

Birchtree Friday Update

Birchtree Charter School 7107 E. Palmer Wasilla Hwy. Palmer, Ak 99645



April 4, 2014

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Celebration for a job well done-

Mrs. Johndro and Ms. Sharer's 3 graders celebrated the end of SBA (standards based assessment) testing with a well earned pajama and pancake day. ALL of our students put forth tremendous effort during SBA testing. We congratulate them on their focus and determination. Thank you to our supportive parents who were instrumental in providing nutritious meals for our students, ensuring a great start to the day!



Kindergarten participates in the month of service-

Our kindergarten classes have been busy creating warm fleece blankets for My House, a local charity serving the needs of the homeless and runaway teens in the Mat-Su Valley. We are proud of our young students expressing compassion for fellow community members.



Virtue of the Week-

Excellence

- ◆ Give your best to whatever you do
- ◆ Give your best to relationships
- ◆ Set noble and realistic goals
- ◆ Remember to plan and practice
- ◆ Don't try to do everything
- ◆ Develop your special gifts

Affirmation:

I give my best to the work I do. I give my best to others. I dare to set noble goals. I choose excellence in all things.

Your Brain on Knitting-

A recent CNN article by Jacque Wilson touted the many benefits of knitting. It mentioned that knitting and crafting can lower anxiety, alleviate chronic pain and even protect against aging! Just a few more reasons to pick up a pair of knitting needles, but of course our students already know about that.

Expressions of Gratitude-



Mrs. Johndro is thankful for the fantastic group of parents who volunteered their time and energy providing healthy, protein packed meals for her students. She is especially grateful to Jennifer Green "her main man" for going above and beyond the call of duty.



Mr. Bowen thanks the 8th grade parents for supplying delicious breakfast buffet items. It was excellent brain food for the SBA testing.



Mrs. Tran sends her most sincere thanks to parents for all the food donations and volunteering to serve breakfast! We really worked together to make this happen for the children and they are very appreciative!

Lost and Found-

The lost and found is bursting at the seams! Take a moment to sift through the mountains of mittens, snow pants, hats, shoes, and socks to find your missing treasures. Take inventory of your winter gear this week to see what arrived home that perhaps belongs to someone else and what is missing.



Upcoming events-

Track starts Tuesday, April 15th-

Attention 4th and 5th grade students, track starts Thursday, April 15th. Practices will be held on Monday's, Tuesday's, Wednesday's, and Thursday's from 3:20- 4:40 PM. Please keep in mind that all practices are held outdoors. We may have a few rainy, cold days ahead, it is recommended that all participants dress appropriately for the weather. The season concludes May 17th with a district wide track meet. Pick up your form in the front office today!

5th Grade Honor Choir– Tuesday, April 15th

Mrs. Fry, along with a talented group of 5th graders, will be participating in the honor choir at Palmer High School . They will perform at the high school on the evening of Tuesday, April 15th at 7:00 PM. Additionally, there will be an all day rehearsal from 9:15- 3:00 at the high school Tuesday, April 15th. Please contact Mrs. Fry if you are interested in chaperoning this field trip.

Spring Concert– Monday, April 28th-

Save the date- Birchtree's Spring Concert is scheduled for Monday, April 28th at the Wasilla Bible Church from 6:30- 8:00 PM. Music teachers Mrs. Fry and Mrs. Eddings request performers arrive at 6:00 PM to prepare for the concert.

Nonviolent Communication Seminar-

Birchtree Charter School in conjunction with Heritage Birch Center is proud to present: Nonviolent communication. This three day seminar, April 25, 26, and 27, will meet at the Palmer Senior Center from 9am— 5pm . The cost of the seminar is \$35 for one day and \$75 for all three days. 1-2 credits may be available for in district employees and with MAA for midwives.

Agenda:

Friday, April 25th Instructor Sarah Peyton will discuss communication in healthcare and communicating with people experiencing trauma. Saturday, April 26th discussion will revolve around communicating in conflict and difficult situations (adult conversations). Sunday, April 27th the seminar will cover communicating with children and learning to hear the heart of our children's souls in their words.

Birchtree Summer Arts Camp

June 9th-13th, 2014



A week of hands on creativity!

Class Themes

Cake making, woodworking, handwork knitting and needle felting, painting watercolor and acrylic, and an adventure camp complete with sword fighting.

ALL CLASSES WILL BE HELD AT BIRCHTREE CHARTER SCHOOL.

Check our website for more information:

www.birchtreecharterschool.org

Registration starts April 1st



Birchtree Charter School

Nonviolent Communication Seminar

Where: Palmer Senior Center

When: April 25, 26, 27 from 9 AM- 5 PM

Credit: 1-2 credits may be available for district employees and with MAA for midwives

Cost: \$ 35.00 for 1 day or \$75.00 for all three days

Birchtree 4th and 5th grade classes will have food available for purchase.

The Seminar is limited to 100 people. RSVP to Birchtree at 745-1831 to secure your spot.

