

Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Weekly Newsletter

November 13, 2025

Tuesday, November 18 School Board Meeting at 4:00pm
Wednesday-Friday, November 26-28 ~ Thanksgiving Break
Wednesday, December 10 ~ Winter Musical * Performances at 1pm & 6pm
Thursday, December 11 ~ K-5 Field Trip to GM, musical *The Witch's Princess*
Tuesday, December 16 ~ School Board Meeting at 4:00pm
Monday, December 22 - January 2 ~ Winter Break

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*

Mid-November already and we continue to work and play hard. With Thanksgiving break coming up soon, we continue to move through the curriculum with the addition of learning parts for the winter musical, that is only 16 school days away! A lot of learning is packed into a school year, so please be sure that your child is getting enough rest each school night so that they are ready to learn and the best well-rested version of themselves! Good sleep is an important element for elementary learning!





Birch Buddies ~ DODGEBALL!

Remaining days of this session:

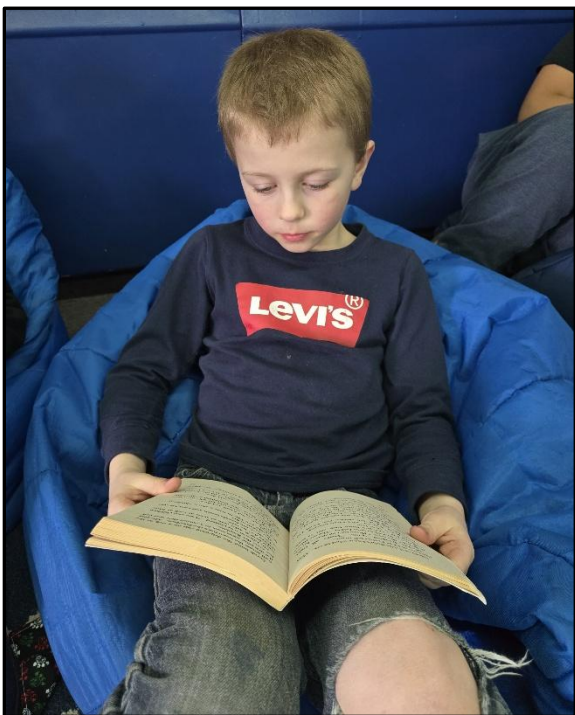
Monday, November 17 (Moms can join us from 4:15-5:15)

Monday, November 24 (Dads can join us from 4:15-5:15)

A mini-session of Birch Buddies ~ ART! Afterschool program:

Friday, November 14 ~ Beading/paracord bracelets

Friday, November 21 ~ Buffalo Hide Painting



Help to support your child's reading journey at home!

Click this link for Reading Tips for Families:

<https://readingtipsforfamilies.com/>



Caribou/Odyssey and employees Jeff Tarver, Evan Klemme and Angie Fernlund saw to it that a donated used refrigerator was brought to Birch Grove today and put in the copy room! Elesha and Don Carn/Oriole Construction donated the fridge. Thank you so much! Jeff and Evan not only put the fridge in place, but they took the old one away. The new fridge is much bigger than what we had - that makes all of the staff happy! Thank you all!



Reminder: The school doors open at 7:55am.
Any student arriving before this should wait in vehicles until the doors open, or in rare cases, students should wait on the bench just inside the first doors. We are not ready to receive or supervise students prior to this time. Thank you!



The Holiday Scholastic Book Fair will be arriving in December again! Click here for a preview!
[Scholastic Book Fair Preview | K6 Tabletop](#)

