

# School Highlights



## **Birch Grove Primary School**

### **Annual Report**

**2011-2012**

### **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. We are continuing to refine our standards based report card and the rubrics to go with this document.

The Birch Grove staff had the opportunity to participate in six 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 Café book Engaging All Students in Daily Literacy Assessment and Instruction* 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 *A Differentiated Classroom* by Carol Ann Tomlinson and Marcia Imbeau. The third group focused on current literature articles about curriculum and instruction. Mike Moynihan, Assistant Principal, coordinated this study group.

Several staff members participated in the first year of a three-year training initiative in the Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS). The PBIS team will be planning and organizing for the school-wide implementation of PBIS. The Staff and students will begin utilizing the PBIS practices in September.

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 the DIBELS Assessments and progress monitoring of the DIBELS. The reading teachers presented to the staff the various reading programs and the process by which students are selected for the intervention reading programs.

Melissa McKee and Laurie Coulom began the process of unwrapping the Common Core State Standards. The coordinators worked with the grade level teams to focus on aligning the standards with the curriculum. The grade level teams reviewed the pacing charts to begin adjusting for the Common Core State Standards. The Kindergarten team worked closely with Melissa McKee to eliminate the topics not included in CCSS and begin the development of units and assessments.

## **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 continues to implement an 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.

First grade teachers used anchor sets to correct some open-ended responses on first grade theme tests. The anchor sets include actual student responses and help to ensure consistency among teachers when scoring.

First and second grade teachers were provided with information regarding the new CCSS. Standards for reading literature were unpacked. Teachers have added the monitoring of sight words to the Mastery Manager database

### **Recommendations for Language Arts**

- Continue to unpack the reading, writing, speaking/listening, language, and foundations CCSS.
- Evaluate the degree to which students are reading nonfiction and writing informative and opinion pieces.
- Align CCSS for Reading Informational Text to nonfiction used in content areas.
- Begin writing units or aligning current units to CCSS.
- Increase the end of year DRA expectation to an Independent Level.
- Continue to create anchor sets for common assessments.
- Create and maintain fidelity to pacing guides.
- Make staff knowledgeable about various reading support programs and the process by which students are identified for such programs.
- Educate staff in the administration and use of DIBELS.
- Provide collaboration time for the reading support teachers and classroom teacher.
- Inform parents of the CCSS. Go to <http://engageny.org/resource/shifts-for-students-and-parent/> to view an excellent for this purpose. Additionally, consider distributing the brochure on the CCSS that

was created by the PTA. This was given to all administrators in the fall at an AC meeting. This and other resources can be collected from <http://www.pta.org/4446.htm>

## Mathematics

The staff at Birch Grove are now into the sixth year of using the standards based Everyday Math program as the major instructional component of the K-5 mathematics curriculum. Teachers began to put more emphasis on fact fluency this year. With the use of the Mastering Basic Math Facts resource, teachers were able to incorporate fact fluency activities and games into their curriculum. This resource, in addition to the Everyday Math software, was made available on every teacher's computer. With the addition of numerous Smart boards this year, these resources will provide new, innovative ways of introducing and practicing math concepts.

Starting in January, the Kindergarten teachers began using a modified pacing guide that eliminated all topics that are not included in the CCSS. With this additional instructional time, they were able to focus on fewer topics in more depth, including fact fluency.

### **Recommendations for Mathematics**

- Focus time on developing assessments and units aligned to the CCSS in both Grades 1 and 2
- Support Grade K as they implement the new CCSS curriculum
- "erase" categories on SBRC to reflect the changes to the Grades K, 1, 2 curriculum

### **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 2011-2012 school years, 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 decide 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.

The social studies coordinator spent time in all of the kindergarten classes talking about Presidents' Day dressed as Abraham Lincoln. The coordinator read a story about President Lincoln and tried to make the day special. He also developed a map lesson for the kindergarten students and modeled the lesson in each class. We looked at a generic classroom map and then worked in groups to make a map specific to each classroom. The social studies coordinator worked with two kindergarten teachers to help update their class websites and to share documents using Dropbox. We also used technology to revitalize some of their activities that were of good use but had become worn. Together we scanned documents and updated booklets to be more useful to students.

