

Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Weekly Newsletter

September 10, 2026

Monday-Friday, September 14 -18 ~ K-5 FastBridge Assessments

Tuesday, September 15 ~ School Board Meeting at 4:00

Wednesday, September 16 ~ VOA-MN School Authorizer Onsite Fall Visit

Tuesday, September 22 ~ DNR Field Day at Birch Grove for 4th & 5th Grade

Thursday, September 24 ~ School Picture Day

Monday, September 28 ~ K-5 Painting By the Lake with Mary

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 has been another great start to a school year!
Welcome to all of our new and former families – we
are glad that you are here!

BGCS will strive to give every child what they need to make significant growth throughout the year, but we will need your help to do it. Please communicate with your child's teacher, encourage and support your child with any homework they may have (there shouldn't be much), use time at home to promote learning, see to it that your child is read to or reads independently at home, and make sure your child knows you think school is important. These are just a few things that you can do to promote growth. The educational staff will have other ideas and resources for you throughout the year. Please never hesitate to contact us if you have questions, concerns or ideas.



The front entry doors open at 7:55am and close at 8:10am. If you arrive before 7:55 please wait in vehicles for the front building doors to open. If you see other children entering the building, it is because they are employee children, or the children are enrolled in one of the two daycares, Saplings or Seedlings. If you arrive after 8:10, please ring the bell for entry. All K-5 students are able to walk themselves into the building – we’ve got this! At the end of the school day, you may pick your K-5 or Sapling up between **3:00-3:15 by the pavilion.**

Newsletters will be emailed each week, usually on Thursdays (sometimes Fridays if it is really busy around here!). Newsletters will be emailed to the address that you indicated on enrollment forms. If you would like to add an email address to the newsletter email group, please let us know by emailing birchgrove@boreal.org Newsletters are also posted on our school website at www.birchgroveschool.com

Be sure to check out our website at www.birchgroveschool.com. You can find the school year calendar, weekly newsletters, lunch menus, school board minutes, upcoming events, resources, and more. I hope that you will be a regular visitor to our site.

Facebook:

Be sure to “Like” and “Follow” our school Facebook page, and be sure to share with others! We post regularly – it can help to keep you up to date with events and activities! [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/birchgrovecommunityschool/)
<https://www.facebook.com/birchgrovecommunityschool/>

Each Sapling and K-5 student has been given a Take Home Folder. Please check this folder daily. Use this folder as one form of communication with your child’s teacher. You can return forms and paperwork, send bus passes, etc. **Take Home Folders are checked every day – backpacks are not!**

Bus passes – if you have a change in your child’s normal busing, please send a written note. For instance, if your child is being picked up by someone and not riding the bus home, please send a note, email, or call. If your child is getting off at a different scheduled bus stop than normal, please send a note – the different stop needs to be on the route. Email will also work, but send it to both me and your child’s teacher in the event that one of us is absent. Also, emails should be sent well before the end of the day so that they are sure to be opened. If you decide to come to Birch Grove and pick your child up instead of having your child ride the bus home, you don’t need to email or call to let us know, you can just show up. If you want to do this, you just need to wait for your child to come out and pick them up at the pavilion between 3:00-3:15 and let your child’s teacher know you are there. Buses leave at 3:15, so just be there before that. Thank you!

Hot lunch is served on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. We do not have hot lunch on Wednesdays so that Senior Lunch can happen, as it has for decades in the BG building. We appreciate you sending a lunch from home on Wednesdays. For now, please do not send anything that needs to be heated, as we will be eating outside on Wednesdays as much as possible and microwaves are not available outside. In November(ish), when we start Lantern Lunch on Wednesdays (inside the building), microwaves will be available at that time. Looking forward to Lantern Lunch!

Please send a backup lunch to be kept at school for the inevitable day that one is forgotten at home or on the bus. Backup lunches will be kept in student lockers. Non-perishables foods should be used for backup lunches.

