

Notes from the Principal, Rik Ponstein



NCA Team during their visit November 16th and 17th

BIRCH STREET RECEIVED TOP MARKS!

Public schools are required to be evaluated by an outside team every five years. Birch Street Elementary completed our NCA "Quality Assurance Review" November 16th and 17th and we recently received our report. I am extremely proud to tell you that our school received top marks in every category! The NCA team, led by Dr. Tim Wood of Grand Valley State University, looked at seven quality standards and rated our program and staff on a scale of 1-4. Four is the highest score and we were "Highly Functional", or a top mark of 4, in every category.

The visitation team met with students, parents, teachers, and support staff and visited our classrooms. They commended Birch Street for being outstanding in three areas: our reading program, the quality of our teacher engagement with students, and our positive school culture and environment. Evaluation teams always make three recommendations for areas a school can work to improve. The suggestions for Birch Street are the addition of another reading assessment, improvement of the actual school building, and the addition of more after-school enrichment programs. These will be our goals for the coming year. We are hoping the February bond issue will pass so we can improve the building.

Dr. Wood praised the staff and students at Birch Street saying he has visited many elementary schools in Michigan, and the program and faculty at Birch Street is among the best in the state! Congratulations to all for the great job!

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**Merry Christmas and
Happy New Year!**



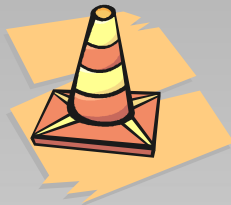
BIRCH STREET MISSION STATEMENT

It is the mission of Birch Street Elementary School to educate all students to their fullest potential. The school staff will use effective instructional techniques, assessments, and appropriate intervention to help each student achieve grade level expectations at their own rate of learning.

Monday Morning Meetings COVETED CONE AWARDS

- WEEK 1** Mrs. Wodehouse's 1st Grade
- WEEK 2** Mrs. Otto's Kindergarten
- WEEK 3** Ms. Krause's 3rd Grade
- WEEK 4** Ms. Bridson's 2nd Grade
- WEEK 5** Mr. Malbouef's 3rd Grade
- WEEK 6** Mr. Malbouef's 3rd Grade
- WEEK 7** Mr. Burkam's 1st Grade
- WEEK 8** Mr. Gustafson's 3rd Grade
- WEEK 9** Mr. Malbouef's 3rd Grade*
- WEEK 10** Mrs. Chappel's (Otto) Kdg.
- WEEK 11** Ms. Rodes's Kindergarten
- WEEK 12** Mr. Beach's 2nd Grade
- WEEK 13** Mrs. Bartholomew's 3rd Grade

*Denotes three time winner



A BIG THANK YOU TO...

Jill Vyverberg for giving us her artistic abilities with framing, covering our recycling box, and laminating posters.

PTO for providing Santa's Secret Shop for our students and all the volunteers that it has taken to let our students shop for their families. Also to **Terri Sibole** and **Deb Ball-Odeh** for the organizing of this event.

Ginny Yost and Susan Guy for the time and preparation on our Christmas Program. Also to all of our **2nd and 3rd grade students** for their hard work learning their songs for the program.

Mathew Price for organizing and facilitating our Canned Food Drive.

Parents, students, and staff for all the can goods brought in for our Canned Food Drive for KAIR.

Coping with Holiday Stress

The holidays can be fun, but they also can be a source of great stress — and no wonder. The holidays are often depicted as a magical time when people reconcile and dreams come true.

How Can You Deal With Continuing Family Problems During The Holidays? Being realistic is the first step. If you have bad feelings about someone, try and avoid him or her and not make an issue of it but don't pretend that all is well. This will enable you to feel true to yourself and less stressed out.

Do Financial Pressures Stress People Out to the Point of Ruining the Holiday Spirit?

Knowing your spending limit is also a way to relieve holiday stress. People believe that they have to go out and buy gifts because it's the holidays, even if they can't afford to do so. Not only is it stressful to feel that you have to buy everyone an expensive gift, but you'll be stressed for the rest of the year trying to pay off your bills. You can show love and caring by getting something that you know is meaningful and personal for that person that doesn't have to cost a lot.

How Do Time Pressures Affect People Around the Holidays? People shouldn't have to put their lives on pause or totally rearrange their schedules because of the holidays. Learn to prioritize the invitations you accept and don't feel that you have to go to every holiday gathering.