For the first grade unit on Mexico, we created a more cohesive Mexican fiesta to culminate the study. The goal was to celebrate a child's birthday party the way it might be done in Mexico and then compare it to a birthday celebration here in the United States. Each class had traditional Mexican foods like warm tortillas, salsa, and homemade guacamole. The first grade team and the social studies coordinator arranged for the cafeteria to serve cheese quesadillas for lunch on that day as well to maintain the feel of Mexico beyond the classroom. Each class also played a traditional piñata game as well. Many students came dressed for the occasion with sombreros, serapés, or ponchós.

In second grade, the students once again celebrated a traditional Japanese tea ceremony. The menu for the ceremony consisted of authentic Japanese fare as well as vegetable roll sushi. Most of the students tried the foods and the tea. The students came dressed for the occasion as well and observed the rituals associated with the genuine ceremony. The students also meet with Mrs. Cindy Huschle from Tolland Intermediate School. Cindy spent a month in Japan teaching English and learning about the culture. She had prepared a presentation with many photographs from her visit as well as an interactive opportunity to try on traditional formal clothing she had brought back from her trip. The kids really appreciate this opportunity to meet with Cindy.

**Recommendations for Social Studies**

- Develop new lessons/units as needed to align with new state standards – particularly in kindergarten.
- Infuse content area literacy skills and strategies into social studies by focusing on content area reading strategies and vocabulary development.
- Develop new and appropriate benchmark assessments to meet new standards in both content and literacy – particularly in kindergarten.

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. We will not be making any adjustments to the curriculum as the Next Generation Science Frameworks were released in August 2011. Standards are being developed and the entire science curriculum will be revised due to the changes to our present curriculum. The new framework changes the way we present science content. It includes elements of Life, Physical, Earth and life science, as well as Engineering and the process of science and takes an integrated approach to instruction. We will be working on the new framework and standards over the next few years.

The third year of implementation of the standards-based report card proved even 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. Students in grades K-2 were assessed in all units as well as science inquiry.

A high point of the 2011 school year for four lucky teachers was the installation of SMART Boards in their classrooms. The grand total of Smart board systems at BGP is now at eight. We hope to continue to install the systems in all of the classrooms at BGP.

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

<b>Grade</b>	<b># classes</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b># students</b>	<b># adults</b>
1	9	<i>Living Things</i>	Living/Nonliving Things Scavenger Hunt	Sept	BGP grounds	195	11

1	9	<i>Forces &amp; Motion</i>	Magnetic Forces	Jan	Science Lab E-16	195	12
2	9	<i>Rocks</i>	Metamorphic Sandwiches	Oct	Science Lab E-16	200	13
2	9	<i>Rocks</i>	Geodes	Oct	BGP Grounds	200	3
2	9	<i>Rocks</i>	Fossils	Oct	Science Lab E-16	200	2
2	9	<i>Sun, Shadows &amp; Gravity</i>	Air Resistance	Feb	Science Lab E-16	200	13
2	9	<i>Insects</i>	Arthropods	May/June	BGP grounds	200	50
2	9	<i>Insects</i>	Amber	June	Science Lab E-16	200	13
1-2	1	<i>After school Science Enrichment</i>	<i>Inventions- Stomp Rockets</i>	March	BGP Grounds	33	4
K-4	1	<i>After School FRC</i>	Arthropods in the forest	April	BGP Grounds	25	8

### **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.
- The Kindergarten team arranged for a presentation about science from the Lutz Children's Museum. They report high interest by the students.

#### **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!
- Students in all classes attended a field trip to Auer Farm in Bloomfield. The focus of the trip was the life cycle of the apple, but students also toured the animal barn and took a hayride to the apple orchard.
- 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.
- Integrate non-fiction science unit related reading materials into the curriculum.
- Meet with K-2 science representatives to continue to review curricular issues. Begin to discuss how Next Generation Science Framework will be implemented.
- 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.

## **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 37 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. Some students are given the DIBELS as a measure of phonemic awareness and fluency. 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.

Reading department maintains an extensive record of data on EXCEL spreadsheets. Rubrics and anchor sets were developed and used for scoring. Alternate benchmark assessments are used in first and second grade. DIBELS was used for monitoring the progress of K, 1, and 2 students in Tier 2 and Tier 3 support programs.