My Opinion Piece! 😊

In my experience, a good portion of the children that have a “bad day”, “melt down”, make poor choices, refuse or have a hard time focusing on their work, or end up in the school office to see me for challenging behaviors, **ARE TIRED.** In my opinion, if all of the children that came to school were well rested each and every school day, I believe that it would cut down on at least 50% (maybe more) of challenging behaviors, and would increase the percentage and gains of academic growth across the board.

I have included a few sleep charts below. All children are different – your child might require more/less sleep than what you see below.

Average Sleep Needs	
Age	Hours
Newborns (0-2 months)	12 - 18
Infants (3 months to 1 year)	14 - 15
Toddlers (1 to 3 years)	12 - 14
Preschoolers (3 to 5 years)	11 - 13
School-aged children (5 to 12 years)	10 - 11
Teens and preteens (12 to 18 years)	8.5 - 10
Adults (18+)	7.5 - 9



At what time should your child go to bed?							
Age	Wake-up time						
	6:00 AM	6:15 AM	6:30 AM	6:45 AM	7:00 AM	7:15 AM	7:30 AM
	Sleeping time						
5	6:45 PM	7:00 PM	7:15 PM	7:30 PM	7:30 PM	8:00 PM	8:15 PM
6	7:00 PM	7:15 PM	7:30 PM	7:30 PM	8:00 PM	8:15 PM	8:30 PM
7	7:15 PM	7:15 PM	7:30 PM	8:00 PM	8:15 PM	8:30 PM	8:45 PM
8	19:30	7:30 PM	8:00 PM	8:15 PM	8:30 PM	8:45 PM	9:00 PM
9	7:30 PM	8:00 PM	8:15 PM	8:30 PM	8:45 PM	9:00 PM	9:15 PM
10	8:00 PM	8:15 PM	8:30 PM	8:45 PM	9:00 PM	9:15 PM	9:30 PM
11	8:15 PM	8:30 PM	8:45 PM	9:00 PM	9:15 PM	9:30 PM	9:45 PM
12	8:15 PM	8:30 PM	8:45 PM	9:00 PM	9:15 PM	9:30 PM	9:45 PM

Good Attendance is Necessary for Learning!

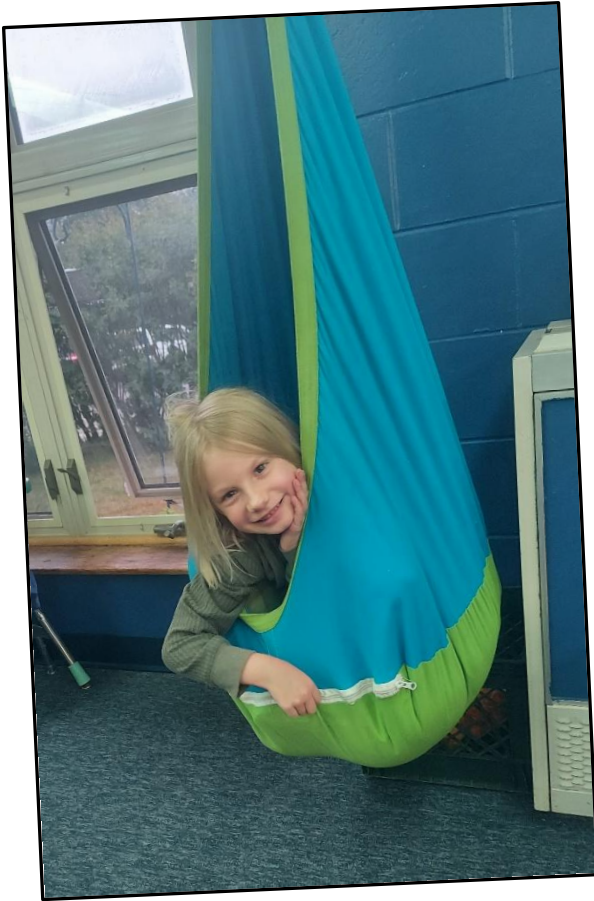
We understand that families sometimes take vacations, have family emergencies, special people may come up north to visit, or families may go out of town early for special events, etc., and some families may pull their students from school on these days. Please keep in mind that your child could (and most likely will) get sick later in the school year and may be absent for a number of days, adding to the total number of absences that were not illness related. Please plan for your child to be sick **5-10** days in the school year, and consider this when pulling your child from school for other reasons. We are required by law to report excessive truancy/excessive absences whether excused or unexcused, to the appropriate agencies, and no one wants that. Should your child's absences become concerning, we will always reach out to you first. If you have any questions, please let us know.

