

## Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Weekly Newsletter

April 10, 2026

Friday, April 10 ~ 911 For Kids! K-3 at 1:30

Wednesday, April 15 ~ VOA Spring Site Visit

Thursday, April 16 ~ Kindergarten Round Up!

Tuesday, April 21 ~ School Board Meeting at 4:00 w/Election Results

Monday, April 20-Friday, April 24 ~ MCA Testing for 3-5<sup>th</sup> Grades

### 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*

We are definitely heading quickly toward the end of the year. 3-5 graders have been preparing for the MCAs by reviewing and focusing on testing preparation. MCAs are scheduled for April 20-24. Families can support this week by ensuring that students get plenty of sleep each night, and by letting your child know that you expect them to do their best work! Breakfast will be served to testers each morning upon arrival to Birch Grove. A menu will be sent out in advance. Please be sure that if your child does not like what is being served, that you see to it that they have a good breakfast before arriving at BG. Also be sure that children are to school on time this special week. We would appreciate it! We look forward to seeing our students show off their big brains! More information on testing will be coming soon.



Birch Grove Community School received a rating of 93% on its 2025 scorecard from authorizer, VOA-MN, with a 4-year cumulative average of 94%. This high percentage qualifies BGCS for an upcoming 5-year contract, the maximum length of contract allowed. Great job BGCS!

<https://www.birchgroveschool.com/>



## [Gala for the Grove 2026!](#)

**2026 Theme: Hats & Horses: The Hometown Derby**  
A Kentucky Derby-Inspired Night of Racing, Roses,  
and Giving for Birch Grove

**Saturday, June 6, 2026**

The Gala for the Grove, a spirited fundraiser for Birch Grove Community School, is semi-formal in the Lakeside Ballroom at Surfside in Tofte. Dress for the theme or not, the choice is yours – it will be a great time either way!

An announcement will be made when tickets are available for this annual fundraiser for Birch Grove!



<https://www.birchgroveschool.com/gala-for-the-grove>

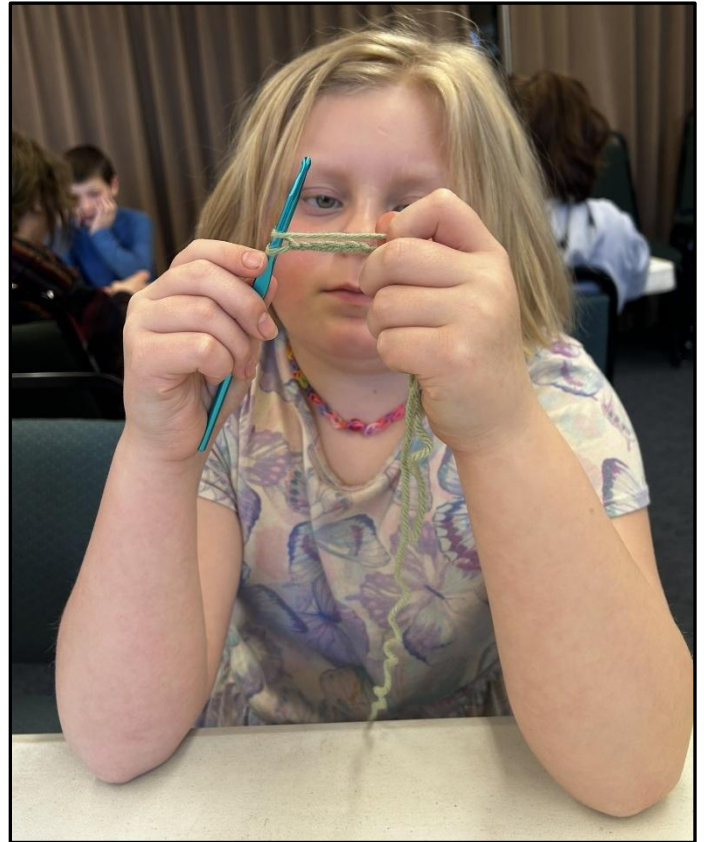


Many thanks to Dale and Teresa Patterson (grandparents of BG students Mia and Maliya Klemmer, and also Jessica Klemmer's parents!) for volunteering to pick up these two ten foot oak benches. The benches were found on Facebook Marketplace for \$35 each, due to the closing of the antique architectural store in Two Harbors. The benches originated from a synagogue in Superior, Wisconsin from the early 1900's. They are so beautiful! Not only did Dale and Teresa drive, load, and unload these benches at Birch Grove, but then they donated them as well. Wow! Many thanks from Birch Grove!

