



Birchwood Clipboard

The Lion's Roar

SEPT 2010 Volume 17,1

WELCOME BACK

The entire staff heartily agreed that it was a joy to see the students on the first day of school. We look forward to a very productive year. More than one teacher has commented on the positive and pleasant atmosphere that has been established from the very start.

Look for notices this month about: Chess club, MathCounts Team practice, 3-4 math club, art and Chinese classes for K-4 students starting sometime in early October.

Hallways under construction; check out our new look . . .

Last summer we spent our time and energy moving into the south wing. We were exhausted but delighted to have space. Decorating took a back seat. But this summer, with renewed energy, we decided it was time to spruce up our interior design. Mrs. Debelak recruited Rhonda Franklin (Anna '13, Eric '17), an artist and interior decorator for schools, to unleash her creative talents and make some proposals for our hallways. A few weeks later, using the color palette from our brochures, she developed a bold, creative plan. The stairwells were painted to match the palette. Our summer staff – Terry, Aaron, and Michael – did the work. Rhonda also designed our three entrances with decorative, entry-way carpet tiles. These should arrive within the next month. Rhonda soon recruited her husband Phil Hollweg and designed five, 14 ft by 6 ft decorative, cork-board leaves for the main hallways! It required a lot of imagination but it also took an equal amount of creative design to figure out how to make the leaves and get them hung. We recruited Peter Debelak ('94) for this. He planned and executed the carpentry work. Mr. Debelak provided "slave" labor. Only one leaf is up but four more are in the works. In addition, Rhonda planned a wall design for the second floor of the south wing and we will start on this project sometime in mid-September. The final piece will include six decorate banners for the main hallways. Liz Laguardia has volunteered to make that happen. We hope to finish everything in time for the fall Open House, but please feel free to drop in anytime and take a peek.

Alumni news "leaf"

One of the leaves will display alumni news, so this is a call to our alumni to send in news about matriculation, marriages, new babies, jobs, etc.

Beyond Birchwood "leaf"

This bulletin board will display student accomplishments outside of Birchwood – sports, music, art, drama, etc. Send us your child's accomplishments for our display.

Tell your friends about "Drop-In" Days

A great way for prospective parents to learn more about Birchwood is to visit us on "Drop In" days. Every Thursday from 9:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. families may "Drop in" the school for a visit and a tour with a staff member. For families unable to drop in during the week, there will be "Drop in" Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. until noon on the second Saturday of each month. Mr. Debelak and one staff member will be on hand to lead tours and answer questions. Flyers will be available in the school office.

In This Issue

Welcome Back

Look for notices

Hallway under construction; check out our new look...

Alumni news "leaf"

Beyond Birchwood "leaf"

Tell your friends about "Drop-in" Days

You can also "drop-in" on Mrs. Debelak

Mrs. Alicea Moves to Columbus

Welcome Joanna West

Just the facts....
With a little opinion...

The Birchwood Project 2010-2011

Essay from Mr. Debelak:
The Potential To Become Great

Upcoming
Thursday, Sept 23
Birchwood Project Lecture: *The Tenets of Great Education*
2-3 and 7-8 pm



You can also “drop in” on Mrs. Debelak

Each Friday morning Mrs. Debelak will host a one hour coffee chat in the second floor parents’ room. Bring your thoughts, ideas, concerns, hopes or just good conversation. In addition the Parent Room will be open each day of the week and parents can use the room for meetings, for conversation or to wait for their children in after school classes.

Mrs. Alicea moves to Columbus

Sarah Alicea moved to Columbus during the summer with her husband. We will miss her dearly. She was a wonderful teacher and good influence on the children. Despite the disappointment, good graces followed. Joanna West, former Birchwood student and daughter of former Birchwood teacher Maryse West, has joined our staff. Her bio follows. She will be teaching 3-4 reading and helping Senora Rodriguez three hours per day with kindergarten instruction. She is a wonderful addition to our staff.

Welcome Joanna West

Joanna West graduated cum laude from Otterbein College in 2007 with a degree in Early Childhood Education and a Reading Endorsement (K-12). In August of 2007 Joanna began teaching preschool at Fit by Five in Westlake, Ohio. In 2008 she took a teaching position at the Avon Goddard School where she taught Pre-K for two years and worked with children in kindergarten through fifth grade in an after school program. Looking for a new challenge, Joanna left Goddard in May of 2010 and began working toward a Master’s degree in Speech and Language Pathology. When the opportunity arose to return to her alma mater, Joanna was ecstatic. She is very excited to begin a new school year with the Birchwood family. Miss West is the second Birchwood alum who has returned to the school to teach. She will be a Kindergarten aide for Senora Rodriguez and will be Birchwood’s full-time reading teacher for third and fourth grade.

JUST FACTS. . . . The Kaiser Family Foundation reports on a recent student of media usage by 8-18 years olds, that average, daily recreational usage was over 7.5 hours. The number is higher among 11-14 years olds: 8 hours and 40 minutes. Only one fourth of the students reported parental restrictions on total usage. **WITH A LITTLE OPINION** . . . It seems with a little adjustment of priorities, the same children could do more homework, learn one or two instruments, take an art class, and be in a community theatrical production.

The Birchwood Project

This year Mr. Debelak will add monthly book discussions to the Birchwood Project Lecture schedule - see below.

The Birchwood Project Schedule

Lectures: The Birchwood Project Lectures highlight the components of great education. Drawing upon research, history, and experience, they provide parents with a knowledge base from which to make informed decisions about their children’s education. They also give parents insight into important developmental issues as they relate to progress and achievement inside and outside of school.