Please send your child to school in layers. We go outside everyday in all but the worst weather! Children can leave a sweatshirt/jacket here at school so that they will always have it and it is not forgotten at home.

Congratulations to Sara Knottski & Walter on passing your therapy evaluation! Sara & Walter are LK9RR's 2nd official registered therapy team! Woof, woof, way to go!



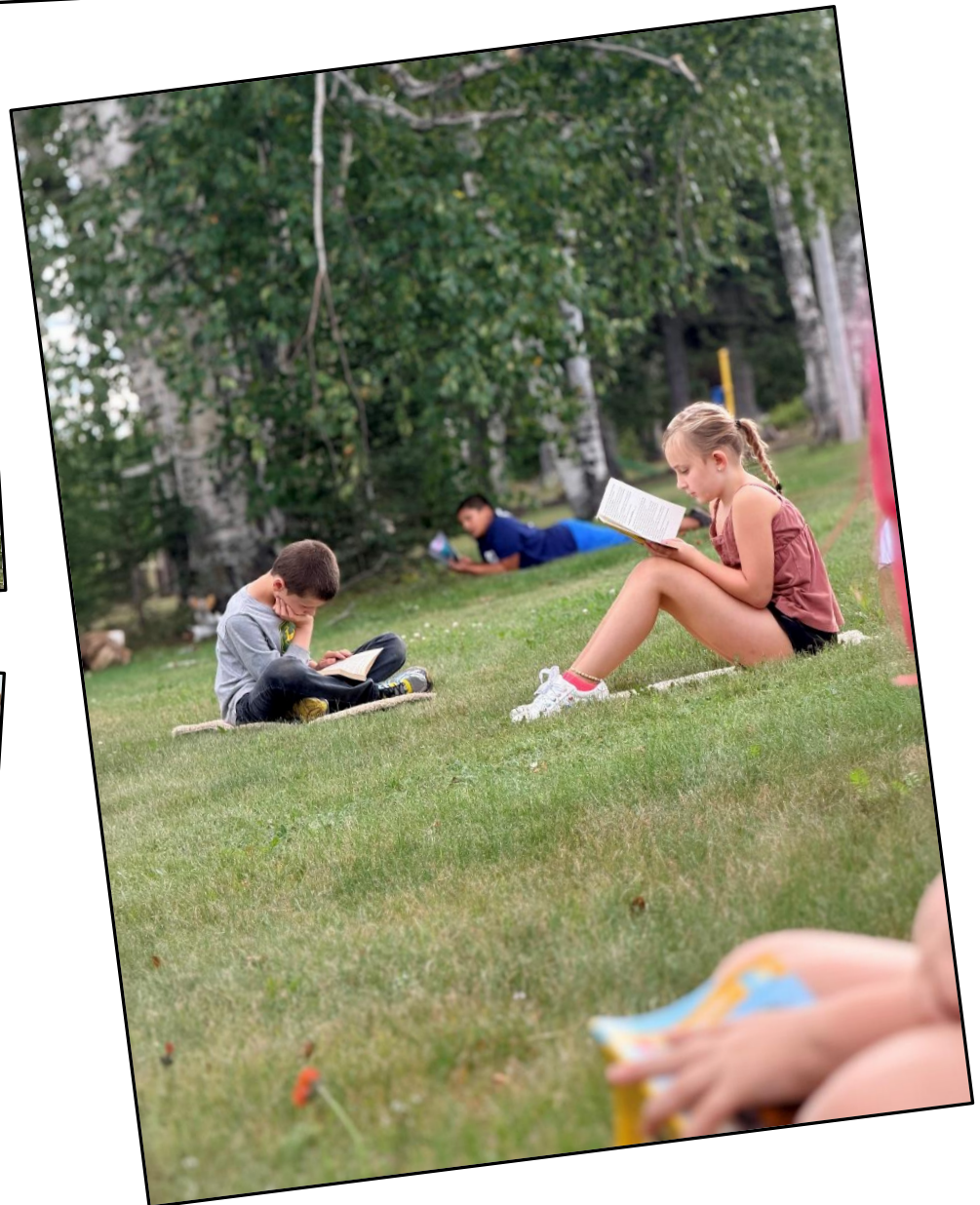
The First Week of 2026-2027! (Three days, really!)

