

Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Weekly Newsletter

May 29, 2025

Upcoming Events:

Friday, May 30 Graduation Celebration! 10:30am – ½ day of school. Release at 12:00.

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 at the end of the 24-25 school year, and this will be the final newsletter. Thank you everyone for the great year! Thank you to staff, families and students! The support that our BGCS families give to our school and students is incredible. We hope that you all have a wonderful summer – everyone deserves it! Please keep your child reading over the summer – this is SO important! You will also find log-in and password information included in report cards for all of our classroom on-line platforms. Students can get on and brush up on the skills that they have learned this year. Keep that summer slide away! 😊



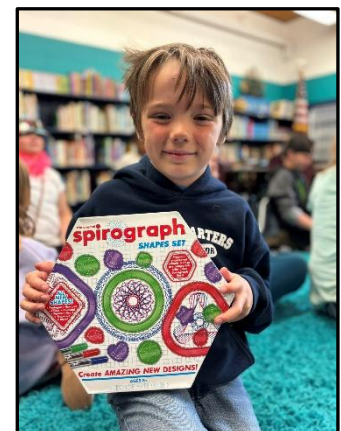
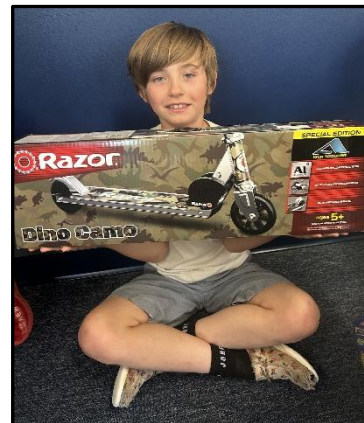
K-5 year end packets, including report cards, will be mailed to families in mid to late June. Should you have any questions about report cards or about anything in year end packets, please reach out to your child's teacher or to me – we would be happy to talk with you!

The K-5 Parent/Family surveys will be emailed to you soon. Please take just a few minutes to complete it. One survey will be sent to each home, so if you need to consult with other adults in your household, please do so before completing.

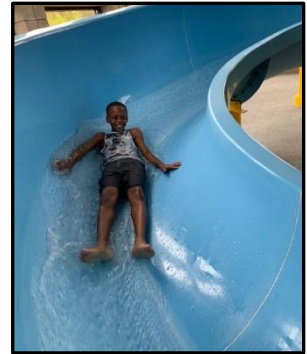
Congratulations to Cook County senior, Silas Ekstrom, recipient of a \$500 scholarship award from the Birch Grove PTO. Wishing you the best from Birch Grove Community School... "Where Roots Grow Deep and Branches Reach High!"



The Tickets To Treasures drawing was on Tuesday! Many thanks to families that supported their student's reading at home, and to the students themselves that earned so many tickets! While everyone did not win a "big prize", everyone got something at the end of the drawing.



K-5 took a field trip last week to Black Beach in Silver Bay, had a special pizza lunch, and went swimming at the Black Beach Inn pools. It was a great day with smiles all around! Find more pictures on the school Facebook page.



Campsite Kids starts on Monday, June 9th. If you have questions about the program, please go to the school website under Community Services/Campsite Kids and read the Campsite Kids Handbook, or click on the links below. We look forward to a great summer!

<https://www.birchgroveschool.com/Campsite-Kids-Campsite-Kids-Handbook.pdf>



Summer Saplings and Summer Seedlings starts on Monday, June 9th. These programs run the same as they do during the school year, except that Summer Saplings is only open M-TH.

We look forward to a great summer!

<https://www.birchgroveschool.com/Summer-Saplings>

<https://www.birchgroveschool.com/Seedlings-Program>



Pictures of your child from throughout the school year will be emailed home if you make a request for them to this email:

birchgrove@boreal.org

We did a little Hawaii theme on Thursday this week and each student that entered the building in the morning received a flower lei. The staff added little Hawaiian touches throughout this fun day!



24-25 Annual COLOR! Run! Day!
More pictures are found on the school Facebook page.



Meet Walter! He is a 12-week-old Golden Retriever, currently in therapy dog training at Liberty K9 Rescue Ranch! Walter was donated to Birch Grove Community School by Billie Jo Forster, and Liberty K9 is donating the training so that Walter can become a therapy dog at our school! Billie Jo is the mom of our 2/3 teacher, Samantha Forster. Walter is also the son of Oakly, Sam Forster's dog (who visits our school) - it's all kind of a family affair! 😊 Thank you to Billie Jo and Liberty K9 Rescue Ranch! We are very much looking forward to this journey!

