

Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Weekly Newsletter

September 11, 2025

Upcoming Events:

Tuesday, September 16 ~ School Board Meeting 4:00pm

Wednesday, September 17 ~ VOA-MN School Authorizer Onsite Fall Visit

Thursday, September 18 ~ Annual Painting in the Woods with Mary LaBarge

Tuesday, September 23 ~ DNR Field Day for 4/5 at Birch Grove

Thursday, September 25 ~ School Picture Day

Monday, September 29 ~ No School/Staff PD

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

The second week of school went just as well as the first week, and we are on our way to a great school year!

Please be sure to take a little time each week to check out these weekly newsletters to see what we have been up to. The newsletters may also be able to answer some of the questions that you may have now or in the future. There is some information below that is a repeat of last week, as I want to make sure everyone reads it, but there is new information below as well. Many thanks to all of the teachers who contribute to this weekly newsletter - your efforts are appreciated! 😊



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 after 8:10, please ring the bell for entry. All K-5 students are able to walk themselves into the building – we got this! At the end of the school day, you may pick your K-5 or Sapling up in the afternoon between **3:05 and 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. 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. 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 between 3:05-3:15 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 back-up 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.

Birch Grove Picture Day is Monday, September 25! Seedlings and Saplings start at 9:00. Enrolled Seedlings or Saplings that are not attending this day can come at 9:00 just for pictures! Ring the bell for entry. K-5 pictures will start after the littles. Picture forms will be sent home soon. Smile!....and....Silly Face!



Birch Buddies ~ HIKE! after school fall session starts today, Thursday, September 11.

<https://www.birchgroveschool.com/Birch-Buddies>

9/11 Caribou Falls -1 mile

9/18 Carlton Peak to school 2.5 miles

9/25 Cook County 45 Trailhead to Cascade 3.6 miles (Suggested older/experienced hikers)

10/2 Sugarloaf Hiking Trailhead (not off of 61)

10/9 Leveaux (Oberg trailhead) 2.3 miles

10/14 White Skyrock & Lake Agnes 2.5 miles (Tuesday)

Our annual Painting in the Woods with local artist, Mary LaBarge, is set for Thursday, September 18.
"Time spent amongst the trees, is time never wasted..." ~ Katrina Mayer



Check out this story on Walter, Birch Grove Community School's new therapy dog (in training), on Northern News Now! Walter will be officially registered on his first birthday in March 2026. Woof!
Link: [Birch Grove Community School welcomes a new therapy dog](#)



2025-2026 Birch Grove Team



Back row: Jessica Klemmer, Jenny Buckman, Angie Fernlund, Emily VanDoren, Stacy Coronis, Sara Silence, and Pam Holm Front row: Gayle Grinnell, Diane Blanchette, Sara Knottski, Walter, and Samantha Forster

Birch Grove Community School Staff:

School Director: Diane Blanchette - birchgrove@boreal.org

K/1 Teacher: Sara Knottski - sara.knottskibgcs@gmail.com

2/3 Teacher: Samantha Forster - sam.forsterbgcs@gmail.com

4/5 Teacher: Stacy Coronis - stacy.coronisbgcs@gmail.com

Special Education Teacher: Sara Silence - sara.silencebgcs@gmail.com

K-5 Paraprofessionals: Jessica Klemmer, Jenny Buckman, Gayle Grinnell

School Nurse: Gayle Grinnell

Office Assistant: Jessica Klemmer

School Cook: Angie Fernlund

School Therapy Dog: Walter (to be registered when he turns 1 in March 2026)

Birch Grove Community Service Staff:

