

Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Weekly Newsletter

November 20, 2025

Wednesday-Friday, November 26-28 ~ Thanksgiving Break

Monday-Friday, December 8-12 ~ Scholastic Holiday Bookfair

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

Monday, January 5 ~ Return of K-5, Saplings and Seedlings

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

Sometimes it is hard to see the forest through the trees. I admit that there are times that I forget that we have something special here! With deadlines, submissions, reporting, meetings, and all of the things that go with administration day to day and year after year, I sometimes lose sight of just how far Birch Grove Community School has come, and just how amazing this small rural school truly is. I tend to focus on the challenges and not the successes. This is something that I personally need to work on, I know.

It seems though, that I tend to get reminders from others just when I need them. To see our school, programs, staff, students, grounds, environment, and accomplishments from another's positive perspective stays with me for a while and reminds me



that most days, I love what I do. I am so proud to have worked with some amazing staff, board and community members, students and families currently, and over the past two decades. Together we have accomplished much! For this, I am thankful! Take a few minutes to lift someone up over this Thanksgiving break – and throughout the year!

Wishing everyone a safe and fantastic break – there will be no newsletter next week, as we have off Wednesday through Friday. We look forward to the return of K-5, Saplings and Seedlings on Monday, December 1.



Birch Buddies ~ DODGEBALL!

Remaining days of this session:

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

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

Remaining days of this session:

Friday, November 21 ~ Buffalo Hide Painting



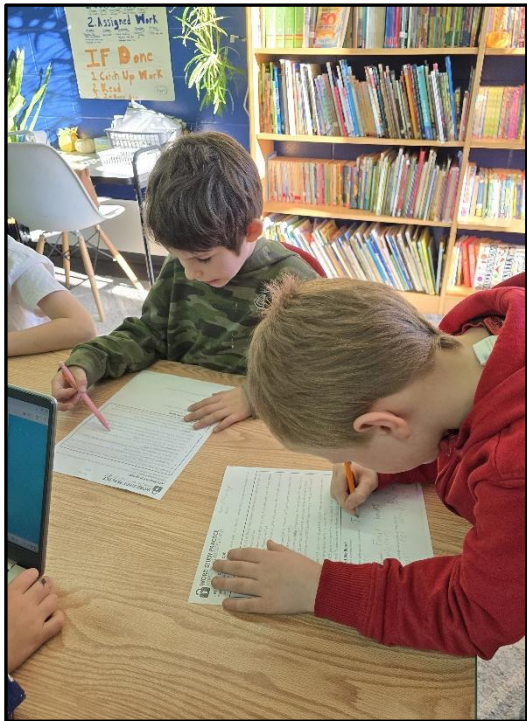
Enrollment forms were emailed and sent home in folders for Birch Buddies ~ **BOARD GAMES!** Afterschool program:

Tuesday, November 25

Tuesday, December 2

Tuesday, December 9

Tuesday, December 16



Congratulations to K-5 families for the 87.5% attendance rate last school year 24-25! BG's rate was 32.7% higher than the Cook County resident districts elementary. This statistic is most likely one of the contributors to BG's consistently higher MCA scores! Keep up the good work ~ Go Birch Grove!

Birch Buddies ~ ART! afterschool program focused on beading last Friday. Pam Holm kept these young hands busy with two different sized beads and looms for all. Each child took home a masterpiece! 😊 <https://www.birchgroveschool.com/Birch-Buddies>



2/3 spent last Friday afternoon playing riddle games, vocabulary games, and making s'mores! Spending time together is their favorite way to end a great week! The beautiful Golden is Oakley, Ms. Forster's dog and daddy to our Walter - both such handsome boys!



TODAY'S THE DAY!