**Mathematics** – In Grade K, data is collected every trimester to assess student performance and growth. This year, the curriculum coordinator helped teachers to assess student progress at each trimester. 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 assessments provide teachers with specific data on student performance. The data from these benchmarks is used to differentiate instruction, establish centers to support individual student needs, and identify students in need of intervention. In grade two, benchmarks were modified to make the scoring link easier to the Standards Based Report Card.

The math lab, staffed with two part-time teachers, worked to focus their intervention sessions this year. Beginning in January, the teachers began giving all first and second grade students a universal screen relating to a specific mathematics concept such as place value, time, money, addition, subtraction, etc. This allowed the math intervention teachers to focus their first grade students on a topic based on the results of the universal screen in addition to progress check data and teacher recommendation. The second grade groups were developed in the same way. The teachers found this was a better way to address student needs; more students achieved mastery and were able to be exited than in the past.

	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade
<b>*Number of Students</b>	69	75

- 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 required revision (other than formatting) this year, though some revision will occur in the near future as a result of the new state social studies standards.

	Average Score
<b>Grade 1</b>	
Neighborhoods	<b>90%</b> (91% in 2010-11)
Maps and Globes	*** (82% in 2010-11)
Mexico	*** (83% in 2010-11)
<b>Grade 2</b>	
Native Americans	<b>92%</b> (90% in 2010-11)
Japan	<b>95%</b> (94% in 2010-11)

\*\*\* not yet available in Mastery Manager at the time of this report

**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 years, 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.

## Staffing

- One FT K-2 LA Coordinator, one FT Reading Consultant, one FT Reading Specialist, six FT paraprofessionals, two half-time paraprofessionals, 1 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. Jan Augusta, Leanne Connolly, Julie Bowering, Jeannie McGuire, Kathy Carpenter, and Mary Hayes retired from TPS. Kathy Adams and Barbara Bednarz were increased to full time staff members.

We continued to utilize the full time math support position 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, continued to work with students 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 twenty kindergarten students. Reading intervention services were provided to 203 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. Approximately 64 students received Tier III instruction. Intensive instruction in decoding is provided. ELL – five students were supported in this area.

**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 Cyndi Huschle 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.

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 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 2012-2013**

Our building language arts goals will be to:

- Continue to unpack the reading, writing, speaking/listening, language, and foundations CCSS.
- Evaluate the degree to which students are reading nonfiction and writing informative and opinion pieces.
- Align CCSS for Reading Informational Text to nonfiction used in content areas.
- Begin writing units or aligning current units to CCSS.
- Increase the end of year DRA expectation to an Independent Level.
- Continue to create anchor sets for common assessments.
- Create and maintain fidelity to pacing guides.
- Make staff knowledgeable about various reading support programs and the process by which students are identified for such programs.
- Educate staff in the administration and use of DIBELS.
- Provide collaboration time for the reading support teachers and classroom teacher.
- Inform parents of the CCSS. Go to <http://engageny.org/resource/shifts-for-students-and-parent/> to view an excellent for this purpose. Additionally, consider distributing the brochure on the CCSS that was created by the PTA. This was given to all administrators in the fall at an AC meeting. This and other resources can be collected from <http://www.pta.org/4446.htm>

Our building math goals will be to:

- Continue to refine the structure for math support: universal screens, progress monitoring, etc.
- Fully implement the Grade K CCSS curriculum
- Implement the modified “erased” curriculum in both Grade 1 and 2
- Focus on fact fluency through activities, small groups, centers, etc.
- Introduce the MAH program at BGP to emphasize fact fluency at home

Our building science goals will be to:

- Meet in grade level teams to review curriculum and instructional practices.
- Integrate non-fiction science unit related reading materials into the curriculum.
- Meet with K-2 science representatives to continue to review curricular issues. Begin to discuss how Next Generation Science Framework will be implemented.
- 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.

Our building social studies goals will be to:

- Develop new lessons/units as needed to align with new state standards – particularly in kindergarten.

- Infuse content area literacy skills and strategies into social studies by focusing on content area reading strategies and vocabulary development.
- Develop new and appropriate benchmark assessments to meet new standards in both content and literacy – particularly in kindergarten.

Our building school climate goal is to:

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