



Kindergarten News

The Kindergarten students have been enjoying our warm Autumn weather and are so excited for this new snow! We have been working really hard on constructing our drums which we hope to use soon! Blue has come to visit during painting time and will soon meet up with yellow. We finished a story about being kind and helpful titled Pumpkin Soup and have started a new story entitled Good Friends. We continue to work hard in our kitchen making bread, butter and soup weekly. We also enjoy working with beeswax and crayoning items related to our weekly stories. We look forward to some special craft items that will be arriving home around Christmas time!

Mrs. Basner's & Mrs. Horvath's First Grades

The first graders at Birchtree Charter School have begun the first steps of their journey into formal learning. They have learned numerous poems and songs, often using gestures. They are sharpening their fine and gross motor skills through beeswax modeling, jumping rope, form drawing, beanbag activities, painting, handwork, and through many other ways. During the first main lesson block of the year, the students began form drawing with an introduction to straight lines and curves, drawing basic shapes to help with proper letter and number formation. During the Language Arts main lesson blocks, the students heard and often dramatized imaginative stories filled with rich vocabulary and visual imagery to help them learn their letter names and sounds. During the Math block, they practiced counting by 1's, 5's, 10's, and 2's, forming a variety of patterns, working with pattern blocks and geoboards, and writing numbers. Upon completion of this Language Arts block, the first graders will return to a Math block and will reenact stories using the four operations.



Ms. Albina's Second Grade

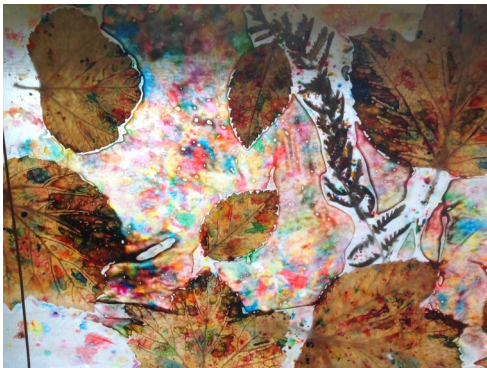
Autumn has brought many unexpected joys to Second Grade, one being the lovely warm weather these past few months that has extended our outdoor playtime upon green grass and dry pathways. On the woodland trails, the children joyfully gathered baskets of the fallen leaves, and back in the classroom, preserved their beauty by pressing them between sheets of waxed paper with colorful crayon shavings. Now we are busy transforming these sheets of pressed leaves into lanterns for next week's Lantern Walk. With eager anticipation of this special occasion, our class has enjoyed learning new songs to sing and play on their flutes.

Compensating for fall's fading light; the light of the Saints has illumined our thoughts, feelings, and artwork as we've written their inspirational stories in our Main Lesson Books. This week the children have been learning about St. Martin.

In Math we've recently been focusing on double-digit addition and subtraction and the concepts of "carrying" and "borrowing."

Our time in handwork has shifted from knitting to weaving. The repetitive rhythmic pattern found in the weft and warp has grown to be a therapeutic and calming creative pastime.

Waldorf's way of teaching from the whole to the parts bears continual fruit here. The children are developing a real sense of community as second graders, and their blossoming socialization reveals supportiveness, cooperation, and empathy.



Mr. Danz's Second Grade

Having worked their way through two blocks of study in reading and arithmetic thus far, my students have begun to find their own way through these subjects. I can see this through the short stories and summaries that they create, in their beautifully rendered Main Lesson pages, and in their skip counting abilities during morning circle. This fall was splendid and we relished in the warmth a couple times, taking nature walks and noticing the variation and composition of plants, moss and bushes in our woods. Songs about pumpkins were sung, regal and sizable flute cases were made, and beeswax characters of the saints and animals were made. The children entered the year ready to get to work and excited about the themes of the second grade year. The stories of the saints/ heroes and animals fit them well at their beautiful and earnest second grade age. Each child has memorized (or is in the process of memorizing) their own birthday verse that I wrote for them. The words of the verses are being committed within and coming out at pace and expression that is singularly their own. And the best thing to me as their teacher is watching the other students mouth the words to each child's poem as it is being spoken. As we learn ourselves, we learn each other.

