

Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Weekly Newsletter

December 11, 2025

Monday, December 22 – January 2 ~ Winter Break
Monday, January 5 ~ Return of K-5, Saplings and Seedlings
Tuesday, January 13 ~ Hearing & Vision Screening
Monday, January 19 ~ No School, Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Tuesday, January 20 ~ School Board Meeting at 4:00

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*

Another full week here at Birch Grove packed with practices and performances of *Elfis and the Sleigh Riders*. K-5 students start working on a winter musical immediately after Halloween. From this date to the show, is a major musical block for us. Students learn songs, lines, dance moves and motions, percussion instruments, ribbon waving, etc. They also hone their listening, cooperation and independence skills. There is much that goes on behind the scenes that the audience is not aware of (as is the case with most performances)! Many thanks to these hard working students and the staff that made it happen ~ the shows were wonderful!!



K-5 went from performers to audience on Thursday as they took a field trip to the Grand Marais Arrowhead Center for the Arts to see *The Witch's Princess*. Many thanks to the Center and to Sue Hennessy for inviting us to see the performance! It was enjoyed by all!

We have one week left before winter break, which is two weeks long! Please be sure to continue to have your child read or be read to as often as possible over the break. Also, please take advantage of the online platforms that each classroom has. This will help to keep the mini slide (versus the summer slide) away. All of the educational staff thanks you!!

There is no school board meeting in December. The next school board meeting will be on Tuesday, January 20.

Starting next week, newsletters will now be emailed on Fridays instead of Thursdays. You can always find our newsletter on the school website anytime at: <https://www.birchgroveschool.com/news> or you can find it posted on the school Facebook page.

Pictures from the *Elfis and the Sleigh Riders* musical, stage pictures and pictures with Santa will be posted on the school Facebook break periodically over the winter break – we hope you enjoy them!



Birch Buddies ~ ART! Afterschool program:

Friday, December 5 ~ *Solstice Lanterns*
Friday, December 12 ~ *Gingerbread Houses*
Friday, December 19 ~ *Twig Trees*

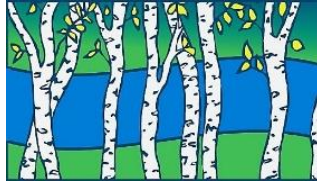


Birch Buddies ~ Board Games! Afterschool program:

Tuesday, November 25
Tuesday, December 2
Tuesday, December 9
Tuesday, December



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

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**

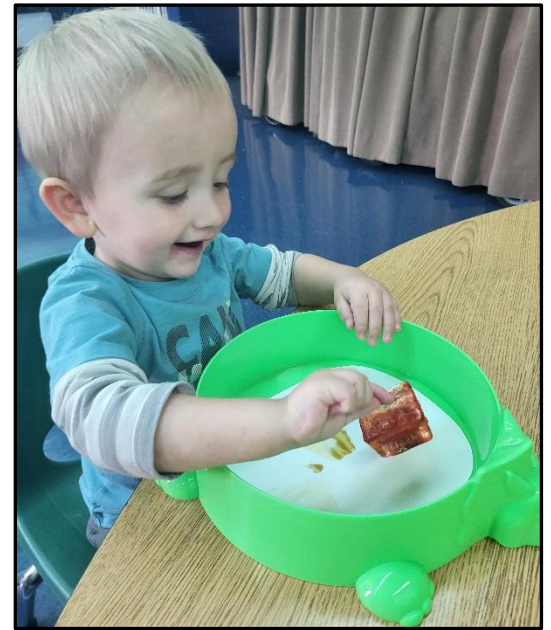
*Seedling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

We continued exploring winter with a Polar Animals theme this week. We started our week by looking at flashcards of different animals that live in either the Arctic or in Antarctica. We learned about polar bears, orca whales, snowy owls, emperor penguins, and walruses. After we learned the names of the polar animals, we played an arctic animal match game by matching together the adult animal with the correct baby animal.

Our sensory table saw the addition of laminated picture cutouts of penguins and polar bears to join the cotton ball and felt snow. When playing with the animals, we practiced counting and also worked on learning how to tell which cutout is bigger and which is smaller.

We played Penguin Bowling in the classroom with penguin "bowling pins" and a small kickball. We also played with the taste-safe snow from last week. Ice painting with ice cubes colored with food dye was explored this week as well. We changed up the classic "Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear" song to "Polar Bear, Polar Bear" and the Seedlings had a fun time showing off their dance moves.

We read books this week that included penguins and polar bears. We read *Penguins Love Their ABC's* by Saray Aspinall and *Peekaboo Polar Bear* by Gary De La Cour. Both books captivated the Seedlings and provided ABC and counting practice.



