

School Highlights



Birch Grove Primary School

Annual Report 2010-2011

Introduction

Birch Grove Primary School staff continues to work together using the Professional Learning Community (PLC) model. This model focuses on student learning as a result of team goals in literacy and numeracy. We have collected data that will drive our professional development and focus our instruction next year. The teachers in each grade level have pacing guides and benchmark assessments in all core subjects that encourage consistency of instruction within each grade level. Last year we developed a standards based report card and the rubrics to go with it. We are continuing to refine the report card and the rubrics.

The Birch Grove staff had the opportunity to participate in three after school study groups. Two-second grade teachers and a Reading Department Staff member coordinated one group. This group used a book study format during which they discussed the book *The Daily Five Fostering Literacy Independence in the Elementary Grades* by Gail Boushey & Joan Moser. Teachers discussed and shared various instructional strategies at each session. Tom Swanson, principal, coordinated a second study group. This group discussed several chapters from *Teach Like A Champion* by Doug Lemov. The third group focused on current literature articles about curriculum and instruction. Mike Moynihan, assistant principal, coordinated this study group.

District-wide workshops related to literacy and technology were provided by the Curriculum Coordinators. Teachers from BGP attended workshops on analyzing student writing, SMART Boards, Photo Story, and nonfiction reading strategies. Debbie Francis, Debbie Couture, and Dot Drobney presented a brief workshop on Assessments and scoring of the DRA. Bob Storozuk presented a math center workshop. Laurie Coulom presented a Shared Reading workshop with the kindergarten team.

Curriculum and Instruction

Language Arts

The Houghton Mifflin Reading Program and leveled readers continues to serve as the core language arts program. The main advantage to having such a program is that it provides consistency in instruction, instructional language, and assessment across and within the grades.

The Lucy Calkins *Units of Study for Primary Writing: A Year Long Curriculum, Empowering Writers, and Write Source* continue to serve as our writing programs.

The Fountas and Pinnell *Leveled Literacy Intervention* program was utilized by Debbie Francis and some paraprofessionals to support kindergarten, first grade and second grade groups. Students' reading progress was accelerated as a result of this intervention.

The Reading Department worked tirelessly to implement a SRBI (RTI) plan for BGP. Reading cut points were established and interventions were provided to students in four eight-week sessions.

Some teachers started using a Daily Five classroom management program as a way of structuring their literacy block.

Second grade teachers worked tirelessly to compile lists of evidence of student work that can be used for gauging student progress.

Recommendations for Language Arts

- Review the Language Arts Program Evaluation conducted by Dr. Susan Deffenbaugh to gauge progress towards meeting the Evaluation's recommendations.
- Continue to refine SRBI model.
- Continue to create anchor sets for common assessments.
- Write a language arts curriculum for grades K-2 based on CCSS.
- Establish a common book room that would house leveled readers for grades K-2.
- Maintain fidelity to pacing guides.

Mathematics

The staff at Birch Grove are now into the fifth year of using the standards based Everyday Math program as the major instructional component of the K-5 mathematics curriculum. Teachers continue to implement good Tier 1 instruction in our math classrooms. This includes strong instructional lessons with guided practice and opportunities for small group instruction to support the diverse needs of the classroom. Staff-meeting time was devoted to SRBI and how we identify students who need support in math and the process of RTI at BG. Teachers developed quick checks as a progress-monitoring tool to identify struggling students and provide feedback for parents on the Standards Based Report Card. For the first time in our eleven years at Birch Grove, there was a full-time math support person to help address students in need of intervention.

Recommendations for Mathematics

- Grade K – work on alignment of curriculum to the CCSS
- Grade 1 – work on alignment of curriculum to the CCSS
- Grade 2 – work on alignment of curriculum to the CCSS

Student Activities in Mathematics

The mathematics curriculum incorporates a variety of everyday activities and games on a daily basis. Routines are used to teach a variety of math concepts such as patterns, counting, calendars, place value,

measurement, and basic facts. Everyday Math software is available on the student computers in each class and in the computer lab to support student learning in mathematics.

