

Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Weekly Newsletter

January 31, 2025

Upcoming Events:

- Monday, February 3 ~ Birch Buddies ~ SKATE! After School Program
Tuesday, February 4 – Wednesday, February 6 ~ 4/5 Trip to North House Folk School
Friday, February 7 ~ No School-PD For Staff
Monday, February 10 ~ Birch Buddies ~ SKATE! After School Program
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*

Most of our families and the local community are aware of Birch Grove's amazing environmental setting, with Lake Superior and the Northwoods both on our doorstep, as well as the outdoor learning, activities, and experiences we offer. These outdoor opportunities make great photos that are often posted on Facebook, in weekly newsletters, and the school website. What is not photographed as often, is the learning that is happening in the classrooms. Rest assured, there is growth happening in our classrooms as well as in the outdoors. How do we know this? Data. One way you can see the data for yourself is by examining Birch Grove Community School's Annual Report or looking on the Minnesota Department of Education website. It's all there.



Public charter schools are required, by law, to send a school board approved Annual Report to all enrolled families and school staff, and must post the report on the school website—traditional/residential school districts are not required to do this. The Annual Report contains an array of mandatory information, including a section on academic performance. VOA-MN, our school authorizer, also requires us to compare our school MCA (Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment) scores to the traditional/resident district in which Birch Grove Community School is located. I also include comparison data for the traditional/resident district in Lake County in the report, since a portion of students come from there as well.

I have taken it upon myself to create a chart of MCA reading and math scores for the past 5 years that shows how much higher Birch Grove's scores are than other elementary school choices, including the State of Minnesota. Yes, you read that sentence correctly, not *if* BGCS's scores are higher, but *how much* higher. A copy of this chart will be sent home to all current Birch Grove families. Please support Birch Grove by correcting any mis-information that's out there in regards to how BGCS's students do academically, or refer folks to the Minnesota Department of Education website to find their own answers, or even better, refer them to Birch Grove Community School. Many thanks for your continued support! Go Birch Grove!



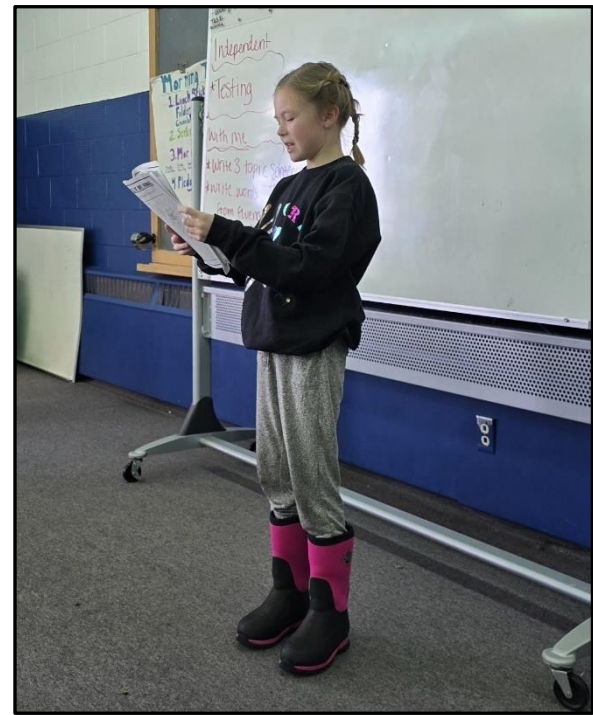
The annual Tickets to Treasures program has started! Reading log sheets have been sent home to all families so that reading at home can be logged (if you run out of logs, a regular piece of paper can be used). For every 20 minutes your child reads at home, they will receive one ticket to put in a container that is linked to a specific prize of your child's choosing. Please remind them that even though they may have tickets dedicated to a prize, it does not mean that they will win it. However, the more tickets they have in, the better their odds. We review this a few times over the year. All who don't win a prize will still receive something special for their efforts (as long as they have earned at least 10 tickets). The drawing takes place at the end of the school year! Happy READING!

4/5 will be going to the North House Folk School next week on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday to participate in the Textile Traditions program! Permission forms went home earlier this week. Please be sure to get them in asap. Thank you.

Field Trip!

*Don't forget to pack a cold lunch each day that does not need to be microwaved. Students will also be stopping at the Dairy Queen on Thursday for a special treat if behaviors are exemplary! Yum!

2/3 students presented their Create-A-Creature project this week! They spent last week developing a new creature that had 3 adaptations to a habitat of their choice. Students completed a picture, life cycle, habitat picture, fun facts, and a paragraph summary to show to their fellow classmates. It was a great way to summarize what they learned about adaptation and habitats while preparing for their next big project!



