

Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Weekly Newsletter

January 9, 2025

Dates to Remember:

Monday, January 13 ~ Birch Buddies ~ SKATE! After School Program

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:

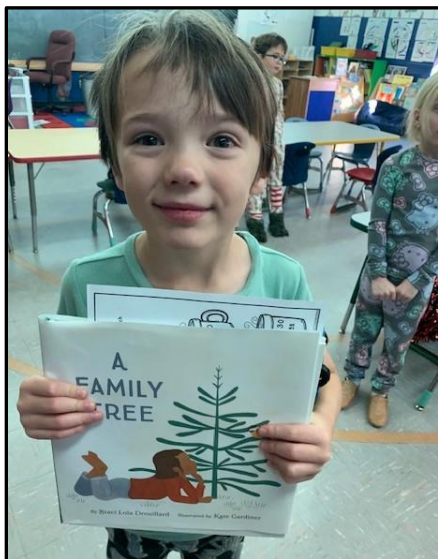
*School Director, Birch Grove Community School
Lead Coordinator, Birch Grove Community Service*

Happy New Year from Birch Grove Community School and Community Services! We are back in the swing of things and are looking forward to a year of learning and laughter!

Quite a few staff and students were ill just before the break, during the break, and/or after the break. Please keep your child home if they are ill - we don't want to spread illness to other children or to the staff. We have had a few days where we have had more than one staff out ill in a given day since the break, and have had to be flexible (and creative) with groupings and responsibilities. Many thanks to our adaptive staff and understanding families! Please talk with your child about handwashing, keeping hands out of their mouth, nose, and eyes, and coughing into their elbow. Thank you!



Sarah Jorgensen-Hallberg, from Java Moose, gifted this book, *A Family Tree*, to each K/1 student. The Author, Staci Lola Drouillard, signed each copy. Staci is a Cook County resident and wrote about a true story of one family and a little spruce tree as they adapt to change by drawing on the strength of their roots. Thank you so much!



Birch Buddies ~ SKATE! starts after school for 4 weeks on Mondays – the first is next week. 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! All families received an email confirming registration.

- Monday, January 13
- 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!



Wolf Ridge 2025 calendars are now on sale for \$5 each! If you would like to score a couple of calendars for this great price, email or send a note to school in your child's Take Home Folder.

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](#)

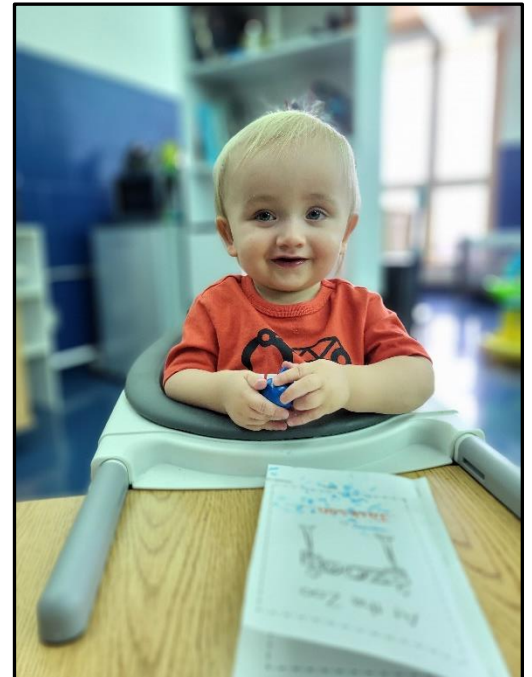


From Ms. Emily VanDoren

Seedlings Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service

We are going to the zoo! Well, through books and songs anyway 😊. This week we have been getting back into the routine of our day after the break and learning about different animals that we might see at the zoo.

Our morning activity table featured different zoo animal themed activities. The older Seedlings practiced their counting with cards that had different amounts of animals and then they used a dry erase marker to circle the written number. They also practiced matching an animal to their shadow. This proved a little tricky since one card had a realistic picture of the animal and the other was blacked out so they could only see the outline. We also introduced "different" in one of our activities. Instead of finding the matching animal picture, they had to circle which animal was "different" from the others in the group. Each child went home with a special "At the Zoo" book that they may color if they choose. It is also a great way to introduce reading as each page has a similar sentence structure with a new animal. While we read the book in the classroom, I would pause before the animal name giving the children a chance to name the animal to finish the sentence. This is a great reading technique that you could try at home.



We spent time in the gym each day to burn off energy since we would spend more time getting dressed than we would actually be able to play outside since the temps were so cold this week. We worked on our gross motor skills by kicking and throwing kickballs. We also played "Red Light, Green Light", "Simon Says" and pretended to be different zoo animals such as elephants, lions, and kangaroos.

Lots of animal books were read this week. We read a few from *National Geographic Kids* that provided us with information about animals that we might see at a zoo such as lions, elephants, zebras, and giraffes. We also read *Elephant Baby* by Ann McGovern which tells the story of Tembo, a baby African elephant. To expand on what we learned about Tembo, we also learned a fun new song, *The Splishy Splashy Elephant*. It is sung to the tune of the *Itsy Bitsy Spider* and has fun movements. Here are the lyrics if you would like to sing at home: *The splishy splashy elephant swung its long grey trunk* (swing arms like a trunk), *into the water, it dipped down for a dunk* (bend down stick your trunk down for a dunk), *up went the spray* (bring arms over head to spray), *cool water fell like rain* (wiggle fingers like rain falling), and *the splishy splashy elephant swung its trunk again* (swing arms again).