Social Studies

During the 2010-2011 school year, kindergarten teachers continued to teach the five social studies units (All About Me, Families, Communities, Homes, and People and Places) that were developed during the summer of 2006 and updated in 2009. First grade teachers used the Nystrom geography program, Neighborhoods Near and Far, for the first two units of the year, Neighborhoods and Maps and Globes. First grade students also learned about the geography and culture of Mexico, comparing the lives of children in Mexico to the lives of children in Tolland. In second grade, students learned about Native Americans, the Continents, and Japan. During summer curriculum writing in June 2010, second grade teachers decided to merge part of the Continents unit with Native Americans and the rest of the Continents unit with the Japan unit. The Japan unit is similar to the first grade unit on Mexico because students learn about the geography and culture of Japan and compare the lives of children in Japan to the lives of children in Tolland.

During the Neighborhoods unit in first grade, students took a “Virtual Tour of Tolland and Hartford”. Jen Olsen videotaped a trip to important locations in the Tolland Community, including Big Y, Crandall Park, the Hicks Building, and the post office. Students pretended to be on a bus traveling through town while they watched the video. At each stop, students used a set of flip cards and identified the community helper that they might find working there. Additionally, Jen Olsen created a video of Hartford, so students could compare and contrast the town of Tolland with the city of Hartford.

For the first grade unit on Mexico, Jen Olsen created a lesson using raised-relief maps of the world and Google Earth to help students compare the geography and culture of Tolland to the geography and culture of Mexico. Students identified the seven continents and then pointed out various locations in Mexico on the raised relief maps. Then Jen Olsen used Google Earth to show how them what Tolland looked like and we compared it to Mexico City and Mazatlan (a city on the Pacific Coast of Mexico).

Embedding literacy skills in social studies instruction is a key component of social studies in the primary grades. Non-fiction reading skills and descriptive writing about social studies topics is an area of continual emphasis.

Recommendations for Social Studies

- Develop new lessons/units as needed to align with new state standards.
- Infuse content area literacy skills and strategies into social studies by focusing on content area reading strategies and vocabulary development.

Science

As in previous years, teachers report little time in their school day to appropriately address science standards. Although each year we work to adjust the pacing guide the effectiveness and the ability of the teachers to keep pace with guide is difficult. During the 2009-10 school year,

each program kept track of their science process lessons so we map the skills taught at each grade level.. We compiled and reviewed the data to determine the scope and sequence of science process skills. We are still in the process of analyzing the results and plan to compile a scope and sequence of science process skills K-12. Although we are attempting to include more hands-on inquiry-type activities in the curriculum, the lack of instructional time to appropriately conduct the activities inhibits the success of those activities. The reality of larger class sizes for the 2010-11 school year further impeded our progress in providing our students with a rich inquiry based science experience.

The second year of implementation of the standards-based report card proved much smoother this year. Teachers and parents are more accustomed to reporting student learning in this way, the process was less cumbersome and more informative for teachers, students, and parents alike.

A high point of the 2010-11 school year was the establishment of a science lab in the second grade wing of Birch Grove School. This dedicated space, which also includes a SMART Board donated by the PTO, has been widely used for hands-on activities in both science and social studies.

Carolyn Tyl, science coordinator, used the science lab to present model lessons to students/teachers at BGP. The table below summarizes those lessons.

Grade	# classes	Unit	Title	Date	Location	# students
1	9	<i>Living Things</i>	Living/Nonliving Things Scavenger Hunt	Sept	BGP grounds	201
1	9	<i>Forces & Motion</i>	Magnetic Forces	Jan	Science Lab E-16	201
2	10	<i>Rocks</i>	Metamorphic Sandwiches	Oct	Science Lab E-16	222
2	10	<i>Rocks</i>	Geodes	Oct	BGP Grounds	222
2	10	<i>Rocks</i>	Fossils	Oct	Science Lab E-16	42
2	10	<i>Sun, Shadows & Gravity</i>	Air Resistance	Feb	Science Lab E-16	222
2	10	<i>Insects</i>	Arthropods	May/June	BGP grounds	222
2	10	<i>Insects</i>	Amber	June	Science Lab E-16	222

First and second grade teachers are anxious to have SMART Board systems installed in their classrooms. We installed 3 new systems this year two in first grade, (Vallone & McDonald) and one in the science lab, room E-16.