How Do You Cope With Kids Who Want Everything For The Holidays and Have No Sense of What Things Cost?

Parents need to tell their children to be realistic. It is OK to say to your child that a certain toy is too expensive. And even Santa Claus has limited funds and has to choose what to give because he has a very long list. You can also tell your children that Mom and Dad and Santa Claus will try to choose the most suitable present for the child. Children have to learn that their wish is not someone's command and to curb their desires for instant gratification.



Top picture – Mrs. Bartholomew’s class and Ms. Krause’s class
Bottom picture – Allison VanAlstine, Mrs. Yost, and Elizabeth Blomquist

Our Birch Street second and third graders knocked the Christmas socks off their audience on Tuesday evening at the annual Christmas concert! The Birch Street gym was packed with family members and friends as the students sang many audience favorites such as: “Rudolf the Red Nosed Reindeer”, “Manger Boy”, “It’s Beginning to Look a lot Like Christmas”, “Silent Night”, and “Savior’s Lullaby”. The students were all very proud of their performance, and they enjoyed showing the audience how hard they had worked learning all of the songs. Smiles were seen on the faces of the students and the audience both during and after the concert. “Students, thank you for a job well done! You make me very proud!” commented Mrs. Yost.

DATES TO REMEMBER:

- Dec. 23 First Day of Winter Break
NO SCHOOL
- Jan. 4 School Resumes
- Jan. 21 Half day of school for students
Dismissal at 11:30
- Jan. 19 & 20 Donuts with Dads
- Jan. 22 Half day of school for students
Dismissal at 11:30
- Jan. 26 Cash for Trash Collection
- Jan. 26 PTO Meeting 6:30 - Library
- Feb. 15 Mid winter break
No School



TO CONTACT STAFF MEMBERS:

By email – First initial of their first name, their last name, and followed by @kpschools.com

Example:

rponstein@kpschools.com

By phone – Please call the office at 231.258.8629

STAFF TEACHERS:

Preschool

Sarah Haveman
Cinda Knight
Lisa Wyzgoski

Kindergarten

Julie Rodes
Angela Sutton
Stephanie VanAlstine
Andrea Otto
Jennifer LePla

First Grade

Lisa Sutton
Erin Kennedy
Becky Loose
Kelly Wodehouse
Tom Burkam

Second Grade

Heather Reust
Greg Beach
Randy Atwood = rjatwood
Ali Bridson

Third Grade

Kevin Malbouef
Jeremy Gustafson
Vicki Bartholomew
Samantha Krause

Special Teachers

Deanna Hixson – PE
Betsy Neelly – Library
Ginny Yost – Music
Pat Smolinski – Art
Dave Dalton – PE

Title I Teachers

Sandra Alspaugh
Gay Kasza

Instructional Coaches

Marie Strong
Arica Swoverland

Special Education Teachers

Shelley Torres
Julie Diola
Michelle Keeder = makeeder

THE KEY TO OUR SUCCESS!

We would like to take this opportunity to once again thank our PTO for all that they do for our school. We have many parents that volunteer their time. Their help with Santa’s Secret Shop, the Snowflake Family Dance, Book Fairs, and many more events totaled many volunteer hours.

SUPERVISION BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL

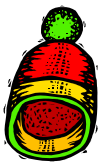
Birch Street Elementary has adult supervision only after 7:30 in the morning. If you drop your child off **before 7:30, they must be in latchkey.** We have registration forms for latchkey in the office. We serve breakfast at 7:30 in the cafeteria. We also have a walking club in the gym during the winter weather beginning at 7:30 and reading club begins at 7:45 in the music room. Please keep this in mind when dropping off your child. Children without parental supervision should only be in one of the three areas before the school day begins.

Also a reminder that if you must pick up your child prior to dismissal at 3:05, you must sign out your child in the office.

We also have adult supervision for our students until 3:30. During winter months, you are welcome to wait for your children in the lobby.

FORGOTTEN ITEMS

We have donated winter clothing items that we are able to lend out to students when they have forgotten their own. However, we aren’t getting them back. If you have any of these items, would you please return them to school with your child.



PARKING REMINDER

During winter months, vehicles may only park on the sidewalk side of the driveway.

CANNED FOOD DRIVE CLASSROOM WINNER



Congratulations to **Mrs. Bartholomew’s classroom** with the total of 465 canned goods collected during our Canned Food Drive. They have earned a free trip to the Kaliseum to swim. Way to go! School wide total of cans collected was 2,825.