Lead Community Service Coordinator: Diane Blanchette

Community Service Coordinators: Sara Silence, Jessica Klemmer, Gayle Grinnell

Saplings Teacher: Pam Holm - pam.holmbgcs@gmail.com

Seedlings Teacher: Emily VanDoren - emily.vandorenbgcs@gmail.com

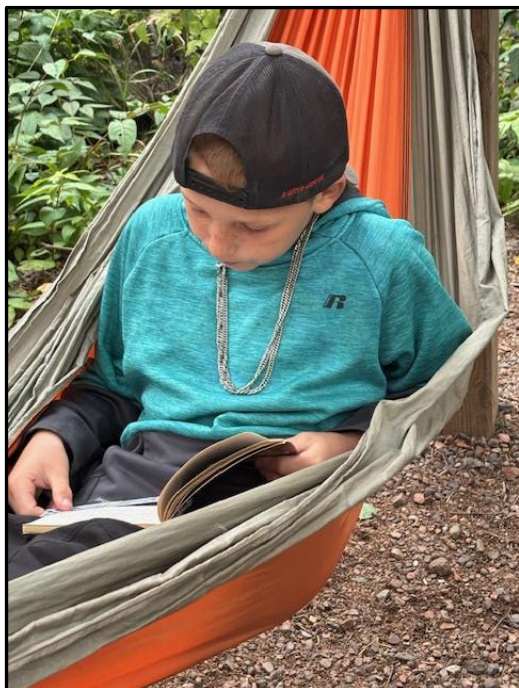
Last Friday was a drizzler, but these students still made s'mores! This was the first s'more day of the year and we look forward to many more this school year!

SMORES

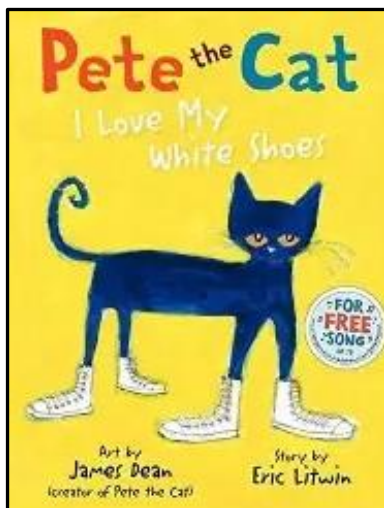
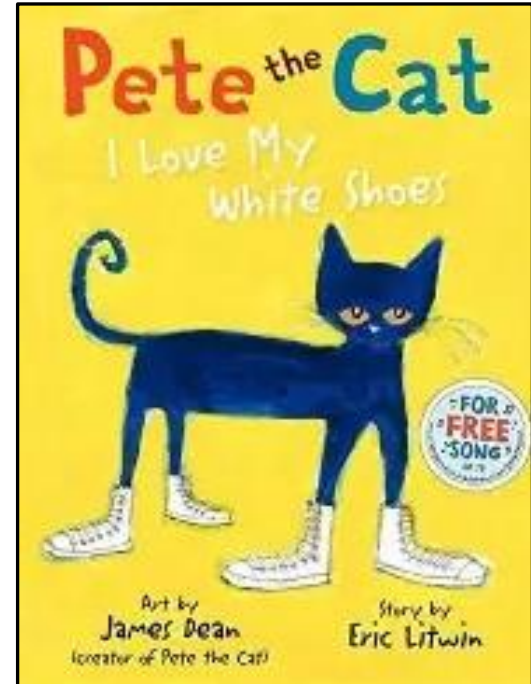
*"A marshmallow slowly roasted over a campfire
Some chocolate oozing down my face
some gram crackers crunching under my teeth
I can't always make smores but I can have some more
I want some more kindness to put a smile on my face
I want to express that kindness to others around me
I want some more quality time with family
I want some more good friends to surround me
I want to be a great friend in return
I want some more compassion to ground me
I want more passion when I right even if it keeps me at night
I want the sight to find the beauty around me and you
Do you want smores too?
Do you want some more in life?" ~ Ann M Johnson*



"Reading is good anywhere, but especially so in the woods- surrounded by the beautiful fresh green and the smell of sun on pine needles." ~Unknown



The Saplings recreated Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes through footprint process art, requiring them to walk through different colored paints to produce muddy footprints, echoing the events of the story! [Saplings Program Ages 3-5 - Birch Grove Community School](#)



We have been slowly creating Walter's school schedule as we consider the best interest of our students, as well as Walter's. Rest time has been built into Walter's schedule throughout the day. During student lunch, Walter comes into the school office for a 30-minute snooze before heading out to join K-5 for a 30-minute recess at the playground or at the Campsite. Shhh...Walter is sleeping!