Therapy dogs can play a vital role in effecting positive mental health changes in students and staff. Therapy dogs can help children learn to read, build confidence, provide comfort and support, can help increase testing scores and so much more. Today, Walter had his first visit at BG! We are excited to be at the forefront of animal assisted therapy in schools as Walter will be an incredible asset to our staff, students, and their families.

Walter will be owned and handled by Sara Knottski, our K/1 teacher, and utilized within the school and beyond. Once Sara and Walter become a registered therapy team, he will officially start his job. In the meantime, while Walter is still in therapy dog training and transitioning to his working role, he will start being integrated into the school starting in just a few months - he will be visiting Campsite Kids over the summer!

We will share a lot more on this in the coming weeks and months, but for now, please enjoy these photos of our students lighting up over their visit with Walter! He is SO adorable!



Birch Grove Community School
End of Year Celebration!
You will find more pictures on the school Facebook page!
Thank you everyone for the great school year!



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](#)



From Ms. Emily VanDoren

Seedling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service

For this final week of school, we didn't have a set theme but instead revisited some of our favorite activities from the school year. We created a fort with the climbing triangle and a blanket, played with bubbles, and did fun sensory activities.

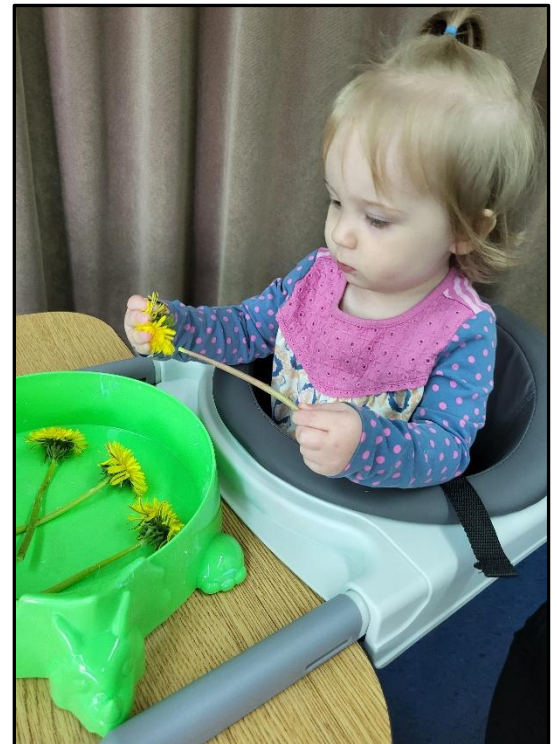
While on our walk along the bike path, we worked our fine motor skills by picking dandelions. Once we were back in the classroom, the older Seedlings were free to explore them in a sensory tray. They pulled the flowers from the stems, smelled them, and saw the yellow from the flower transfer to their hands. We also used them as paintbrushes with our taste safe paint.

We had a wonderful year in Seedlings and I enjoyed watching them learn and grow!

Hope you have a wonderful summer!

218-663-0170 ext. 7

emily.vandorenbgcs@gmail.com



From Ms. Pam Holm

Sapling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service

The Big Wheels Construction theme proved highly successful with the Saplings. A discussion ensued regarding the roles and responsibilities of construction workers, highlighting their collaborative teamwork. Various construction vehicles were compared, including bulldozers, cement mixers, excavators, dump trucks, and cranes. The functions and capabilities of each vehicle were examined, including the materials they work with (The bulldozer pushes soil and the crane lifts heavy bricks).



Sensory play activities incorporated numerical concepts through counting and loading rocks and blocks into a dump truck. Construction-themed vocabulary was explored through phonetic awareness and syllable counting. Additionally, hammering golf tees into cardboard alphabet letters and building names with rocks enhanced literacy skills while developing fine motor dexterity and hand-eye coordination.

This week, Saplings built two construction vehicles, an excavator and a dump truck, for art. These projects facilitated the development of their concentration and perseverance skills as they encountered difficulties in placing the pieces exactly where desired. They had to cut out the pieces and assemble the trucks.

Engaging in scissor practice is an excellent way to promote fine motor skills and enhance hand-eye coordination. As they carefully maneuver scissors to cut along lines, they develop control over their hand movements and make precise cuts, an essential skill for future tasks such as writing. Furthermore, scissor practice contributes to strengthening hand muscles and improving dexterity.