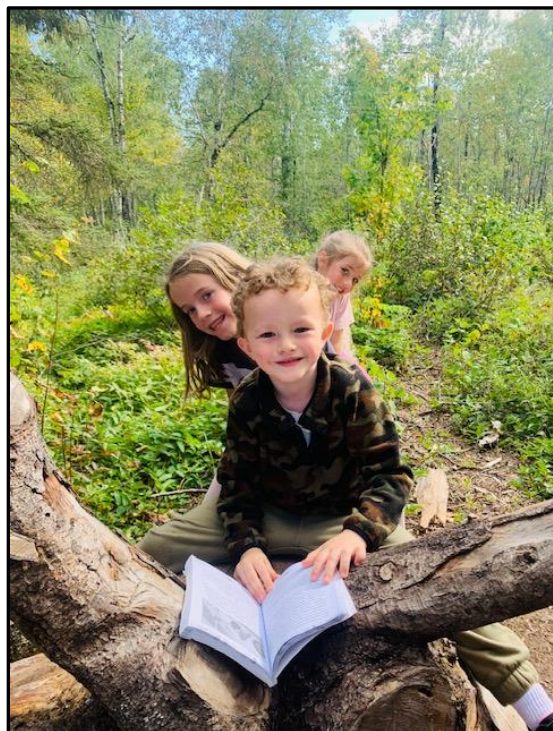
Please consider supporting **Birch Grove Community School/Services** through GiveMN and Give To the Max campaign at: <https://www.givemn.org/organization/Birch-Grove-Community-School>

Give to the Max's Early Giving period begins Nov. 1 and the campaign culminates on **Give to the Max Day, Thursday, Nov. 20.**

Each donation through [GiveMN.org](https://www.givemn.org) qualifies **BIRCH GROVE** for additional grants from the Give to the Max Day prize pool, thanks to the continued generosity of the Bush Foundation.

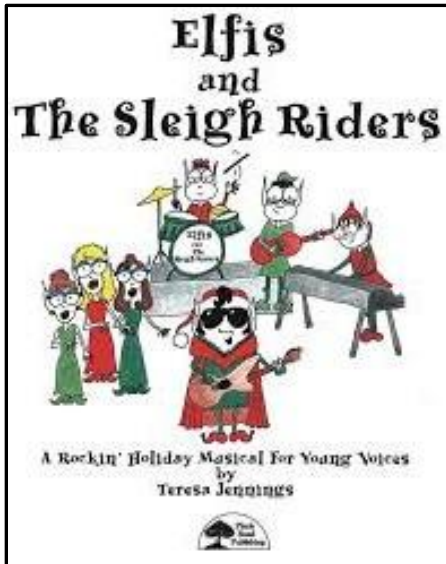
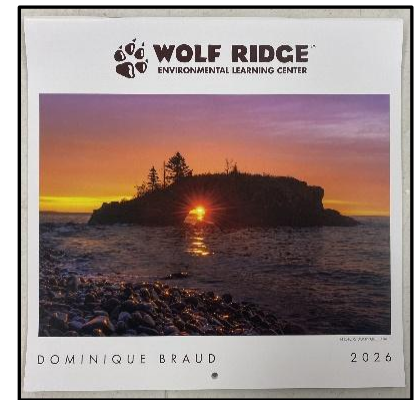
On Nov. 20, Give to the Max Day, GiveMN will award:

- \$500 Early Giving Golden Tickets daily on Nov. 1-19
- \$500 Golden Ticket prizes every 15 minutes on Nov. 20
- \$1,000 Hourly Golden Ticket prizes hourly on Nov. 20
- \$6,000 Power Hour Prizes, shared among the top three organizations based on the amount raised between 10:00-10:59 a.m. and 10:00-10:59 p.m.
- The grand prize of Give to the Max Day, a \$10,000 Super-Sized Golden Ticket, drawn from all gifts made Nov. 1-20. Additionally, dozens of regional prizes will be awarded to organizations across much of Greater Minnesota, thanks to the support of the Initiative Foundation, Southwest Initiative Foundation, Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation, Northwest Minnesota Foundation, and West Central Initiative.



