

Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Weekly Newsletter

February 6, 2026

Monday, February 9 ~ Dental Checks
Thursday, February 12 ~ Afternoon Valentine Card Exchange
Friday, February 13 ~ No School, Staff PD
Monday, February 16 ~ No School, President's Day/Staff PD
Tuesday, February 17 ~ School Board Meeting at 4:00
Thursday, March 12 ~ Sled Dog Rides with Rita Wehseler
Friday, March 13 ~ No School, Staff PD
Tuesday, March 17 ~ School Board Meeting at 4:00
Monday, March 16 - Friday, March 20 ~ Parent/Teacher Conferences
Monday, March 23-Friday, March 27 ~ Spring Break, No School

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 first week of February started out warmer (comparatively) than the previous weeks - finally! This allowed us to get outside for cross country skiing, ice skating, recess, and an all day field trip to Tettegouche State Park on Thursday. Highlights of the field trip will be in the next newsletter!

As we find ourselves halfway through the school year and deep in the curriculum, we ask that you remember to support your child's learning at home. Keep them reading, please! Practice basic math facts at home (we have flashcards available for check out) and utilize your child's classroom online educational platforms. Need help or assistance, or more ideas? Let us know as we would be happy to help!



The Saplings "traveled" through Italy this week! For art they sculpted clay animals after learning about the artist Donatello, Michelangelo, Leonardo, and Raphael were also highlighted throughout the week! <https://www.birchgroveschool.com/saplings-program>



More pictures can be found on the school Facebook page.

[Facebook](#)



K/1 and 4/5 participated in cross country skiing as part of P.E. and outdoor recreation this week! Students learned skills for staying balanced, going uphill and downhill in skis, and gliding! A fun adventure was had by all! <https://www.birchgroveschool.com/the-great-outdoors>



More pictures can be found on the school Facebook page.

[Facebook](#)

Birch Buddies ~ PAINT BY NUMBERS! started this week and will run for 2 more Tuesdays after school - Feb 10 & 17. This is a creative project that is low key with opportunities for quiet friendships. This northern lights piece is framed and ready to hang in all its spectacular glory!
<https://www.birchgroveschool.com/birch-buddies>



More pictures can be found on the school Facebook page.
[Facebook](#)

The Saplings continue their "traveling" through Italy this week! Inspired by Michelangelo's famous method, Saplings lay on their backs to paint a story. This activity develops their problem-solving skills and fine motor abilities. <https://www.birchgroveschool.com/saplings-program>



There are 2 remaining days of Birch Buddies ~ *Paint By Number!*

For Grades 2-5

3:15-5:00

Tuesday, February 10

Tuesday, February 17

<https://www.birchgroveschool.com/birch-buddies>



Math fact flashcards are available to check out for home use. Please ask your child's teacher, and we will send them home! Please help us, and your child, by supporting learning at home.

There are 2 remaining days of Birch Buddies ~ *SKATE!*

3:15-5:00

Monday, February 9

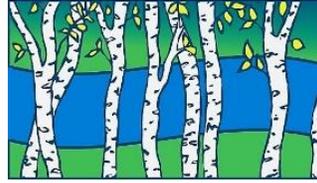
Monday, February 23

<https://www.birchgroveschool.com/birch-buddies>



The annual Tickets to Treasure program continues! Reading log sheets have been sent home to all families. For every 20 minutes your child reads at home, they will receive one ticket to put in a container that is linked to a specific prize of your child's choosing. School online platforms may also be logged on these sheets. Please remind your child that even though they may have tickets dedicated to a prize, it does not mean that they will win it. However, the more tickets they have in, the better their odds. We review this a few times over the year. All who don't win a drawing prize will still receive something special for their efforts (as long as they have earned at least 10 tickets). The drawing takes place at the end of the school year! Happy READING!

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](#)



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**From Ms. Emily VanDoren**

*Seedling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

The Seedlings started the week by learning about groundhogs to celebrate Groundhog Day on Monday. We read a book about groundhogs and then the Seedlings colored their own book to take home. They worked their fine motor skills while using the markers and also helped to identify some of the pictures in the book. This is a great activity to practice early reading skills at home as well. After we talked a bit about groundhogs and shadows, the Seedlings worked together to match different pictures of animals and objects to their shadows.

This week the Seedlings also learned about feelings. We read lots of books that helped us to identify how someone may be feeling based on the way their face changes. *Lots of Feelings* by Shelly Rotner provided pictures of real faces that we then tried to copy ourselves. *The Way I Feel* by Janan Cain was a great book to show us how different things, like a storm or meeting a new person might make us feel different emotions. We also read *What If I Know My Feelings* by Michelle Nelson-Schmidt that taught us different things we can do when we feel different feelings, such as smiling when happy or asking for help when we feel scared.



The Seedlings played a feelings matching game by matching two faces together that look the same. We then named the feeling and tried to make the same faces. We also worked on our fine motor and prewriting skills by using dry-erase markers to trace an outline of a smiling face. The Seedlings also enjoyed listening to "If You're Happy and You Know It" this week. This song is a great way to begin

teaching emotions as well as practicing their memory and listening skills as they try to remember which movement comes next in the song.

218-663-0170 ext. 7

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

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**From Ms. Pam Holm**

*Sapling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

Saplings started the week off by celebrating Groundhog's Day. On February 2nd we watched Punxsutawney Phil come out and see his shadow. It scared him to go back to his home and sleep for another 6 weeks of winter. Monday featured a range of measuring, counting and science activities centered around groundhogs and shadows. Saplings carried out an experiment focused on casting shadows of different shapes and sizes. They not only created hand shadows but also used various objects, including animals and figures, in front of the light source. They also crafted their own pop up Groundhog and made shadows with them.

