

Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Weekly Newsletter

September 18, 2025

Upcoming Events:

Thursday, September 18 ~ Annual Painting in the Woods with Mary LaBarge

Tuesday, September 23 ~ DNR Field Day for 4/5 at Birch Grove

Thursday, September 25 ~ School Picture Day

Monday, September 29 ~ No School/Staff PD

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*

The third week of school is coming to a close with high spirits! We are off to a great school year with incredible staff and students! K-5 are doing a great job in learning expectations as well as the rules and routines in the classroom and school. Curriculum is underway and we are moving along.

Both the Saplings and Seedlings programs are also off to a great start with everything running smoothly with all spending some time outdoors with walks, or projects and activities – Fall is here and we are enjoying it!

Please continue to send your child to school in layers. We go outside everyday in all but the worst weather. Children can leave a sweatshirt/jacket here at school so that they will always have it and it



is not forgotten at home. Thank you and much appreciated!

Today was our annual Painting in the Woods! with Mary LaBerge, local artist. K-5 had a great time creating a canvas painting in small classroom groups – it took all day! Each masterpiece will be displayed on easels in the entryway of the building in rotating shifts. All paintings will be displayed before the end of the school year and all will be sent home on the last day of the year. Here are a few preview pictures of the event. More will be posted on the school Facebook page soon!



Good Attendance is Necessary for Learning:

We understand that families sometimes take vacations, have family emergencies, special people may come up north to visit, or families may go out of town early for special events, etc., and some families may pull their students from school on these days. Please keep in mind that your child could (and most likely will) get sick later in the school year and may be absent for a number of days, adding to the total number of absences that were not illness related. Please plan for your child to be sick **5-10** days in the school year, and consider this when pulling your child from school for other reasons. We are required by law to report excessive truancy/excessive absences whether excused or unexcused, to the appropriate agencies, and no one wants that. Should your child's absences become concerning, we will always reach out to you first. If you have any questions, please let us know.

Birch Grove Picture Day is Thursday, September 25! Seedlings and Saplings start at 9:00. Enrolled Seedlings or Saplings that are not attending this day can come at 9:00 just for pictures! Ring the bell for entry. K-5 pictures will start after the littles. Picture forms will be sent home soon. Smile!....and....Silly Face!



Birch Buddies ~ HIKE! after school fall sessions remaining!

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

9/18 Carlton Peak to school 2.5 miles

9/25 Cook County 45 Trailhead to Cascade 3.6 miles
(Suggested older/experienced hikers)

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**)

"Reading is good anywhere, but especially so in the woods- surrounded by the beautiful fresh green and the smell of sun on pine needles." ~Unknown



The October lunch menu has been created and is on the school website. School lunch menus can always be found here:

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

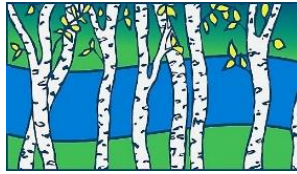


The 4/5 class will be taking part in the DNR Field Day here at Birch Grove next week on Tuesday. Please send a cold lunch this day as all the schools attending will be having a cold lunch at the Campsite. Thank you!

Thank you to the Sons of the American Legion in Grand Marais and the spectacular group pictured for funds raised at the bingo tent during Fisherman's Picnic this year. \$1,024 was raised for Birch Grove! Thank you all so much!



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

Leaves are falling and autumn is calling! This week we focused on the fall leaves that are beginning to change color and fall all around us on our walks.

While on our walks we talked about the different colors that we could see on the leaves and watched as the wind blew through the trees and brought the leaves down to the ground. The Seedlings enjoyed finding leaves and squeezing them to see if they made a crunching sound. The beautiful weather this week allowed us to really take our time on our walks to soak up the sunshine.