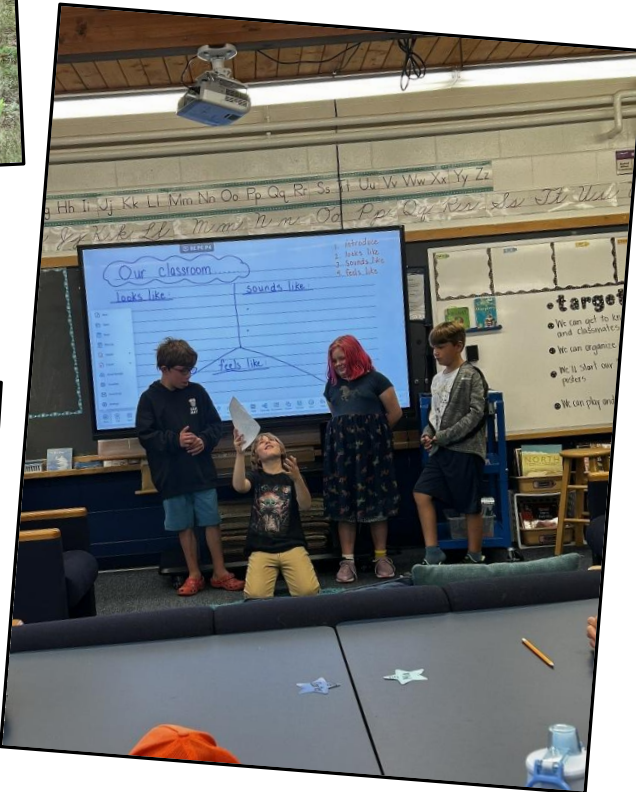


More pictures can be found on the
school Facebook page.

[Facebook](#)









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school Facebook page.

[Facebook](#)



✨**WOW!** ✨ Tofte General Store has done it AGAIN!! For the 4th year in a row, Tofte General Store will be donating fruits and vegetables for the entire school year to the in-house school lunch program! Show them some love on the school Facebook post and when you stop in! Thank you for the community support of our small, public charter school that is Birch Grove Community School in Tofte on the West End!

26-27 school pictures with Bruce Johnson Photography are scheduled for Thursday, September 24. Pictures include "regular" and "silly"! Order forms will be sent home prior to picture day. All students have their picture taken, even if families don't place an order. Everyone say "CHEESE"!



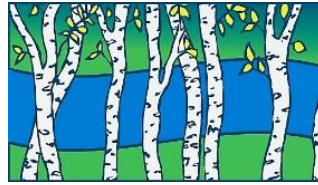
Birch Buddies ~ HIKE! after school program, the fall session:
Starts Wednesday, September 16 and runs every Wednesday for 5 weeks.
Join us and HIKE the SHORE! <https://www.birchgroveschool.com/Birch-Buddies>



The first student of the school year to be caught "being good"!
On the second day of school even - that called for a double prize! Nice work!



