

Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Weekly Newsletter

February 13, 2025

Upcoming Events:

Friday, February 14 ~ Valentine's Day & 101 Days of School Afternoon Activities

Monday, February 17 ~ No School-Presidents Day and PD for Staff

Tuesday, February 18 ~ School Board Meeting at 4:00

Monday, February 24 ~ Birch Buddies ~ DODGEBALL! After School Program

Mission Statement:

Birch Grove Community School will promote academic excellence utilizing our unique natural setting to prepare students to become socially and environmentally responsible, self-directed, life-long learners.

From Ms. Diane Blanchette:

School Director, Birch Grove Community School

Lead Coordinator, Birch Grove Community Service

Another busy week is coming to a close. Students and staff have been working hard throughout the week and will celebrate Valentine's Day and the 101 Day of school tomorrow afternoon with a card exchange and special activities in each classroom. Pictures will be posted on the school Facebook page of all of the festivities.

Birch Grove just recently received the VOA Annual Scorecard Report published in the winter of 2025 for FY24 (fiscal year 2024).

Congratulations were received from Stephanie Olsen, Senior Manager of VOA-MN, our school authorizer, on the four year average score of 94%, saying that Birch Grove was "on track for a five-year charter renewal contract!" The 23 page report scored multiple criteria in the areas of academics, finance, board governance, and management

operations. Schools must receive an Exemplary Rating of at least 80% of points possible and meet the majority of standards in each performance area to be eligible for a five-year contract renewal (versus a lesser 3-year contract). With one more year to go before the current contract is up, it could be said that BGCS is well on the way to another five-year contract! Go Birch Grove!





The newly opened Seedlings program (primarily for ages birth-3) is full and a waiting list has been started. If you, or someone you know, would like to get a child on the waiting list, please email birchgrove@boreal.org

For more information on the program go to:
<https://www.birchgroveschool.com/Seedlings-Program>



There is no school on Monday, February 17th for Presidents Day and for PD for staff. School will resume on Tuesday, February 18. Remember that during the school year if there is no school for K-5, Seedlings and Saplings are also closed. A school calendar can be found on the school website at: www.birchgroveschool.com

Birch Buddies ~ DODGEBALL! After school special! K-5 students that are registered will have a snack in the Community Room prior to hitting the gym. Pick up time is by 5:00pm. Please be on time. Snacks and some unbelievable dodgeball all provided for \$6 a day!
<https://www.birchgroveschool.com/Birch-Buddies>

DODGEBALL days:
*Monday, February 24
*Monday, March 3
*Monday, March 10
*Monday, March 17



4/5 had the ice to themselves on Monday afternoon!



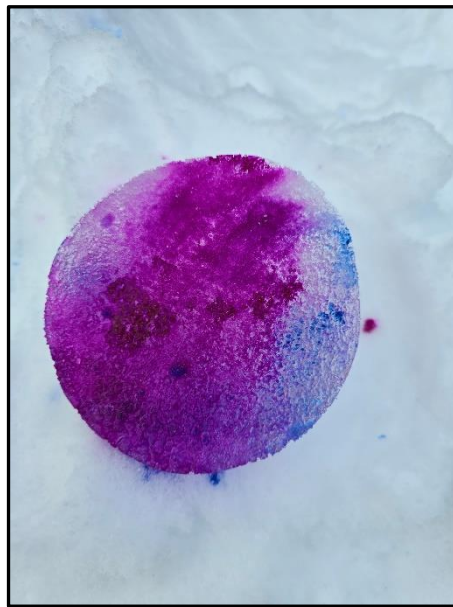


The Sapling program (primarily for ages 3-5) has a few slots available. Please recommend this program to any who may be looking for care for their little. Thank you!

For more information on the program go to:
<https://www.birchgroveschool.com/Saplings-Program>



2/3 did a little science experiment to understand the effects of salt on ice. They froze water then took it out to the Campsite to pour salt and dye on it! The salt melted through the ice and the dye made it possible to see the ice caves. Everyone was excited to check this out!



This week concluded the Birch Buddies ~ SKATE! after school special program session. Thanks to all that registered - we hope your child had a good time! Birch Buddies ~ DODGEBALL! will follow on Mondays starting on February 24 and we are all looking forward to it!



Please have your child read (or be read to) 20-30 minutes per day/night (or more!). If there is one thing that you can do at home that has a huge positive impact on your child's academic growth, this is it! Happy reading!



If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us:

birchgrove@boreal.org ~ 218-663-0170

Website: www.birchgroveschool.com

School Spirit Store Link: <https://birchgrove.logosoftware.com/> You can use GRAB15 for 15% off and free shipping for orders over \$125

Face Book: [Birch Grove Community School and Community Services #4145 | Facebook](#)



From Ms. Emily VanDoren

Seedling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service

In honor of Valentine's Day, our focus this week was on showing kindness and love in our friendships. The older Seedlings are practicing their greetings to one another when they arrive in the morning. We have been practicing waving "hello" and "goodbye" and are offering hugs to one another.

We added in a few books this week that have a focus on friendship, kindness, and saying "I love you". The book How Kind! by Mary Murphy tells the story of a hen that offers an egg to a pig, and through that act of kindness, other animals decide they would like to do something kind as well, and eventually the hen sees her kindness returned to her. We also read Snuggle Puppy by Sandra Boynton. It is a fun book with a catchy song that explains that you are loved because of who you are.



Our song playlist saw the addition of Skidamarink and the Barney song I Love You. Both songs are a great way to let a little one know that they are loved.

