

## Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Weekly Newsletter

January 16, 2025

### Upcoming Events:

Friday, January 17 ~ Dental Checks

Monday, January 20 ~ No School ~ PD Day and Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Tuesday, January 21 ~ School Board Meeting at 4:00

Monday, January 27 ~ Birch Buddies ~ SKATE! After School Program

Tuesday, January 28 – Friday, January 31 K-5 Fastbridge Assessments

### 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*

January is a busy academic month at Birch Grove as teachers increase focus on benchmarks and standards, as well as ensuring that the pacing of said benchmarks and standards are on track. Mid-year assessments will be taking place before the end of the month so that staff can see what growth has taken place so far in the school year. Staff meetings are held to discuss assessment data for each student and plans are made for each in light of this data, including any teacher observations or determinations concerning growth. Families can help increase academic growth by ensuring that students read at home as often as possible. Accessing our school on-line platforms at home will also help to support academic growth. Teachers often suggest other actions that families can do at home in these newsletters. Should you want to support your child even more, please contact your child's teacher as they have a plethora of ideas for you. As always, we appreciate and need support from home. Thank you!





Please note that there is no school next week on Monday, January 20 on Martin Luther King Jr. Day. This is also a professional development day for staff. Some teachers may be continuing to take the mandatory READ Act training (this training will take 1-2 years), other training, or they may be getting caught up on other school work. Tomorrow is the end of the quarter, and work on student report cards is also on all of the teacher's agendas. Also, many of you may not know the load of training that daycare teachers have to complete outside of actual care for children – it is

substantial. Many thanks to our teachers, paraprofessionals, daycare staff, and school cook for all of their hard work that benefits our school, our students, our daycare children, families, as well as our community. You are all amazing!

It has come to my attention that some families may not know that there is an Arrowhead bus stop that takes students to the arena in Silver Bay for hockey practice after school from Birch Grove. This has been a stop for years and continues to be one. If you would like your child dropped off at the arena after school for hockey practice in Silver Bay, you only need to contact us with a bus note specifying this or call/email, and we will write one for you. Please share this information with other families that may not know. The Arrowhead bus can also stop at the YMCA, North House Folk School, or Cook County Schools for any practices or activities that are happening there after school. Again, you only need let us know, and we will see that it happens. Please also share this information with others – much appreciated!



**Birch Buddies ~ SKATE!** after school special! K-5 students that are registered will have a snack in the gym prior to hitting the ice rink. Pick up time is by 5:00pm. Please be on time. Skates, helmets and snacks all provided for \$6 a day!

Remaining SKATE! days:

- ❖ Monday, January 27
- ❖ Monday, February 3
- ❖ Monday, February 10

Please be sure your child has all of the necessary outdoor ware needed to stay warm and enjoy themselves. Happy skating!

February and March hot lunch menus have been posted on the school website. Yum! <https://www.birchgroveschool.com/School-Lunches>





After working hard in the classrooms last Friday, K-5 hit the ice for the first skate date of the year! We had both pros and newbies enjoying the rink, warming hut and bathroom provided by Tofte Township. Many thanks to Tofte for supporting Birch Grove's focus on the outdoors!





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:

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Website: [www.birchgroveschool.com](http://www.birchgroveschool.com)

School Spirit Store Link: <https://birchgrove.logosoftwear.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](#)



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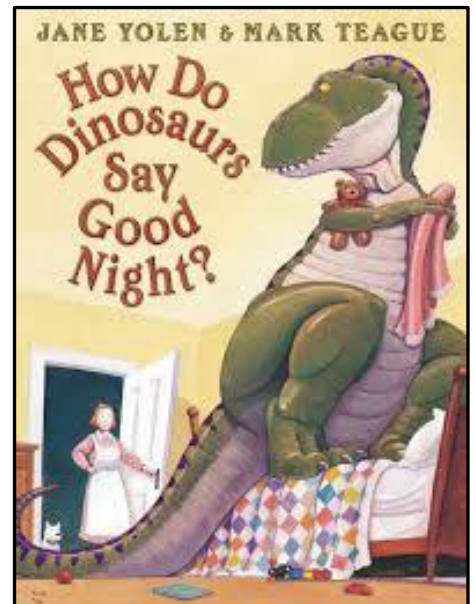
### From Ms. Emily VanDoren

*Seedlings Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

This week was all about dinosaurs. We had a lot of fun playing with dinosaur figurines, singing songs, and reading books about all the different dinosaurs that once walked the earth.