CAMPSITE KIDS ~ SUMMER 2025



Believe it or not, we have already had inquiries about Campsite Kids for this coming summer from non-Birch Grove families. The first day of Campsite Kids will be on Monday, June 9 and the last day will be Thursday, August 21. Enrollment is offered to Birch Grove Community School families first, as always. If there are slots open after that, we will open the program to the general public. There is no other program like Campsite Kids in either Cook or Lake County, so when registration forms come home and you want to register your child(ren), turn your forms in as soon as possible. Thank you!

We love our K-5 paraprofessionals Jessica Klemmer and Jenny Buckman! Show them some love when you get a chance. They are the BEST! We also welcome new paraprofessional Marcy McGleno who just started last week - welcome to Birch Grove!





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, 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!

K/1 went snowshoeing last Friday, for the first time this season, and it was a beautiful day! K/1 were on the hunt for animal tracks as they tried out some of the new snowshoes purchased through an Arrowhead Round Up grant. Birch Grove Community School is committed to outdoor learning and experience!





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!

DODGEBALL days:

- *Monday, February 24
- *Monday, March 3
- *Monday, March 10
- *Monday, March 17

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.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](#)



From Ms. Emily VanDoren

Seedlings Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service

This week we had a focus on construction. We talked about different types of equipment, people, and skills that are needed to build houses, schools, and other buildings. The book *Build It* by Laura Seitz Danielsen was a terrific read that explained the concepts in a great way for our young readers.

With the warmer temperatures, we have been enjoying playtime on the big playground as well as short walks on the bike path. It was great to have some fresh snow to play in. The older Seedlings used their imaginations to open an ice cream shop and sold lots of different flavors. We also played in the gym and practiced throwing and catching. We moved our bodies in the classroom by



pretending to be different pieces of construction equipment and we stretched like a crane, stomped like a jackhammer, spun like a cement mixer and so much more!

For our table work, we practiced counting different construction vehicles and circled the matching number. We had a magnetic construction scene that had pieces to move around to create their own construction site. We also played a construction truck memory match game.

Big changes are happening for the Seedlings room. The older Seedlings have grown into Saplings! They will move into the Saplings room with Ms. Pam next week. We have spent the past two weeks working on skills to help them be successful in this new adventure. I will miss having them in the classroom but I know that they will flourish as Saplings and am very excited for them to continue learning and growing at Birch Grove!

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From Ms. Pam Holm

Sapling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service

This week, Saplings observed Chinese New Year through an immersive cultural experience. We discussed China and viewed images of traditional dress, temples, and other aspects of Chinese culture, such as food and language. We located China on a world map and examined the Chinese flag, contrasting its colors and stars with those of the United States flag. Additionally, we honed our skills in using chopsticks to pick up various manipulatives.

An exploration of the Lunar New Year legend revealed that, many years ago, a dragon named 'Nian' would descend upon a Chinese village on the first night of the new year. The villagers, fearful of Nian's arrival, sought advice from a wise man. He informed them that Nian was afraid of three things: the color red, loud noises, and bright lights. Armed with this knowledge, the villagers prepared for Nian's next visit by adorning their homes with red, lighting lanterns, and creating loud sounds with drums and firecrackers. These efforts successfully frightened Nian away, and he never returned. The narrative was revisited during circle time, prompting a discussion about the children's recollections of the story.

Our cultural immersion included listening to traditional Chinese music, highlighted by bamboo flutes and drums. This enhanced our listening skills and introduced us to a new type of music. Furthermore, we observed pictures of traditional instruments. Then we decorated our own traditional costume dragon and paraded down the hallway in a dragon dance.



We explored the Chinese zodiac, discussing the various animals that represent each year and their symbolic significance. Our findings indicated that most of us share the same birth year, the year of the ox, whereas one individual was born in the year of the rat and another in the year of the pig. To commemorate the current year of the snake, the Saplings practiced their tracing and cutting techniques by decorating snake designs with diamonds. Moreover, we studied the giant panda, China's national animal, by viewing photographs of them in their natural environment, eating bamboo, and analyzing their appearance at birth, as well as the meaning of their endangered status. We subsequently created our own panda representations using forks to create textured fur and adding paper details to form facial features.

The Saplings created hanging scrolls as a fun way to explore Chinese calligraphy writing. A hanging scroll is one of the many traditional ways to display and exhibit Chinese painting and calligraphy. Displaying the art in this way allowed public appreciation and appraisal of the aesthetics of the scrolls in its entirety by the audience.

On Wednesday it was Chinese New Year Day each Sapling received 'Hong Bao' which are red envelopes filled with lucky coins that are given as gifts to children to bring luck and prosperity for the next year.

新年好

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

K/1 is finishing a science unit on force! This week we read a book about two girls trying to catch the monster in their closet. We brainstormed ideas for a trap for the monster and helped the girls in the book catch the monster! We also drew and wrote about our own inventions to help us with chores. We finished the unit with human bowling. The students got to be 'bowling balls' as they sat on a scooter while the bowler used force to push them across the gym into bowling pins. It was a blast!