Thursday was Ms. Forster's last day at Birch Grove as she is now on leave while her family anticipates a new member. Ms. Forster says that she will send word and pictures when she is able and we look forward to seeing what we know will be the cutest baby ever! 😊



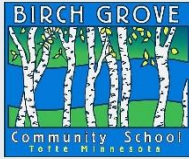
New sessions of Birch Buddies afterschool programming started this week!  
<https://www.birchgroveschool.com/birch-buddies>



More pictures can be found on  
the school Facebook page.

[Facebook](#)





## School Board Elections

Tuesday, April 21, 2026  
at the regular school board meeting at 4:00

Seats Up:  
Judy Motschenbacher: running unopposed  
Mary VanDoren: running unopposed

Two seats remain open on the board.

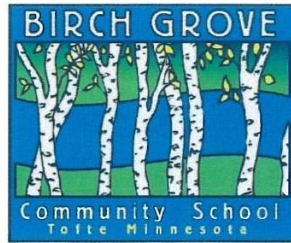
One ballot will be sent on Monday, April 6, to each BGCS family, staff and employee. Please send ballots back to Birch Grove by Monday, April 20.



Front row: Judy Motschenbacher, Skip Lamb.  
Back row: Sara Knottski, Mary VanDoren, Sarena Crowley.



For more board or election information go to:  
<https://www.birchgroveschool.com/school-board>



**Yee haw ~ Kindergarten Round Up!**  
**Birch Grove Community School**

**Thursday, April 16**

**8:00 - 12:30**

**All children age eligible (must be 5 by September 1)  
Are invited to spend a fun morning at BGCS!**

**1/2 Day Kindergarten Experience:**

- Special Projects & Fun Activities!
- Free School Lunch Provided!
- Spend Recess with Us!



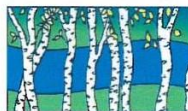
The school director and K/1 teacher will be available from 12:00-12:30 to answer questions.



*Cowboy/Cowgirl hats provided! Yee haw!*



Meet Walter, our school therapy dog-in-training, on the way to the classroom and again at recess!



Giddyap to Kindergarten Round Up!  
Registration forms can be found on the school website  
[www.birchgroveschool.com](http://www.birchgroveschool.com)  
or email [birchgrove@boreal.org](mailto:birchgrove@boreal.org)  
218-663-0170

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](#)



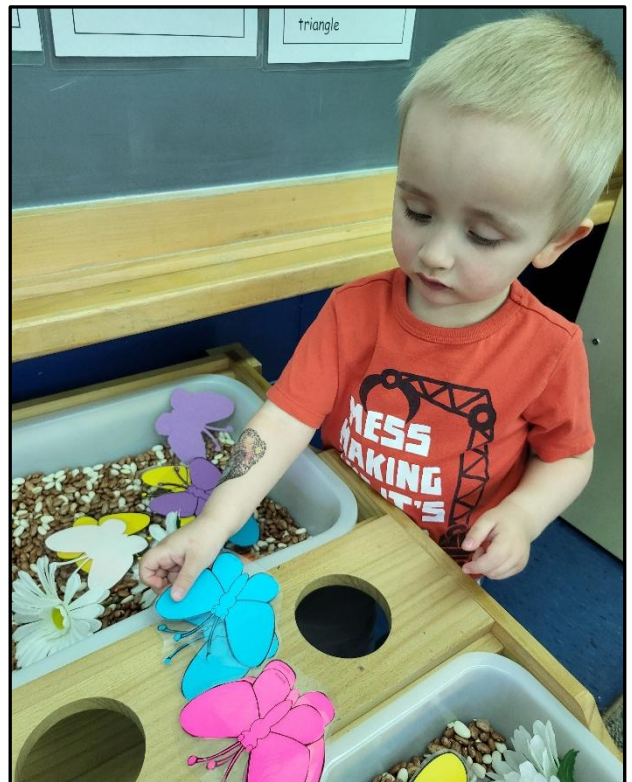
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### From Ms. Emily VanDoren

*Seedling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

This week the Seedlings learned all about caterpillars and butterflies. At the beginning of the week, our sensory table of "dirt" (dried beans) saw the addition of caterpillars to practice our counting skills. We counted how many caterpillars we found and we also counted how many circles were on the caterpillars. Later in the week the caterpillars transformed into butterflies that the Seedlings used to practice identifying colors and worked on their color matching skills.

To learn about the lifecycle of a caterpillar we sang a song accompanied with visual aids that explained how caterpillars hatch from eggs, spend a long time eating, form a chrysalis and then emerge as a butterfly. We read *Ten Wiggly Wiggly Caterpillars* by Debbie Tarbett. This book provided a great opportunity to practice our counting skills while also showing that caterpillars turn into butterflies. We also read *The Crunching Munching Caterpillar* by Sheridan Cain. The book follows along as Caterpillar interacts with a bumble bee, a bird, and a butterfly. He is sad that he can't fly and wishes that he had wings. In the end he takes a long winter nap and awakens as a beautiful butterfly.