Ms. Sharrer's & Johndro's Third Grades

Our third grade curriculum meets the developmental stage of the children by providing extensive practical work whereby they can associate both thought and deed. Studies of shelters, textiles, food and gardening are examples of the practical work. The latter also provides an opportunity for the children to work in community with each other.

The arithmetic curriculum, which deals with measurement, time, money and other practical applications, coincides with the children's need for orientation in space and time. Work towards mastering the times tables and math facts continues through daily oral and written practice. The concepts of borrowing and carrying are reviewed and practiced along with times tables. Through movement, drawings, and use of chosen forms, the form drawing curriculum is a precursor to more complex mathematics and geometry.

With respect to reading, students read aloud both published texts and those written by the teacher. The students have opportunities to practice sustained silent reading as well as choral reading and reading in small skill-based groups.

Finally, the stories of the Old Testament are the children's first introduction to history. The children can relate the events in the stories to their own inner struggles; for instance mankind's fall from Paradise equates to the children's new feeling of separation from the world, and the building of the temple relates to their own bodies and skills. Portraits of strong individuals lead the children to sharpen their judgments of right and wrong. They witness how great individuals are both responsible and moral.



Mrs. Tran's & Mrs. Folsom's Fourth Grades

It is already November and fourth grade has covered so much! We are in our third block and will be beginning our fourth block soon. We began the year with an Alaska and Geography block. Starting close to home, we mapped out our classroom, school and playground, and then Palmer. We were introduced to Alaska Natives through a study of the Athabascans in our area. We heard lively tales of Raven, beginning with a story about how Raven created Alaska. Highlights of this block were our field trip to the Dorothy Page Museum, The Knik Museum and Musher's Hall of Fame, the Transportation Museum, the Colony House Museum, and the Visitor's Center. We learned a lot of local history and met the challenge of climbing Butte as a class with the reward of a spectacular view of the valley. A view that was reproduced in crayon drawings and paintings.

In September, we spent the rest of the fall enlivening the class with tales from the Kalevala, a Finnish epic poem. We used these fantastical stories to review nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs and other parts of speech. We practiced writing summaries and even wrote our own runes (8 syllable verses). The Kalevala was enriched through songs, plays, and paintings. We used it also as a backdrop for our fractions study.

Deep into a mostly snowless fall, our third block focused on exploring fractions. We began by looking at multiplication patterns, times houses, multiplication strategies, and a picture of long division. Then, we dove into fractions with apples, pizza, and fractions circles. We created pictures of trees with factor roots, fraction trees with splitting branches, and fractions in measurement. We expanded and reduced fractions. We extended fractions into music, counting whole, half, quarter, and eighth notes. We will end the block suitably with more food-quesadillas and pies! Please do allow your children to play with your food—or at least divide them into fractions!

As the winter gets darker, our next study will serve to lighten the mood. Fish and Game recently came in to give a very informative and interesting presentation on the salmon cycle. We also got to get our hands messy with a salmon dissection. I was impressed and of course not surprised about how much our children already know about salmon. You can now ask your children to stump you with a question about salmon. This was an excellent preview to our next block--zoology!



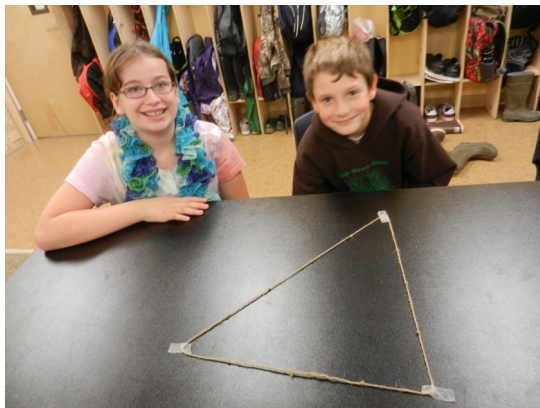
Mrs. Levesque's Fifth Grade

The forest's proliferation of mushrooms this fall enabled fifth graders to appreciate nature's production of the lower plant kingdom. During our botany block, the class learned that these plants—fungi, equisetums, ferns, lichen, and algae—do not reproduce with seeds, but mostly with spores instead. We became familiar with the term dioecious in relation to conifers, evergreens which bear male and female parts on individual plants. Lastly, we read Little Bee Sunbeam, a book that gave us an intimate look into the workings of a beehive and the crucial role bees play in plant reproduction. We even extracted delicious honey from Kelly and Alex Strawn's hive.

