

## Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Weekly Newsletter

**December 13, 2024**

### Dates to Remember:

No December School Board Meeting  
Friday, December 20 ~ Pajama Day!  
Monday, December 23 – Wednesday, January 1 ~ No School-Winter Break  
Thursday, January 2 ~ School Resumes  
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

### 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*

It was a busy December week with only one to go before winter break! Please note that this is the last newsletter of the year, as there will be no newsletter next week. School is out on Monday, December 23 and resumes on January 2.

As some of you may know, Stacy Coronis has taken a leave of absence due to family care needs. Ms. Coronis and Birch Grove are expecting her to return at some point, but the absence could be long and no return date has been set. During her absence, Ms. Sara Silence will be teaching in the 4/5 classroom while continuing to serve the school's special education needs. The important thing to know is that each child at Birch Grove will continue to get



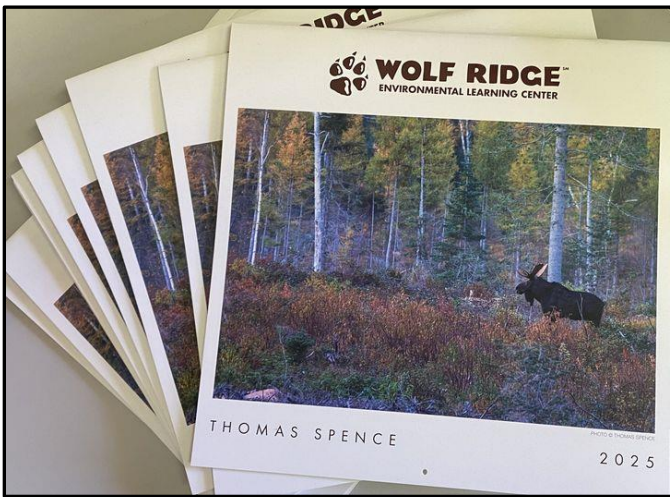
everything they were getting before! For the few families that don't know Ms. Silence, she has been teaching for 8 years. Before teaching special education, she was the 2/3 teacher at Birch Grove for 6 years. Ms. Silence recently completed her second teaching license as an Academic and Behavioral Specialist, and is now dually licensed. Congratulations, Sara! We send well wishes to Ms. Coronis (she is keeping in touch) and know that Ms. Silence will continue to do a great job for Birch Grove Community School!

K-5 did a great job at both performances of "The Share Bears"! Bears, bees, and wind were spectacular! Thank you to everyone that came out to see a show - the students love an audience! 😊 Thank you also to the musical leads Stacy Coronis and Samantha Forster, as well as the rest of the musical support staff, Sara Knottski, Sara Silence, Jessica Klemmer, Jenny Buckman, Angie Fernlund, Emily VanDoren and Pam Holm. Special shout out to guest photo pros Gayle Grinnell and Ari Summerfield. All of your contributions to this great show are appreciated!





More pictures can be found on the school Facebook page.

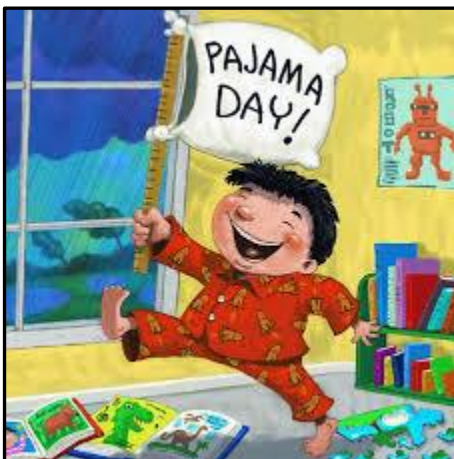


We have lots of calendars still available to purchase!

Wolf Ridge calendars featuring local photographer, Tom Spence, are available for \$15 at BGCS! Stop by Birch Grove or contact a BG family/staff member to get yours. Tom Spence donated 2 boxes to BGCS and we purchased 2. Proceeds go to support the annual 3-day, 2-night Wolf Ridge trip for Birch Grove 2-5th graders. Thanks to Tom and to all who have or will purchase this beautiful calendar! It will make a great gift to bring in the new year!