Student Activities in Science

There were several activities that students were involved in this year in the area of science.

Kindergarten

- Students observed the life cycle of a ladybug and the praying mantis, during the spring science unit.
- Students were involved in an in-school field trip, Polymer Power, by the West Hartford Science Center.

Grade 1:

- In September, as a kick off to their Living Things unit, students went on a scavenger hunt for Living, Non-living, and Once-living things. Led by Carolyn Tyl, science coordinator, all first graders participated and enjoyed every minute of the hunt!
- In January, Carolyn Tyl kicked off the Forces & Motion unit by presenting a hands-on science lesson involving magnetism that was highly engaging to the students. This lesson was conducted in the science lab, room E-16.
- Throughout the year, students participated in nature walks to observe the cyclical nature of our world.

Grade 2:

- In the fall, students experienced an in-school program called *High-Tech High-Touch* during their “Dig it” unit on rocks and minerals. The program involves hands-on activities that are motivating to the students including a “dig” for colorful crystals.
- Carolyn Tyl, presented several inquiry based lessons to second graders while involved in the Rocks, Earth, Moon and Sun and Insects units.
- During the second science unit, Sun Shadows and Gravity, Carolyn presented a lesson on Air Resistance that involved dropping various objects from the second floor with and without a parachute. Students timed each to determine the effect of air resistance on falling objects.
- In June, each second grade class participated in an in-school field trip conducted by our science coordinator. The program utilized the BGP nature trail and pond to study insect metamorphosis.

Recommendations for Science

- Meet in grade level teams to review curriculum and instructional practices.
- Meet with K-2 science representatives to continue to review curricular issues. Discuss how changes are being implemented. Implement Tier I lessons using best practice at all grade levels.
- Equip every classroom with the necessary materials to complete inquiry labs. Include more measurement in science activities.
- Continue to work toward purchasing enough supplies that all grade levels can complete science units in the same sequence. We are presently limited by materials/supplies availability.
- Continue to install SMART Board systems in each classroom.
- Determine how to address the concerns regarding lack to time to teach a required content and skills.

Character Education

Character Education

We continue to discuss and practice our character theme of the month. The children in all grades write about the theme and we often share that writing during the morning announcements. Most classrooms made use of the Second Step Anti-Bullying program.

Recommendations for Character Education

- Implement training year of PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) as it is implemented in the other three schools.
- Continue to establish behavioral expectations for Tier 1 interventions prior to referral for the TAT process.
- Require all classrooms to implement the Second Step Anti-Bullying Program.

Student Assessment

Language Arts - There are approximately 35 language arts assessments administered in grades K-2. Kindergarten assessments are based on Marie Clay's Concepts of Print. Other assessments include the DRA, Integrated Theme Tests (from Houghton Mifflin), and writing prompts. All assessments are based on national standards and reflect current research in literacy instruction. Mastery Manager serves as the database for collecting and sorting data from these assessments. Various reports are available for analysis.

Rubrics and anchor sets were developed and are used for scoring. Alternate benchmark assessments are used in first and second grade. DIBELS- administered twice a year at BG to screen students for reading support and to monitor fluency.

Mathematics – Based on the districts pacing guides in Grade K, data is collected every trimester to assess student performance and growth. In grades 1-2, students take a beginning, middle, and end of year assessment to monitor progress. In addition, common formative assessments are administered every 20 to 30 days. These 21 assessments are aligned with the CT State Frameworks for Mathematics and provide teachers with specific data on student performance. The data from these benchmarks are used to differentiate instruction, establish centers to support individual student needs, and identify students in need of intervention. With the implementation of a full time math support person, we were able to provide students with support in targeted areas. The table below provides information for the year:

	Sept. - November	November- December	January - March	March - April	May - June
*Number of Students	38	31	32	53	40

- The number of students serviced is dynamic. Some of the same children may revisit the Math Lab at different times of the year.

Social Studies – The following table shows results on the first grade and second grade benchmarks. None of these benchmarks needed revision (other than formatting) this year.

