



Birchwood Clipboard

The Lion's Roar

MAY 2010 Volume 16,8

In the April issue we proclaimed that **Mrs. Miller** won an award for the History Teacher of the Year at the regional level. Now we must blow the trumpet! We just received the news that **Connie Miller was named 2010 Ohio History Day Teacher of Merit!** She received a plaque and a monetary award for her dedication to the teaching of history and excellence as an educator. This prestigious award was sponsored by the Ohio Historical Society and, at the national level, by National History Day and the Patricia Bearing Fund.

Up and Coming This Spring

- Lunch with Dr. Sylvia Rimm. Dr. Rimm's articles and books have been at the foundation of Birchwood's research base in the guidance of bright children. *Why Bright Kids Get Poor Grades* (Educ. Award Winner), *How to Parent so Children Will Learn* (Parenting Award Winner), and *See Jane Win* can be borrowed from our Gifted Resource Center. (See **Mrs. D**) Other titles *Raising Preschoolers, Ed. of the Gifted and Talented*. Lunch with Dr. Rimm is a special opportunity indeed! Sunday, May 23 Luncheon 1-3 p.m. LaCentre Place.
- This spring we are launching a new program for next year's 8th graders called, "The Ben Franklin Initiative." Each current 7th grader and parent(s) will set goals for 8th grade in a reflective process. In his early years, Ben Franklin set goals for himself and consciously worked at his writing and his character. Our 8th graders can "own it"!
- Look for a notice that parents of 5th-8th grade students can meet with **Mr. D** for options for summer academic work.
- Parent Night and Open House on Thursday, May 20 will display showcase examples of daily classwork, award winning work, and exhibits from special programs.
- The K-4 Fine Arts Night and Poetry Show on May 14 promises to be a special time. Each class will present a folk tale, perform musical numbers, and display art work on the theme of Folklore Around the World.
- The Spanish Show which will "take us to Cuba" and showcase our K-8 students with their knowledge of the language and culture directed by **Senora Rodriguez**. April 30th

Highlights Inside This Issue

- Ten 7th grade students have worked on inquiry-based research projects to understand the ways that climate change affects the Earth. See who these 10 students are who will travel to Perrysburg, Ohio to join other K-12 and university students to present their research on April 27th at the OhioView Satellites Geospatial Technology Conference.
- Birchwood has four poster winners whose drawings will be features on the Earth Day Calendar: **Shruthi R** (1st gr. Winner), **Avi B** (3rd gr. Runner up), **Pheby L** (5th gr. Winner), and **Hannah Y** (7th gr. Winner). See a complete list of the other 11 Birchwood students who were recognized for being in the top ten of their grade!
- Believe it or not, our math students hauled in even more 1st place state and regional awards. See details in the story and view the wall outside the math room.
- Many state winners at the Ohio National History Day competition. See the names and projects that will travel to Washington D.C. in June for the national contest.

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- The Future Problem Solving State Bowl held exciting results. **Nardine T** tied for fifth place in the scenario writing competition. **Katelyn V** took the first place trophy in the individual category. The intermediate team of **Grant F, Mohammed M, YunLu S** and **Ben W** brought home a fifth place trophy in this highly competitive category.

Thank-you to:

- **Mrs. Chu** for arranging an outstanding concert by CIM students (violin, cello, piano), a professional (viola), and an expert (guitar). The performers also talked about their love of music and their incentives to practice. After the performance, students and parents were invited to touch the instruments and meet the performers. Students were encouraged to sign up for lessons and to join one of the ensembles next year.
- **The Poole family** for donating the Star Lab experience for an in-school field trip in May. Each class will get a turn to enter and learn from this portable planetarium from the Lake Erie Nature and Science Center.
- **The Hageman family** for donating the Veggie U kit to the science program.

Class News

K-Computer

In computer class we have been learning MicroWorlds Jr. We worked on creating turtles and giving them instructions. Then we composed music to add to our MicroWorlds pages. The students had lots of fun writing a short piece of music and then sharing it with their friends.