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.logosoftware.com/> You can use GRAB15 for 15% off

Face Book: [Birch Grove Community School and Community Services #4145 | Facebook](#)



From Ms. Emily VanDoren

Seedling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service

This week we continued our School Days theme from last week and added in a few new activities and changed out our materials in the sensory table.

We read *Time to Say Bye-Bye* by Maryann Cocca-Leffler and practiced waving bye-bye to each of our friends. This book is a great way to help infants and toddlers say bye-bye to one person or activity and move on to the next fun thing that is on their schedule. Book reading is a favorite of all the Seedlings. They love to pull up a floor cushion on our large leaf rug and all sit around while I read books. They also like to sit and look through the books on their own. This is a great way for them to develop a love of reading and to learn new words.

Our sensory table was filled with extra-large pompoms, multicolored wood clothespins, and laminated color cards. This table worked their fine motor skills as they practiced squeezing the clothespins to open them and tried to pick up the pompoms. We also talked about colors as we clipped the clothespins to the matching color card. Shoelace threading boards were used this week as well to practice fine motor skills. The older Seedlings were successful at threading the shoelace through the small holes with a little guidance from me. We also colored a picture of a school and a school bus with markers.



The nicer weather this week allowed for longer walks as well as some time playing on the playground. The Seedlings enjoy the swings, the small slides, and taking turns pretending to drive cars and trucks at the steering wheel.

218-663-0170 ext. 7

emily.vandorenbgcs@gmail.com

~~~~~

**From Ms. Pam Holm**

*Sapling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

To initiate the week, the Saplings *All About Me* theme observed International Dot Day with a reading of *The Dot* by Pete H. Reynolds, which emphasizes the importance of self-expression and creativity. This day encouraged connection, collaboration, and creativity among the students. The story centers around a caring teacher who motivates a doubting student to believe in herself by making her mark. As a result, each Sapling created their own dot.

Throughout the week, the Saplings utilized mirrors 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. This information will be showcased on their *All About Me* posters. The Saplings also participated in a collaborative body tracing activity to design a pop art mural inspired by Keith Haring.



Throughout the week math and manipulatives tables provided opportunities for Saplings to participate in measurement, counting, and weighing activities, employing counting figures, hand spans, and footsteps to measure length and height. The literacy and writing table included a variety of body part vocabulary, such as hand, foot, head, arm, and more. Playdough and felt mats of diversity were offered to develop fine motor skills through face creation. The sensory bin contained photographs of individuals from diverse backgrounds, while the science center offered magnifying glasses for fingerprint examination.

As a means of fostering camaraderie and learning one another's names, we played *Who Stole the Cookie from the Cookie Jar*, introducing letters and letter sounds with names written on cookies. This activity also helped the Saplings develop their sense of rhythm and beat.

The Saplings welcomed two new friends this week by taking a walk to Rocky Hill and receiving their new journals.

218-663-0170 ext. 6  
[pam.holmbgcs@gmail.com](mailto:pam.holmbgcs@gmail.com)

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

We are working hard in K/1st grade! We started math and reading groups this week. Students are working at different stations during math and reading times. We are also working on a poster called "All About Me." The students drew and wrote about their family, themselves, and their favorite things. Posters, as always, will be hanging in the hall all year.

This week, Kindergarteners were introduced to the letters C, O, and A. We are learning the procedure for how we are going to learn new letters throughout the year. The students have been writing C, saying the C sound, and talking and reading about words that start with C. Kindergarten will be building their alphabet knowledge as the weeks go on. 1st grade reviewed letter sounds as they focused on reading and writing. We blended sounds, worked on spelling, and practiced reading words with short vowels. The 1st graders are loving reading decodable books.

In math, we are learning to write and recognize numbers. 1st grade is reviewing how to write numbers and counting up to 120. They are also learning about partners of 5, such as 3 and 2. Kindergarten students learned how to write, recognize, and count numbers 0, 1, and 2. Ask them to write these numbers at home, and see if they remember!

This week, K/1 was excited to learn about Walter's rules and their rules with Walter. We liked that we get to have Walter in our room at the end of the day. We get to play with him during playtime! Their favorite game to play with him is chase and family.



Reminders: Please send students with backup clothes and a backup lunch to keep in their lockers. We do have a snack twice a day. Please send something healthy (especially on hot lunch days!)

As always, feel free to contact me by phone, email, or in person if you have any questions!

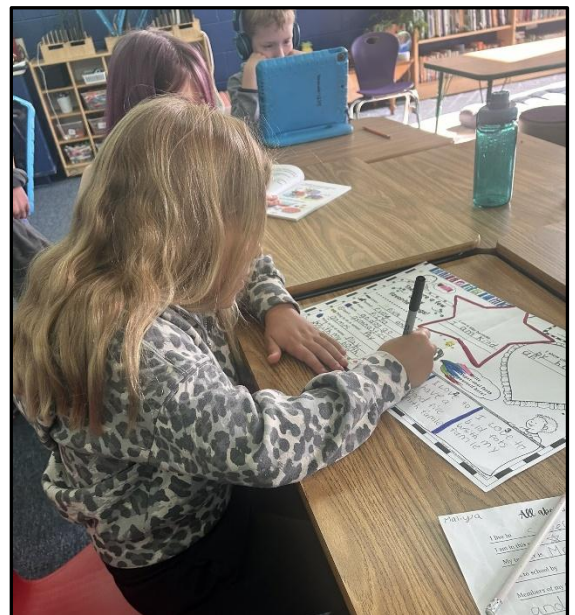
218-663-0170 ext. 2

sara.knottskibgcs@gmail.com

