

Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Weekly Newsletter

December 5, 2024

Dates to Remember:

Monday, December 9 ~ Scholastic Book Fair Opens
Wednesday, December 11 ~ Winter Musical 1:00pm & 6:00pm
Tuesday, December 17 ~ School Board Meeting at 4:00
Monday, December 23 – Wednesday, January 1 ~ No School-Winter Break
Thursday, January 2 ~ School Resumes
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*

We are back from Thanksgiving break and have quickly dived into a busy December, which is a short month with winter break starting on the 23rd!

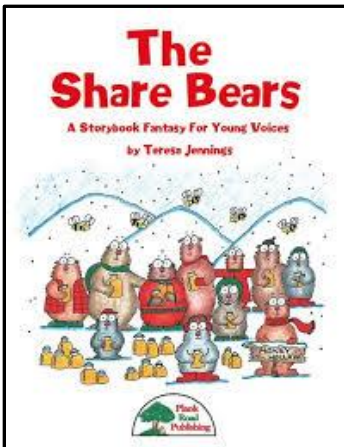
We finally have some accumulated snow, which always changes up the energy. We look forward to wintry woods, warm bonfires, building with snow blocks, and the sleds will be out soon – also the ice-skating rink should not be too far behind! Don't forget that we have new ice skates, helmets, and snowshoes to break in this winter! Please be sure that your child, whether in



Lights, camera, action!

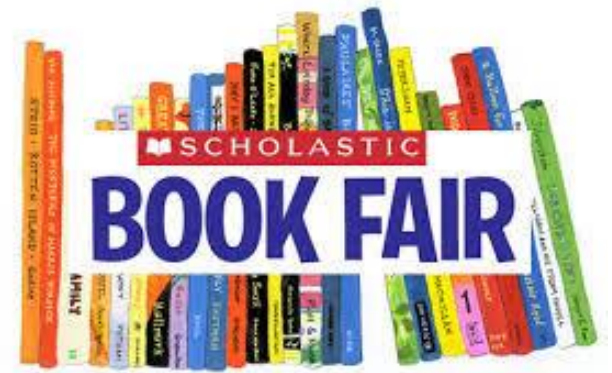
Birch Grove purchased a new spotlight and we are excited to use it for the musical on December 11!

K-5, Saplings or Seedlings, has proper winter gear to keep them warm and dry on all of our outdoor excursions. Birch Grove has a focus on the Great Outdoors!

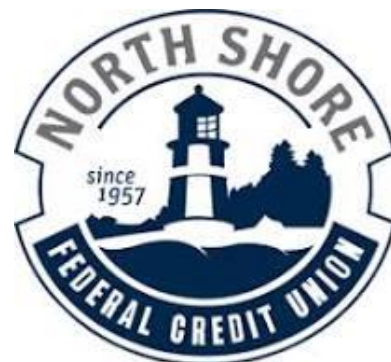


K-5 are practicing hard for this year's annual musical. *The Share Bears A Storybook Fantasy for Young Voices*, by Teresa Jennings, promises to be the cutest of shows. The Saplings are also practicing a few numbers to open each show. Performances are next week on Wednesday, December 11 at 1:00pm and 6:00pm. The evening show will be followed by cookies, a treat from Ms. Claus, and an opportunity for pictures with Santa, as well as holiday shopping at the annual Scholastic Holiday Book Fair. We hope to see everyone here!

The annual Scholastic Holiday Bookfair will be open on Monday, December 9 during school hours 8:00- 3:30ish until the winter musical. You can shop during school hours without your child(ren) seeing you, just enter the fair through the front office to the Community Room – I can keep a secret! The fair will also be open the evening of the musical after the performance on Wednesday, December 11. Books make great holiday gifts! BGCS receives a % of sales in Scholastic Dollars that are used to buy school library books. *Please note that the fair is cash or check only.



