



Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Weekly Newsletter

September 4, 2025

Upcoming Events:

Tuesday, September 16 ~ School Board Meeting 4:00pm

Wednesday, September 17 ~ VOA-MN School Authorizer Onsite Fall Visit

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

It has been another great start to a school year! We started our week with the Bell Ringing Ceremony on the first day of school. Welcome to all of our new and former families – we are glad that you are here!

BGCS will strive to give every child what they need to make significant growth throughout the year, but we will need your help to do it. Please communicate with your child's teacher, encourage and support your child with any homework they may have (there shouldn't be much), use time at home to promote learning, see to it that your child is read to or reads independently at home, and make sure your child knows you think school is important.

These are just a few things that you can do to promote growth. The educational staff will have other ideas and resources for you throughout the year. Please never hesitate to contact us if you have questions, concerns or ideas.



The front entry doors open at 7:55am and close at 8:10am. If you arrive after 8:10, please ring the bell for entry. All K-5 students are able to walk themselves into the building – we got this! At the end of the school day, you may pick your K-5 or Sapling up in the afternoon between **3:05 and 3:15 by the pavilion.**

Newsletters will be emailed each week, usually on Thursdays (sometimes Fridays if it is really busy around here!). Newsletters will be emailed to the address that you indicated on enrollment forms. If you would like to add an email address to the newsletter email group, please let us know. Newsletters are also posted on our school website at www.birchgroveschool.com. A hard copy of this newsletter is sent home only the first week of school and the rest will be sent by email. If you did not receive the newsletter by email today, let us know so that we can add you to the newsletter email list. Thank you!

Be sure to check out our website at www.birchgroveschool.com. You can find the school year calendar, weekly newsletters, lunch menus, school board minutes, upcoming events, resources, and more. I hope that you will be a regular visitor to our site.

Facebook:

Be sure to “Like” and “Follow” our school Facebook page, and be sure to share with others! We post regularly – it can help to keep you up to date with events and activities! [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/birchgrovecommunityschool/)
<https://www.facebook.com/birchgrovecommunityschool/>

Each Sapling and K-5 student has been given a Take Home Folder. Please check this folder daily. Use this folder as one form of communication with your child’s teacher. You can return forms and paperwork, send bus passes, etc. **Take Home Folders are checked every day – backpacks are not!**

Bus passes – if you have a change in your child’s normal busing, please send a written note. For instance, if your child is being picked up by someone and not riding the bus home, please send a note, email, or call. If your child is getting off at a different scheduled bus stop than normal, please send a note. Email will also work, but send it to both me and your child’s teacher in the event that one of us is absent. Also, emails should be sent well before the end of the day so that they are sure to be opened. If you decide to come to Birch Grove and pick your child up instead of having your child ride the bus home, you don’t need to email or call to let us know, you can just show up. If you want to do this, you just need to wait for your child to come out between 3:05-3:15 and let your child’s teacher know you are there. Buses leave at 3:15, so just be there before that. Thank you!

Hot lunch is served on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. We do not have hot lunch on Wednesdays so that Senior Lunch can happen, as it has for decades in the BG building. We appreciate you sending a lunch from home on Wednesdays. For now, please do not send anything that needs to be heated, as we will be eating outside on Wednesdays as much as possible and microwaves are not available outside. In November(ish), when we start Lantern Lunch on Wednesdays (inside the building), microwaves will be available at that time. Looking forward to Lantern Lunch!

Please send a backup lunch to be kept at school for the inevitable day that one is forgotten at home or on the bus. Backup lunches will be kept in student lockers. Non-perishables foods should be used for back-up lunches.

My Opinion Piece! 😊

In my experience, a good portion of the children that have a “bad day”, “melt down”, make poor choices, refuse or have a hard time focusing on their work, or end up in the school office to see me for challenging behaviors, **ARE TIRED.** In my opinion, if all of the children that came to school were well rested each and every school day, I believe that it would cut down on at least 50% (maybe more) of challenging behaviors, and would increase the percentage and gains of academic growth across the board.

I have included a few sleep charts below. All children are different – your child might require more/less sleep than what you see below.

Average Sleep Needs	
Age	Hours
Newborns (0-2 months)	12 - 18
Infants (3 months to 1 year)	14 - 15
Toddlers (1 to 3 years)	12 - 14
Preschoolers (3 to 5 years)	11 - 13
School-aged children (5 to 12 years)	10 - 11
Teens and preteens (12 to 18 years)	8.5 - 10
Adults (18+)	7.5 - 9



At what time should your child go to bed?							
Age	Wake-up time						
	6:00 AM	6:15 AM	6:30 AM	6:45 AM	7:00 AM	7:15 AM	7:30 AM
	Sleeping time						
5	6:45 PM	7:00 PM	7:15 PM	7:30 PM	7:30 PM	8:00 PM	8:15 PM
6	7:00 PM	7:15 PM	7:30 PM	7:30 PM	8:00 PM	8:15 PM	8:30 PM
7	7:15 PM	7:15 PM	7:30 PM	8:00 PM	8:15 PM	8:30 PM	8:45 PM
8	19:30	7:30 PM	8:00 PM	8:15 PM	8:30 PM	8:45 PM	9:00 PM
9	7:30 PM	8:00 PM	8:15 PM	8:30 PM	8:45 PM	9:00 PM	9:15 PM
10	8:00 PM	8:15 PM	8:30 PM	8:45 PM	9:00 PM	9:15 PM	9:30 PM
11	8:15 PM	8:30 PM	8:45 PM	9:00 PM	9:15 PM	9:30 PM	9:45 PM
12	8:15 PM	8:30 PM	8:45 PM	9:00 PM	9:15 PM	9:30 PM	9:45 PM

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.