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Sarah Peyton, independent facilitator and Center for Nonviolent Communication Certified Trainer, offers personal growth workshops and teleseminars in Interpersonal Neurobiology, focusing on the trans-



Empathy Changes Us

Do you sometimes have a sense of being stuck in your journey through life? Or that you are seeing the same scenery out your emotional window, even though time is passing? Do you long to connect to a sense of richness and meaning that will let you have deep and satisfying relationships with your family, your work and yourself?

When we understand some basics about how the brain is changed by relationship, and we begin to ask our bodies for the stories of our emotions and our longings, our work to create self-compassion and compassion for others is given wings.

Yearbook News-

Once again we will use TreeRing to make our yearbooks. They are a web-based organization that plants a tree for every yearbook ordered by our school. Yearbooks are for sale online and include 2 customized pages. Please go to: www.treering.com/validate and use Birchtree passcode: 1013468155713247, The deadline to purchase and customize your yearbook is **April 8**.

Next year calendar-

Many of you are perhaps wondering why the early-release day has been changed to Thursday for the 2014-15 school year. There are several reasons for this change, and I will be sharing them in each week's Friday Update.

Quality of education drives all of our decisions. We were privileged enough to have received a large grant a couple of years ago from the U.S. Department of Education. Part of what we vowed to do within the scope of this grant was to improve our attendance. Waldorf education is considered "live" education because each lesson is created by the teacher, specifically catered to each class, and then "served fresh daily". To fully digest main lesson content, attendance is not only important, it is essential.

Why this tangent about attendance and grants? Because our attendance improved significantly last year and into the first semester of this year. With the institution of the early-release day on Fridays during this spring semester, the number of absences on Friday virtually doubled. While it may seem that missing a half-day is inconsequential, the first part of the day holds the curricular gem in a Waldorf school. Children who miss Friday's morning lesson on a regular basis are in essence missing one-fifth of their studies. Teachers took note of this while planning the calendar for next year.

-Donna Levesque

APC News-

Hello Birchtree families! We have already begun to receive feedback from families from the surveys we sent out. Please fill out an online survey before April 7, if you have not done so already. Your input is invaluable.

We had some excellent suggestions from our Pedagogical Consultant Prairie Adams who provided us with a special Mission Moment to begin our meeting and also provided some excellent suggestions for future evaluations of our school and how well it is meeting the needs of our students and community.

We approved what appears to be an increase in the pupil to teacher ratio, but is actually a return to the original ratio that we reduced last year.

We approved new procedures to ameliorate any errors in the lottery process.

We approved changing the day of early release from Friday to Thursday beginning in Fall, 2014. This last change was made after lengthy discussion and was not made lightly. The APC Board realizes that many parents prefer an early release on Friday, however the purpose of the Early Release is not to provide a three-day weekend to our students. The purpose is to provide teachers with an opportunity for education. To that end, Thursday is the most common day for early release in Waldorf education for many reasons, including rhythm and attendance. We hope this change will not be too inconvenient. We are exploring many after school options including the Menard Center, the AT&T Sport Center and on-campus child care for families who need assistance on early-release days.

Finally, it is possible we will have portables next year. Anyone who wishes to join in the discussion is encouraged to speak with Mr. Klauder about joining the Building Expansion Committee.

Our next meeting will be Wednesday May 7 from 6pm to 8pm in Ms. Folsom's room.

**Thank you,
Abigail Sheldon
APC Secretary
376-9562**

abigailesheldon@gmail.com

Volunteers needed-

Summer Arts Camp-

Birchtree's Summer Arts Camp is looking for a few good coordinators. You will be working alongside a fantastic group of individuals dedicated to creating a fun, artistic, and creative summer camp experience for our students.

The volunteers who accept this position will be provided with a template to work from with very specific and doable job duties (You will not be expected to re-invent the wheel). This is a terrific opportunity to meet talented parents and students.

Jump Rope-

Ms. Sharrer is looking for assistance with jump-rope activities for the month of April.

May Faire-

Mrs. Sharrer is looking for a few good coordinators to assist with May Faire activities. This is a great opportunity to express your creativity and help us organize for this most anticipated event! Please contact Mrs. Sharrer at:
amysharre@matsuk12.us

Spring Concert-

Birchtree's Spring Concert for grades 4-8 is scheduled for Monday, April 28th at Wasilla Bible Church. We are in need of parent volunteers to assist with set up and clean up for the concert. Please contact Gena at 745-1831 if you would like to help.



"The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not winning but taking part; the essential thing in life is not conquering but fighting well" (Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympic Games).

For our 5th grade class, this notion will be displayed at our 4th annual Pentathlon held at the Sherrod Soccer Fields in Palmer Thursday, May 8th. The 5th grade class has been learning the art of wrestling, discus, javelin, running, and long jump throughout the entire school year. Moreover, the class has been learning that victory is not necessarily found in strength and speed, but in grace and sportsmanship.