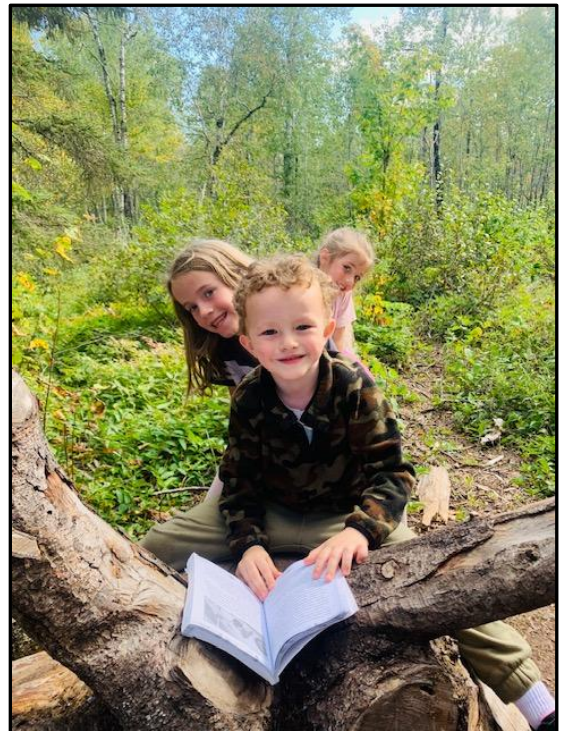
Please consider supporting **Birch Grove Community School/Services** through GiveMN and Give To the Max campaign at: <https://www.givemn.org/organization/Birch-Grove-Community-School>

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.

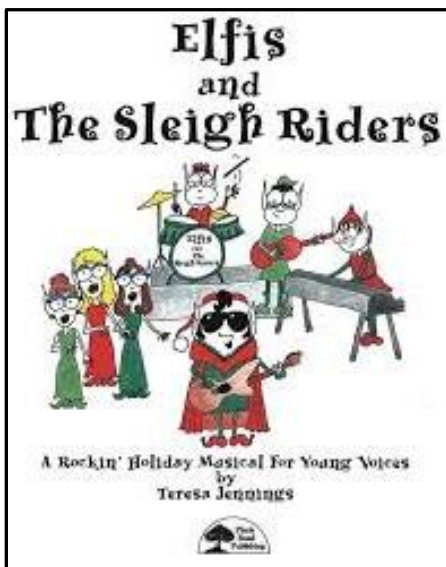
On Nov. 20, Give to the Max Day, GiveMN will award:

- \$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>



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!

The Seedlings continue to enjoy walks when the weather allows! Pictured are the littlest Seedlings enjoying a morning snooze all bundled up in the stroller, while the older Seedlings stretched their legs and their imaginations while exploring nature. Even the littlest are living large on the North Shore! <https://www.birchgroveschool.com/Seedlings-Program>



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.

The Birch Grove TEAM is seeking an additional K-5 paraprofessional to join our crew! We are looking for just the right person ~ could it be you? This position will remain open until the stars align, as we are taking our time with this hire. Please share with others you know. For more information go to: <https://www.birchgroveschool.com/Employment-Opportunities>



The December school lunch menu can be found on the school website at: <https://www.birchgroveschool.com/School-Lunches>



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](#)



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### From Ms. Emily VanDoren

*Seedling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

Gobble, gobble! This week was focused on Thanksgiving and being thankful. We read books every day this week that focused on Thanksgiving including *Countdown to Thanksgiving* by Jodi Huelin and *Bear Says Thanks* by Karma Wilson. Both books showed how family and friends gather together to share a meal and give thanks.

The older Seedlings enjoyed practicing their counting and color recognition by placing feathers on to felt turkeys. This also provided a sensory experience as well and worked their hand-eye coordination. We sang a fun finger play song about turkeys that is full of rhymes and helps with number recognition. I also changed one of their favorite songs, "Five Little Ducks", into "Five Little Turkeys" and we sang it throughout the week and practiced our "Gobble gobble". We also tried out a turkey dance and flapped our wings and shook our tail feathers. Our Thanksgiving craft this week was a process based project where the Seedlings used cotton balls and cotton swaps with a paint pad and dot markers to paint the tail feathers on a paper plate. Once their feathers were complete, we glued on a turkey body to finish out the project. We will continue our Thanksgiving theme next week by continuing to read about Thanksgiving and work on fine motor by "Feeding Turkeys" in the sensory bin and coloring our Thanksgiving turkeys.



This week we enjoyed time outside as well as time in the gym. While outside we explored along the bike path and played on the playground. In the gym, we practiced throwing and kicking dodgeballs



and played “Red Light, Green Light” and marched around the gym to the song “The Ants Go Marching”. All the Seedlings enjoy adding music to our activities throughout the day.

Have a great Thanksgiving break!