Together as a group we worked on a butterfly match game where we took turns finding a picture of a butterfly that matched the one that I showed them. We practiced size comparison by finding "big" and "small" butterflies from a group of ten identical butterflies. The Seedlings worked on their pencil

grip and fine motor skills by coloring a coloring sheet of the lifecycle of a caterpillar and a coloring sheet of a butterfly.

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**From Ms. Pam Holm**

*Sapling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

Saplings explored a spring theme centered around Butterflies, Bees, Birds and Beetles, reflecting the season's vibrant new life. Sapling's first lessons focused on the butterfly, whose lifecycle is marked by metamorphosis. We examined how a caterpillar navigates around by inching or crawling. The Saplings then emulated this movement before painting a representation of their Very Hungry Caterpillar wriggling around.

Saplings learned on Tuesday that butterflies are insects distinguished by their six legs, four wings, a pair of antennae, and three-part bodies. The wings of butterflies are made up of tiny scales, featuring colorful, symmetrical patterns and designs. Butterflies flap their wings five times per second. We attempted to replicate this swift motion by rapidly flapping our arms five times. As a subsequent art activity, each student painted a butterfly species native to our region.

On Wednesday, we concentrated on bees, engaging in two hands-on, sensory-rich experiences. The first involved honey production, where the Saplings used eye droppers to transfer nectar from the flower bin to the honeycomb trays. The second experience focused on hexagon shapes and constructing beehives using Honeycomb cereal and playdough. Saplings refined their fine motor skills when creating artistic bees.

Spring in Minnesota brings a vibrant influx of migratory birds. Thursday's lesson compared the different songbirds like the American Robins, Red-winged Blackbirds, Eastern Bluebirds, warblers, Baltimore Orioles, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Indigo Buntings, and Scarlet Tanagers. We noted their different distinctive singing calls from a loud *cheerily cheer-up cheerio* to a rapid *tut tut tut*. Saplings learned that Robins, Starlings, Bluebirds and Grackles are often seen on lawns searching for earthworms and insects. Each Sapling produced their own painting of a Minnesota bird.

Friday Saplings learned beetles are everywhere! There are over 350,000 kinds of beetles, from tiny ladybugs to giant rhinoceros beetles. They identified the three main parts of a beetle – the head,



thorax, and abdomen. Sensory play included playdough with pipe cleaners and beads for Saplings to create their own unique beetle species. After reading *The Very Clumsy Click Beetle* by Eric Carle, Saplings practiced the “click and flip”. A Styrofoam printing art activity allowed Saplings to design their own beetles and make prints.

Throughout the week, the central theme centered around the letter 'B'. In the classroom, students went on a 'B Hunt', practicing the short, *bouncy* /b/ sound, which is characterized by a quick puff of air, similar to a bubble popping. Writing skills were further developed through diverse prewriting practice, including line tracings of uppercase B: One big line down, and two little curves and lowercase b: A tall line that *swims* up and over to make a belly. Moreover, students participated in various manipulative and math-based activities, including counting, pattern formation, and size sequencing, using a sensory bin filled with butterflies.

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

K/1 finished a unit this week about the ancient civilization in Egypt. We spent time exploring the pyramids, mummies, and hieroglyphics. We enjoyed cracking the hieroglyphic code and making our own symbol alphabet. We built pyramids with plaster of Paris and we destressed them just as the weather has done for the past few thousands of years. We wrapped up our unit by measuring how big the sphinx and the great pyramid of Giza are. We learned that the sphinx is a bit longer than the school but not wider and the great pyramid is 3 times the size of the sphinx.

In math, K/1 is learning about time and adding and subtracting. This is a good time of the year to get refreshers on what we learned at the beginning of the year. We will review number lines, place value, telling time to the 5 minutes, and counting all change.



In language arts, we are practicing our writing. We are really focused on the mechanics of writing such as capitalization, correct letter formation, spacing, spelling, punctuation, etc. I have seen big gains from the beginning of the year!

We are hoping for a big winter meltdown that leads to puddles! Make sure your student is equipped with rain boots, a jacket, gloves, snow pants, and a hat so they can play! A lot of children are going

home wet because they are playing hard! Please check their clothes and make sure to send them back dry the next day.

Please continue to work with your child on reading, writing, and math needs that we discussed at conferences! Together we can ensure success!