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!



birchgrove@boreal.org
www.birchgroveschool.com

School Spirit Store Link: <https://birchgrove.logosoftwear.com/> You can use GRAB15 for 15% off
Face Book: [Birch Grove Community School and Community Services #4145 | Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/Birch-Grove-Community-School-and-Community-Services-4145/)



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**From Ms. Emily VanDoren**

*Seedling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

The Seedlings had a great first week back at school! We spent the week getting back into our new routine and learning about a few new routines to our classroom. Every morning before snack we will have circle time where we sing a song to greet all our friends and then we will read a book and sing a song that goes with our theme of the week.

This week the sensory table was filled with pipe cleaners, empty thread spools, and pieces of plastic straws to create a threading station. By threading the straws and spools onto the pipe cleaners, the Seedlings worked on their fine motor skills.

Our theme this week was School Days. We read books that had a focus on the school day and what may be seen in a school. We played matching games that included a shadow match, shape match, and sorted pictures of objects that may be found in a classroom. The Seedlings also colored a picture of a backpack using dot markers.

When the weather allowed, we spent time outside playing in the Saplings backyard. We have small slides, a sandbox with various toys, ride-on cars, and a tunnel that the Seedlings can enjoy.





I am looking forward to this school year and am very excited for all the fun, learning, and growth that will happen. If you have any questions/concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out.

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**From Ms. Pam Holm**

*Sapling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

Saplings started the new school year off with *Rocking in their School Shoes* with Pete the Cat. We read his stories, learned about our classroom and school, and welcomed two new friends. Saplings played "Follow the Leader" to practice walking in the hallway with their gross motor skills, moving just like Pete does in his rocking school shoes. This activity moved outside into the Saplings' woodland nature play space. For science our little scientists dove into a sweet hands-on experiment! They explored how everyday liquids can change the size of a gummy bear. Before placing the bears into different liquids, they made their own scientific predictions. Over the course of the week, they eagerly watched them grow and transform!

On Tuesday, the Saplings focused on geometric shapes by creating school bus art using squares and circles. The creative momentum continued into Wednesday as they participated in a collaborative body-tracing activity to design a vibrant pop-art mural inspired by artist Keith Haring.



Thursday mirrors were utilized to examine their physical characteristics, charting facial features, hair and eye color, and recording data on favorite colors and foods, as well as pets and siblings. Saplings then used these details to create self-portraits, which will be proudly displayed with their upcoming All About Me Posters.

Saplings wrapped up the week with a fire drill, focusing on essential safety skills. The drill covered: alarm recognition, quietly lining up and exiting the school under teacher guidance and gathering at a designated safe meeting spot outside with the class. I also underscored the importance of handwashing by reading *Those Mean Nasty Dirty Downright Disgusting But – Invisible Germs* by Judith Rice.

To foster literacy skills, a range of Pete the Cat pre-writing exercises were employed, encompassing beginning sound clip cards, vocabulary word matching and tracing activities. This week's comprehensive vocabulary list included: cat, school, bus, playground, lunchroom, library, shoe,



button, red, blue, yellow, green, brown, white, mud and wet. Thursday's literacy included a variety of body part vocabulary, such as hand, foot, head, arm, and more.

Throughout the week math and manipulatives tables provided opportunities for Saplings to participate in measurement, size sorting and weighing activities with buttons and shoes, along with counting them in a manner similar to Pete. Buttons were also added to the yellow playdough to create Pete's yellow shirt. Felt mats of diversity were offered to develop fine motor skills through face creation. The sensory bin contained connecting people mixed in with school buses, using flashlights and a light table, Saplings shone the light behind each school bus to magically reveal hidden letters or numbers.

I am so excited to see what the Saplings learn and create next. Thank you for your continued support in making learning so much fun for your Sapling! May they keep walking along and singing their song because it's all good.