Jon and Shirley Heinzen and the North Shore Federal Credit Union are both donating a book per child from the Birch Grove Scholastic Holiday Bookfair! Students will be shopping the fair next week and bringing their 2 books home – please watch for them. Thank you so much to Jon, Shirley, and NSFCU for supporting Birch Grove students!





Birch Grove Community School received \$15,225 on Give to the Max Day from generous donors! Incredible! Thank you so much for supporting our mission, our school, and our programs - it means so much to us! Go Birch Grove!



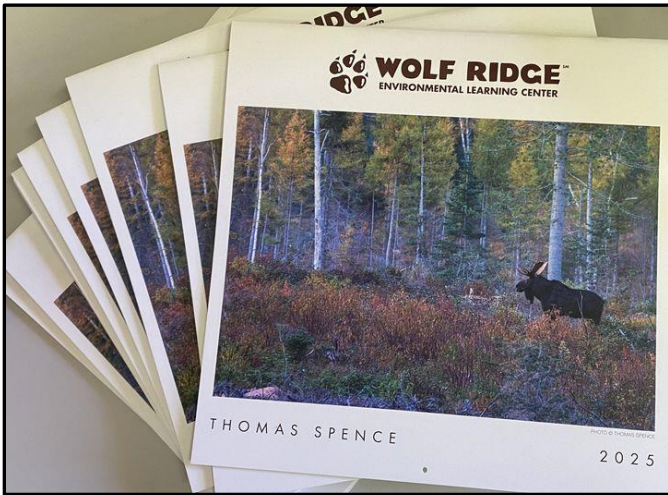
In case you missed it: Birch Grove students were featured on WTIP's "Oh Ole' Night" program and shared what they are thankful for, as well as a few other tid bits! Click below:

[Cook County students express gratitude during WTIP's Oh Ole' Night Program | WTIP](#)

December and January hot lunch menus have been posted on the school website. Mmm, mmm, good!

[School Lunches - Birch Grove Community School](#)





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!

Many thanks to recent \$1,000 donors:

*Timber Wolff Realty

*Rod Young

*Shelly & Michael Hanson Family ~ for the school hot lunch program



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](https://www.facebook.com/Birch-Grove-Community-School-and-Community-Services-4145/) | Facebook



Join the Lutsen Junior Alpine Ski Team!

We are a volunteer parent-led alpine ski racing team and ski club open to kids 5-16. We focus on teaching kids how to enjoy skiing while training for speed, control, and precision on the hill. We practice on giant slalom courses with and without the use of gates, supporting team members who wish to compete in the Northland Junior Race Series. Coaches and parent volunteers work to improve confidence on the slopes, foster a team-wide connection among skiers and families, and establish a lifelong love of alpine skiing.

Register at LutsenJrAlpine.com or in-person December 10, 4-6 (Lutsen Mountains Rental Shop). Practices Tuesdays and Fridays, 4-6, December through March. See teamduluth.org/NJRS for race schedule.



- Free rental skis provided by Lutsen Mountains with your commitment to participate in practices all season. Attend a fitting session at the rental shop December 10, 4-6 to get skis.
- Each child requires a ski pass for practices and races; parents on the mountain also require a pass.
- Supported by coaches Craig Horak, Molly Hicken, Claron Krogness, Ryan Ketchmark and multiple parent volunteers.
- Additional information provided upon registration. See opposite side or contact lutsenjralpine@gmail.com with questions.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Does my child have to know how to ski already to join? - Yes. They do not have to be a skilled or practiced skier, however we do ask that all participants are able to control their speed, stop for safety purposes, and be confident enough to ski without help. Skiers who do not meet this criteria above will require a parent to accompany them on the hill until they do.

Does my child need a parent to ski with them? - Children who are able to ride the lift safely and responsibly on their own, can control their speed and stop on command do not need a parent to ski with them. Parents are welcome to join in on practices at any time, and volunteer opportunities abound!

When are practices/races? - Practices are currently scheduled for [mostly] Tuesday and Friday evenings from 4-6pm beginning December 13, with Championships at Detroit Mtn ending the season March 2, 2025. Lutsen takes part in the Northland Junior Race Series. Seven races are scheduled for various Sundays January through March (see teamduluth.org/njrs for calendar). Lutsen hosts a race on January 26!