K-Math Center

- Students continued with the Wood Program and the Singapore Program
- Learned addition, with regrouping
- Some of the children are working on 2-digit subtraction with regrouping
- Learned the concepts of money: comparing money and solving problems
- Worked on problem solving

Congratulations to **Gyovanni M** for his enthusiasm for math.

K-Reading Center

- During the Instructional Reading time the Advance group finished the chapter books *Dinosaurs Before Dark*, *Nate the Great*, and *Nick Swan, Swim or Swam*. They are reading at the 3rd grade level.
- Students spent time on individual and group reading and worked on book reports.

Congratulations to **Marissa B, Saleh D**, for reading second grade level books and to **Alex W** for his high fluency score.

K-Writing Center

- Wrote sentences using sight words of the week
- Worked on neatness and punctuation
- Wrote daily about their varied activities

Congratulations to **Bridget L, Nurah N, Praveen K** and **Josh S** for their writings.

K-Science

- Magnetism
- Temperature
- Volcano
- Oil and Water
- Students made their hypotheses and arrived at their conclusions after the experiments

K-Social Studies

- **United States Geography:** Landforms, Rivers, and Mountains
- Students learned how to use maps and the globe to locate the states
- Studied the rose compass and the four directions
- **The seven continents** including:
 - 1) **North America:** Countries and Limits
 - 2) **South America:** Countries and Limits
 - 3) **Africa:** Interesting facts, Geography, Folk tales
 - 4) **South America:** Countries, Limits, Rain Forest, Culture
 - 5) **Earth Day:** History and the importance of taking care of our planet

Our thanks to **Mr. Samulak** for talking to the class about his experiences in Uganda, Africa.

- He showed us pictures of the city, the villages, and his safari into the African Savannah
- He brought objects made in Africa
- His explanations captured the children's undivided attention



- **Mr. Samulak** read the book he authored, *A is for Africa*. It is illustrated by an African artist.
 - 1) The children saw the original canvases of African animals that were painted with wax
 - 2) The book list the animals in alphabetical order and each animal has a narration describing it
- Visit <http://www.amazon.com/Africa-Michael-Samulak/dp/142517115X> to see the original paintings

1st-2nd Computer

In computer class we have been discovering new websites. We watched videos from the National Geographic site for kids. We learned how there are play pumps being installed in Africa to provide clean drinking water for the villages. The pumps are like a merry go round and they pump the water out. We also learned about some of the amazing animals there are in the world.

1st Math

The first graders are working on identifying larger numbers, to 999. We began by learning to say and write the numbers properly. This then led to counting larger numbers and identifying unknown numbers in a sequence. We are now moving on to skip counting, counting backward, and comparing numbers.

2nd Math

The “blue” math group recently completed their unit on fractions and mixed numbers. Now they will begin strengthening their skills with division. The “purple group” is practicing problem solving skills of various types.

1st-2nd Reading

The first and second graders are diligently working on the 2010 Spring Poetry Show. The first graders will be performing an adaptation of “The Elves and the Shoemaker.” The second graders will be performing two selections about Paul Bunyan. Both classes are perfecting expressive delivery and choreography.

1st-2nd Science

The first and second grade students are currently wrapping up their anatomy unit with a study of the teeth. They are now able to name and give the function of about ten of the main body organs. Before we move on, we’ll see that although each person’s basic anatomy is alike, we are all individuals, a concept that will be exemplified well through our fingerprinting activity.

From there, we’ll spend some time learning about personal hygiene, nutrition and exercise, and safety. Students will use “Glo Germ” liquid and powder to see how (in)effectively they wash their hands; chances are, their hands will appear clean, but casting a UV light onto them will show a different story!

We’ll finish the year by learning about plants. Students will create “baby books” to detail the beginning of their plants’ lives. We’ll also have our last science outing to the Metroparks to see all the beautiful changes that take place in the spring.

