

## Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Weekly Newsletter

September 25, 2025

### Upcoming Events:

Monday, September 29 ~ No School/Staff PD

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

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

### 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*

September has been a pretty packed month with K-5 student assessments, an all-day site visit from our school authorizer, the annual painting in the woods with Mary, the DNR Field Day, school pictures, bonfires, classwork, and getting to know the rules and expectations here at Birch Grove Community School. There is no school next week on Monday, and everyone deserves to take a little break from this busy month!

Please look ahead to the Upcoming Events at the top of this newsletter for October and note that events and information can be added as the month rolls along. Should you have any questions, please be sure to reach out.

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!

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources held its annual 5th Grade Field Day at Birch Grove Community School again this year, with Sawtooth Elementary and Great Expectations joining BGCS! The overarching theme this year was "Fire on the Landscape". Seven different stations were located throughout the property. Each station addressed some aspect of the direct and indirect impacts of wildfire in forest ecosystems. This was accomplished through a mixture of presentation, hands-on activities and games. We were incredibly impressed with the DNR staff and the amazing day that they planned for all of our students! Thank you so much - it was a great day of learning and fun!





🍏🍏 The hallway was filled with the scent of freshly baked pie as Saplings engaged in crafting personal apple pies! They used their fine motor skills to blend and roll out dough and followed sequential steps involving coring, measuring, and mixing the filling. The Saplings program is primarily for ages 3-5, and they can bake pie like nobody's business!

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



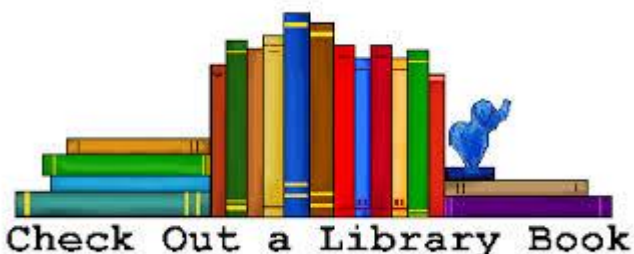


The October school lunch menu is up on the website! You can always find it here: <https://www.birchgroveschool.com/School-Lunches>



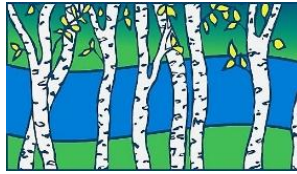
Please note that there is no school next week on Monday, September 29, as it is a scheduled staff professional development/workshop day. Remember, if there is no school for K-5, there is also no Saplings or Seedlings.

School pictures were taken today. All who were present had their picture taken, even if an envelope was not turned in. Questions about pictures? Please contact Bruce Johnson at: [brucejohnsonphoto@gmail.com](mailto:brucejohnsonphoto@gmail.com) There is no picture retake day.



Library has started for all of K-5. Please remind your child to treat library books kindly and to keep track of them. Designate a place at home for school library books so that they are less likely to get lost.

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](http://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*

This week the Seedlings learned all about apples. We had a lot of fun with books, songs, and art projects that had a focus on apples.

We read the book *The Apple Pie Tree* by Zoe Hall. The book shows how an apple tree changes through the different seasons and how the apples can be used to create apple pie. After we read the book, we colored a picture of an apple tree using crayons. We worked on fine motor skills and also talked about the different parts of the tree as well as the colors that would be on an apple tree. We also read *Ten Apples Up on Top* by Dr. Seuss this week. The book was a great way to introduce counting. To go along with our reading, we practiced pulling felt apples that were velcroed to an apple tree picture and laying them on top of character cut outs from the book.



We added red and green balls to our sensory table along with the paper grass. The Seedlings dug through the grass to find the "apples" and placed them in a basket. We talked about the colors of the apples and their shape. Things got a little silly when we tried to balance the balls on our heads just like the characters from *Ten Apples Up on Top*. We also played an apple match game together.



I brought in apples from my tree to cut open to show the Seedlings the seeds inside an apple. After we explored the apple, the Seedlings used the apple halves as stamps to paint a picture of an apple. The Seedlings loved this sensory art experience.

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**From Ms. Pam Holm**

*Sapling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

This week, Saplings thoroughly enjoyed the apple-themed activities. The hallway was filled with the scent of freshly baked pie on Tuesday as Saplings engaged in crafting personal apple pies! They used their fine motor skills to blend and roll out dough and followed sequential steps involving coring, measuring, and mixing the filling. Each sapling peeled apples, with an apple peeler. They then utilized the peels as rulers to measure both individuals and objects around the room.



Our Dramatic Play was transformed into an apple orchard, inspiring dialogue on customer service and apple-based goods like pies, cider and butter. Many conversations were had regarding who liked apples, the parts of an apple, colors of apples, if apples float, who eats apples, etc.

As part of their Monday activities, the Saplings undertook an exercise designed to strengthen their finger muscles, which involved ripping paper to create colorful apple art. They then participated in a taste test of red, green, and yellow apples, voting on their favorite variety afterwards. This was followed by a discussion on the distinct taste profiles of the apples, their shared characteristics, and the factors influencing individual preferences.