What if we cannot make all races/practices? - That's ok! This is a casual program meant to introduce racing, have fun, and enjoy the outdoors. Some participants (especially in their first year) are not yet comfortable racing, but enjoy coming to practices and participating in the team environment. Only if participants wish to be eligible to place in the final championship race, need they participate in at least 3 races.

Cost/Gear - Registration is free. Skis are provided at no cost to team members with their commitment to participate all season. Helmet, ski boots/poles, and quality winter gear are a family's responsibility. A Lutsen Mountains ski pass (Lutsen.com) is required for each kid and for parents who are helping on the hill. Team gear swap December 1, 3-5 at the Lutsen Town Hall.

If the cost of a season pass is prohibitive - Email us for a scholarship form if you've got a dedicated skier but financial stress would prevent their participation. We do have funds available.

From Ms. Emily VanDoren

Seedlings Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service

Let it snow! Our theme this week was clouds and snow. We started the week by talking about clouds and how they can give us shade from the sun, rain, and best of all... snow!

The Seedlings have been enjoying playing in the snow and going on short walks for fresh air. We made a snowman and lots of snow angels. Their favorite part was flopping onto the snow so that became a new fun game during our walks, the giggles were contagious!

We read books during snack time that had a focus on snow. We read *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats, *The Biggest Snowman Ever* by Steven Kroll, and *Snow on Snow on Snow* by Cheryl Chapman. Using our observation skills, we made guesses about what might happen in the books and talked about how the characters may be feeling.



During morning playtime, the older Seedlings practiced counting by counting snowflakes then drawing a line from the snowflakes to the written number. This activity not only helps with counting but also number recognition and provides prewriting practice. Another prewriting activity that was utilized this week was using a dry erase marker to trace the path of a snowflake on a laminated sheet.

For art this week we created a snowstorm painting. A cloud was created by using fine motor skills to pull apart cotton balls and gluing them onto a cloud shaped paper plate. By using white paint, we finger painted snowflakes on blue construction paper. Once the paint was dry, the cotton ball cloud was glued to the paper, creating a snowstorm. We also practiced our scissor skills again this week. We closed out the week by creating cloud dough! We combined hair conditioner and corn starch to create a cool new texture experience.

Have a great weekend!

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**From Ms. Pam Holm**

*Sapling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

The Saplings were thrilled at the prospect of playing and sledding in the fresh snow and spent the week talking about their outdoor adventures. Upon finishing *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats, they replicated the storyline by forming diverse footprints in the snow. They have already mastered dressing in their outdoor gear! If you haven't already, kindly provide a neck gaiter or warmer for your child. Please no scarves due to safety concerns.



In conjunction with the snowfall, our weekly theme centered on snowflakes and snowmen. A range of snow-themed math and manipulative activities were undertaken throughout the week. The Snowman roll and cover activity proved to be the most popular. Rolling a die never fails to excite the students. This particular game facilitates the development of various early learning skills, including teamwork, turn-taking, fine motor skills, numerical recognition, basic arithmetic, and comparison.



I implemented a literacy snowman name building craft that provided a fun and interactive learning experience. It was an effective way for the Saplings to practice spelling their names, their classmates' names, and recognizing the letters and sounds within their names. The Saplings stacked the letters in their names and then added the snowmen's heads on top.

We explored some captivating facts about snowflakes. The formation of snowflakes, noting that no two are identical. We scrutinized the patterns and counted the six sides they possess. A snowflake begins to form when an extremely cold water droplet freezes onto a dust particle in the sky, creating an ice crystal. As the ice crystal falls to the ground, water vapor freezes onto the crystal, building the six arms of the snowflake. A snowflake's journey from sky to the ground is about 20 minutes.

Just as your children are unique, every snowflake is one-of-a-kind, yet each one is perfect.