The Saplings opened both the afternoon and evening K-5 musical with some cute songs. Red glowing noses, jingle bells, snowflakes and tails! It was a great combo and they warmed up the audience for the K-5 show. Great job, Saplings!



Pajama Day! Friday, December 20! Everyone can wear pajamas on this day, the last day school in 2024. Traditionally, we have shown a movie in the afternoon with a special treat. What a great way to finish out 2024!



Many thanks to Bruce Johnson for taking Santa pictures after the evening musical. So festive! And thank you to Lloyd Chase (Santa) and Deonn Cicak (Ms. Claus) for bringing even more festivities to the annual musical. The kids love seeing Santa and Ms. Claus!

More Santa pictures will be on the school Facebook page later!

Ho, ho, ho! We hope everyone has a safe and happy holiday break. We look forward to seeing our students, Saplings and Seedlings on January 2, when school resumes.



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.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**

*Seedlings Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

Our theme this week was Polar Animals. We started our week by looking at flashcards of different animals that live in either the Arctic or in Antarctica. We learned about polar bears, orca whales, snowy owls, emperor penguins, and walruses.

The weather decided to match our theme and brought us fresh snow to play in and very cold temperatures. We were able to go out on Monday to enjoy the fresh snowfall and practiced waddling like penguins. We spent a short amount of time on the playground on Tuesday to get some wiggles out. Since the temperature dropped too low for us to safely enjoy playtime outside for the remainder of the week, we played Penguin Bowling in the classroom with penguin "bowling pins" and a small kickball. We also utilized the cloud dough from last week after our morning snack and practiced letter recognition with playdough letter stamps.



This week, one of the morning table activities was polar bear and penguin size sorting. We worked together as a team to line up each animal in order from the smallest to the biggest. There were also two puzzles to choose from, a snowy owl and an emperor penguin puzzle. We practiced counting and number recognition by counting the number of snowballs on a card and then finding the card with the penguin that had the correct written number. We also played an Arctic Animal match game by matching together the adult animal with the correct baby animal.

We read two books this week with a focus on polar animals. The first book we read was *Arctic Fives Arrive* by Elinor J. Pinczes. *Arctic Fives Arrive* tells the story of snowy owls, polar bears, ermine, walruses, Arctic hares, and musk oxen gathering together to watch the Northern light. The book also provided counting practice since each group of animals arrived in groups of five. We also read *Whales Passing* by Eve Bunting. *Whales Passing* is a story of a boy and his father watching a pod of orcas swimming and the father teaches the boy about orcas and how they travel great distances from the Arctic and they communicate with clicks and by singing.

Next week a special craft will be sent home with each child so be sure to check their take home folder.

I hope everyone has a wonderful break!

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**From Ms. Pam Holm**

*Sapling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

Wednesday's performances by the Saplings were a resounding success, thanks to their thorough rehearsals. I added a surprise element with the performance of "Little Snowflake".



Our theme this week, Evergreens, entailed exploring the life cycle of coniferous trees. We analyzed and compared the branches of pine, fir, spruce, and hemlock. We also closely examined different pine cones and seeds.

Upon completing *Mr. Willowby's Christmas Tree* by Robert Barry, we undertook tree size sequencing and matched the size tree to the characters in the story. To complement the story our sensory bin was stocked with different size trees to sort and alphabet letters for letter recognition. There was also a die-rolling activity with one-to-one counting, incorporating different evergreen trees.

Our blue carpet was converted into a makeshift ice-skating rink, this week, where the Saplings placed wax paper on their feet and skated around the tree.

The upcoming theme for next week is Gingerbread and Candy Canes. During our science and art session on Wednesday, we will create Gingerbread houses! Our academic focus will be concentrated on the letters G and C, reinforced through a Gingerbread sensory bin activity designed to refine writing skills. The aroma will be delightful! Additionally, numerous candied themed matching and counting puzzle activities will be available.

