

## Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Weekly Newsletter

January 16, 2026

Monday, January 19 ~ No School, Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Tuesday, January 20 ~ School Board Meeting at 4:00

Thursday, February 5 ~ K-5 Field Trip to Tettegouche State Park

Friday, February 13 ~ No School, Staff PD Day

Monday, February 16 ~ No School, President's Day/Staff PD Day

Tuesday, February 17 ~ 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*

This week was focused on K-5 FastBridge mid-year assessments. Resulting data will be examined by classroom teachers and at our weekly teacher staff meetings. This is an opportunity to see how our each of our K-5 students are progressing. A FastBridge report will be sent home for each child showing this assessment data along with a semester report card at the end of the month. Should you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to us here at Birch Grove Community School.

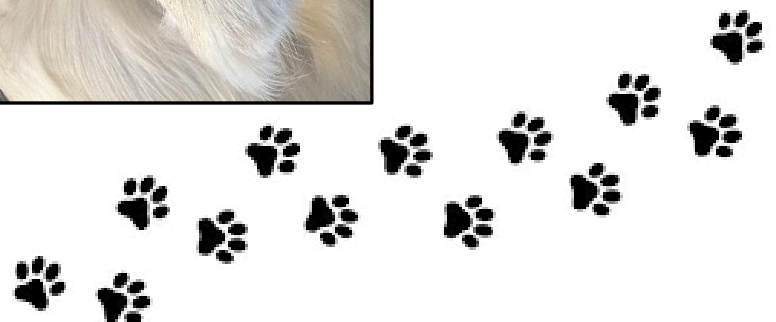
Please continue to help us to support your child in their learning journey. Take advantage of the on-line platforms that BG offers for your use at home and keep your child reading. The Tickets To Treasure program starts this week, so this may help with motivation to read – although it is our hope that students will love to read for the sake of reading itself (eventually if not already)! 😊





The annual Tickets to Treasure program has started! Reading log sheets have been sent home to all families so that reading at home can be logged (if you run out of logs, a regular piece of paper can be used). 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 on-line 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!

This is our gooooooood boiiiiiii, Walter, after having a tasty treat! Walter continues to grow and learn, just like our students. His birthday is coming up in March when he will be eligible to be registered as a therapy dog. He has been an amazing addition to Birch Grove Community School!





We are so lucky to have an ice-skating rink right outside our doors! K-5 hit the ice for the first time this year last week on Friday, and wow, was it a beautiful day! K-3 hit the ice first, and were later joined by 4/5, after they finished a spelling test (our jobs come first). It was an all school event on a perfect day! <https://www.birchgroveschool.com/the-great-outdoors>

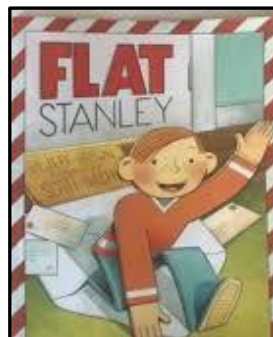


More pictures can be found on  
the school Facebook page.

[Facebook](#)



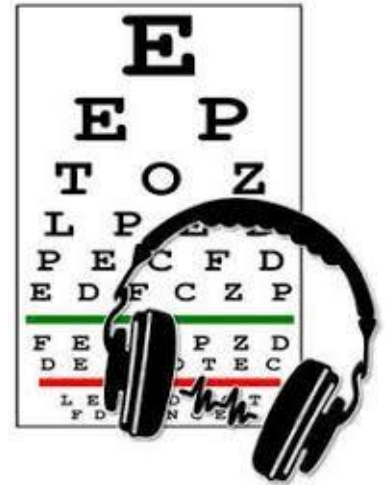
4/5 created their own "Flat Stanley" that will ride along in the Beargrease sled dog race. They spent time learning the history of the race and look forward to tracking the journey that their mail will take in the upcoming race!





There is no school next week on Monday, January 19 in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day. K-5 school, Saplings and Seedlings will resume on Tuesday, January 20.

Sawtooth Mountain Clinic staff and our school nurse, Gayle Grinnell, conducted hearing and vision screening this week for Saplings – 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Emails will be sent out to families of children where a recommendation to re-screen with the family physician was made. If you do not receive an email, your child passed both tests. Thank you!



Birch Buddies ~ SKATE! afterschool program started yesterday and will run on Mondays for 5 weeks. Thank you for full enrollment again for this great program!

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

More pictures can be found on  
the school Facebook page.

[Facebook](#)





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.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 the circus! We learned that there are many talented people that perform at a circus. We learned about clowns, acrobats, magicians, and so much more!

We read several books about the circus and used the books to enhance our learning of colors and numbers. We read *A Day at the Circus: Fun with Colors* by Paulette Rich Long. After reading the book, the Seedlings played a game to find objects around the room that matched different color cards. We also read *Count 10 Circus Friends* to practice our counting and number recognition. This book also introduced different people and animals that could be found at a circus. *The Clown-Arounds* by Joanna Cole was a silly book that showed the Seedlings the many different faces of clowns. This book was a great model of facial expressions so we talked about how our face changes with our different emotions through the use of clown face flashcards. Our final book of the week was *Clara Joins the Circus* by Michael Pellowski. It tells the story of Clara, a cow, as she attempts to join a circus to cure her boredom. She tries out different acts until she finally finds one that is the perfect fit. It was a great book to help explain what the performers do at the circus, and also that we should keep trying even after we fail.



There were a few puzzles available this week for the older Seedlings to try out. There was a picture match puzzle where the Seedlings had to match up two halves of a card to create pictures of different things that can be found at the circus. The Seedlings were really challenged with two different

puzzles that consisted of six cards that needed to be arranged in the correct way to create a picture of an elephant and a picture of balloons.