Next, in a mathematics block, we delved into the number systems of ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt. The class learned that not all number systems are decimal, or base 10. The Babylonians used a sexagesimal system, base 60. The Egyptians' system was decimal, but did not contain place value. Using cuneiforms and hieroglyphics, we learned to multiply in these two systems. We realized that since the Egyptians multiplied only by doubling, they may have been the first people to use the Distributive Property.

Ancient India and Persia provided the backdrop for our first of three blocks of ancient history. In India, we learned about the Buddhist guide for living in accordance with spiritual laws, known as the Eightfold Path: right views, right aspiration, right speech, right behavior, right livelihood, right effort, right thoughts, and right contemplation. The "three best things" to strive for in Persia were good thought, good word, and good deed.

We have just started a Geography block, one that looks at all of North America, from Alaska to Mexico. We will examine how landforms and resources shaped the lifestyles of various American Indian tribes. Students will prepare a report, each having chosen a Native group to research, delving into the group's region, use of tools, food, and clothing. Throughout the block, students will hear the lore of these people and many others. We will read Paddle-to-the-Sea, telling the adventures of a carved boat that's propelled from waterway to waterway in the region of the



Fifth graders from Ms. Levesque's class learn to make right triangles as the ancient Egyptians did: by knotting a rope at intervals. (Fifth graders used palms instead of cubits or an Egyptian's height.) Using a ratio of 3-4-5 knots for each of the triangle's sides, the children were able to give credence to constructing geometric figures with rope. These students extended the activity, discovering how to form a square.

Mrs. Hill's Fifth Grade

We began our year learning about botany as we investigated the lower plants including: algae, moss, lichen, mushrooms, ferns and horsetails. Students collected samples for mini terrariums and enjoyed hiking the mountains on our class backpack trip to Hatcher's Pass. (Smiles remained despite the wind and rain storm during the night). Our next unit was a review of mathematics as we studied ancient number systems from ancient worlds building on concepts such as geometry, place value, fractions, decimals, and long division. The last block of Ancient India and Persia captured our imagination with ancient myths and foreign cultures. Presently, we are in our North America Geography block. Students are selecting different Native American groups to study as we prepare for a feast and report presentation before Thanksgiving. Our year will close with a study of Ancient Egypt and Babylonian.

Mr. Klauder's Sixth Grade (written with help from his students)

Hey 6th Grade Parents,

Our class has been learning so much! So far our blocks have been: Economics, Mineralogy, Astronomy, and Roman History Part I. In Economics, we learned that through human will and energy natural resources are transformed into raw materials and then products. We also learned about the nature and value of "stuff". In the Mineralogy block, we explored the mysteries of the Mineral Kingdom, and our brains increased immensely! In Astronomy, we learned the Greek stories behind the northern hemisphere constellations such as Orion and Ursa Major. It was cool! We are just finishing our study of Roman History (Part I). We learned about the cycle of good and evil during the reigns of the Seven Kings, and how the Roman Republic was born. Next we will be exploring the wonders of Geometry; in particular the amazingly precise things that can be created with only a straight edge and a compass.

Sincerely,

Mr. Klauder and his 6th Grade Class.

Ms. Phillips Seventh Grade

Our first study block this year was medieval history where we studied castles, the feudal system, monasteries, cathedrals, the crusades, and plagues. Our culminating activity was the presentation of student-built castles. The final day of the block students defended their castles with student-built catapults and trebuchets during our class "Defend Your Castle" simulation.

Our second block this year was chemistry where we explored transformation through the study of combustion and salts. Guest speaker Norm Straub visited our classroom and conducted an experiment whereby the students were able to make ice as cold as possible using various salts. The "Roaring Carboy" demonstration was also one of the highlights of this block.

We are currently in a Geometry/Algebra block and are discussing and putting to practice various key concepts of Algebra. Geometric constructions such as, 6 and 12 divisions of a circle, hexagons, six pointed star, Fibonacci numbers and the Golden Ratio are also part of this block of study.

