

## Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Weekly Newsletter

October 2, 2025

### Upcoming Events:

Wednesday, October 8 ~ Annual Tofte Fire & Rescue Visit for Fire Prevention Week

Thursday & Friday, October 16 & 17 ~ No School for MEA

Tuesday, October 21 Annual School Board Meeting @ 4:00 Regular Meeting to Follow

Sunday, October 26 ~ Annual PTO Halloween Carnival from 2-4pm

Monday, November 3 ~ No School/PD for Staff

### 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*

Welcome October! Autumn is such a beautiful month on the Shore – with plenty of opportunity to enjoy all that the Shore and Birch Grove have to offer!

We are in the groove of the new school year and things are going well! Schedules are down, expectations are clear and some serious classwork is underway. Please support us at home by having your children access our academic on-line platforms from time to time (we know it is screen time, but it is educational screen time) and be sure to dedicate a “reading time” in your home. These are two things that you can do to support your child’s academic journey this year. Having good student attendance and being to school on time is highly important as well. As always, please reach out if you have concerns or would like to have a discussion with



your child's teacher. Staff are available to meet most days after school in person or by phone from 3:20-4:15. We love to hear from our parents!

As always, we go outside everyday in all but the most severe weather. Birch Grove has a focus on the outdoors! Please send your child in weather appropriate clothing. Layers are best as they can always take them off. Leaving a hoody at school in lockers is always a good idea.

Remaining fall hikes for Birch Buddies ~HIKE!

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

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)



As our families know, we serve a hot lunch 4 days a week – Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. This is mainly because the senior lunch program uses the kitchen to create a weekly meal and it's not possible to have two cooks/two programs using the kitchen at the same time. Senior lunch has been happening in this building for decades, and we want to see this continue in our community, so we ask that families send a cold lunch from home every Wednesday. There is a bright side to this as a cold lunch from home is easier to eat outside – either under the pavilion or at the Campsite!



Lantern Lunch is also easier with a cold lunch (this starts in November). We thank our families for sending a cold lunch each Wednesday! PLEASE also send a back-up lunch (non-perishable) to store in student lockers for the inevitable day that a cold lunch is forgotten at home (or the bus). If your child brings a cold lunch every school day, please do the same and send a back-up lunch to keep in their locker. Thank you!



# THE ANNUAL BIRCH GROVE HALLOWEEN CARNIVAL!



**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 26**

**2:00 - 4:00**

**AT BIRCH GROVE IN TOFTE**



- ~ FUN FOR ALL AGES!
- ~ KIDS GAMES!
- ~ WIN PRIZES!
- ~ CAKE WALK!
- ~ COOKIE DECORATING!
- ~ FABULOUS FOODS!
- ~ BINGO! WITH CASH PRIZES FROM  
GRAND MARAIS STATE BANK~TOFTE



**WEAR A COSTUME (OR NOT)  
AND BRING THE WHOLE FAMILY!**



**IT WILL BE A SPOOKTACULAR TIME!**

**CARNIVAL TICKETS ARE \$5 EACH - CASH OR CHECK ONLY.**  
**MULTIPLE ACTIVITIES CAN BE ENJOYED FROM ONE TICKET.**



**BIRCHGROVE@BOREAL.ORG**  
**218-663-0170**

Zoar Lutheran Church in Tofte contributed \$510 to Birch Grove Community School's hot lunch program! We thank you for this support that keeps our amazing in-house lunch program running to benefit all of our K-5 students, Saplings and Seedlings. What a great community we have!

<https://www.birchgroveschool.com/School-Lunches>



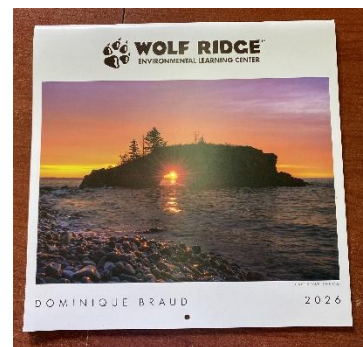
💎 WOW! 💎 Tofte General Store has done it AGAIN!! For the 3rd year in a row, Tofte General Store will be donating fruits and vegetables for the entire school year to the school lunch program! Show them some love on the FB post and when you stop in! Thank you for the community support of our small, public charter school that is Birch Grove Community School in Tofte on the West End!