Have a nice weekend!

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From Ms. Pam Holm

Sapling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service

Welcome back from winter break! Saplings rang in the New Year with a Tick Tock theme serving as an introduction to analog time-telling methods.

We reviewed the achievements of the past year and the goals for the coming year. We explored what a resolution is by reading *Squirrel's New Year Resolution* by Pat Miller. Then each Sapling wrote their own resolution.

This week's theme was centered on Jan Brett books, including *The Mitten*, *The Hat*, and *Trouble With Trolls*, focusing on the development of comprehension skills, including predictions, retelling, sequencing, and cause and effect. The Saplings developed their fine motor skills through a mitten-lacing activity and participated in a fun retelling of the Ukrainian fairy tale, *The Mitten*, by placing character animals inside their laced up mittens.

Our educational sessions entailed letter recognition, with a particular focus on T for time and trolls, Y for year, M for mitten, and H for Hat. We also addressed one-to-one correspondence counting in mathematics, employing mittens and hats. Moreover, we cultivated our patterning abilities. The study of calendar months remained an ongoing endeavor.

Happy New Year!

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From Ms. Sara Knottski

K & 1st Grade Elementary Teacher

I can tell everyone had a great break! I heard a lot of stories about what everyone did over winter break and it sounded like a blast! Some sicknesses also followed us back from break. Make sure to talk with your child about handwashing, keeping hands out of their mouth, nose, and eyes, and coughing into their elbow.

The kindergarteners learned about the letter S and practiced bumping lines to make letters the correct size. In math, they learned about making tens and teen numbers. The first graders reviewed sight words and practiced reading this week. We read a few different nonfiction books and talked about what is an essential element in a nonfiction text. In math, we learned about making tens when adding.



As we get back into the swing of things and continue forward in winter, just a reminder, we do go outside even if it is frigid! Please ensure that students are sent to school with plenty of layers, snow pants, a hat, waterproof gloves, and a neck scarf.

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From Ms. Samantha Forster

2nd & 3rd Grade Elementary Teacher

This week has been focused on routine and refreshing knowledge learned before break. We have been reviewing expectations and how to operate in the classroom. We love our routine and it is nice to get back in the swing of things. There was a teeny bit of a backward slide but mostly the students were easily reminded about the skills that they learned in the first part of the year!

In reading, we focused on writing a descriptive paragraph based on a nonfiction article. We brainstormed, outlined, practiced topic and conclusion sentences, revised and published. This was a new type of paragraph to us but we are experts at paragraph writing



and summarizing so this was a piece of cake. With that, we practiced our summarizing skill with our anchor text (one about a K-9 officer and one about Helen Keller). I coupled this with a summarizing song and it has been stuck in everyone's heads this week! I spend two mornings a week doing a spiral review of vocabulary words then we add synonyms, antonyms, prefixes, and suffixes to our vocab word wall. All these skills are in preparation for our upcoming winter testing but also to help foster a love for language and reading.

Math skills are the most complex of all year right now. Second grade has continued to work on mastering regrouping and borrowing which is a hard skill to accomplish but is the base to all more complex addition and subtraction. They will continue with this but apply it to money and clocks throughout the next month. Third grade is working on fractions. This has been extremely hard for us all. We practiced comparing fractions, creating mixed numbers, plotting fractions on a number line, and word problems involving fractions. This is in preparation to applying these skills with measurement and clocks. I have added manipulatives to both groups to help master these skills and build understanding. I have also added a small group in the afternoon to ensure that each student is where they need to be.

We are in Antarctica this month. We are exploring fun facts about this continent, creating wintry masterpieces, and hopefully conducting our own frigid experiments outside. We have also spent time this week reviewing adaptations and habitats in preparation for an upcoming project! Lastly, our class will be creating our own book and I will be sending it to a publishing company. We decided on Things to Do in Minnesota in All Seasons. Each student will write a page and illustrate their writing. We are very excited to apply the skills that we have been working on into a real life project!

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From Ms. Sara Silence

4th & 5th Grade Elementary Teacher

Fourth and Fifth graders are fully back in the swing of things in class. We have started long range projects in both science and social studies. For science we are participating in the Minnesota Starbase program that offers us hands on learning with a STEM focus and we explore travel to Mars! In social studies we are beginning our tour of the United States. We started in the Northeast region with all of the small states, we will also "travel" to the statue of liberty and Hershey, Pennsylvania. As part of kicking off our social studies focus, this week we began creating a slideshow about ourselves. We started by focusing on ourselves and then zoomed out to our house, town, county, state, country, and finally planet!

Both grades are currently practicing multiplication of large numbers. We are doing single digit numbers to the thousands place as well as continuing double digit multiplication. Fifth



graders have the added twist of applying decimal knowledge in their exercises. The expectation for math continues to be one page of lesson practice per day, about 10 review problems, and 20 minutes daily on IXL. Students have at least a 30 minute study hall each day to finish up work, and staff support at any time. The best way families can support kids at home is by practicing math facts. Math problems can quickly become overwhelming if they need to look up the calculation for each step (9x6 for example).

We read a hilarious book this week about a girl who snuck a snake into the library. The librarian promptly found it, fainted, and left in an ambulance! It was quite the tale that had us looking for inferences and brought out some good vocabulary like: genuine, humble, truly, reference, and research.

Friday afternoon we will be going ice skating. If students have skates they would like to bring, please have them contained safely in a bag. Students will also be required to wear a helmet, which we have at school. If your child has one at home instead, feel free to send it.

Happy Weekend and Think Snow!

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