

Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Weekly Newsletter

January 23, 2025

Upcoming Events:

- Monday, January 27 ~ Birch Buddies ~ SKATE! After School Program
- Tuesday, January 28 - Friday, January 31 K-5 Fastbridge Assessments
- Monday, February 3 ~ Birch Buddies ~ SKATE! After School Program
- Friday, February 7 ~ No School-PD For Staff
- Monday, February 10 ~ Birch Buddies ~ SKATE! After School Program
- Friday, February 14 ~ Valentine's Day 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*

This was a short 4-day week, with Monday being a scheduled day off. Many schools had a 4 day break, having called school off on Tuesday, but Birch Grove Community School was still in session. Why? It's Minnesota and it will sometimes snow a lot and/or be quite cold. Lake County schools (381) closed due to cold temperatures and Cook County Schools (166) closed due to an equipment failure, resulting in no phones or internet which also impacted some heating systems. Great Expectations followed suit as they use the same transportation as 166. Birch Grove had heat on Tuesday. Please note that Birch Grove doesn't have any students that walk to school, and a good number are also dropped off by parents each day. Also, mainly because BGCS is birth-5th grade, none of our students/daycare children wait outside at bus stops - they wait in their parent's heated vehicles and then get on a heated bus. Arrowhead Transit reported that they ran routes on Monday, which was colder than Tuesday, and confirmed they would be running as normal on Tuesday. It was

also predicted to warm up somewhat in the afternoon. Many thanks to those that expressed their gratitude that BGCS was open, as their places of employment didn't close due to cold temperatures. Recess was held inside the school gym on Tuesday. As always though, families may keep their child(ren) home from school if they decide it is too cold to go to school. Please reach out if you have any questions concerning school closures.



“Pines by Paige”! Check out these beautiful white pines in the entry of the building. These were purchased from one of our Birch Grove students, who was selling them this summer on Sell & Swap. She sold out! She will have more this summer, so consider supporting her business while making the shore a little bit greener! We were happy to add a little bit of Northwoods to our entryway. 😊



Birch Grove Community School would like to welcome new paraprofessional, Marcy McGleno, who will be working in the 4/5 room on Mondays and Fridays. Marcy has extensive experience with children of various ages and in various settings. We are excited for her to join our team! Welcome!

Valentine's Day is just around the corner! K-5 have special activities in the afternoon on this day, including a card exchange. Our rule is if you give a card to one person in your class, you give to all. A list of classmate names will be sent home with students well in advance of Valentine's Day so that your child will have time to write them out at home - consider it a great handwriting exercise! If you, or your child, don't want to take part in exchanging cards, it's okay - there will be other fun activities happening. Also, considering how expensive cards can be, we will send home materials for your child to make their own cards, if you so desire. If you would like this option, please tell us sooner rather than later so that your child has time to make cards. Stay tuned for additional information from your child's K-5 teacher and from the Saplings and Seedlings as well.



We were sure to get outside last week prior to the colder temperatures. Many outside activities were happening throughout the building. Here are a few moments captured:



4/5 had a bonfire at the Campsite and made s'mores, but we forgot to take pictures. Oops!