1st-2nd Social Studies

These classes have started on a whirlwind world tour to learn about our neighbors far away. First stop – our neighbor to the south, Mexico. We have learned about the different regions of Mexico and their varying geography and compared and contrasted Mexican and American families. The children enjoyed sampling Mexican food and wrote food poems about their experiences.

1st Spanish

The first graders worked on clothing and food vocabulary. They learned the pronunciation and completed exercises in the Spanish book. The students memorized the new words and played riddles. The children enjoyed listening stories about Cuba. They learned the dance “Malagueña” by E. Lecuona and they will dance it in the Spanish show.

2nd Spanish

The second graders learned the community places, body parts and food vocabulary. They memorized new words and completed different activities like filling in the blanks, writing in the blocks, and word search. They like to sing Spanish songs. “Sabem flores cultivar” is their favorite song. Together with the first graders they learned how to dance “Malagueña”.

3rd-4th Computer

We are working on a new typing program this quarter, called www.typingweb.com. The students loved working on it and were excited about some of the features that it had. I hope to see improvement in their speed and accuracy over the next few weeks. Learning to type is an essential skill that all students will need.



3rd-5th Language Arts

The third and fourth graders continue to work on their autobiographies, which they will proudly display at Open House next month. We lost quite a few days while taking the Iowa Tests and participating in other spring events, but the students are now busily writing once again and will have finished books very soon.

The fifth graders are enjoying a new experience, working with a student teacher. **Mr. Paul Crego**, a junior at Baldwin-Wallace College, has been teaching grammar and a few composition lessons several times per week. He led the students through the *Snow White* story modeling assignment that they did the week before Iowa testing. **Mr. Crego** will be with us until the end of April.

3rd Math

After completing a unit on fractions, the logical next step was decimals, which the third graders took on with zeal. They learned that a decimal is another way of expressing a fraction. They learned to identify decimal place value, comparing and ordering decimals, adding and subtracting, and rounding decimals.

4th Math

Following a long and arduous unit on fractions and mixed numbers, the “green” group has begun a unit on geometry. Since geometry involves a lot of vocabulary and concepts, we began by reviewing some of the more basic terms, such as line, line segment, ray, etc. We then practiced identifying these figures. Our next task will be working with angles, identifying, measuring, and drawing them.

The “magenta” group is also working with geometric shapes. Specifically, they are learning some of the many uses of a compass. They have learned to create perpendicular bisectors of line segments, bisecting angles, making congruent segments and angles, and drawing parallel lines, all with just a compass and a straight edge.

3rd-4th Science

The third and fourth grade students finished learning all about the human body and its major systems. After spending a bit of time reviewing for the IOWA Test of Basic Skills, the young scientists learned more about food chains and webs through owl pellet dissection. It was a really neat experience!

The students have just begun their final unit called Veggie U. It will be an exciting way for students to learn about plant parts and growth as well as nutrition and healthy eating habits. The Veggie U curriculum is sponsored by The Chef’s Garden in Huron. “The mission of Veggie U is to promote the well-being of children through a healthy lifestyle... with a focus on making wise food choices, combating adolescent and juvenile disease, and attaining an understanding of sustainable agriculture.” Veggie U includes “a kit complete with seeds, soil, flats, root view boxes, grow lights and a worm farm.... These materials allow the student to see, hear, taste, feel and experience the process of planting, growing and harvesting a crop in their classroom. Best of all is eating the results!” (Veggie U, 2009) If you’d like to learn more about Veggie U or The Chef’s Garden, visit www.veggieU.org. **Many thanks to the Hageman family for their generous donation of the Veggie U kit!**

Finally, the third and fourth graders will take one last trip to the Metroparks to observe the new beginnings spring brings.

3rd Social Studies

We finished up our unit on economics, following the steps of production (from the resources to the factories to the stores), focusing on the relation between supply and demand. Students had fun coming up with their own product to sell, making posters to advertise their product in order to get rid of the oversupply. We had fun learning about the different currency used from past to present, along with money today from around the world. Thank you parents for the loan of some of your foreign currency.