Contrary to the common misconception, the Saplings summer program is not solely for leisure, but will continue to offer educational lessons throughout the summer. By integrating structured activities, both indoors and outdoors, including circle time, reading, and art projects, the Saplings will be given opportunities for targeted learning and development. Additionally, outdoor exploration will be valued as a means of promoting critical thinking, problem-solving skills, social-emotional skills, and physical abilities. By incorporating both structured activities and outdoor nature exploration, the Saplings program aims to provide a well-rounded educational experience that will prepare your child for academic success. The year-round curriculum is required to meet specific goals and objectives in the following domains: Approaches to Learning, The Arts, Cognitive, Language, Literacy and Communications, Physical and Movement and Social and Emotional.

The summer themes for Saplings are as follows: Interesting Insects, Let's Go to the Beach, Let's Go Camping, Red, White and Blue, Under the Sea, At the Zoo, At the Circus, At the Amazon, Down on

the Farm, A Pirate's Adventure, and Feeling Minnesota.

Have a great vacation break and see you on the 9th!

218-663-0170 ext. 6
pam.holmbgcs@gmail.com

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**From Ms. Sara Knottski**  
*K & 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Elementary Teacher*

The last week of school is always a fast one! The kids enjoyed all of the end of the year activities. We had a blast getting colored, did year-end cleaning, released our butterflies, had a walking field trip to Tofte Park, and played lots of games! That isn't even everything, the end of the year is always a blast!

As we close out the year, I wanted to say thank you to all the parents for all the support throughout the school year. Together we ensured that each child learned and grew! This year has been fabulous and full of great memories. It has been a pleasure to teach each kid in the K/1 classroom. I am excited to see the Kindergarteners return to the K/1 classroom next year as 1<sup>st</sup> graders! I have seen great growth throughout this year and I am excited to continue to see them grow next year! I am also excited to see the 1<sup>st</sup> graders continue to grow next year. They are off to new adventures in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and in a new classroom. I know they will succeed in their new classroom!



Have a great summer!

218-663-0170 ext. 2  
[sara.knottskibgcs@gmail.com](mailto:sara.knottskibgcs@gmail.com)

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From Ms. Samantha Forster
2nd & 3rd Grade Elementary Teacher

This week has been jammed packed with cleaning and fun activities. We finished cleaning our classroom and finishing up last minute touches. We had our Tickets to Treasure event then our Color Run/games. It was so much fun! Then on Wednesday, we spent the day exploring the Tofte Park. There was many spas and rock shops set up that everyone was able to visit. We planted trees, our garden, and completed Thursday with bingo for all. It has been such a great school year and I loved

being able to finish the year with so many activities. I loved being your child's teacher. Each day was filled with kind words, "best teacher" art, and silly comments. Thank you for letting me be a part of their lives this year! I hope everyone has a great summer spending time with loved ones and creating memories!

Please have your child continue to read over the summer as well as use our classroom on-line platforms to continue reading and math growth. On-line information will be sent home again in year end packets.

Have a wonderful summer!

218-663-0170 ext. 3

samantha.forsterbgcs@gmail.com



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**From Ms. Stacy Coronis**

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

Wow! This week has flown by so quickly with all of our end of the year activities and celebrations. We have worked hard this year and have enjoyed having fun on all of our field trips. You may have heard the amazing news about Walter, the new therapy dog at Birch Grove, who will continue his training at Campsite Kids this summer! We are so excited to have our own dog next year! Our hamster, Lily, will be vacationing this summer with a host family and will be back next fall!

Thank you to all of you at home for being so flexible with teacher changes this year,

helping your child at home with reading and math, and sending them to school ready to learn each day! Your support matters and makes such a difference. It was an honor to work alongside you during my first year at Birch Grove and I am excited to return for another wonderful year! I think that Birch Grove is an amazing place for teachers and kids to learn and have fun together!



Please remind your child to read over the summer so they can continue their wonderful reading growth. Report cards will be sent home soon and will include the usernames and passwords for the online learning platforms that students can continue to use over the summer!



I want to wish our 5th graders and their families well as they move on. We will miss you, but you will always be part of the Birch Grove family!

218-663-0170 ext. 4

[stacy.coronisbgcs@gmail.com](mailto:stacy.coronisbgcs@gmail.com)