The Kindergarteners learned about the letter Sh this week. We have body motions for every letter we know! Sh's body motion is shhhhhh finger over the mouth! Ask your child about the rest of the body motions! The first graders are learning about long vowels. We are learning about how magic e changes the sound of the vowel. We are practicing reading every day now. The students are reading to self, reading to someone, and



listening to reading every day during reading rotations. We are working on inferring when reading stories. In math, we are learning about comparing and place value.

Reminder: Valentine's Day/101<sup>st</sup> day of school is in two weeks. K/1 will have a card exchange on Friday, February 14<sup>th</sup>. If your child wants to make cards, I can supply paper and coloring materials, just let me know!

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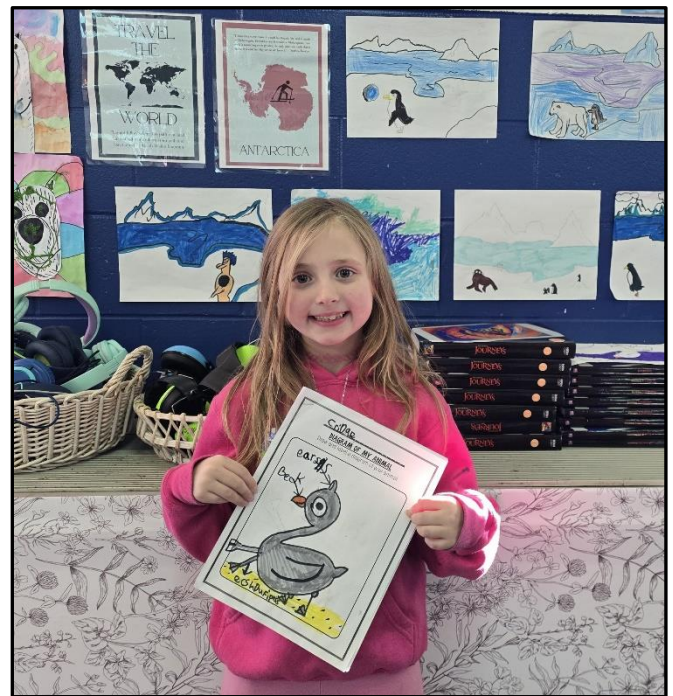
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**From Ms. Samantha Forster**

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

It was a beautiful January week! We had assessments this week so students got to show off all their hard work from previous months. It went well and I was thoroughly impressed on how serious they took the assessments. This also meant we had a little bit of a different week. The students finished up their create-a-creature from last week! I also had them practice presenting these to the class. This also opened up discussion around what it means to be an active listener and a good audience member. We will be doing a biography project in the next few months so this was amazing practice. It was also the last week in our Antarctic Continent so we did our last art project inspired by this unique area of our world! We will be spending our Friday afternoon exploring how salt and ice interact with each other and snowshoeing!



In reading, I have incorporated a fluency activity that helps students build up that skill. Since I didn't teach a unit this week, we did a deep dive into the vocabulary in this reading passage. We had so much fun talking through the different elements of the words and using them in sentences. We also worked on writing our book page and going through the steps that we have practiced throughout the year. I cannot wait to see the final product!

We are finishing up Unit 5 with the second graders so they will test on those skills next week. They have quickly become experts at regrouping and working with numbers under 200. We will start incorporating graphs and understanding data from graphs in the following weeks. Third grade is still working on time and elapsed time. We will finish that skill this week and move onto graphs next week. This is something they are familiar with and I know will be a nice break from the challenging skills we have been working on. I will circle back to fractions and elapsed time before March as this is a hard concept for students to grasp.



Valentine's Day is coming up. Please reach out with any questions or if any supplies are needed. We have lots for students to make cards for each of their classmates!

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**From Ms. Sara Silence**

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

We have been buckling down this week on finishing up the foundations of long division as well as reviewing skills from the year so far. We have nearly completed our winter Fast Bridge assessments. I love to see all the growth that the kids have, recognizing of course that not all the accomplishments are the kinds that show up on a fixed assessment. In math we also played a few new games, using the interactive TV display in the classroom.

The stories for this week focused again on natural disasters. We focused on identifying key details and the main idea. We have been practicing these skills using movie shorts/clips and creating an interactive notebook. Another way to grab attention and open up discussions in an engaging and fun way.

February will be a busy month for our class. Next week we will spend three days in Grand Marais at the North House Folk Shore completing a fiber class. On Wednesday we will go to the library. If students do not already have a library card from their home library, they can fill out the paper that will be sent home before we leave and kids can pick up the library card when we visit.

For Valentine's Day, 4th and 5th graders are in charge of creating a "vessel" (container of some kind) at home to hold their treats. Any school appropriate creation is welcome, most often these are made using boxes and other recycled items. If you need ideas or materials, just shoot me an email and I will send stuff home.

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