Students are now beginning a unit on our government. With a focus on our capital, they started working on a research project of a building, memorial, or other historical site from the Washington D.C. area with a trip to the library. The students will continue to work on this over the next few weeks while we study more about our government.

4th Social Studies

Students finished up their studies of Ohio with a focus on Ohio’s government, learning about the three branches of government. They will be taking a trip to the courthouse and city hall to see our local government in action in May. Parents are welcome to join us on this tour.

Students moved back to the regional text, focusing on the Southwest Region of the country. They are learning about



the fascinating history and growth of this region, taking a look at the Native Americans, cowboys, and the industries that made the Southwest prosper.

3rd-4th Spanish

The students learned the vocabulary of places around town, and food. They memorized the words and completed crossword puzzles and riddles. They learned the concept of masculine and feminine when applied to adjectives. They translated sentences and were able to write in Spanish while I dictated phrases.

They learned the dance “Son Cubano” a traditional Cuban song. They will present the play in the Spanish Program.

5th-6th Computer

We are working with PowerPoint. Each student is creating a presentation with photos of their favorite things. They bring in photos from home as well as use sounds and music. When complete, we will present them to the class.

5th-6th Computer - Logo Programming

We are designing a racetrack game. The students are creating a car, obstacles, and scenery. Then we will work on programming everything to move and work together. They “player” of the game will be able to control the car to avoid obstacles and win the race. It is quite a challenge to make everything fit together, the students often work together to solve problems.

5th Language Arts

SEE 3rd-5th Language Arts

5th-6th Language Arts - Vocabulary Enrichment

The fifth grade students are taking in words and Greek and Latin word roots as fast as I can present them! In addition to their workbooks, they are using activities like word-root Jeopardy to become more familiar with some impressively difficult words.

The sixth grade students have really stepped up their game this year, absorbing an amazing amount of knowledge about Greek and Latin word roots. They have also become quite inventive at using previously unfamiliar words in sentences. The fourth quarter finds them learning the most judicious use of English words that come from Greek and Latin, since as George Orwell said, “Bad writers are nearly always haunted by the notion that Latin and Greek words are grander than Saxon ones.”

5th Reading

Students have been gluttonously consuming many different varieties of “soup”. Robert Newton Peck’s autobiographical Soup series is a humorous look at the activities of boys growing up in mid-twentieth century Vermont. The class sipped and slurped its way through title after title and students shared their enjoyment by reading aloud 1-2 pages of a favorite scene. We have just begun reading fantasy books, and class titles will include *Tuck Everlasting* and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. *Tuck Everlasting* will introduce students to Babbitt’s wonderful writing style; additionally, we will “build” characters and consider several life-altering decisions that were made in the story. I am also pulling some older Newbery fantasy titles and will have each student read at least one of these books.

6th Reading

John Fitzgerald writes of his own childhood experiences in the “Great Brain” series. In addition to its entertainment value, this regional fiction series brings out the impact setting has on a story—early 1900s in small-town Utah—and the theme of tolerance is strongly brought out. The class had some significant discussion regarding this topic. We have just started what must be the most eagerly awaited unit of the year—Greek mythology. One student came in to class today saying, “I’ve read the d’Aulaire book of myths again and again and again and again!” Two emphases for this unit are that a foundation in mythology is useful in understanding many references in classic and poetry and literature, and for students to appreciate the extensive heritage we in the western world have gained from our Greek “family tree”: language, architecture, astronomy, science, medicine, government and law. Students will practice their oral skills through “storytelling” as they retell a myth before the class.

5th Science

Students continued their study of the atom. They looked at the periodic table of elements to see how the arrangement of protons determined an element’s position in the periodic table and how the electrons in the outer energy levels allowed them lose or gain electrons. They did a little research on the first fifteen elements in the periodic table and presented it to the class. They are doing two mini-units on sound and a mini-unit on topographical maps.