During our reading time before nap, we read books that had a focus on fall leaves. *Fresh Fall Leaves* by Betsy Franco is a fun story that shows all of the fun things that can be done with leaves such as jumping in them or throwing them in the air. *One Windy Day* by Tammi Salzano is a fun little story of how the wind can blow things up and down, left and right, or over and under. It is a great book to introduce opposites.



Our sensory table was filled with paper grass and foam leaf cutouts. This provided a fun activity for the older Seedlings to search through the “leaf piles” to find the different leaf shapes and colors such as red, orange and yellow. A sensory bottle was created using the same paper grass and leaf buttons that the younger Seedlings could enjoy.

We had a variety of fun art projects this week as well. We created fall trees using paper plates that were cut into the shape of a tree and then coloring them with red, orange, and yellow dot markers. We also created a fun leaf handprint craft. Paint was introduced this week as well. The older Seedlings were given a small amount of paint that they could dip a cotton ball into and then paint a picture of leaf outlines. For our younger Seedlings, the picture was placed inside a large Ziplock bag with the paint and then sealed. They were able to squish the paint unto the picture in a fun and mess free sensory experience.

218-663-0170 ext. 7

emily.vandorenbgcs@gmail.com

~~~~~

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

*Sapling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

This week, Saplings observed the chromatic season of fall. We examined the captivating world of autumn leaves, explored the reasons behind the change in leaf colors and their eventual fall from trees during autumn, while acquiring knowledge about chlorophyll. Saplings spent Monday creating vibrant stained glass maple leaves in rich red and bold orange, focusing on enhancing their fine motor dexterity.



Throughout the week we ventured on nature walks to gather an array of fallen leaves. Saplings

encountered leaves in diverse colors, including red, orange, yellow, and brown. They subsequently categorized them according to color, size, and shape. With the aid of magnifying glasses, they analyzed the leaves' vein structures that carry food/water throughout the leaf and crafted their own vibrant collage using oil pastels and watercolors to replicate the fallen leaves.

On Wednesday we used crayons and paper, to produce mighty oak leaf art by placing leaves underneath and rubbing sideways, thereby exposing the unique shapes and patterns of each leaf. We designed a sensory bin filled with leaves of varied textures and colors, accompanied by acorns and pinecones. The Saplings utilized small scoops and containers to sort and explore the materials, thereby enhancing their tactile awareness, measurement skills, counting abilities, and sorting techniques. Such activities cultivate social interaction, cooperation, and teamwork.



Saplings on Thursday employed real, life-size leaves and seeds to craft the leaf characters and landscapes, positioning them against textured paper backgrounds, in a style similar to Lois Ehlert's *Leaf Man*.

This week's literacy focus centered on exploring letters L and F within the context of the leaf and fall theme. In the library center, Saplings utilized props from *There was an Old Lady who Swallowed a Leaf* to retell the story, honing their sequencing skills. The writing center featured pre-writing mats, vocabulary words and letter recognition cards to accompany the story.

Mathematical concepts were integrated through leaf sorting and classification exercises. While the math and manipulatives center featured leaf counting and graphing, leaf sequence sizing and sorting, shadow matching, fall number puzzles, and a build-your-own scarecrow activity.

On our upcoming nature walk for Friday Saplings will paint *en plein air* a landscape of *Birch Grove* trees. They have been immersing themselves in friendships, playful learning and personal growth!

218-663-0170 ext. 6  
[pam.holmbgcs@gmail.com](mailto:pam.holmbgcs@gmail.com)

~~~~~

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

I can't believe it's only the third week of school! The children learned the rules quickly and are comfortable already! We created our own classroom rules and posted them in our classroom. The students also came up with consequences for themselves if they break their rules. We finished the week creating classroom jobs.

Our favorite activity this week was learning about money during playtime. They sorted, counted, skip counted, and did transaction all while engaged in play. In Kindergarten, the students learned the letters G, D, and M this week. We read a book about making friends at school and made connections to our school. In math, we learned the numbers 0-5 and counting. We will continue to practice writing and counting numbers 0-10. The first-grade students are reviewing letters and learning to read and spell words such as play, and, the, and for. We also read stories about pals. We learned about main idea and supporting details in a book. In math, we are learning about all the different ways to make 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10. We are also learning addition patterns of adding 0 and 1.