Our morning table activities worked our pre-writing skills, number recognition, and our memories. The older Seedlings traced lines to lead a dinosaur back to its nest, lined up triceratops from smallest to biggest, put brontosaurus in number order from 1-10 and we also played dinosaur memory match. We also used play dough to create "fossils" with the dinosaur figurines.

We read a variety of fiction and non-fiction dinosaur books this week. A few of the fiction favorites included *How Do Dinosaurs Go To Sleep*, *How Do Dinosaurs Say Good Night*, and *How Do Dinosaurs Stay Friends* by Jane Yolen & Mark Teague. *Five Little Dinosaurs* by Will Grace was also a fun book that was modeled after the Five Little Monkeys song. We also read non-fiction books including *The True Book of Dinosaurs* by Mary Lou Clark and *Dinosaurs* by Kathleen N. Daly. These books taught us about the different kinds of dinosaurs, how they lived, what happened to the dinosaurs, and how fossils helped us to learn about the dinosaurs.



During our gym time, we sang songs to add to the fun. We sang *We are the Dinosaurs* by Laurie Berkner and had fun marching and roaring. We also sang *If You're a Dinosaur*. It is sung to the tune of *If You're Happy and You Know it* and was a big hit. Here are the lyrics if you would like to sing at home: *If you're a dinosaur show your claws, if you're a dinosaur show your claws, if you're a dinosaur give a*

great big dino roar, if you're a dinosaur show your claws. The verses following change to *Swing your tail, stomp your feet*, and the final verse is *Take a nap*. This is a fun movement song that helped to get our wiggles out.

Enjoy the long weekend and we will see you again on Tuesday January 21st!

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**From Ms. Pam Holm**

*Sapling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

Saplings have joined the 1000 Hours Outside Challenge! We are outside everyday, year round. The children play and run breathing fresh air in their lungs and they come to embrace what nature provides us with; whether that be sun, clouds, rain, or snow. According to most experts, children aged 3-5 years old should ideally spend around three hours outdoors per day. With the colder weather Saplings have averaged 80 minutes per day in January. The saying of "There is no bad weather, only bad clothing" applies to the Saplings. We have been bundling up and going outside everyday. Today we went on a snowshoeing hike! Please be sure your child has appropriate warm winter gear, including base layers. Don't forget the neck warmers or goggles.



As part of the blended learning strategy, which blends the outdoor and classroom instruction, we explored the theme Polar Bears, Penguins and Seals Oh My! this week. The concentration was on the letter P, with a literacy project that asked, "What would you do if you met a penguin?" We discussed the polar opposites North Pole versus South Pole. We compared the Arctic to Antarctica and the animals that live in each. The saplings refined their scissor and painting skills by creating penguins, seals, walruses and polar bears in the style of Eric Carle.

Our Arctic and Antarctica sensory table filled with snow and ice bergs led to great discussion about the habitat of the animals and how they survive such cold temperatures. Using a simple science activity with a bag of lard and ice water, we learned how animals with blubber maintain warmth even in icy ocean water. They also noted that the polar bears and harp seals blended in with the snow, making them camouflaged.

Penguin and polar bear-themed math activities covered number recognition, counting 1-10 and 1-20, number sense, one-to-one correspondence, comparing numbers, and composing and decomposing numbers. There was also polar bear paw print measuring, where the Saplings measured how many paw prints long or tall an object was.

For more information on the benefits of outdoor exploration check out Dr. Julie Ernst website: <https://sites.google.com/d.umn.edu/jernst/home?authuser=0>

Enjoy the three day weekend!

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**From Ms. Sara Knottski**  
*K & 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Elementary Teacher*

Push, pull, lift, force, and strength! These are some of K/1's work words for our science unit. We are learning about basic physics and how force and momentum can change how things move. We worked in partners to save a tiny town (paper houses) from an impending boulder (tennis ball) that would crash into town. We also practiced bouncing and force to knock down bowling pins this week!