6th Science

Students looked at the functions of organelles in Eukaryotic cells and began a study of water. So far they explored the chemical and physical properties of water and did a mini-unit on static electricity to help them understand water's polarity.

5th-8th Social Studies

As we head down the homestretch, there's still a lot of historical investigation and inquiry unfolding in the classroom. In the 5th grade, students are finishing up their analysis of Revolutionary War battles as they consider the significance of each and subsequently choose two in order to analyze their details in more depth. We enjoyed looking at the process our founding fathers took in writing the Constitution. Coming up, we'll be analyzing the Star-Spangled Banner and looking in detail at the flag that flew over Ft. McHenry when Francis Scott Key wrote his famous verses. Students will discover that physical items can yield all kinds of historical clues.

In the 6th grade, we've been studying the Middle Ages and the Renaissance period. Students have chosen a topic from this time period for which they have begun doing in-depth historical research. The end result will be their first, full-length research paper. Also, students have wrapped up their memorization of the countries and capitals of the world with their study of Europe.

In the 7th grade, students looked at the impact of the industrial revolution in the early 1800s and its effect on ordinary people. Following their study they drew some excellent political cartoons depicting a topic from the lesson. Currently they are reading about reformers from the 1800s. After choosing one and doing some basic biographical research, they will write an "autobiographical" essay from the perspective of their individual. The year will conclude with a study of the causes and effects of the Civil War.

The 8th graders are just beginning their final "decade" project. The class has been divided into smaller groups, each of which will focus on a decade ranging from the 1940s to the 1970s. They'll be gathering facts, doing biographical sketches of notable people from their decade, drawing political cartoons, and gathering photographs of key events. As they work students will get to enjoy music from the various decades.

Look for the various History Day projects done by the 7th and 8th graders (and a few 6th graders) at the Open House in May. There's much to enjoy!

5th Spanish

The students learned adjectives and the verb ser (to be). They described friends, teachers, and family members using the verb in addition to adjectives. The students learned verbs and were able to use the verbs in sentences. They studied the use of negative and interrogative phrases. The children studied the biography of Jose Marti an icon of the Cuban culture. They translated sentences and memorized them for their Spanish Program presentation.

6th Spanish

They worked with verbs in the first conjugation and they added vocabulary about school and activities. They read about the differences between schools of Latin America and the USA. They learned about food, likes and dislikes, and how to say useful expressions. For the Spanish Program the students memorized the poem "Cultivo una rosa blanca" by Jose Marti to recite. They worked on a PowerPoint about Cuba, created flyers to announce the event, and worked on the front page of the programs.

7th-8th Computer

We are editing and publishing the yearbook. This is the first time we are using a company called TreeRing to print our yearbook. The layout and design is done online with lots of ways to make the yearbook look really great. The 7th graders are creating the pages for each classroom and the 8th graders are creating a half-page about themselves. It is a great way to learn new software and to learn how to design and layout a page for the yearbook.

7th-8th Latin I

The seventh grade students are making good progress through their first-year textbook, as well as having fun learning about Roman culture, history, geography and mythology via 'certamen' (a Jeopardy-like game). On to Latin 2 next year!

The eighth grade students are making good progress through the first-year textbook and playing 'certamen' (a Jeopardy-like game) to learn about Roman culture, history, geography and mythology. Six are also taking placement exams at Ignatius, Hathaway Brown, and Hawken, with hopes of earning a year of high-school credit for the excellent work they've done this year.



Birchwood alumnus **Jacob D**, a 9th grader at Hawken currently taking Latin 2, reports that he recently earned a perfect score on the National Latin Exam. Congratulations!

7th Reading

Memories, special places, a moment in time...students studied a variety of poetry by great poets past and present on these themes. After writing original poetry on these themes, each selected one to submit for the Creative Communications poetry contest. On May 3rd, poet **Joseph Psarto** will come to our class to share his poetry and his thoughts on great literature. Later that week, we will attend the Great Lakes Theater's, Shakespeare production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Literature circles met to discover themes and "big ideas" several times throughout the course of reading *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry*. After each meeting, students completed self-evaluations of their group's progress in conducting an effective discussion. Following this, each student shared an excerpt from a second book they had read which highlighted a similar theme. All of the 7th graders are very fluent oral readers! We are on to some lighter but equally literary fare: the awesome fantasy author, Lloyd Alexander.