During Wednesday's class, we delved into the history of apples in America with a reading of Johnny Appleseed by Steven Kellogg. Saplings then weaved a paper basket and added painted apple stampings to compile a bushel of apples.

Following a reading of From Seed To Apple Tree by Steven Anderson on Thursday, Saplings worked together to create the life cycle of an apple, covering the science of apple components, such as stem, skin, flesh, and pips, and incorporating positional words and directional skills.

Throughout the week, Saplings took part in various apple-themed songs and fingerplays. One popular activity was the fingerplay 10 Red Apples Growing on a Tree, where they predicted the location of the worm behind one of the apples. A range of math and manipulative activities were offered, including categorizing apples by size and color, counting apples and seeds, and the sensory apple pie-making bin. Literacy instruction centered on the letter A, supported by interactive magic apple alphabet cards that revealed hidden letters by shining a light behind the apple cards. Saplings also crafted an apple featuring their name spelled out in the seeds, a fun and creative way for them to learn to spell their names.

Wishing you an appletastic weekend! 🍏

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**From Ms. Sara Knottski**

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

Fall is in the air and K/1 is excited about the change in seasons! We went on a nature hike this week to collect and examine fall leaves. We drew pictures of the leaves we found and used watercolor to paint our pictures. We also used our science skills to classify and sort leaves by shape, size, color, and type. We look forward to more fun science, math, and reading fall activities.



Our play this week brought us to kinetic sand and pretend construction. We used our fine and gross motor skills to mold and shape the sand. We also practiced sharing and collaborating with others. Construction play led to practicing our math skills. Students were measuring, comparing, counting, adding, and subtracting!

Kindergarten students learned more letters and numbers up to 10. We are really getting good at learning new letters and numbers. We are focusing and responding well. We also read some books and focused on the main idea of a book. The first graders continue to practice numbers and letters. We are working on blending letters to read words and reviewing sight words. We read a few stories and focused on understanding a character's actions.



We started library a few weeks ago. We will have it every Monday. Please make sure the books are treated kindly and returned on Monday so the kids can check out new ones!

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**From Ms. Samantha Forster**

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

This week flew by with such nice weather! We spent a good deal of time exploring outside and doing some crafts outside as well. We finished up our Jackson Pollock art project and started a Ted Harrison inspired project. I love utilizing the campsite with the warm weather to do our messy crafts! We also spent more time on animal traits this week. Students made a field journal, categorized animals by different traits, and read multiple passages about animals with unique traits that help them survive in their environment. Gym was also able to be enjoyed outside with a great game of crab kickball which was a Walter favorite!

In reading, we explored many phonics skills such as the short vowels and VCe words. I had students transfer these skills to multisyllabic words. I loved to see that many students pulled their prior knowledge from last week to divide words into syllables and label them. This is a great strategy to help students break unknown words into more manageable chunks. We read a story about Gladys West which sparked lots of conversation about GPS and the difference we see today in the workforce. This helped students increase vocabulary and background knowledge which leads to better comprehension in future passages!

Math has been loads of fun with us continuing with learning how to add 3 to 4 addends in one of our groups and learning all our multiplication and division facts up to 6 in another. In both groups, I modeled how to use multiple different strategies to solve the problems. This led to students choosing which strategy worked best for them while they are working on memorizing the facts. I do utilize the IXL program which is a wonderful resource to use at home. Please reach out for any usernames/passwords as I think this is one of the most effective ways to incorporate technology and education into your home!

Thank you for your continued support as we progress through the school year! Reminder that we do have cold lunch every Wednesday at school and we DO NOT have hot lunch. Thank you!

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**From Ms. Stacy Coronis**

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

This school week began with our DNR Field Day event on Tuesday. The weather was beautiful, our DNR leaders were engaging and the schools in Cook County enjoyed spending the day at Birch Grove! The students were able to learn about several topics including the water cycle, fisheries, impact of fire and the role that vegetation plays in water runoff, Lake Superior, dragonfly migration and the human impact on the fish in our water. The 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders all learned so much and so did I!



In math class we are wrapping up our first unit. This week we focused on strategies to help us solve two step word problems. These proved to be difficult, but after a few days of practice the students were able to solve these problems successfully. It was a good chance to practice math stamina. Hopefully you see your child practicing their math facts for about 5 minutes a night so that they can master all of their math facts. We will use an online program in math again this year called IXL to supplement our current math curriculum. IXL allows students to practice skills at grade level as well as enter into their “individualized math arena”.

Our reading groups are off and running this year so that students receive reading instruction and strategies at their current level. Our focus this week was identifying story elements such as characters, setting, conflict, resolution, plot and point of view of a realistic fiction story. Students will also use the online reading program Lexia again this year. This program also differentiates instruction to meet your child’s individual needs. Students can access this from home as well if they want to accelerate their reading progress.

Please remember to check in with your child each weekend to look over their weekly Progress Report with them, sign it and have your child return it to school in their Take Home Folder. Thank you so much for your support at home!

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