If you or someone you know would like to donate to the school hot lunch program, please contact us at [birchgrove@boreal.org](mailto:birchgrove@boreal.org) ~ 218-663-0170 ~ Post Office Box 2383 Tofte, MN 55615



Birch Grove will be selling Wolf Ridge calendars again this year as a fundraiser to help contribute to the expense of the annual 2-5th graders 3-day, 2-night trip to Wolf Ridge at the end of the school year. We will be sending home 1 calendar per K-5 family and ask that you buy or sell the calendar for \$15 – just one calendar! Once sold, please send the \$15 in an envelope with your family's name on it with the note "Wolf Ridge Calendar". If you choose not to sell one calendar, please send the calendar back to Birch Grove letting us know. If you should want to sell more than one, please let me know and I can get you additional calendars.



All K-5 students will have an opportunity to earn a \$5 carnival ticket to the Annual Halloween Carnival that is on Sunday, October 26 from 2:00-4:00. The opportunity will be linked to academic work. We will need many volunteers to work at this event to make it successful, so please mark the date on your calendar, as a volunteer sign-up link will be coming soon. Grandparents make great volunteers for this event, so put a bug (so Halloween!) in some ears! Thank you!

Birch Grove staff were multi-tasking today during their lunch break! Staff gathered with Laurie Roberts, our Q-Comp Teacher Mentor, as they reflected on the results of their first classroom observation of the year!

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In 2008, Birch Grove Community School was the 21st charter school to enter into the Quality Compensation Program (Q Comp). Q-Comp is designed to advance the teaching profession by providing structural professional development and evaluation, as well as an alternative pay schedule that compensates teachers based on performance. The program brings together career advancement, professional development and compensation linked to academic achievement. It includes a locally agreed-upon peer evaluation process for every teacher that is based on skills, responsibilities and student academic growth.



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](mailto:birchgrove@boreal.org)  
[www.birchgroveschool.com](http://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](#)



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

*Seedling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

This week the focus in the Seedlings room was our five senses. We read *I'm Exploring With My Senses* by Laura Purdie Salas. This book showed what we might hear, see, smell, touch, and taste if we spent a day at the circus. We also read *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* which allowed us to practice naming animals and colors. The Seedlings colored a picture of a face with crayons and we identified our eyes, ears, mouth and nose. The song *Heads, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes* was used to help the Seedlings remember where their facial features are located.

Our sensory table this week was filled with fabrics of different textures as well as feathers to explore our sense of touch. We also worked on our fine motor skills and our sense of touch by playing with play dough. The Seedlings liked squishing the play dough, pulling it apart, and using letter stamps. For our sense of hearing, different musical instruments accompanied our sensory table such as a drum, xylophone, tambourine, and maracas. The Seedlings all enjoyed taking turns with the instruments and exploring different sounds. During snack and lunch, we talked about what we were eating and the different tastes and textures of the food.





While we were out on our walks this week, we talked about the things we could hear such as the vehicles on the highway, birds in the trees, and even a puppy on the bike path. We talked about the things that we could see such as the playground, cars, trees, bikes, and mushrooms. We explored our sense of touch by feeling the grass, fallen leaves, pine needles, and a few flowers that we found.

As the weather will begin to cool down, please be sure to send your child with jackets, hats, and mittens as we go outside every day for a walk as long as the weather allows.

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### **From Ms. Pam Holm**

*Sapling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

The Spooktacular month of October has arrived! Saplings have settled in - what an amazing group of little ones. This week's theme was *A Ghostly Gathering*, with Ghosts, Skeletons and Mummies - focusing on the color of white. The Dramatic Play area is transformed into a Haunted House. The sensory bin was transformed into a graveyard full of bones. It provided an engaging setting for exploration, where the Saplings were digging and counting bones and skulls in a controlled environment. The writing center offered pre-writing exercises emphasizing the letters G for ghost, M for mummy, and S for skeleton. The math and manipulative center provided activities such as mummy wrapping to develop fine motor skills, ghost and skull counting, ghost shapes and haunted house sequencing.



Tuesday's activities commenced with the creation of ghosts after reading *There Was An Old Lady Who Swallowed a Ghost*. A ghostly science experiment was also conducted, employing magnets to create the illusion of a ghost 'dancing' using a paperclip inside a tissue ghost. Notably, our hike showcased trees and leaves eerily transformed into ghosts and ghouls.

Saplings developed their letter recognition abilities on Wednesday by identifying the letters in their names. They constructed paper haunted houses, cutting out shapes then adding their names floating on ghosts haunting the house!