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From Ms. Pam Holm

Sapling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service

This week, Saplings explored the foods that connect us to Native Americans. We read about the *Three Sisters Crop* of corn, bean and squash, they are grown together for their mutual benefit. We also learned of the *Seven Sisters Crops* in some native traditions which include sunflowers, Ojibwe potatoes, ground cherries and tobacco. Saplings also discovered stories about indigenous fishing and hunting practices. Salmon was a vital primary food source for many tribes, providing crucial nourishment year-round. These tribes honed intricate fishing techniques, including netting, trapping, and spearfishing, to harvest salmon during their annual spawning migrations. Saplings created sunflowers, corn, salmon, turkeys, and deer artwork.



Music this week emphasized on pow wow dancing, a valuable tool for teaching Saplings about Native American culture. We danced with ribbons as we flew like an eagle, ran like deer, swam like a fish, growled like a bear, hopped like a rabbit and howled like a wolf.

Pattern building and bead stringing enabled us to develop our fine motor skills and counting proficiency. We also had the opportunity to practice counting and letter recognition through a candy corn-inspired matching puzzle.

Maintaining a consistent sleep schedule throughout this Thanksgiving break is vital. A rambunctious or rowdy child before naptime or bedtime often indicates an **overtired**, not undertired, child. When a child does not get enough sleep, their body releases cortisol, which can make it harder to fall asleep and causes a surge of energy. Cortisol also inhibits the production of melatonin, which is needed in order to fall asleep and stay asleep. Children aged 3-5 years should get 10-13 hours (including naps). Insufficient sleep can decrease brain development, learning problems, frequent negative emotions, and lack of physical growth.

The significance of napping in a child's health and well-being cannot be overstated. A substantial body of research has shown that napping plays a crucial role in clearing the brain, thereby enabling the hippocampus to be replenished with new information. Throughout the day, children accumulate new experiences and information such as learning the alphabet, the color of the sky is blue and a bunny is furry, which are initially stored in the hippocampus before being sorted and consolidated into the cortex, an extensive long-term filing system, during sleep. This process facilitates the integration of new information into existing knowledge frameworks, promoting the creation of generalities and enhancing memory retrieval. Consequently, their hippocampus requires frequent clearing. Research has demonstrated that children who nap shortly after learning new vocabulary, for instance, exhibit an 80% retention rate, whereas those who do not nap retain only 30% of the new words. Moreover, napping children tend to have longer attention spans and are less irritable than their non-napping counterparts.

Next week our Saplings will be focusing on the theme of Thanksgiving including table setting and manners. Tuesday we will celebrate by crafting Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade balloons.

Pajama Day on Tuesday!

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**From Ms. Sara Knottski**

*K & 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Elementary Teacher*

We are a thankful bunch of kindergarten and 1st graders! This week, we discussed what it means to be grateful for people, animals, and things. K/1 created turkeys and wrote what we are thankful for. We shared what we're grateful for and thought about all the different things we have in our lives that make it special.

Our chickadees outside our classroom window have been busy! We have been diligent to refill their feeder, and we are seeing a lot of birds! This week, we created a scarecrow and set it up next to the feeder. We hope that the birds will get more comfortable with human shapes and eventually feel comfortable enough to fly around us.

In kindergarten, we learned about sequence of events in a story, and we practiced blending letter sounds and reading sight words. In math, we practiced adding and subtracting. In first grade, we are learning about end blends. We also practiced finding the characters, settings, and plots of stories. In math, we are finishing up a unit about addition and subtraction.





K/1 has library on Mondays. Ensure that books are returned on Monday morning so the students can check out new ones. They are learning about finding good-fit books to practice reading at home. Students can practice reading those books at home, but also enjoy listening to their choice book and falling in love with stories.

Have a great weekend and Happy Thanksgiving!