Often, we will have multiple assignments a day that the students are expected to work on in class. Some of those assignments will go home incomplete because I do not make kids work during break/play time as long as they work the whole-time during work time. If you find unfinished work sent home, you can work on it with your child. Often, assignments are not completed because it is challenging (but grade level) for them or they need additional support. It would offer additional support and practice for things that may be hard. However, this is not homework or required!

Reminder: If your child does not have backup clothes and backup lunch in their locker, please send them in their backpack to school!

Have a wonderful weekend!

218-663-0170 ext. 2

sara.knottskibgcs@gmail.com

~~~~~

**From Ms. Samantha Forster**

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

This week we started our reading and math curriculum! It was full of great discussion about schools and dogs! We explored the North American artist Jackson Pollock with a super fun art project that involved straws and liquid water color. This week, we also went to library and gym for the first time. Students were so excited to explore the library and pick out some books to read. We have made it about halfway through the Wild Robot. We should be able to watch the corresponding movie in a couple weeks where we will compare and contrast the literacy version versus the digital version! Our social studies topic was focused on rules, rights, and responsibilities, the constitution, and the 3 branches of government. We had a great week!



In reading, we focused a lot on syllable times and breaking words into multi-syllabic words into the smaller parts. We broke about many different words throughout the text to help us build understanding. Each group focused on short vowels and schwa sounds and what our mouth looks with all those different sounds. This will be something that I will focus on throughout the whole year with all types of readers as it is so helpful at breaking apart unknown words.

In math, we spent time working on adding and subtracting within 20 and multiplication facts 1-5. This involved using a multitude of strategies to help each child arrive at the answer. We also practiced writing equations and listening for the important information in word problems.



Reach out with any questions or concerns!

218-663-0170 ext. 3

[samantha.forsterbgcs@gmail.com](mailto:samantha.forsterbgcs@gmail.com)

~~~~~

From Ms. Stacy Coronis

4th & 5th Grade Elementary Teacher

Words cannot express how happy I am with how our class is developing into a well-functioning room full of learners! Students are settling into great routines at school and they have formed new friendships.

Thank you for sending them to school each day with their snack, water bottle, and take home folder.

Ask your child to show you their math fact practice sheet in their folder and how they use it to practice their facts. Students should practice their facts for about 5 minutes so that they can sign our “wall of fame” posters for addition, subtraction, multiplication, and

division once they have reached mastery. Students can also practice their facts by logging on to a device at home (with parent permission) and using the free website **Ascend Flashcards**. They have been trained on how to use that website. Becoming fluent with these math facts will make math so much easier for the remainder of the school year. Besides math facts, we have reviewed place value to the millions, comparing numbers, rounding, expanded form as well as adding and subtracting large numbers.



In reading we have started our reading groups while at the same time learning our routine for reading group rotations and IDR which stands for independent daily reading. We have set up our reading journals and reviewed the different types of genres. Students all have a chapter book for IDR time, graphic novels and picture books can still be read during other times during the day or at home for their 25 minutes of reading. Students also spend about 15 minutes each day on the Lexia reading platform that covers several topics of foundational reading skills. This program differentiates the level to meet your child’s reading needs. Students may also log on to the Lexia website from home if that is how they want to do their 25 minutes of reading most nights. Thank you for supporting your child’s reading time at home, it does make a difference.

We have wrapped up all of our fall Fastbridge testing and we will review this data at our first conference later this fall. Tomorrow everyone is looking forward to painting in the forest!

One last item..... Please make sure to send your child's picture order form back to school before school pictures next week on Thursday. Thank you!!

218-663-0170 ext. 4

stacy.coronisbgcs@gmail.com