Click on this link to support Birch Grove!
<https://www.givemn.org/organization/Birch-Grove-Community-School>

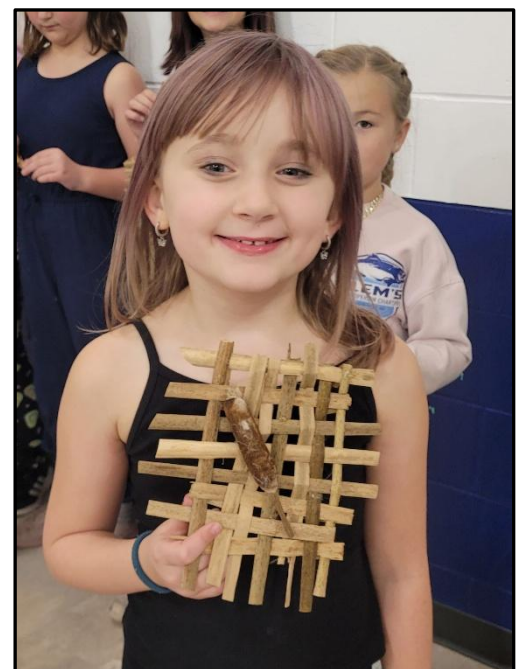
Wolf Ridge 2025 calendars for sale for only \$15! You can purchase a calendar from any BGCS family, pick one up at BGCS or call 218-663-0170 to make arrangements. Proceeds go to support the annual 2nd - 5th grade adventure to Wolf Ridge at the end of each school year! These calendars make great gifts, especially with the holidays coming up!



Mark your calendars for our annual winter musical on Wednesday, December 10th, with performances at 1pm and 6pm. The musical selected for this year is "Elfis and The Sleigh Riders", a rockin' holiday musical for young voices by Teresa Jennings. It is sure to be a rockin' good time!

Bringing the wetlands indoors, Birch Buddies ~ Art! afterschool program showcased impressive skill and creativity through their intricate weaving of cattail leaves.

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



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 online at LutsenJrAlpine.com beginning 11/17/25 or in-person at our Info Meeting 11/25/25, 5 pm (Scandinavian Chalet). 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 November 25 after our info meeting to get skis.
- Each child requires a ski pass for practices and races; parents on the mountain also require a pass.
- Supported by coach Craig Horak and multiple parent volunteers. Seeking more parent coaches!
- More info provided at the Information Meeting 11/25, or contact us for Q's.

lutsenjralpine@gmail.com / Facebook: Lutsen Alpine Ski Team / lutsenjralpine.com

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.

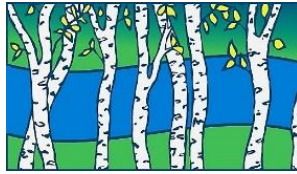
Does my child need a parent to ski with them? - Children who are able to ride the lift safely and responsibly on their own, can control their speed and stop on command do not need a parent to ski with them. Parents are welcome to join in on practices at any time, and volunteer opportunities abound!

When are practices/races? - Practices are currently scheduled for [mostly] Tuesday and Friday evenings from 4-6pm December through March. 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 25 and Championships March 8!

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/sale November 25, 4:30-5 at the Scandinavian Chalet.

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!



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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](#)



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### **From Ms. Emily VanDoren**

*Seedling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

We continued our exploration of fall with a scarecrow theme this week. The Seedlings heard a story about an old woman that builds a scarecrow to keep the birds away from her cherry tree. At the end of the story, we all moved our bodies like a scarecrow, by moving our head side to side and wiggling our arms and legs as if they were blowing in the wind to scare away birds.

The older Seedlings worked on their color recognition while coloring a picture of a scarecrow. They were each able to choose between two coloring sheets and then we practiced color names when they chose their marker. We continue to work their fine motor skills by practicing their tripod grip when holding their marker. Shape recognition was practiced this week by creating a scarecrow out of foam shape pieces. We spent some time in the gym this week as well. We practiced kicking and throwing with dodgeballs. We also sang songs and played "Simon Says" and "Red Light, Green Light".



The older Seedlings have also been practicing their self-help skills by learning how to put on and take off their jackets and hats. I have also been encouraging them to try to attempt a task on their own when they ask for help before I assist them. Oftentimes they are able to complete the task after one or two attempts and gain a sense of pride when the task is complete.