8th Reading

"Never was there a tale of more woe, than that of Juliet and her Romeo." This and other quotes from the play resounded in our classroom as the students dramatized and memorized selections from Shakespeare's play. This class did an awesome job of analyzing the bard's poetic style elements which are so particular to this play. They discovered it was loaded with word play, puns, oxymoron, metaphors, and dark/light imagery. Currently, students are writing quatrains, clerihews, and even a sonnet. Next we will watch *West Side Story* and compare the Broadway musical to the Shakespeare play. The 8th grade class will attend *Midsummer Night's Dream* along with the 7th grade class. The poetry the 8th graders submitted to the poetry contest contained their attempts to apply metaphor in an original poem.

In honor of Mark Twain's birthday we read *Huckleberry Finn* and made comments on his witty style on a shared google.doc. We found this a great way to communicate as we read over Spring break.

7th Science

7th grade students finished studying the Sun and other stars. They took observations of the ground-surface temperatures and cloud data in December and proposed research questions. The following students have worked on inquiry-based research projects to understand the ways that climate change affects the Earth. **Marla B, Sarah D, Vikas N, Prithvi P, Alex P, Sanjana R, Susmita R, Hassan S, Abhijeet S, and Hannah Y** will travel to Perrysburg, Ohio to join other K-12 and university students to present their research on April 27th at the OhioView Satellites Geospatial Technology Conference.

8th Science

Students were able to see and experience what they were studying in the textbook by dissecting a chicken wing. In front of them they found the humerus, radius, and ulna, as well as the muscles, tendons, ligaments and blood vessels. They finished a chapter in the textbook regarding homeostasis, muscles, bones, and skin. Now they are on to the digestive system. So far they have looked at food labels and how to analyze them. Want to know the healthiest yogurt? Ask an 8th grade girl.

7th-8th Social Studies

SEE 5th-8th Social Studies

7th Spanish

They studied the verb hacer (to do) and conversed about what they do at a birthday party. The students studied about Puerto Rico, the weather forecast, and water sports. They completed exercises from the book. They wrote a script about the Cuban immigrants to present in the Spanish program.

8th Spanish

They studied the preterit of some of the irregular verbs and wrote stories based on pictures. They practiced conversation about daily living at home, at school, with friends, on vacations. They also talked about things they like to do. They read two stories a week from the book *Leyendas Latino Americanas* to practice comprehension and vocabulary. They wrote a funny script about four girls going to Cuba and they will present it in the Spanish program.



Continental Mathematics League Cumulative Scores

The Birchwood students did an impressive job with the CML testing this year. **Sue R, Sunny R, and Kavya R** all were State and Regional champions! Both the **seventh and eighth grades** classes turned in scores that placed Birchwood as the top school in the State and the Region. The **sixth grade** class finished 3rd in Ohio and 3rd in our region, while the **fifth grade** class finished 2nd in Ohio and 3rd in the region. Great Job to all!

Earth Day Poster Winners

This year 920 students from 27 different schools in Cuyahoga County entered the Cuyahoga Solid Waste District's Earth Day Poster Contest. Students had to depict some aspect of composting. Although top picks were chosen because of their art work and best use of design and color there were many excellent student posters that did not make the top ten. Fortunately, with parental permission, **Mrs. Kutis** allowed us to scan student work into Artsonia. You can look at student artwork online at www.Artsonia.com, and even order a mug or note cards with student work on it.

Students recognized for being in the top ten of their grade were: **Elizabeth P** (3rd grade); **Alexis H** and **Anna H** (5th grade); **Sarah C, Sarah D, Sean F, Alex P,** and **Brad S** (7th Grade); **Zach I, Clare P, LuLu S,** and **Ben W** (8th Grade).