~~~~~  
**From Ms. Samantha Forster**

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

This week has been all about routines and testing! We practiced many things that we will be doing this year each day, sentence writing routine, logging into computers, transitions to independent work, and getting ready for other activities outside of the classroom. It is a new classroom for many students but everyone is adjusting so well! We did an animal traits unit in science this week and spent some time classifying different types of animals. This will be to help with us as we start our reading units next week! We also have been doing a read aloud each day after recess. I will continue this throughout the year and choose a different chapter book each time. This may be concluded with the corresponding movie and that has been making students VERY excited to listen each day. We explored a North American artist named "Emily Carr" this week and did an art project inspired by her. Lastly, we cleaned out the garden to prepare it for the coming winter.



Next week, we start our reading and math curriculums with a lot of small group rotations. This may leave students feeling mentally tired each day. We will go outside each day and explore so please ensure your student has warm clothes and a spare change of clothes, just in case. Thank you for continuing to send a snack each day with students!

218-663-0170 ext. 3

[samantha.forsterbgcs@gmail.com](mailto:samantha.forsterbgcs@gmail.com)

~~~~~  
From Ms. Stacy Coronis

4th & 5th Grade Elementary Teacher

Classroom routines and procedures are coming together nicely in our classroom. Students are learning about each other and what Mrs. Coronis' expectations are in our room. All students worked together to create our class rules and then completed a self-portrait to put on our expectations wall. Students are doing their very best to follow these rules and I have been so impressed! We have earned almost 70 compliments for our hard work over the past two weeks towards our class goal of 100 to earn a class hamster!

In math class we reviewed how to break down big numbers into expanded form and how to write them in word form. We also reviewed subtraction and addition with regrouping. After a few tries most students were very proficient. Your child has math facts in a plastic sleeve in their take home folder. If your child has time at home, have them set a timer for 7 minutes and see how many they can successfully complete. We also started the online math platform called IXL which can

differentiate math skills based on your child's math level. Students also used a free online program called Ascend Flashcards and can be accessed at home on any device. Ask your child to show you how it works! We are working hard on our facts every day! In reading we reviewed how to pick a "just right" chapter book to maximize reading growth, but still enjoy the chosen book. We reviewed the different types of genres of books and introduced the 40 book challenge that all kids will be able to join. Your child should be reading at home most nights for about 30 minutes using books from our classroom library, the school library or even your books at home. Thank you so much for reinforcing this habit at home!

Please check your child's "Take Home" folder each night and have them return it to school every morning. Remove any notes home or corrected papers. Tomorrow your child will bring home their first weekly progress report along with work from the week. Please look over both, sign the progress report and then send the progress report back to school in your child's folder. Thank you so much!



218-663-0170 ext. 4

stacy.coronisbgcs@gmail.com