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From Ms. Pam Holm

Sapling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service

To initiate the week, Saplings commemorated the 50th Anniversary of the loss of the Edmund Fitzgerald on Monday. We discussed the significance of iron ore boats in transporting taconite pellets from Minnesota across the Great Lakes for steel production. The Saplings experimented with taconite pellets in the sensory bin to explore their magnetic properties and weight. This was followed by a painting activity depicting the Fitz in the turbulent waters of Lake Superior.



On Tuesday, November 11th, the Saplings marked Veterans Day by exploring its importance as a day of tribute to the brave men and women who have selflessly served in our armed forces, safeguarding our freedoms and way of life. Our educational activities included poppy dot counting with playdough, identifying which one is different, what comes next sequencing, 10 piece puzzle counting, and matching cards. Prewriting practice involved tracing and printing letters A, M, N, C, and P. Moreover, we designed artistic stained glass renditions of poppy flowers to honor those who served.

Since the winter is coming upon us, the rest of the week focused on preparing for winter. We started by introducing a BIG word, hibernation, and seeing who knew what it meant. We came up with questions to explore - do all animals hibernate? What does hibernation look like? How long does hibernation last? In addition to H for hibernate, we also focused on the letter B for bears, as they are the most commonly associated hibernating animal. Our classroom was transformed with cozy bear dens for hibernation and featured bear den artwork following our reading of *The Bear Snores On* by Karma Wilson.

Saplings also engaged in a letter identification game, feeding alphabet letters to a bear, and subsequently created animal habitats using sticks, pebbles, and brown play dough, showcasing their immersion in the activity.

Winter preparations are underway for the Saplings, too. Through reading *Froggy Gets Dressed* by Jonathan London, winter readiness will be demonstrated on Friday. To promote independence and fine motor skill mastery in our classroom I have implemented the Zipper List. Once they have mastered putting on and zipping their jacket and snowpants their name will be placed on the Zipper List! Also, if your child doesn't know how to fix their sleeves when inside out, now is a good time to practice.

To foster more independence, grant your child ownership of their school backpack. Encourage them to pack and carry their own backpack to school. Assign them the responsibility of placing their water bottle and lunch box into the pack. Upon arrival at school, they should be the ones to remove the folder, lunch box, and water bottle. A checklist by the door outlines the expectations for arrival and dismissal of the Sapling's classroom. When returning home, designate a specific area for the backpack to be emptied by them. Allow them to remove their school projects and present them to you, using this opportunity to inquire about their creative process, lessons learned, or favorite part of the day.

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

A few things went home this week that would be good practice for K/1ers at home! One resource I sent home was decodable books. Each book has a different letter sound focus. Students learned to highlight the letter sounds and practice reading those words first. Students may keep these and practice them over and over again. I also send home a practice and remembering math book for students to practice at home if you wish! Remember, to keep reading with your student at home! Practice makes perfect! The students can practice their skills on Raz-Kids, Lexia, and Freckle as well!

In Kindergarten, we focused on the letter P and K this week and the word to. We are starting to read words and practice reading sight words in books! In math, we are working on addition and subtraction stories, shapes, and teen numbers!

First grade learned about a biography and non-fiction text features. We also focused on l blends and are starting to get fluent with reading words with blends. In math, we are learning about math fact families and solving for a missing part in an equation.

K/1 started a social studies unit last week. We are learning about community helpers, goods and services, needs and wants, and scarcity. We will continue this unit through November. We also learned about Veterans for Veterans Day and wrote letters to Veterans!

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

We had such a great week! Our science focus was on weather and climate. We spent lots of time on weather-related vocabulary, doing water experiments, and color coding maps to align with different climates in the world. We did art inspired by Roberto Mamani Mamani and introduced shading and gradient. We started the musical practice, with 3rd-5th graders getting play lines and the rest of the school supporting with music and dance moves. It is going to be so much fun and the kids are already getting into the excitement.

In reading, we focused on cause and effect and character traits. The story about how the chipmunk got its stripes carried over to our daily social-emotional learning with learning how to phrase compliments to oneself. This helped remind students that they can say good things about themselves without making it sound like bragging or teasing. We focused on the prefix dis- and constructed words that have this prefix. Lastly, I included a lesson about shades of meaning with vocabulary to help students start seeing the connections between different words.