Please 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.

The annual Bell Ringing Ceremony ~ 2025-2026



Birch Buddies ~ HIKE! after school fall session starts on Thursday, September 11. Registration forms were sent home this week. Space is limited to 15 students this session.

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

9/11 Caribou Falls -1 mile

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

0/14 White Skyrock & Lake Agnes 2.5 miles (**Tuesday**)



Our annual Painting in the Woods with local artist, Mary LaBarge, is set for Thursday, September 18.

"Time spent amongst the trees, is time never wasted..." ~ Katrina Mayer



WOWEE! Someone dropped off these amazing bikes in the entryway of the building with a note that said they were to go to a student at Birch Grove! AMAZING! The bikes have been put on display in the library and will be two of many prizes that students can enter to win through earning tickets in the Tickets To Treasure Drawing at year end. Thank you so much to the anonymous donator - YOU are amazing too!



2025-2026 Birch Grove Team



Back row: Jessica Klemmer, Jenny Buckman, Angie Fernlund, Emily VanDoren, Stacy Coronis, Sara Silence, and Pam Holm Front row: Gayle Grinnell, Diane Blanchette, Sara Knottski, Walter, and Samantha Forster

Birch Grove Community School Staff:

School Director: Diane Blanchette

K/1 Teacher: Sara Knottski

2/3 Teacher: Samantha Forster

4/5 Teacher: Stacy Coronis

Special Education Teacher: Sara Silence

K-5 Paraprofessionals: Jessica Klemmer, Jenny Buckman, Gayle Grinnell

School Nurse: Gayle Grinnell

Office Assistant: Jessica Klemmer

School Cook: Angie Fernlund

School Therapy Dog: Walter (to be registered when he turns 1 in March 2026)

Birch Grove Community Service Staff:

Lead Community Service Coordinator: Diane Blanchette

Community Service Coordinators: Sara Silence, Jessica Klemmer, Gayle Grinnell

Saplings Teacher: Pam Holm

Seedlings Teacher: Emily VanDoren



School
Garden
Harvest!

So
many
carrots!





Northern News Now was at Birch Grove Community School today to do a spot on Walter, Birch Grove's new therapy dog. You can catch it tonight at 10:00pm and it will be posted on their website immediately after airing. <https://www.northernnewsnow.com/>

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.logosoftware.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*

The Seedlings had a great first week back at school! We have a couple of new friends that have recently joined the Seedlings so we spent this week getting into our routine. We also have a new addition to the classroom, a sensory table! I am excited to have this new element in our classroom as it will offer the older Seedlings a new way to interact with different sensory experiences as well as work on their fine motor skills. This week the sensory table was filled with pipe cleaners, empty thread spools, and pieces of plastic straws to create a threading station. By threading the straws and spools onto the pipe cleaners, the Seedlings worked on their fine motor skills. The younger Seedlings also had a fun sensory bottle to explore. The bottle was filled with dry beans and small objects such as foam shapes, numbers, and letters as well as buttons of various colors and shapes. The bottle creates a fun noise when shaken and the objects inside provide an opportunity to learn the names of different objects and their color.



This year I will be incorporating a new curriculum as well as creating some of my own curriculum and activities for the Seedlings. This week our theme was School Days. We read books that had a focus on the school day and what may be seen in a school. We played matching games that included a shadow match, shape match, and sorted pictures of objects that may be found in a classroom. The older Seedlings also colored a picture of a backpack using dot markers.

We go outside for walks and playtime after our morning snack time. Our time was cut short on a couple of the days as it started to lightly rain part way through our walk. The climbing triangle with a slide was put to good use this week and provided plenty of physical activity on the rainy days.

I am looking forward to this school year and am very excited for all the fun, learning, and growth that will happen. If you have any questions/concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out.