The kindergarteners learned the letter E. They practiced saying the letter e sound while smiling! This helped them tell the difference between e and a. We are practicing sight words and becoming more fluent in reading three-letter words! We are working on a unit about teen numbers and adding and subtracting in math.



The first graders read a story about a big race. We discussed the main idea and supporting details in the book. They also practiced sight words and creating sentences using those words. We finished a math unit about decoding story problems and finding missing addends.

We will be doing Fastbridge assessments next week! Please help by making sure your child has enough sleep and a good breakfast and by talking with them about how it is important for them to try their hardest.

Please continue to read, write, and practice letters at home!

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**From Ms. Samantha Forster**

*2nd & 3rd Grade Elementary Teacher*

This week has been jam-packed with academics. We have spent time reviewing life cycles, habitats, and adaptations this week in preparation for their Create-A-Creature project next week. We also did an art project based around Antarctica as we experienced the arctic chill outside. I have added in IXL group jams and language arts games into our afternoon rotation so that we are refreshing all portions of learning before we do our mid-winter testing. We will spend time ice skating this Friday if the weather stays cool enough for nice ice.

Our language arts block is filled to the brim with activities designed around the science of reading. We have finished writing a descriptive paragraph based on an informational text. There are many steps that I require to be done before publishing. We brainstorm, outline, construct a good topic and conclusion sentence, and draft. These are all important steps that I want to ensure students take as they learn the steps of writing. We also started writing our ideas down for our book. The title is going to be "Activities to do in Minnesota in All Seasons." Each student picked an activity they like to do in a certain season and now we are constructing outlines for drafts. I also added a fluency component into our reading block now that we have become proficient at our routine. Each day, students participate in a repeated fluency reading with a partner. This involves separate reading, choral reading, sentence by sentence, then summarizing the reading. This is a proven strategy to help all levels of readers work on their fluency.



Math has continued to be challenging for students. This has been a challenge met with excitement and anticipation. Regrouping and borrowing is our main focus in second grade with numbers up to 200. We have also practiced making change from a dollar. This requires students to practice a real life skill. Third grade has taken their fraction knowledge and started to apply it to measurement and time. This is a very important task and helps build understanding with things that they will use in their day to day lives. I have incorporated manipulatives and strategies into each group as we master our understanding.

I know we are busy and life is filled with activities but reading is such an important activity. All the students in second and third grade can read books and this is a great way to bridge learning from school to home. They are excited about their growth and it helps them connect learning to all areas of their life. Ask questions along the way that you think are important and encourage open ended discussion ( i.e why do they feel that way? What traits does that character have? Does that make them a good friend? What would you do if you were in their shoes?) Building knowledge and increasing vocabulary is the best proven way to increase reading comprehension!

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**From Ms. Sara Silence**

*4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Elementary Teacher*

This week 4th and 5th grade have been solidly working within all of our projects. Projects provide hands on learning allowing opportunities for deeper understanding and asking/answering complex questions. They also allow us to increase our writing ability. One of my goals this year is to make sure that our Birch Grove students are meeting expectations for future teachers in the area of writing and expressing ideas (an area that is on a national downward trend). In science, we continue our Mars exploration as we looked at energy systems and created several simulations using an online set up from PHET laboratories. In social studies we completed the first of nine stops in the Northeast region of the United States. We started at West Quoddy Head Lighthouse which is the most eastern point of the United States. We also continue to work on our slideshow of the map of our life. Students can draw or submit a photograph of their bedroom, house, and town. If parents would like to send pictures, please send them to my email and I will upload them to the student account.



Our reading books have been about several different art forms and understanding character development. We were able to use one of our stories and connect it to art, studying Jackson Pollock. The last bit of news is that families will be receiving an email inviting them to join our Google Classroom account as a guardian. This will allow parents to see what students are doing in class and allow them to follow up with assignments that need to be completed.

Birch Grove does not believe in nightly homework, however after the week is over and the 2 hours of study hall have been used in addition to academic blocks, any remaining work may need to be done at home. This generally means that the student has been distracted or not focusing on academics when time has been given. Should you have questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Continuing reading and practicing math facts at home, but even more than that, continue to talk with and experience the world with your child! They are pretty amazing!

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