In math, 2nd graders had their Unit 3 assessment that was related to length, shapes, and line plots so we spent most of the week reviewing this. 3rd graders combined a multitude of skills to solve problems (length, fractions, and line plots.) These are skills that we will continue to work on throughout the year because they can be harder concepts to grasp and master.

We are still doing our school wide food drive! Thank you to all that has donated, the students love seeing the difference we can make within the community. If you need any more information about the food drive, please feel free to reach out! It is now coat season here and EVERY student is going out each day with a coat. Please ensure yours has warm clothes to enjoy the outdoors!

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**From Ms. Stacy Coronis**

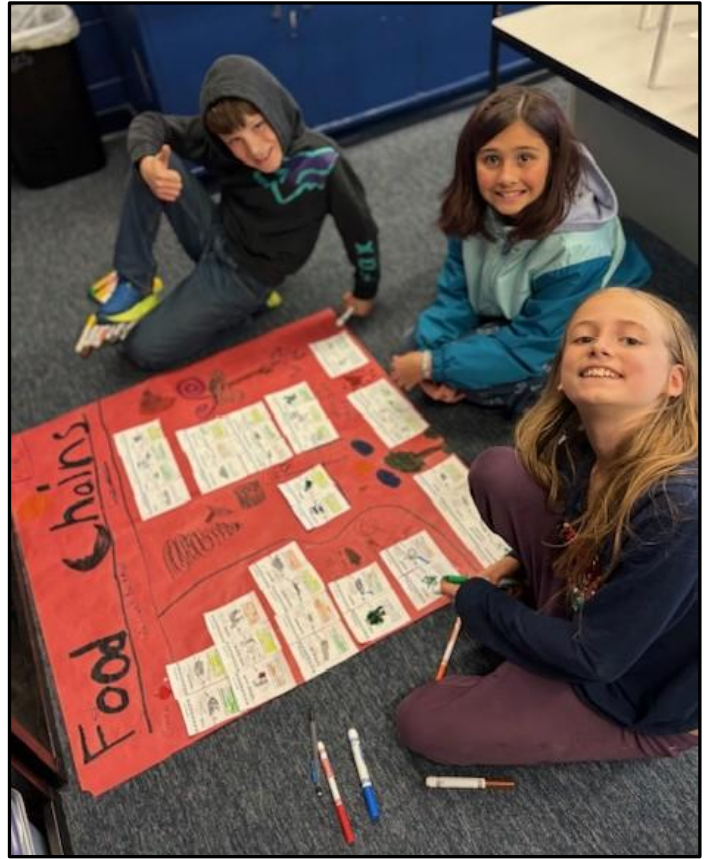
*4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Elementary Teacher*

We have been busy this week preparing for our upcoming musical, "Elfis and the Sleigh Riders". All students who wanted a speaking part have a script and can practice their assigned parts at home. We have had some early conversations about props and costumes, but more information will come home on Friday with your child's weekly Progress Report. Our class performances have started well and next week we will join grades 2 and 3 for joint rehearsals.

In math class we are wrapping up our multiplication unit and will take a final test next week to assess the skills that we have learned. 5th graders have also had the chance to learn and practice multiplying decimals and estimating the products to be sure that their product makes sense. Our next math unit will focus on long division.

This week in reading we read an excerpt from Old Yeller and focused on identifying character traits and how characters can change over time based on their experiences. Students created a Venn Diagram to compare and contrast two characters from the story and then created a story map that identifies the plot elements in the historical fiction text. We continue to practice a new spelling pattern each week with an assessment on Fridays.

In science class this week we learned about how matter moves through a food chain. We learned that all plants and animals are part of an ecosystem and that the energy from the matter changes as it moves through the food chain. We reviewed consumers, producers, predators and prey. Students worked in small groups to play a game called "Eat or Be Eaten" and then considered what would happen if all of the ants disappeared from the food chain. We agreed that while ants may be annoying, they are a vital part of the ecosystems that they belong to!



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