	Average Score
Grade 1	

Neighborhoods	91%
Maps and Globes	82%
Mexico	83%
Grade 2	
Native Americans	90%
Japan	94%

Science – Teachers are continuing to administer benchmark tests at appropriate times throughout the school year. The system for inputting and storing the benchmark results, Mastery Manager, in use for the fourth year in a row, has proved to be a valuable tool for assessing student learning. Since the 2008-09 school year, all benchmark assessments are linked to standards, so that teachers have more specific information about individual student learning progress. As the benchmark tests are reviewed and revised, the data will be even more meaningful with regard to student learning. Teachers report little time to intervene with students who are not mastering the concepts assessed due to the lack of time in the school day.

Staffing

- One FT K-2 LA Coordinator, one FT Reading Consultant, one FT Reading Specialist, six FT paraprofessionals, two half-time paraprofessionals, 1.5 kindergarten paraprofessionals
- The Math Lab was staffed with two half time teachers. In essence, this provided BG with a full time math support person. This allowed students from both grades one and two to be serviced.

There were several changes to the staff at BGP this year. Maggie Eichorn, grade 1 and Pat Wahlberg, principal retired from TPS. Mike Moynihan was hired as the new assistant principal. Lisa Miner was moved from 2nd grade to the .5 Math support and .5 kindergarten position. Kim Hollenbach moved to teaching half-day math support. Jen Kelly moved to .5 kindergarten and .5 special education. Chris Riesbeck moved to 4 year-old pre-school. Linda York moved to work closely with the Applied Behavior Program (ABA) program.

We added a full time math support teacher this year. The two teachers started the year supporting grade 2 students and mid way through the year, they worked with struggling grade 1 students. With the addition of a fulltime Math teacher, we were able to offer Tier II and Tier III targeted math support to second graders all year and to first graders mid way in the year. The math teachers mapped the grade 2 and 1 curriculum and worked with the classroom teachers to develop a schedule of support. This was a challenging task. They also designed lessons integrating technology for extra drill and practice when appropriate. The reading support schedule this year permitted some time for the reading paraprofessionals to support math in the second grade classrooms on a rotating basis. All grade 2 math classes received support several times a week, enabling the teachers to plan and implement small group instruction.

School Facilities

We continue to work with Johnson Controls and the Tolland maintenance staff to correct HVAC control issues especially at the change of the seasons.

Student Support Services

Language Arts -Pull-out for “gifted” kindergartners met 30 minutes a week all year Kindergarten Literacy Program, a push-in model, increased from twice a week to five times a week for 30 minutes per session. All morning and afternoon classes received support from trained reading paraprofessionals. The Leveled Literacy Intervention Program was utilized with one group of first graders all year, rather than for the first 10 weeks of school. Small groups of grade 2 students have continued in the LLI program for a second year from January through June. Reading intervention services were provided to 204 students (33% of student population.) The intervention varied and was determined by the needs of the student. Tier III instruction is administered one-to-one through the TLC program in grades 1 and 2. Intensive instruction in decoding is provided. ELL – five students

Math - The mathematics curriculum incorporates a variety of everyday activities and games on a daily basis. Routines are used to teach a variety of math concepts such as patterns, counting, calendars, place value, measurement, and basic facts. Everyday Math software is available on the student computers in each class and in the computer lab to support student learning in mathematics.

Inclusion of more special education students in regular education classes is an important step to providing all students access to the regular class curriculum. Nevertheless, teachers will continue to need support from special education teachers, paraprofessionals, and the coordinators.

Grade level teachers and special education teachers communicated more frequently with classroom teachers and the curriculum coordinators in order to measure student progress in all the content areas.

The reading department has developed and instituted an SRBI (RTI) plan for Birch Grove School. The tiered plan of intervention in Reading, Math, and Behavior has resulted in fewer referrals to the Teacher Assistance Team. Many intervention strategies must be in place before a referral can happen. Birch Grove's Teacher Assistance Team (TAT) provides a systematic early intervention process for teachers and students that are experiencing academic or behavioral difficulties.