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

It has been a crazy busy week. The musical took up a lot of our afternoons this week. I think it will be a very successful performance, and the students are excited and happy to perform for their families next week!

This week, kindergarten learned about the letter J. We also practiced breaking down teen numbers into tens and extras. First graders reviewed blends this week and learned the th sound. In math, we are learning about missing addends and decoding story problems.

We continued our social and emotional learning. We learned how to reset the body using breathwork. We used the idea of sniffing flowers and blowing out candles as a guide to breathe big and slow. We also worked on identifying different emotions based on facial expressions and body language.

Please continue to read for 20 minutes a night with your child. It can make a huge difference in the amount of growth and learning in a year. Utilize some of our online resources for different math and reading practices!

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**From Ms. Samantha Forster**

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

This week is full of musical wintery fun! Students have been working hard at learning music, dances, and their lines as we prepared for our musical next week! It is a great amount of fun. Students can wear whatever they would like for the performances and can add little “sparks” to make it more fun if wanted! We have been very focused on that so next week we will incorporate some winter art before we leave for winter break.

Math has been coming along with second grade finishing Unit 3 and completing their Unit 3 assessment. We will be starting a little bit of Unit 4 but also circling back to previous skills that need refreshing. Third grade is working on adding and subtracting 3-digit numbers with regrouping in a multitude of ways. They have been rounding the numbers to the nearest ten and hundred then adding or subtracting. They also have been deciphering word problems with those numbers, looking at graphs and answering questions, and writing the numbers in expanded form. I want to make sure students are solid on all these skills before winter break. IXL is a great resource to utilize at home so that students can practice their skills.



Reading has become such a routine that students can transition through literacy stations with virtually no prompting. We talked about drawing conclusions in a humorous fiction text as well as sequence of events in an expository text. These are review skills so students have been working through their graphic organizer more quickly while reading the text. We learned about irregular plural nouns, when to change y to I, and added another suffix into our toolbox. We have been spending less time in smaller groups and working on participating in cumulative review in whole group lessons. This is a great time for all students to get exposure to material that may be challenging while being part of a conversation with their peers.

Make sure your children come with hats and gloves as well as extras! We have limited borrow items and it is getting really chilly out. We want to keep everyone safe and comfortable while enjoying the great outdoors the North Shore offers! Reach out with any questions or concerns!

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From Ms. Stacy Coronis

4th & 5th Grade Elementary Teacher

This week in our 4/5 classroom we have been busily preparing for the musical “The Share Bears”. We have been practicing the speaking parts and songs each day and we are excited to share them with you next Wednesday. In addition to the winter musical, we have LOVED playing in the snow this week. Thank you for reminding your child to bring their outdoor clothes. All students wrote a personal narrative, My Perfect Winter Day, and they went through the writing process which included creating a graphic organizer, writing a first draft, revising, editing and finally publishing a final copy. We created a crayon-resist watercolor painting to go along with the personal narratives that we wrote.



4th graders this week used the stories in the reading book to identify facts and opinions. We had a discussion about how authors will use facts to support their opinions when they write. In math the 4th graders learned two ways to multiply multi digit numbers and checked their answers by estimating the products using rounding. Finally, they applied these two skills to solve word problems by identifying the important math information needed to solve the problems. It wasn't easy, but I am proud of how everyone did their very best.

5th graders this week read a short excerpt from “Old Yeller” and studied the character traits of the dog Old Yeller based on his actions. We practiced making inferences about human characters based on their words and how they treated others. In math class the 5th graders continued their study of decimals. In addition to drawing, comparing and ordering decimals, this week students learned how to add, subtract, estimate and round decimals.

During reading groups all 4th and 5th graders completed a story plot map which identified the main story elements of characters, settings, central conflicts, rising action, climax, resolution and themes. All students continue to extend their learning through differentiated math and reading platforms using IXL and Lexia. Just a reminder that your child can use these programs on a device from home to count as their reading and math facts homework each night. Thank you for your continued support at home!

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