218-663-0170 ext. 7

[emily.vandorenbgcs@gmail.com](mailto:emily.vandorenbgcs@gmail.com)

~~~~~  
From Ms. Pam Holm

Sapling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service

Saplings were rocking this week!

This week, we started the year off with a "purr-fectly" groovy attitude, just like our friend Pete the Cat! We read his stories, learned about our classroom and school, and made new friends. We

employed buttons to sort by color and size, and count them in a manner similar to Pete. Buttons were also added to the yellow playdough to create Pete's yellow shirt. We explored early science concepts by testing if buttons and toy shoes sink or float in a sensory bin filled with water. Saplings played "Follow the Leader" to practice their gross motor skills, moving just like Pete does in his rocking school shoes. This activity moved outside into the Saplings' woodland nature play space.

To foster literacy skills, a range of Pete the Cat pre-writing exercises were employed, encompassing beginning sound clip cards, vocabulary word matching and tracing activities. This week's comprehensive vocabulary list included: cat, school, bus, playground, lunchroom, library, skateboard, shoe, button, red, blue, yellow, green, brown, white, strawberry, blueberry, mud and wet.



Saplings artistically painted Pete the Cat and subsequently integrated his school shoes. They also created colorful messes of their own, using process art and foot painting to understand how Pete's shoes changed color. This hands-on activity helped us retell the story of *Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes* and understand the fun of creativity. Using a story sequencing activity helps them make sense of narrative order, supports working memory, and builds storytelling confidence.

Saplings wrapped up the week with a fire drill, focusing on essential safety skills. The drill covered: alarm recognition, quietly lining up and exiting the school under teacher guidance and gathering at a designated safe meeting spot outside with the class. I also underscored the importance of handwashing by reading *Those Mean Nasty Dirty Downright Disgusting But – Invisible Germs* by Judith Rice.

I am so excited to see what the Saplings learn and create next. Thank you for your continued support in making learning so much fun for your Sapling! May they keep walking along and singing their song because it's all good.

218-663-0170 ext. 6
pam.holmbgcs@gmail.com

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

K/1 had an amazing start to the school year! We spent this week learning the expectations in school. We learned to walk in the halls, sit on the carpet, and care for our classmates and school materials. We also spent time outside enjoying the beautiful weather! We played many games and got to know new friends in our class. I can tell it is going to be a great year!



We also spent time writing and drawing about ourselves, and we learned a lot about our classmates. It was great to see the new first graders step up and be role models for the new students.

Our favorite activity this week was spending time in the school garden picking and learning about vegetables. We took the tops off carrots, washed them, and dried them for use during snack! Carrots were a popular snack this week!

Note: We have a snack twice daily, one mid-morning and one mid-afternoon. Please let me know if you wish your child not to have a snack during one or both of those times. Please pack two small healthy snacks for this time (especially on hot lunch days). The students cannot eat desserts or drink juice during this time.

Each child needs an emergency lunch, gym shoes, and an extra set of clothes at school. Please pack an emergency lunch, gym shoes, and an extra set of clothes for your child to keep in their locker for the rest of the year.

I look forward to a great year with the kindergarteners, first graders, and you!

218-663-0170 ext. 2

[sara.knottskibgcs@gmail.com](mailto:sara.knottskibgcs@gmail.com)

~~~~~  
From Ms. Samantha Forster

2nd & 3rd Grade Elementary Teacher

What a fun week we have had in a very energy-filled room! We have spent so much time with rules and routines this week. Students have been excited to learn and be within the new classroom. We did some icebreaker games, a self-portrait, a letter to their future self, and some math work! We also did some learning about North America, the continent we are “visiting” this month! I will be testing each student over the next few weeks individually so we practiced what that looks like and how to independently work when I am not available. We had some time to go into our community garden, which is our classroom’s job to maintain, and harvest some veggies! There was plenty of peas, zucchinis, and carrots for all! We learned how to process the vegetables we harvested by cleaning them. This food will be incorporated into snack time each day!



Please reach out with any questions, comments, or concerns. I am loving my class already and I know it will be a wonderful year. Thank you everyone for the tissues and disinfectant wipes! Lastly, we eat snacks each day and go outside. Please send a healthy choice snack with your child and extra warm clothes. The weather has a hard time deciding what it wants and I want everyone to be prepared!

218-663-0170 ext. 3

samantha.forsterbgcs@gmail.com

~~~~~  
**From Ms. Stacy Coronis**

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

The school year is off to a great start in the 4/5 classroom. We have spent time learning about our new classroom and each other. We have 15 students in our classroom and we have all commented on how kind and caring our class seems to be with each other! Great discussions took place about how to be respectful, responsible and safe while learning and growing together. Students created a set of rules that will help everyone reach their potential this year!

4th and 5th graders enjoyed learning three new math games called Pyramid Addition, Subtraction War and Multiplication Squares. These games were not only fun, but they helped us review our basic facts. The cooperation, sharing and kind comments that students shared with each other during the games was inspiring and helped make everyone feel included. In reading we spent time talking about the 40 chapter book challenge and how our classroom library is organized. On Thursday we had outdoor reading by the bonfire and in the hammocks. It was definitely a favorite highlight of our week!



Please watch for any upcoming handouts and papers that will be sent home daily in your child's folder. Thank you so much for sending your child to school with a water bottle and a snack each day to keep them hydrated and full of energy! What an exciting start to a wonderful year ahead!

218-663-0170 ext. 4

[stacy.coronisbgcs@gmail.com](mailto:stacy.coronisbgcs@gmail.com)