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From Ms. Samantha Forster

2nd & 3rd Grade Elementary Teacher

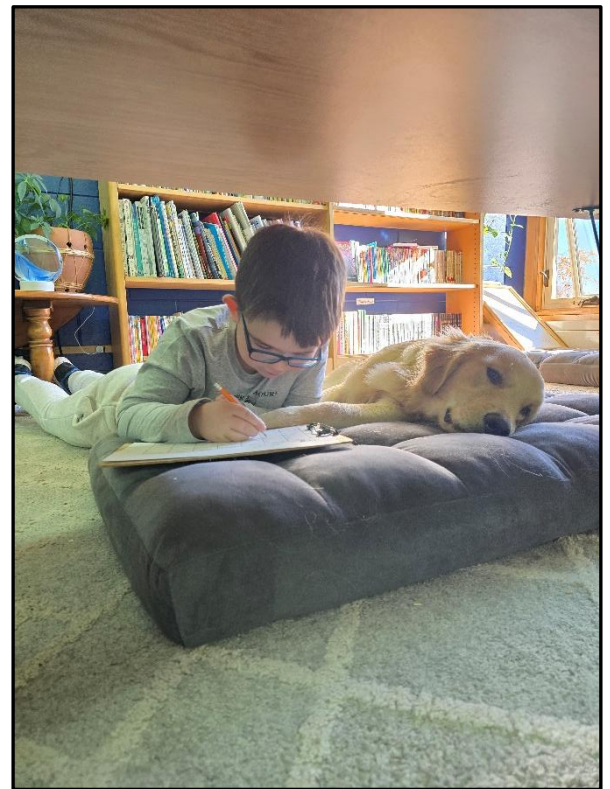
We started musical practice this week and it was a blast! This may result in some tired kids after school. In social studies, we focused on calendars. It was a progression from learning the history of calendars to filling out a calendar to creating our own calendar with different holidays. I ended the unit by focusing on the Anishinaabe calendar and comparing the lunar calendar to our regular calendar. I finished reading the read aloud "Stuart Little" and we will watch the corresponding movie sometime in the near future. Students have been so excited to pick out the next read aloud book. We did some Thanksgiving Art for our art lesson this week. But most of our afternoons were spent listening, dancing, and singing for the musical.

In reading, the main focus was on fact and opinion and main idea with supporting details. We filled out graphic organizers, read passages, and completed fill in sentences with facts and opinions. Our prefix for the week was pre- and dis-. We also looked at pronouns and how to correctly use them to replace nouns within sentences. Our phonics lesson was focused on the "au, al, o, and au" sounds and how they are similar sounds but spelt differently. I always pair these activities with multiple word sorts and a decodable reading to help reinforce this idea.

Math was all about coins and time. 2nd graders focused on counting coins up to a dollar. This will help paired with giving back change next week. The 3rd graders focused on time to the nearest minute and to the nearest 5 minutes. These are some concepts that we will continue to work on throughout the year because they can be difficult to master.

Thank you for continuing to send warm clothes and extra warm clothes so that students have multiple layers when they go out to play!

Have a great Thanksgiving break!



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**From Ms. Stacy Coronis**  
*4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Elementary Teacher*

The 4/5 class had two main areas of focus this week. First of all, we are spending time each afternoon practicing for our upcoming musical. We have been practicing the speaking parts and songs with the 2/3 class and each day we are getting better and better. We are so excited to share this performance with you on December 10!

Our other main focus this week was ecosystems. In science class we reviewed how species in a habitat form food chains and food webs. If this ecosystem becomes off balance, it can affect all of the plants and animals in that ecosystem. We also learned that all plants have “little mouths” called stomata that allow the air to enter the plant so that it can grow. We all found it incredible that the largest tree in the whole world, General Sherman, grew from a tiny seed and only used air (carbon dioxide), sunshine and water. In reading we read a narrative nonfiction story about the Florida Everglades so we were able to learn a little bit about that ecosystem. We also learned that authors have a purpose for their writing and the story this week was written to describe the Everglades and persuade the readers to understand that this ecosystem needs protection and conservation.



In math the 5th graders finished up the lessons on multiplying decimals and 4th graders learned how to estimate products and multiply 2 digit by 2 digit numbers using two strategies, the area or box method and the shortcut method. All students have done well in this unit and will take a final assessment on Friday before we move on to our next unit on long division. This week in spelling our lesson was learning and using homophones in our writing. We spent time talking about how the words sound the same, but the meanings and spellings of these words are different.

There will not be a newsletter next week so I would like to express my thanks to you at home for sending your wonderful kids to school each day ready to learn. I am so thankful to teach at Birch Grove! It is an honor to help your children learn and grow. Happy Thanksgiving!

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