The Tenets of Great Education

Thursday, September 23, 2:00 - 3:00 and 7:00 – 8:00

How can I be sure my child is getting a good education? What does history tell us? What does research tell us? What part do parents play to insure great education for their children? In a global marketplace, parents are increasingly more concerned that their children are receiving an education that will make them successful in the 21st century.

Cultivating Creativity in Young People

Thursday, November 17, 2:00 – 3:00 and 7:00 – 8:00

We hear from every quarter that creativity is one of the most important characteristics for individual achievement and success in the 21st century. But it is equally important to know that creative thinking is a skill that can be learned, developed, and perfected. This lecture will focus on these skills and how they can be nurtured.

“IQ – Its Meaning and Implications for Education”

Thursday, January 20, 2:00 – 3:00 and 7:00 – 8:00

Nearly 100 years of research on intelligence provides ground work for parents and educators to make informed and wise decisions about educating children. This lecture will debunk the myths surrounding the meanings and interpretations of the intelligence quotient (IQ) while also explaining its place in determining curriculum and educational planning for young people.



The Cumulative Advantage: The Rationale for Investing Early in Education
Thursday, March 24, 2:00 – 3:00 and 7:00 – 8:00

Do you hope to give your child the best education possible? Then start early. The most important habits and attitudes about schooling and achievement can be, and should be, nurtured in children before the age of ten. Over time, these advantages accumulate and give children a head start in academic achievement and personal development.

Book Discussions: The Book Digest Roundtable Discussions are custom made for busy parents who want to stay abreast of current research about child development, high quality education, or education for bright and gifted children. There's no homework and everyone can participate. In each discussion, participants will take turns reading selections from popular literature written by accomplished scholars. These selections will highlight the author's central theme and enable participants to engage in informative and thoughtful discourse.

Thursday October 21 at 2:00 – 3:00 and 7:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Beyond the Classroom by Steinberg

Drawing upon ten years of extensive research, Laurence Steinberg, author, researcher and university professor, explains the key factors for student achievement. He offers parents and educators strategies to develop the characteristics that lead to academic success.

Thursday, December 9, 2:00 – 3:00 and 7:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Mindsets: By Carol Dweck

Clinical psychologist and researcher at Stanford University, Carol Dweck has spent 30 years studying issues surrounding competency and motivation. In her popular new book, she describes the difference between a *growth mindset* and a *fixed mindset*, and how these two approaches to life affect learning and achievement.

Thursday, February 17, 2:00 – 3:00 and 7:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Reforming Education by Mortimer Adler

Author of the classic *How to Read a Book*, Mortimer Adler continues to be a voice for universal, classical education. His insights into the components of great education are timeless and critical to the ears of 21st century parents.

Thursday, April 21, 2:00 – 3:00 and 7:00 – 8:00 p.m.
The Talent Code by Daniel Coyle

Author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Lance Armstrong's War* and *Hardball: A Season in the Projects*, Daniel Coyle connects the dots among populations of high achieving individuals in various disciplines. He illustrates some of the essential characteristics of talent development from sports training to academic training. The implications for schooling are powerful.



THE POTENTIAL TO BECOME GREAT

What does it mean when we talk about children “reaching their potential?” Let’s consider. When we see a tadpole, we see the potential for a frog. When we see an apple seed we see the potential for an apple tree. But when we see a little child . . . what is it that we see? The answer is not immediate. We know intuitively that it is not just physical maturity, and if we ponder long enough we also have to admit that it is not merely adult accomplishment. Then what is human potential?

The early Greek philosophers, Aristotle in particular, answered this question in a manner that affected moral, ethical and religious thought for more than 2000 years. Aristotle defined human potential in terms of human virtue. For Aristotle, the essence of being human is to be virtuous, and within every boy and girl is the potential to become a virtuous adult. In becoming virtuous, the child becomes fully human. Virtue does not necessarily suggest a successful professional life, or one of fame and good fortune. According to Aristotle, virtue describes those characteristics of conduct that spontaneously elicit respect, honor and admiration regardless of cultural or religious background.

Aristotle’s view has powerful implications for parenting and education. Virtue is given center stage. Its importance includes but also transcends intellectual development or any other kind of personal achievement. The cultivation of virtue is at the heart of what it means to be human and correspondingly what it means to lead a fulfilled life. The development of virtue makes a human a human.

Children can become doctors, lawyers, entrepreneurs, or trades people. But these professions only describe what people do. They do not define what it means to be human and, according to Aristotle, they cannot fulfill human life. On the contrary, it is within the personal struggle to “know the good, love the good, and do the good” i.e. virtue, that the child finds fulfillment in adult life. Yes, life may include intellectual and financial success, but the sum of a virtuous life is much more than achievements.

Having worked closely with children, young adults, and young parents for more than 35 years, my experiences support Aristotle’s viewpoint, and I have let this perspective shape much of my work as an educator. It is a work that I call “raising great kids.” On the one hand it includes achievement, talent development, and personal success. But it also includes building good work habits and shaping the ethics of achievement. It includes nurturing healthy attitudes, aspirations, and determination. It expects and requires that children learn social intelligence – they know how to interact with others at all times and in all places. This work has as its end a “great” kid, one whose life and conduct elicits respect and honor from others, a life that brings a sense of personal fulfillment and positively affects family, friends and the greater society.

This will be the topic of the Clipboard essays during the 2010-11 school year. I will explore with you Aristotle’s notion of virtue, particularly as it applies to parenting and education. I will also show how both history and modern research supports this perspective.

For more essays, visit Chuck’s blog at:
www.birchwoodschool.org/blog