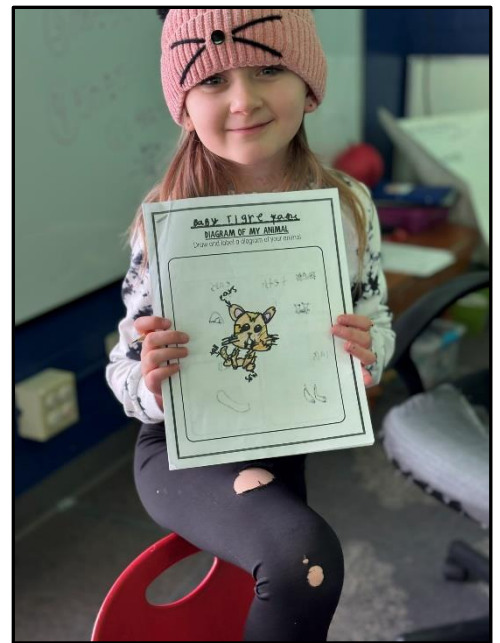
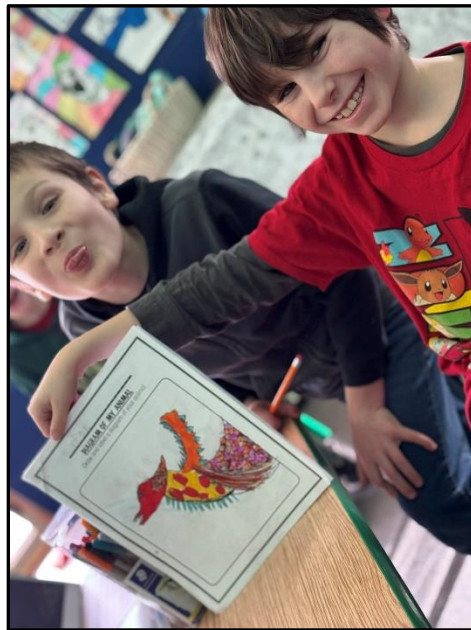
Birch Buddies ~ SKATE! after school special! K-5 students that are registered will have a snack in the gym prior to hitting the ice rink. Pick up time is by 5:00pm. Please be on time. Skates, helmets and snacks all provided for \$6 a day!

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!

2/3 worked on their "Create a Creature" project throughout the week. The students were so excited about this project that we just had to post some pictures here even though they project is not yet completed. Students worked hard, and they are turning out great! 2/3 student, Kadence, took the photos below.



NEW! Registration to be sent home tomorrow,
Friday, January 24!



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:

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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](#)



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**From Ms. Emily VanDoren**

*Seedlings Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

The Seedlings were clowning around this week as we learned about the circus! We learned that there are many talented people that perform at a circus. We learned about clowns, acrobats, magicians, and so much more!

Our morning activities included puzzles of different styles. There were a couple of more challenging puzzles this week that required us to really look at the pieces and match them up to create the pictures. One of the puzzles required using number recognition to line the pieces up in order from 1-10 to create a scene of a big top with performers. We also practiced number recognition by lining up clowns in order from 1-10. We also had a picture match activity where we had to match two halves of a card together to create pictures of different things that can be found at the circus.

The cold temperatures continue to keep us inside most days. All of the Seedlings love to play in the gym. We spend our time playing different games and playing with kickballs. We work on a variety of skills such as kicking and throwing. They also enjoy unstructured free play to create their own games.

The Seedlings enjoyed *Clara Joins the Circus* by Michael Pellowski for our morning snack reading. It tells the story of Clara, a cow, as she attempts to join a circus to cure her boredom. She tries out different acts until she finally finds one that is the perfect fit. It was a great book to help explain what the performers do at the circus while also providing some giggles.

Have a good weekend!

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**From Ms. Pam Holm**

*Sapling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

This week's lessons centered around Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the significance of friendships. We conducted a writing activity where the Saplings wrote about their aspirations for children worldwide, inspired by Dr. King's 'I Have a Dream' speech. Our discussions and activities sought to promote an appreciation for the shared human experience that transcends external differences. We also discussed the essential qualities of a good friend and the value of treating others with kindness and respect.

By concentrating on M for Martin and F for friends, we worked to improve recognition of capital and lowercase letters. The Saplings carried their writing practice over into the snow. We are emphasizing the sounds of letters and introducing basic two and three letter words.

Saplings engaged with colored bears and shapes in pattern manipulation activities and math counting and weighing exercises throughout the week. They also participated in a fun game of Chutes and Ladders.



Saplings art this week focused on a rainbow of colors and skin tones as they related to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and friendships. Our science experiment used eggs to represent people and display how even if we have differently-colored skin on the outside. We are all the same on the inside.