**From Ms. Pam Holm**

*Sapling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

Hats off to the Saplings for their outstanding musical performance last night!

The Saplings have been playing and sledding in the fresh snow and spent the week talking about *Snowflakes and Snowmen*. We explored some captivating facts about snowflakes. The formation of snowflakes, noting that no two are identical. We scrutinized the patterns and counted the six sides they possess. A snowflake begins to form when an extremely cold water droplet freezes onto a dust particle in the sky, creating an ice crystal. As the ice crystal falls to the ground, water vapor freezes onto the crystal, building the six arms of the snowflake. A snowflake's journey from sky to the ground is about 20 minutes.

Our Saplings' participation in snowy activities promoted development in literacy, math, and creativity. By retelling *There Was a Cold Lady Who Swallowed Some Snow*, they practiced sequencing, developing memory, comprehension, and story structure understanding. Upon finishing *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats, they recreated the storyline by forming diverse footprints in the snow. We also explored "footprints" in the snow, comparing sizes, and examined the various animals living in our woods, stumbling upon Yeti tracks that led to Saplings crafting an Abominable Snowman.



A literacy snowman name building craft that provided a fun and interactive learning experience. It was an effective way for the Saplings to practice spelling their names, their classmates' names, and recognizing the letters and sounds within their names. The Saplings stacked the letters in their names and then added the snowmen's heads on top.

A range of snow-themed math and manipulative activities were undertaken throughout the week. The Snowman roll and cover activity proved to be the most popular. Rolling a die never fails to excite the students. This particular game facilitates the development of various early learning skills, including teamwork, turn-taking, fine motor skills, numerical recognition, basic arithmetic, and comparison.

Just as your children are unique, every snowflake is one-of-a-kind, yet each one is perfect.

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**From Ms. Sara Knottski**

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

It has been another busy but fun week in K/1. The musical took up a lot of our time this week but it was a very successful and entertaining performance! I saw lots of smiling and happy elves in K/1! We also enjoyed our field trip to Grand Marais to see a musical. It was a great way to compare and contrast our experience singing in a musical versus being an audience member.

We spent the week reviewing key topics in both reading and math. We practiced sight words, letters, reading, writing, and answering questions about stories. In math, we reviewed shapes, place value, addition into the teens, and numbers up to 120.

K/1 has sparked interest in building and imaginary play this week. Kitchen play and building play has been the draw this week. Next week, we will be using our math, engineering, collaboration, and writing skills to create a structure out of cardboard. The students are excited to use our new building kit to cut, join, and build with cardboard. Stay tuned for what our engineers will build next week.

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From Ms. Samantha Forster

2nd & 3rd Grade Elementary Teacher

This week was so busy. We spent the first part of the week focusing on practicing the musical. We watched Stuart Little throughout Wednesday when we weren't practicing or performing and the students loved seeing the differences between the read aloud and the movie. The musical performance was amazing and you could see all the hard work that the students have been pouring into it. Thursday was so much fun and students loved to see others perform. Because of our action-packed week, Friday will be a reset day to get us prepared for next week. Next week, we will have a mostly normal week with Friday being a pajama day with Bingo, light wands, and a movie to celebrate the end of 2025 and the start of winter break. Please reach out with any questions!

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**From Ms. Stacy Coronis**

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

This week we are starting something new for the 4/5 newsletter! We are excited to announce that each week a student from our class will write about what we learned from the week. The students are excited to take on this responsibility and share the learning from their point of view. Over the next few months all students will have a chance to be the guest author! Kadence Goettl is the author this week and has this to say about the past week. Enjoy!

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*Kadence Goettl 4/5 Student*

This week in math we learned new ways to do bigger division problems including problems with dividends to the thousands place. We also learned how to use rounding and multiplication to check our quotients to see if we got the problems correct. Also in math we reviewed double digit multiplication to make sure that we were still doing it correctly.

This week in reading we did not do a new story or reading strategy due to our musical practices and winter program. We worked really hard on these and it was great! Many people came to both shows and like always the Saplings put on a wonderful preshow.

This week in Science we learned how to tell the difference between a snowflake and a snowfake! Then we created snowflakes to decorate our classroom windows. We also wrapped up our science unit on food webs by creating dinosaur food webs and learned how the sun was blocked from so much asteroid dust and that killed all of the plants. Since the plants died, many of the smaller dinosaurs that ate plants died which caused the carnivore larger dinosaurs to lose their food source and become extinct.

This week the announcements are that we took a field trip to see the community play up in Grand Marais. Next week is the last school week in 2025 and on Friday we will have a PJ, Bingo and movie day. Your child can wear PJs and bring a stuffed animal and blanket if they would like.