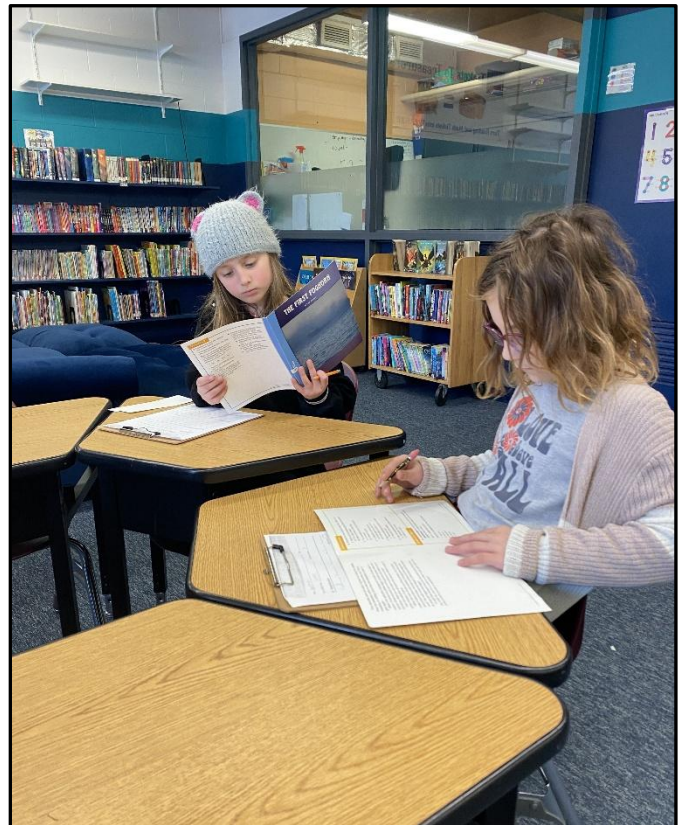
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**From Ms. Samantha Forster**

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

It is time for my last newsletter as I will be going on maternity leave on Friday! Thank you for such an amazing and supportive year(s). I am lucky to have seen your students grow throughout this year and I can't wait to come back to them in the fall! This week, we focused on test prep for MCA's and FastBridge. This involved lots of reading, comprehension questions, and a variety of math questions. We also presented our Create-A-Creature to practice presenting in front of a group and answering questions. We did a seed dispersal project (though it wasn't as fun not being able to disperse seeds outside). All the students are antsy to get outside and explore with some warm weather. Please continue to send winter gear as we still have snow on the ground. Students should have hats, gloves/mittens, snowpants, boots, and a jacket. We are working on limiting use of the borrow bin so double check with your student that they have what they need to be successful outside. We are so close to greener weather!



Reading was focused on a story about a mysterious tadpole, using story elements to help build understanding. We also worked on the sound /oo/ and the variations of spelling this sound has. This was paired with multiple word sorts, roll and reads, and decodables. Students had fun pretending to move their lips like a cow while they practiced this sound. Third graders had a strong focus on how to answer questions and utilizing the passage to help answer those questions. We focused on the “2 Bad, 1 Good, and 1 Best” answer when completing multiple choice questions. This has helped students understand how to not be overwhelmed with questions.

Math was all about multiplication area problems for second graders. This has continued to be a fun part of math as students continue to build a strong understanding of how multiplication and division works and what strategies they can use to complete these problems. In third grade, we focused on a

variety of math problems in preparation for testing and how to work through multi-step problems. This will continue to be a priority in the coming weeks.

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**From Ms. Stacy Coronis**

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

Wow! The students in our classroom are working so hard to prepare for the upcoming MCA tests in math, reading and science. We are covering the last math standards for both grade levels this week and students are working on the types of problems that they need to review. We have covered many learning standards in geometry this week including the classification of quadrilaterals and triangles. We have also used what we know about quadrilaterals and angles to be able to identify missing angles using complementary and supplementary angles. Finally in math we learned how to calculate the volume and surface area of rectangular prisms by actually building one and using the formula to help us find the solution.

In addition to studying for the math MCA test, we have been practicing the PRESTO comprehension test strategy using fiction, nonfiction and poetry. After the students complete a reading section, they meet with me to get immediate feedback on their work. If mistakes were made, we would look back into the text together to figure out the correct answer. Students were very focused and gave 100% effort on these practice tests.



In writing we have wrapped up our personal narrative 5 paragraph essays. Students met with classmates to complete 2 peer edits. After revising their essay, each student met with an adult to have a final edit. The last step was to publish the final drafts and most students typed up their very first essay paper. It was a great opportunity to learn about the formatting options and punctuation rules for typing up a paper on the computer. The class learned a lot! On Friday, each student had the chance to share their writing to the class using a protocol I use called, "Author's Chair" which gives kids an authentic audience. They cheered each other on and gave positive feedback about the author's writing. It was a great way to wrap up a 2 week writing project!

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