Small hands change the world.

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From Ms. Sara Knottski
K & 1st Grade Elementary Teacher

K/1 found the cold air temperature to be fascinating! We did a few cold weather experiments. One that they found amazing was throwing boiling water into the air. It turns into snow! We connected that idea with the idea of why we can see our breath went it's cold. We build a frozen statue by our window with wet clothes and observed air pressure changes in a balloon!

Another topic that was covered this week was Martin Luther King Jr. We discussed why there is a day off for him and what he did in his life that was important. They enjoyed listening to a few stories about Martin Luther King Jr.

In reading, Kindergarten practiced all of the letters of the alphabet. We said the sounds, names, and sorted letters together. We are practicing reading more and more. First grade learned about magic e and practiced reading and writing words with long I and long A. They enjoyed turning a word like cap to cape with only one letter.

In math, K/1 learned a variety of different math games. These games practice adding, subtracting, place value, and shapes. This will be added to our ever-changing math work cabinet for morning playtime and math work time.

Have a great weekend!

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**From Ms. Samantha Forster**  
*2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Elementary Teacher*

Ms. Forster planned to be out on this 4-day week, really hitting the academics hard last week, and preparing a daily plan for this week that reinforced her previous teachings. A combination of staff worked with 2/3 on reinforcing concepts that Ms. Forster delivered last week.

Students worked on vocabulary words with definitions, read aloud in small groups with questions/answer and discussion, worked in rotating reading stations, completed independent worksheets, as well as individual work on IXL and Lexia.

2/3 worked hard in all aspects of the classroom, but were most excited about the 4-day long project "Create a Creature". (See the pictures earlier in this newsletter.) In this fun project, students had to create their own creature. First, they had to draw and label a diagram of their made-up animal, detail the physical characteristics, illustrate the various stages of their animal's life cycle in a sequential order, draw four things that their animal eats, determine and draw the habitat, include 3 fun facts about their animal and then write an essay using all of this previous work done. In their rough copy they had to include an attention-grabbing introduction, title, body and conclusion. Then they needed to re-write a final copy. Ms. Forster will be pleased upon her return to see these amazing projects and give feedback on the final draft. She will also be pleased to know that her students showed exemplary behavior and I am sure they will be recognized for this as well as their incredible work!



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**From Ms. Sara Silence**

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

With all the cold this week, we focused on all sorts of things, that didn't include snow and cold! Our main anchor text was about hurricanes, while each reading group read about tropical disasters such as volcanoes and tsunamis. We also learned about Plymouth, Massachusetts as part of our tour of the northeastern US.

The last book that we read this week was a biography of Martin Luther King Jr. We will use this book as we write our own mini-biography summary next week. Summarizing what is read helps the brain process and make meaning out of what was read. It also allows for opportunities to make deeper connections as we reflect on what was read.

In science we learned about our fingerprints. We learned that each one is unique. We then used ink pads to experiment with our fingerprints as we created some fingerprint doodles. Thursday and Friday we will look more into some fast facts about fingerprints, as it was an area of interest for the kids.

In math, we began to tackle long division. Using a method with a box diagram, the process has gone pretty smoothly. It really highlights place value and gives students an understanding of why they are doing the steps. One student this week had an "Aha" moment. They had been using the traditional long division method, copying the steps but not knowing why those steps worked. For anyone concerned, don't worry, that "normal" way will be taught too. This way just helps them see the place values and is keeping their numbers straight.

Lastly, this week we have been approaching review topics and problem areas as we prepare for winter assessments next week. Students have been encouraged to mark any work they are getting that they have a question on so it can be addressed. We are also doing more practice activities to become fluent or practice fluency in reading and math skills. Next week we will have some form of assessment on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. The only thing for you to do at home to prepare is to help your child get enough sleep and ensure they are relaxed. No need to stress, just encourage them to take their time and do their best work.

Thank you and have a great weekend!

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