Next we will study the major explorers and their accomplishments, both on the earth and in the stars. The Vikings, Prince Henry the Navigator, da Gama, Columbus, Vespucci, Magellan, Copernicus and Galileo will be among the historical figures that we will study.

Mr. Bowen's Eighth Grade

Since school began, the 8th grade has been very busy. We had a great class campout to start the year. We had a lock-in as a culminating activity at the end of our first history block. We hosted a Fall costume social. In our main lessons, we have finished blocks in Anatomy, Revolutions, and Chemistry. We are currently working on our play block that will end with our presentation of Charles Dickens', "A Christmas Carol". We have also been busy visiting community businesses requesting support for the annual auction. All year we will be fundraising to earn our trip to Washington D.C. We have learned to write business letters and how to communicate with business owners. We have had guest speakers to motivate and inspire. We have learned how to create PowerPoint presentations and are working to become proficient at typing. We have learned several patriotic songs on flute and have even done a little singing. We have hit the ground running and hope to keep up the pace all year long.

From Frau Rogers—German Classes

1st grade has been exceptional in learning German songs, poems rhymes and many other topics. We have indulged in tales, legends and games. Nothing seems to make them happier then to play a German "catching" game. They also have been very sharing and caring. They are a blessing.

2nd grade is grooming their German proficiency and pushing into higher altitude with more complicated tongue twisters, songs and legends. The felt board remains their favorite story medium. As we move into winter and holiday season there will be more stories and games coming their way.

3rd grade has baffled me with outstanding performances for the 1st graders. They are honing their skills and are eager to write, I can barely hold the horses here. So we will work on a new short play (it will stay a surprise for now) and see how writing can be part of that.

4th grade has excelled in their main lesson work since the beginning of the year. We spend most of the time last month creating the beautiful lanterns for the lantern walk and writing the German lantern songs into our books. We will now be heading back and finish our family project.

5th grade is very involved in their German animal report project. They work well and with ease on their projects. Their eagerness has warmed my heart.



From Mrs. Jones—Movement Classes

Transitioning from ball and blacktop games the first two months, our Birchtree students have been exploring pedagogically-sound field and playground games since October. During the week of Halloween, the students played holiday specific games, including chase, jump rope, and Cat's Cradle string games. With the snow and ice these last two weeks, we have been enjoying snow games such as Fox and Geese and have been exploring the woods and sled-ding hill with our shovels and sleds.

Over the next quarter and through the winter season, we will continue playing snow games, building snow forts, sled-ding, snowshoeing, and skiing. The upper grades will also be exploring Finger Lake as it freezes over for great snow-shoeing and sled-ding. If any parent would like to help with any of these activities, please let me know. We would love to have you exploring and playing with us.

Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation for you and your children during this most blessed holi-day season. I give thanks for your trust, kindness and dedication. It is a gift to be a part of your children's lives, thank you.

From Mrs. Fry— Music

This fall, my students (grades one to four) and I have been having a wonderful time getting to know each other! The **first and second graders** have been exploring their voices by making interesting sounds (vocalizing). Also, we have had great fun singing and dancing and playing instruments to a short piece from Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* (ask them to sing to you about Chef Figaro), and learning about the legend of Peer Gynt and the Trolls represented in Grieg's *The Hall of the Mountain King*. (Watch out—they make convincing Trolls!) In **third grade**, we explored a variety of "instruments" from our surroundings and talked a lot about specific kinds of movement. Students then created short movement compositions set to music. We have also been singing lots of rounds, Hebrew songs (Zum Gali Gali and Shalom Chaverim), and Negro Spirituals. (They are learning to wail with the best of them!) **Fourth graders** spent most of these past months preparing to play the violin: reviewing basic rhythms, music notation, and details about their instruments. Now they enjoy twice-weekly violin instruction from Mrs. Eddings (our orchestra teacher) and me. Additionally, we explored movement improvisation, sang folk songs, nature songs and lots of rounds.

Many adventures to come!

From Mr. Klauder— Woodworking

5th Graders are learning the basic nature of wood, sawing, boring and nailing, as they work on finishing group birdhouse projects. Next they will begin working on individual folk art creations.

6th Graders are learning how to use gouges to create spoons.

7th Graders are hollowing bowls from green birch.

8th Graders are working on their individual stool projects.