The older Seedlings have really enjoyed our new wood climbing structure. They are able to climb up and slide down and also crawl under the tunnel. We utilized it with one of our activities by dropping paper heart cut outs down the slide.

Each Seedling helped create a special Valentine's keepsake so be sure to check their take home folders.

As a reminder, there is no school on Monday, February 17th. Happy Valentine's Day!

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From Ms. Pam Holm

Sapling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service

Valentine's week in the Saplings featured an engaging and interactive experience with the dramatic play area designed as a Post Office. The theme highlighted activities such as mail delivery, letter writing, stamping, sorting packages, and learning about mail carriers, with an emphasis on post office-related vocabulary including stamp, envelope, mailbox, and address.

To enhance literacy skills, we wrote letters to classmates and family members incorporating vocabulary words like Mom, Dad, and Love, introduced envelope-addressing skills, and delved into phonetics through mail-related activities.

For math the Saplings activities included sorting packages by size, counting stamps or matching numbers to mailboxes. Along with several Valentine counting manipulative activities to choose from. The sensory bin included a mixture of rose petals and hearts, allowing for sorting exercises focused on weight, size, and color.

In our Science lesson, we examined the human heart's function as a dual pump, responsible for circulating blood throughout the body. This circulation ensures the body receives vital oxygen and nutrients. Following the discussion, we used real stethoscopes to listen to each other's heartbeats.

Saplings created an array of heart-shaped masterpieces that showcase their unparalleled creativity and skill this week. They employed an impressive range of techniques, including painting, weaving, marble rolling paint, tearing paper, stamping, and crafting exquisite tissue stain glass art. The pink and red playdough proved to be a huge hit as they brought to life an assortment of hearts, hugs, and kisses in various sizes, each one a testament to their innovative spirit and artistic prowess.

Happy Valentine's Day!

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From Ms. Sara Knottski

K & 1st Grade Elementary Teacher

The Kindergarteners learned about sequence of events in books. We practice retelling stories with first, next, and last vocabulary. They also identified the setting and characters in a story. The first graders read a book about where food comes from. We talked about the author's purpose and finding supporting details in a book. Everyone is working hard to improve their reading skills. We are constantly practicing sight words, letter sounds, writing, and reading!



In math, first grade practiced adding tens together.

Kindergarteners practice addition partners of ten and teen numbers. K/1 has been enjoying Friday math time recently. We have been playing an online quiz game, Kahoot, as a class. It is our new favorite way to practice math skills!

Students are looking forward to giving and receiving Valentines during a special afternoon with their peers tomorrow. Happy Valentine's and 101 Day of school!

Have a great long weekend! Remember to have your child read every day for at least 20 minutes. Students should be practicing at home on Lexia as well.

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**From Ms. Samantha Forster**

*2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Elementary Teacher*

This has been such a great winter so far. We have spent so much time learning and growing. I sent home an order form for the book we are creating. Please do not feel obligated to purchase one, but I do NEED every order form signed back in order for our classroom to receive a free book. The students have been working hard on it. We worked on Batik inspired work this week to continue in our Asia research. We also spent time with the constellations that the Ojibwe people used within their culture. This was paired with note taking, read alouds, and a group poster expressing their understanding. Please keep students reading at home for those Tickets to Treasure!



Reading has been going so well! I have been so impressed with the process we continue to make each week with our understanding. We continue to do our fluency activities each week and this is helping so much with each student's fluent reading ability. It is also introducing them to a variety of nonfiction topics and vocabulary. We also started a unit on Greek and Latin word parts. This has been exciting as we all become word watchers to find these words in our everyday language!

Second grade has FLOWN through Unit 5 so I am pulling small groups to reinforce understanding of the concepts we learned. Third grade has been working on graphs and took their Unit 6 assessment on Wednesday. I will be pulling their small group in the afternoon to continue to work through any confusion or frustration. Small groups are important so that I can meet each student where they are at and build their confidence. Time, money, and fraction has been our main focus. These are all hard skills so we will continue to work on these as we prepare for spring assessments.

Valentine's Day and 101 Day are on Friday! It will be a day filled with gratitude and kindness. If you have any questions or need anything between now and Friday, please reach out. I am happy to provide materials. We also have been very short on borrow winter material. Please ensure that your student has waterproof gloves AND an extra pair and hat in their locker or backpack. We focus on outdoors and will go out on all but the worst of weather. Thank you!

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From Ms. Sara Silence

4th & 5th Grade Elementary Teacher

After our week at North House Folk School, that went splendidly, we continued our interest in creating things. We took some time this week to learn some basic weaving, and in the next couple weeks, we will add some other sewing options to our free time bins. Kids are already sharing ideas on what could be done. This Friday after we share Valentine's, we will take our crafting outside to the Campsite around a bonfire. Here's to hoping for some great weather!

Both groups finished up their math unit this week and we began our unit assessment. The students are more than happy to leave multiplying and dividing numbers in the thousands behind for a while! That being said, they made great progress in the unit and have some great foundation skills. The next unit could be a little challenging as we take a deep dive into algebra for a bit! Making sure your child practices their math facts continues to be essential. They need to have a strong foundation in numbers before those algebraic letters show up!

Our two stories that we have been focusing on this week have taken us to the Antarctic. We focused on understanding details, asking



questions while reading, and of course our comprehension. The topic proved to be an easy one to ask questions about as there were a lot of tidbits of information that were new to us! For example, did you know that it can take 100 years for a single inch of moss to grow in Antarctica? WOW!

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