Having been a collegiate athlete and involved with organized sports my whole life, winning has always been the objective. But with maturity, knowledge and life experience, it has become evident that the lasting benefits of an athletic career are not the victories or trophies, but the lasting friendships and the personal strengthening of will and character. It is this perspective that I hope to pass on to the students.

It is also my hope that you *will* want to take part in this one day event with us and share in the joy of this beautiful competition. We are in need of volunteers for the following different areas:

- Lead parents and an enclave of other volunteers for preparation and/or organization of authentic Greek foods for the feast after the event (recipes available at school),
- Pentathlon judges and officials that do not have a child participating in the event (requires a training commitment for one afternoon after school),
- A photographer,
- Several persons who can act as a nurse at the First Aid station,
- Individuals willing to lend a tent canopy for the day,
- Persons for set-up (May 7th after school and early May 8th) and tear-down (immediately after the event),
- 4 individuals to work the registration table,
- And 2 adults to take-on the roles of Zeus and Hera.

If you can help, please contact Gena Chastain at Birchtree (745-1831).

Sincere thanks,

Mrs. Jones

BIRCHTREE MAY FAIRE

Saturday May 3rd 11:00-4:00

Vendor Application



Office Use Only

Date

Check #

Cash

This year's May Faire will have handmade craft vendors. If you would like to participate; the event is Saturday May 3rd from 11-4. This year the vendors will be charged \$50 per table space and \$25 dollars for alumni students or parents of a Birchtree child. There are a limited amount of spaces available. Respond in a timely manner to secure your space. Applications are due May 1st. When you have completed your application please turn it into the Birchtree Charter School front office or email to Amy Sharrer. You will then receive an email/phone call letting you know your application has been received. Set-up will take place from 8:30-10:30 and clean-up is at 4:00.

If you have any questions you may contact Amy Sharrer. amy.sharrer@matsuk12.us

Contact Name _____

Description of handmade craft or business

Business Name _____

Phone number _____ email _____

Do you need a table? Y N

Liability release: Birchtree School will not be responsible for any personal injury or damage to the vendor. By participating in any activities on or related to property owned by Birchtree, you will assume all risk associated with any injury or damage that may occur. In the event there is a claim of any type made or filed, you and your family must agree to hold harmless and indemnify Birchtree from any claim of any type for damages. Consideration for assuming such obligation will be permission for your participation in the activity.

Signature _____

date _____



PEDAGOGICAL NOTES-

During a recent afternoon, the Pedagogical Council met to revise Birchtree's disciplinary policy. We viewed this task as threefold, involving the Virtues Project, or perhaps Compassionate Campus; progressive discipline, and a purposeful work program.

The Virtues Project and Compassionate Campus are aimed at developing healthy relationships, giving children and adults alike a common language with which to cultivate moral excellence. We have begun to use components of both of these programs at Birchtree and plan to further them by fostering a more rhythmic buddy system. Each fall, at the Flower Ceremony, we introduce 1st graders to 8th graders, marking the beginning of new friendships. All classes could benefit from being paired with others to share lunch, work, and play.

With progressive discipline, the goal is to articulate developmentally appropriate responses for specific behaviors. We studied the range of frequently occurring misdeeds at our school and identified the need to track them more consistently, to respond more effectively, to provide a space other than the office as a place to regroup, and to refine the RTI process.

Meaningful work provides a proactive approach to discipline by educating the will. This includes activities such as farm chores, grounds work, gardening, or small building upkeep and repairs. Our students demonstrate a great need for developing the will forces to carry out purposeful work. School-wide participation in gardening and animal husbandry holds tremendous potential for establishing discipline in the habit life of a child. To start, teachers and staff can generate a list of tasks that need doing throughout the school. This work would instill both pride and respect for school property. All students should be stewards of the building and grounds. Even if it means working alongside our custodian, school chores need to be divided amongst all classes and carried out regularly. We foresee developing our discipline policy by engaging all students in meaningful work.

-Donna Levesque

Pedagogical Council Chair

April/May

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
30	30	1 SBA Testing	2 SBA Testing APC Meeting 6-8 PM	3 SBA Testing	4 SBA Testing Full school day (8:30- 3:15) Intent to return forms due.	5
6	7	8 High school initiative meeting 8:30 AM, BTC library 5th grade parent night	9 Intent to enroll forms due.	10 2nd grade Imaginarium field trip 9 am -3 pm	11 Picture orders due. Early release Friday	12
13	14	15 Spring Picture re-takes 5th grade honor choir at P.H.S. 7PM Track : 3:20-4:40	16 BPG meeting 3:45 Lottery 7 PM 3rd grade paper violin project 5:30 - 7 PM	17	18 Early release Friday	19
20	21	22 8th grade parent night @ 6:30	23	24 Mrs. Albina's par- ent night 5:30- 7:30 PM	25 Menard activities canceled Early release Friday Nonviolent communication	26 Nonviolent communica- tion seminar 9-5 at Palmer senior Center
27 N. C. seminar	28 Spring concert 6:30- 8 PM	29	30	1	2 Pastries for Par- ents Sleepover with Ms. Sharrer	3 May Fair