Each grade winner and runner up had their posters featured on the Earth Day Calendar. The four Birchwood students were: **Shruthi R** (1st grade Winner), **Avi B** (3rd grade Runner up), **Pheby L** (5th grade Winner), and **Hannah Y** (7th grade Winner).

Future Problem Solving

Nardine T submitted her science fiction piece to the 2010 Future Problem Solving Scenario Writing Contest. She developed the topic of "Sensory Overload," where a child's life was turned topsy-turvy when his older brother became handicapped from a car accident. Normalcy came in the form of a neuro-implant device that allowed the older brother to regain mobility, that is, until side effects started to surface. Compounding the turmoil in the family was how the younger brother begrudged all the attention his

brother was getting. This piece qualified to go on to the state level and tied for fifth piece. Congratulations!

History Day

Birchwood had a wonderful showing at the state level of the National History Day competition. Held at the brand new Ohio State University student union building in Columbus, 22 students went with strong projects and high hopes. There were many high quality projects from other schools as well and the competition was tough. Birchwood students excelled in a number of categories and six students are advancing to the national competition which will be held at the University of Maryland in June. In the paper category, both **Sam Z** and **Amir F** were national finalists. This is the first time Birchwood has sent on two historical papers to nationals. **Sam's** paper is on the Gatling Gun and **Amir's** paper is on Garrett Morgan, the Cleveland inventor of the gas mask and traffic light. Also advancing to the national competition is **Nathan C** with his website on Alan Freed, the innovative Cleveland radio deejay who coined the term "rock and roll." In the individual documentary category, **Ben W** will be competing with his documentary on the printing press. **Zaem M** and **Clare P** will be representing Birchwood in the group performance category with their performance on the Marshall Plan. In addition, **Amir** received two special awards from the Society of Ohio Archivists and the Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board for his use of historical, archival records in his research.

There were also a number of other strong showings by Birchwood students. In the group documentary category, **Munim, Zach I,** and **Deepak K** were the national alternates with their project on the polio vaccine. **Hassan S** was a national alternate in the individual documentary category for his project on the Apple II computer. Making the finals of the state competition and thus receiving honorable mentions were **Kavya R** for her website on the Bill of Rights, **Lulu Sun** for her website on the Northwest Ordinance, and **Trevor L** and **Sunny R** for their group performance on Yellow Journalism.

Good luck to all at the national competition in June!



SUMMER TIME OPTIONS with Mr. Debelak Grades 5-8

By design, Birchwood's academic program for middle school students provides numerous options for summer work at varying levels of challenge and rigor. If parents of students entering 5th-8th grades are interested in knowing more about these options, I will be holding two large-group informational meetings followed by one-on-one conversations with individual parents. Content will include options in history, writing, mathematics, reading and science. I will also explain how children can prepare for the Independent School Entrance Examination (ISEE).

The informational meetings will be Monday, May 10th at 2:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. Here I will explain the options in relationship to content and procedure. The one-on-one meetings will be conducted within increments of 15 minutes between 3:00 and 5:00 p.m. during the week of May 10th. Parents wishing to attend the one-on-one meetings should respond to me directly by email CWdebelak@gmail.com requesting a day and time, and also indicating any special interests for summer work. I will respond quickly to the request and either confirm, or if the time slot is already taken, ask you to identify another time during the week.

THE BEN FRANKLIN INITIATIVE Inspiring Middle School Students – Eighth Grade

WHAT:

The Ben Franklin Initiative is an extension of our eighth grade, character development program. It is an opportunity for incoming eighth graders to learn skills that promote independence, self-reflection, responsibility, collaboration, goal setting, and planning. The initiative speaks to the best intentions of young teens and inspires them to fulfill their potential.