The Saplings presented their passports and boarded their "airplane" on Tuesday, bound for Italy and the Winter Olympics. Our classroom turned into an "Olympic Village" as we explored Italy, international flags, the Olympic rings and the torch. We also learned and participated in different sports like the luge, skeleton, bobsled, speed skating and curling.

Math and manipulative activities explored which one is different and what comes next patterns, 10 piece counting puzzles, 1 to 15 clip and count, Olympic ring and torch size sequencing and sorting, measuring the ski jumps, roll and count along with an introduction to time with skate time matching.

Literacy focused on the letter 'O' with activities of dot the O, trace the O, follow the letter O path, tracing and writing the letter O along with winter Olympic sports words. We also learned some Italian words: ciao, grazie, per favore, si, gelato, acqua, pane and latte.

Saplings art revolved around four iconic Italian Renaissance artists. Tuesday for art they sculpted clay animals after learning about the artist Donatello. Wednesday inspired by Michelangelo's famous method, Saplings lay on their backs to paint a story. This activity develops their problem-solving skills and fine motor abilities. Thursday's activity involved



emulating Leonardo Di Vinci's style, resulting in their interpretation of the Mona Lisa. The week concluded with an exploration of plaster to create fresco style painting, inspired by Raphael.

The Milano Cortina 2026 Olympics start today!

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

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

We had a fantastic field trip to Tettegouche State Park. The day was filled with outdoor adventure, hands-on learning, and fun! We learned about winter animal homes, owls, and animal tracks. We took our learning outside to see some of these key concepts up close and in nature. K/1 also enjoyed a snowshoe hike!

In language arts, all of K/1 practiced, practiced, and practiced reading to increase our fluency. 1st grade is learning about long vowels and practicing noticing magic e in words. Kindergarten has mastered our letter sounds, and we are practicing blending those sounds. Another focus in language arts is writing. K/1 is working toward writing independently and with complete sentences.

In math, 1st graders are learning about place value. We practiced identifying tens and ones in a number and adding tens together! Kindergarteners are learning about different ways to make ten, adding, and numbers up to 100. We played a variety of games to practice our math facts.



Reminder: Valentine's Day is next week. K/1 will be having a card exchange on Thursday, February 12th. If your child wants to make cards, I can supply paper and coloring materials!

218-663-0170 ext. 2
sara.knottskibgcs@gmail.com

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**From Ms. Samantha Forster**  
*2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Elementary Teacher*

This week has been all about writing our book page and illustrating it! We focused on all the drafting process through writing and then drew a picture for their page. Keep a look out for order forms for the book as they will be going home next week! We also were lucky enough to get to go to

Tettegouche and learn more about Minnesota animals (which is the topic of our book.) Then we did an art project (a beautiful winter fox inspired by the work of Sam Zimmerman) and went snowshoeing! It was an action-packed field trip. We also ended our week with ice skating because we were unable to get outside last week. This was a major highlight for the kids.



In reading, we spent lots of time writing. There was time spent in the rough draft, final draft, and revising stage. We spent time creating our own story maps for the anchor text we read. This was a new skill but vital as they start to monitor their own comprehension. We also looked at the word part “form” and how this word part impacts the words that it is a part of. Students spent time changing words that end in “y” into “i” and adding a suffix.

In math, each grade focused on adding and subtracting large numbers. This was an important aspect for each grade and we did many problems to create repetition. By the end of the week, everyone had it mastered. We will continue to work on multiplication and division facts for 3rd grade as this is a very important skill to master before they leave the classroom. Though many students don’t have it memorized, understanding the concepts and how to achieve the answer is the most important. Flashcards COULD be helpful at home but something as simple as writing random facts (1-12) down for your student would be very beneficial.

218-663-0170 ext. 3  
[samantha.forsterbgcs@gmail.com](mailto:samantha.forsterbgcs@gmail.com)

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**From Ms. Stacy Coronis**  
*4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Elementary Teacher*

Our class had a few fun special events this week! First of all we grabbed our cross country skis and joined the K/1 class out at the campsite to enjoy time outside. It was the first time skiing for some kids and I was so proud of how the class helped each other with the equipment and stayed so positive! With each fall came laughter and helping each other get back up. This was great practice for the Tettegouche all day field trip. The weather on Thursday was perfect for all of the outdoor fun. Our final special event this week was the addition of our new classroom hamster! Pictures to come next week of our new little guy.

In math this week we continued our fraction unit and as the level of difficulty increased so did our math stamina. Students learned how to add and subtract mixed numbers which included borrowing and simplifying fractions. This math standard has so many smaller subskills built into it so we had to remember to work carefully, use our multiplication facts, and show our thinking with each step.

Students also learned how to draw and work with equivalent fractions which included the ability to switch back and forth between mixed numbers and improper fractions.

In reading this week we continued our study of American history by reading about the American Revolution and the role that women played. Students used details from the narrative nonfiction story to draw conclusions and make generalizations about this time period. It is interesting to study historical events from multiple perspectives which is also a 4th and 5th grade reading standard. Due to many special events, we will dive into our 13 Colonies unit next week.

Don't forget that next Thursday afternoon we will set time aside to exchange Valentines and we will have some fun with some Valentine Olympics and play Valentine BINGO! If your child wants to bring in treats and cards make sure that they include everyone in our class. Construction paper is available to be sent home if your child would like to make their own cards at home.

218-663-0170 ext. 4

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