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From Ms. Sara Knottski

K & 1st Grade Elementary Teacher

K/1 had an amazing start to the school year! We spent this week learning the expectations in school. We learned how to walk in the halls, sit on the carpet, and care for our classmates and school materials. We also spent time outside enjoying the beautiful weather! We played many games and got to know new friends in our class. I can tell it is going to be a great year!

We also spent time writing and drawing about ourselves, and we learned a lot about our classmates. It was great to see the new first graders step up and be role models for the new students.

Our favorite activity this week was playing with Walter. K/1 is learning about how we take care of Walter and what Walter can and cannot do in school. We enjoyed bringing Walter in with our play. Walter was served 'lunch' from our play kitchen; he was a student during play 'school' and learned some letter names and sounds, and Walter played fetch and tag in the woods with us!

Note: We have a snack twice daily, one mid-morning and one mid-afternoon. Please let me know if you wish your child not to have a snack



during one or both of those times. Please pack two small healthy snacks for this time (especially on hot lunch days). The students cannot eat desserts or drink juice during this time.

Each child needs a backup lunch, gym shoes, and an extra set of clothes at school. **Please pack a backup lunch, gym shoes, and an extra set of clothes for your child to keep in their locker for the rest of the year.**

I look forward to a great year with the kindergarteners, first graders, and you!

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**From Ms. Samantha Forster**

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

Welcome Back! I am so excited for this next school year and seeing everyone's faces again. As always, please reach out with any questions or concerns as we start our year off. This week has been all about our routines and procedures. We talked, demonstrated, talked, and demonstrated again. This may feel like a mundane activity for students but it is crucial for our classroom to start to feel predictable. We started our yearly All About Me poster, where students were able to state things about themselves and then add their own creative spin to it. We also did a classroom roster using Self-Portraits and "I am" statements. Students drew themselves and then wrote adjectives that helped describe themselves. We were able to spend time picking our garden. Students asked if they could wash their carrots off in the



garden hose so they could have an end of day snack so many students got onto the bus eating their delicious carrot. Lastly, we focused on our time capsule that was similar to the all about me poster but we will be putting them in a jar to bury until the spring. I have told students if they want to bring in a small and UNIMPORTANT object to put in the time capsule, that they can with permission from their adult at home. We ended our week with a trip to Tofte Park, which is always our highlight!

We eat 2 snacks a day (second being optional). Please send snacks that will fuel your child's body for all the fun activities that we have planned. If you would like to send a sweet treat for your child, please ensure that there are nutritious snacks as I will have them eat those first. The North Shore is known for its moody weather, so please send students with extra clothes (keep in locker), a



sweatshirt, and mud boots/okay if they get muddy shoes so they feel prepared to take on the day. If you need help with any of that, let us know and we will be able to assist. I cannot wait for this year!

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From Ms. Stacy Coronis

4th & 5th Grade Elementary Teacher

The school year is off to a great start in the 4/5 classroom. We have spent time learning about our new classroom and each other. We have 16 students in our classroom and we have all commented on how kind and caring our class seems to be with each other! Great discussions took place about how to be respectful, responsible and safe while learning and growing together. Students created a set of rules that will help everyone reach their potential this year!

4th and 5th graders enjoyed learning three new math games called Addition & Subtraction War

and Multiplication Squares. These games were not only fun, but they helped us review our basic facts. The cooperation, sharing and kind comments that students shared with each other during the games was inspiring and helped make everyone feel included. In reading we spent time talking about the 40 chapter book challenge and how our classroom library is organized. On Thursday we had outdoor reading by the bonfire and in the hammocks. It was definitely a favorite highlight of our week!

Please watch for any upcoming handouts and papers that will be sent home daily in your child's folder. Thank you so much for sending your child to school with a water bottle and a snack each day to keep them hydrated and full of energy! What an exciting start to a wonderful year ahead!

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