HOW:

This spring, Mr. Debelak will lead creative problem solving sessions with all of the current seventh graders, teaching them how to identify the opportunities, challenges and problems that their eighth grade school year might present:

where to go to school, how to prepare themselves, how to become a better student, what personal strengths or weaknesses should they focus on, how can they learn leadership skills or develop better friendships. Applying principles of the creative problem solving process (akin to our Future Problem Solving Program), the students will define two or three areas of focus and collect data in these areas in order to craft a plan of action for their eighth grade year. Mr. Debelak will show the students how to make this plan a collaborative effort with their parents and teachers. Early next fall, each student will write a 300-350 word essay describing their plan of action for the 2010-11 school year. After submitting the essay, the student, parent(s), and a teacher will meet together to discuss and finalize the student's plan. This conference will replace the midyear parent conference although informational updates will probably be necessary.

WHY THE PROGRAM:

As young teens become more independent, wanting to make their own choices about life, it becomes increasingly more important that parents and teachers prepare them to make thoughtful, reasoned decisions about their young lives. It is everyone's hope that these young men and women will become a blessing to themselves and everyone around them. This approach, that we are calling "The Ben Franklin Initiative," represents a teenage guidance effort that navigates the middle ground between unrelenting authoritarianism against which teens often rebel, and complete freedom of choice that leaves teens ill-prepared to deal with contemporary influences that may lead them astray.

WHY "BEN FRANKLIN":

Ben Franklin, a child of common origins but of uncommon adult accomplishments, determined in his teen years to become a noble and good man: personally successful and socially responsible. To this end, after considerable study and personal reflection, Franklin identified fourteen personal virtues that he believed were necessary for success. Aiming to cultivate these virtues, he established a plan of action, and although early success was elusive, the impact and result of these initiatives forged a remarkable character, and made Franklin one of America's greatest founding fathers and a good model for young teens.



COMPETENCY AND MOTIVATION

Part VII

A Mindset Toward Affliction

When heaven is about to confer a great responsibility on any man, it will exercise his mind with suffering, his sinews and bones to hard work, expose his body to hunger, put him to poverty, place obstacles in the paths of his deeds, so as to stimulate his mind, harden his nature, and improve where he is incompetent.”
Meng Tzu, China, 3rd cent, BCD

If parents hope to instill a *growth mindset* in their children, it will be important to teach them how to face life’s afflictions. Affliction, hardship, and disappointment are inescapable. They are life’s crucible inflicting mixed results upon our lives. They can forge strength, courage, and virtue, or they can impose crushing defeat and withdrawal. The choice in life is not whether or not we will face these trials, but how we will cope with them. This requires a healthy ***mindset***, one that understands the place and purpose of life’s challenges.

In raising our four children, Helene and I found this task the most difficult. We did not want to help our children to face any afflictions, hardships or disappointments. Our parental hearts wanted to protect them from every possible heartache. When difficulties occurred my first reaction was to defend them, justify them and make someone else pay for their pain! But of course deep at the core of our hearts, Helene and I knew better; this was life, bad “stuff” happens. But we also knew that good things could come out of each and every trial.

What then. . .? We took a deep breath, put aside our paternal subjectivity, and helped our children gain perspective. We had to take the first step to swallow our inclination to blame or find excuses, and only then, we could put the affliction in perspective. Something could be learned out of this trial; something could be gained in the end.

As we muted our visceral reactions, we were able to comfort our children, support them, and when their tears finally stopped, talk to them about making something good emerge in the end. They were too young to do it on their own. They needed guidance. Without this support they could become bitter, a slave of their own anger toward others, allowing a poor self-concept to take root, and perhaps lean toward a lifestyle that always seeks the path of least resistance. Certainly if Helene and I felt we needed to be our children’s advocates with the people or events that caused the anguish, we jumped into the middle of the problem. But often what was needed more often, was for us to invest time with our children, working together to craft a plan that, on the one hand, helped them gain a perspective about the trial, while on the other hand, making the most of the trial.

The process was always painful for Mom, Dad and the kids. But like the afflictions themselves, these times became a factor for lessons that could last a life time.