Thursday focus was on Mummies. Sapling learned that they are not just in spooky stories, but are actually a fascinating part of history! Ancient people, especially in Egypt, used special techniques to preserve bodies for thousands of years. These mummies were carefully wrapped and buried with

treasures to help them in the afterlife. While dancing we participated in a lively interactive activity where we wrapped each other in toilet paper to become mummies, developing our dexterity and coordination.

This Friday, our focus will be on the skeletal system and its role in maintaining our structural integrity. The calcium in bones is crucial for their strength and whiteness. We will be using fragmented Q-tip bones to form words and spell out names. After reading Hannah Elliot's book *Día de los Muertos*, Saplings will participate in a culturally enriching activity, utilizing maracas and castanets while listening to traditional Mariachi music. Additionally, we will create a skeleton using paper chain for limbs.

October initiates our Show and Tell activity, where Saplings are encouraged to bring in Halloween or spooky-themed items, firefighter pictures, or explorer equipment like a compass, binoculars or maps. In our small group setting, they may share once a week, on a day of their choice.

Have a fa-BOO-lous weekend!

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

K/1 showed interest in music during our play time! We listened and danced to our favorite songs, and listened to music that was new to us, had a different language, and used different instruments. We ended the week exploring sounds and tunes on a xylophone.

In Kindergarten, we are learning letters H and P this week. We also read a story about pets. We used inferencing skills to predict what will happen in the story. In math, we are practicing writing numbers 0-20 and we learned about circles, rectangles, and squares.

The first-grade students are continuing to practice reading and reviewing letter sounds. We read a story called *Curious George Goes to School*. We talked about sequence of events in a story. We summarized the events that happened to Curious George in a flow chart. In math, we learned all of our addition partners up to 10!

We spend lots of time outside on a school day. As the weather turns colder, please send your child with appropriate clothes to wear for extended periods of time outside. We hope that the weather will continue to stay warmer through October!





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

This short week flew by! I was so impressed with students this week, they worked so hard and played so hard! We entered the European continent this month, which is very exciting for students with families from Europe. We will be exploring traditions, landscapes, and artists for this continent throughout the month. This week, we started with an art project based around Van Gogh's "Sunflower Painting." It was so much fun! In science, we focused on being engineers and practicing with balanced and unbalanced forces. This activity was called "Hopper Poppers" and it was a great representation of push and pull forces.

In reading, we focused on the main idea throughout each group. Students have been practicing filling out a graphic organizer along with their story. Writing about reading is one of the greatest ways to strengthen reading comprehension! We also focused on the prefix un- and spent time building words and sentences with this prefix. Phonics continued with syllable types, VCe patterns, and vowel teams related to "A" and "E." It has been fun to watch the students develop their word watcher skills. Lastly, groups read about Frida Kahlo and her triumphs as a Latino artist. We created discussion about vocabulary words, prior knowledge, and background knowledge to help build understanding around this topic.

In math, we had to separate groups working on different things. In one group, we focused on building fluency with our multiplication and division facts. The other group worked towards automaticity on subtraction and addition under 20. Both groups worked on solving word problems. On Friday, we focused on money and the concepts of money. I will spend each Friday throughout October on money and utilizing money manipulatives.

Please reach out with any questions or concerns. I have loved this first month as your child's teacher and I can't wait for this next month!

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## From Ms. Stacy Coronis

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

This week in math we took our first math test on the concepts from Unit 1 on number sense. The corrected test will be in your child's take home folder on Friday. As we move into unit 2 we will focus on strategies for multidigit multiplication. This unit will be difficult for students who have not mastered their multiplication math facts yet, so please encourage your child to practice most nights for 5-10 minutes. They can use the plastic sleeve in their take home folder, the Ascend Flashcards website or flashcards. We take our math facts quizzes every Friday and students who have been practicing during the month of September have made incredible gains or have even mastered their facts. Every bit of practice helps!

In reading we read a play and studied the elements of fiction including characters, setting, plot, conflict and resolution. We compared the structure of a play to narrative pieces and many students had a chance to participate in the play by taking the role of one of the characters. Most students have finished one or more chapter books in September. Wow! Thank you for encouraging your child to read most nights at home for about 25 minutes!

We have started our spelling units and each week we will focus on a new spelling pattern. At the beginning of the school week your child will get a new list to put in their plastic sleeve (in their Take Home Folder) to use that week to study. We will work in class on the spelling patterns and will take a test each Friday. If your child wants to practice the words and patterns at home they can use this sheet. They have learned some strategies about how to study with an adult or by themselves.

Our 4/5 room is settling in nicely with our routines and it has been impressive to watch them develop into such a hardworking class of motivated learners!

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