Our primary mental health project continued this year. This is a program funded by a grant from the State of Connecticut where trained paraprofessional works with students who need assistance in adjustment to school and related issues. She sees 40 students per week individually or in small groups. This work is done under the guidance and with the assistance of a School Psychologist.

Our Family Resource Center continues to offer many activities and services to parents and children both in preschool and school-age. They offer a summer camp program and a very popular before and after school program. The FRC continues to be grant and self funded.

Parent and Community Feedback

Read Across Tolland Day was once again coordinated by Dot Drobney and Hedy Nathan from TIS. Students from TIS travel to Birch Grove to read to and with students at BGP. More students than ever were involved in this wonderful opportunity.

The districts website was updated to provide unit vocabulary, unit goals in each grade and the everyday math homework links. Curriculum night continues to provide teachers the opportunity to support parents by discussing the mathematics program.

The Tolland Historical Society is a valuable resource for the students of Birch Grove Primary School. Second grade students have an in-house presentation on Native Americans from the Benton Homestead staff.

This year four administrators from the Foundation Public Schools in Karachi, Pakistan visited Tolland for four weeks. They arrived on September 20 and we toured the district, visiting each of the four schools. All four administrators visited Birch Grove during their visit, but Sameena Abdullah primarily spent time at Birch Grove and Faiza Arshad primarily worked with TIS teachers. Asma Zuberi and Sadaf Kuram split most of their time between TMS and THS. During their visit, the administrators observed teachers' classes, met with Tolland administrators, attended after-school functions, and toured Connecticut. Sameena shared a presentation for students in second grade comparing and contrasting Pakistan with the United States. Teachers from the entire BGP community supported this visit by inviting them to dinner and hosting them in their classrooms.

The Tolland Elementary PTO (TEPTO) provided financial support for the science program this year by budgeting funds to supplement the curriculum. The generous funds were used to purchase science related non-fiction reading material for grades 1 & 2. in addition, some other supplies for hands-on units. They also purchased a SMART Board and projector for the school as well as some software to use with the interactive white board.

TEPTO is very generous in providing funding for the purchase of materials to enrich our entire curriculum. They provide money for curriculum related field trips and school wide assemblies. TEPTO also provided funding for the author's visit.

The Family Resource Center continues to provide many services to the families of Tolland.

The Tolland Education Foundation awarded a grant to Kathy Adams, a music teacher, for the purchase of IPod, laptop computer and a wireless microphone technology for her classroom. Christine Riesbeck and Valerie Gaulin, a preschool teacher received a grant for the purchase of alphabet carpets.

The staff at Birch Grove Primary School is aware of the importance of developing and maintaining a home school relationship based on cooperation and trust. More than 200 volunteers have helped in the classrooms and the library. The Birch Grove staff and the FRC staff work in collaboration with Tolland Family Services to meet the various needs of children and families.

Birch Grove Goals for 2011-2012

Our building language arts goals will be to:

- Review the Language Arts Program Evaluation conducted by Dr. Susan Deffenbaugh to gauge progress towards meeting the Evaluation's recommendations.
- Continue to refine SRBI model.
- Continue to create anchor sets for common assessments.
- Write a language arts curriculum for grades K-2 based on CCSS.
- Establish a common book room that would house leveled readers for grades K-2.
- Maintain fidelity to pacing guides.

Our building math goals will be to:

- to provide building structure to fully utilize the math resource person
- Provide support s for small group instruction in math

Our building science goals will be to:

- Continue to concentrate on developing more inquiry based, hands-on lesson for their students.
- The science coordinator will continue to develop, model, and help implement science lessons.
- A “science lab” room in the first grade wing would benefit teachers by giving them a space to setup learning centers related to the current content unit.
- Each classroom teacher would bring his or her students to the lab during a designated time.

Our building social studies goals will be to:

- Develop new lessons/units as needed to align with new state standards.
- Infuse content area literacy skills and strategies into social studies by focusing on content area reading strategies and vocabulary development.

Our building school climate goal is to:

- Implement training year of PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) as it is implemented in the other three schools.
- Continue using morning meeting, common language, and common rules in the classrooms.
- Require all classes to use Second Step Anti-Bullying program.