As we read Jan Brett's *Gingerbread Baby*, Saplings will be assigned characters to represent, standing when their character's name is mentioned. After the reading, we will analyze the characters' actions and quotes from the story.

On Friday, December 20th, the Saplings room will host a Pajama Day event, featuring a viewing of *The Polar Express*!

Happy Holidays!

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**From Ms. Sara Knottski**

*K & 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Elementary Teacher*

It has been a crazy busy but fun week in K/1. The musical took up a lot of our time this week but it was a very successful and entertaining performance! I saw lots of smiling and buzzing bees in K/1!

We spent the week reviewing key topics in both reading and math. We practiced sight words, letters, reading, writing, and answering questions about stories. In math, we reviewed shapes, place value, addition into the teens, and numbers up to 120.

K/1 continued to discuss emotions and emotional regulation. This week, the students learned about calm emotions. We practiced breathing to reset our bodies, intentional movements through yoga, and positive affirmation self-talk! K/1 is all very kind and empathic towards one another, and they thrive on learning new self-regulation skills.



Please have your child read over break! All students are capable of reading to you with the appropriate book. 20 minutes a day will make a big difference in academic growth! You can use our online tools for additional reading and math practice.

Have a wonderful break!

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**From Ms. Samantha Forster**

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

This has been a music filled week with lots of dancing and memorizing lines. We spent the first part of the week practicing and then performing! On top of this, we focused on wintery art and cold outside time. Because of the musical, our normal routine was interrupted but we had lots of review time and catch-up opportunities.

We tried to incorporate reading each day into our routine and we worked on a few new skills. We talked about quotation marks in dialogue, idioms, and compound sentences. Our target comprehension strategy was text features and story elements. Next week is our last week before winter break, so we are spending time writing and reviewing skills.



In math, we finished our unit 3 assessments and started preparing for concepts in unit 4. We are not going to jump all the way with lessons but we are reviewing past skills while incorporating new and interesting material.

This Friday, we will be having a little reward pajama and movie party. Students have worked hard on accomplishing goals so that they receive a sticker towards this goal. Thank you for all that came out and supported the musical! The students worked so hard at making it all possible and it was so much fun to see! Over break, please ensure that your children are reading. I will make sure each has a book to bring home, but this could also involve newspapers, cookbooks, and other things you have in print around the house. Ask guiding questions and help monitor their comprehension by stopping them frequently. I know we are all busy, but this is an easy way to help boost their reading skills! If you need any online platform passwords, I did send an email out with this information but feel free to reach back out if you can't find it.



See you in the new year!

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**From Ms. Sara Silence**

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

Even though I will miss Ms. Coronis deeply, I am excited for the opportunity to be back in the classroom. It will allow me to do longer learning projects and fun activities that I was not able to do in my other position.

On Monday we all had lots of questions of how the days will look and some anxiety of how things will change. We took time as a class to answer any questions and make sure students were comfortable. Enjoyed being the teacher and showing me the details of their classroom routine.



The biggest news of course was how awesome these kids did during the musical! 4/5 did an amazing job with their parts and with being role models for the younger kids.

The academics we did carve out in between practices we're mostly review topics. In reading, we are focusing on character point of view and finding details. In math fourth grade is working on estimating and multiplying multiple-digit numbers, while 5th grade math is working on place value of large numbers including decimals. We began our introduction to Google classroom, a platform we will be using for some of their classwork. This will allow more flexibility in student responses, allow all students more access to materials, and give them skills they need going forward.

Next week we will be previewing two of our next projects. One is a social studies unit that Ms. Coronis and I had planned to start, the other is a creation of reference visuals for their writer's notebooks. This will increase skills for reading comprehension. A tradition of a whole school pajama day and movie continues on Friday.

Winter break is a great time to snuggle in with a good book and work on any catch-up skills on Lexia or IXL, our online learning platforms. If you don't have the login information feel free to reach out.

If I missed anything or you have any questions, ever, feel free to contact me at any time.

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