The Seedlings worked their gross motor skills by walking a “tightrope” that we created by laying out our floor cushions in a line. This helped them practice their balance as they stepped up and down from flooring of differing heights and walked on a soft surface. Fine motor skills were exercised by coloring a paper plate that was then turned into their very own clown hat! We also colored clown pictures and worked on our pencil grasp.

There is no school on Monday, January 19th so we will see you on Tuesday!

Have a good weekend!

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### **From Ms. Pam Holm**

*Sapling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

This week, Saplings ventured into the icy and snowy regions of the North and South Poles. We explored the unique characteristics of the South Pole in Antarctica, the coldest, driest, and windiest continent, and the North Pole in the Arctic Ocean. The primary focus was the diverse array of animals that inhabit the Arctic, including polar bears, arctic foxes, caribou, narwhals, walruses, belugas, puffins, orcas, and numerous penguins in Antarctica. The Arctic and Antarctica sensory bins, filled with snow and icebergs, facilitated engaging discussions about the animals' habitats and their adaptations for survival in extreme cold. Saplings noted that polar bears, arctic foxes and harp seals blend in with the snow, enabling them to camouflage themselves.

Saplings discovered the remarkable survival skills of polar bears in the Arctic on Monday. Their large paws resemble snowshoes. Notably, polar bears have black skin under their white coat, which absorbs the sun's heat. Saplings participated in a "blubber experiment" using lard to experience how a layer of fat maintains warmth in icy water. They created a visual representation by cutting out polar bears and gluing them onto a snowy background.

Tuesday Saplings studied the different types of penguins that live in Antarctica including the Gentoo, the Emperor, the Adélie, the Chinstrap, the Rockhopper, and the Macaroni penguins. The saplings refined their scissor and painting skills by creating a penguin collage.



Saplings explored the world of Puffins on Wednesday. They discovered that these colorful birds are often referred to as the "clowns of the sea" due to their vibrant orange beaks and comical waddles. Puffins don't build nests, they excavate burrows in the ground, resembling small tunnels. Saplings designed their own puffins with bright orange, yellow, and red beaks.

Thursday Saplings delved into Arctic foxes. They have thick fur on the bottom of their paws that acts like "snow boots" to prevent slipping on ice. Their fur changes color! It is bright white in the winter to blend with snow and turns brown or gray in the summer to hide among rocks. Saplings performed the "Arctic Fox Dance" – sniffing with their noses and dancing on their toes to stay warm. Subsequently, they crafted a cotton ball arctic fox.

Friday we focused on the world of seals, rendering a 3-D picture. The weddell seal can hold their breath for up to one hour while diving. The southern elephant seal can weigh over 4 tons!

Penguin and polar bear themed math and manipulative activities covered number recognition, counting puzzles, one-to-one correspondence, and size sequencing. There was also polar bear paw print measuring, where the Saplings measured how many paw prints long or tall an object was. Literacy concentration was on the letter P, with a literacy project that asked, "What would you do if you met a polar bear or a penguin?"

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

K/1 started studying the moon and patterns in the sky. We are exploring our wonders about the moon, such as 'why does the moon look different on different nights?' and 'why do we see the moon during the daytime sometimes?' We are excited to learn about the different phases of the moon and became interested in geography in the process. We will learn about where we are on Earth next!

The kindergarteners learned the letter E. They practiced saying the letter e sound while smiling! This helped them tell the difference between e and a. We are practicing sight words and becoming more fluent in reading three-letter words! We are working on a unit about teen numbers and adding and subtracting in math.





The first graders read a story about a big race. We discussed the main idea and supporting details in the book. They also practiced sight words and created sentences using those words. We started a unit about place value in math. We have been practicing counting by tens, adding two-digit numbers with one-digit numbers, and observing the tens and ones in numbers.

We did our FastBridge assessments this week. Information about your child's progress will be sent home with the report card at the end of the month! The students were excited to do the assessments to show off their growth!

Please continue to read, write, and practice letters at home!

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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 winter standardized assessments. Students have loved being able to see all the growth from their hard work the last couple months. I will be sending out report cards and an updated family report at the end of January to share with families. The assessments have been disruptive to our schedule but students are handling it well and are always flexible with changes. We also will be starting Tickets to Treasure this week. Students will have a sheet to bring home that they can track their reading minutes. This can be students reading OR being read to (I will leave that up to your discretion). We will be checking slips at the end of the event so please don't worry about sending them back and forth. We did our best to enjoy the nice weather at the beginning of the week because the end of the week was chilly! This involved lots of snowman building, snow fort building, and sledding. We also did an Antarctic landscape art project. In social studies, we focused on the Anishinaabe constellations and their stories. We then did a poster project representing a chosen constellation. Next week, we will be starting our book project (if you remember from last year.) This involves writing a page and drawing an illustration for a classroom book that you will be able to purchase. Watch for order forms in February! Please reach out with any questions! This year has continued to be wonderful and I loved spending each day with your students!



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**From Ms. Stacy Coronis**

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

Greetings 4/5 families! We have had a busy week of learning as we all settled back into our daily routines. Special events this week included completing our math and reading FastBridge tests, learning about the John Beargrease Sled Race and celebrating and honoring Martin Luther King Jr.'s life and all that he stood for. We created a wall mural in his honor that will hang in our hallway to remind us of his message of peace and love. Finally, your child should be asking you to sign their "Tickets to Treasure" sheets for doing their reading and math practice at home using books or the online platforms called Lexia/ Power Up for reading and IXL for additional math practice. Your child has their log in information, but if you need any help please reach out to me. Our guest author this week is Paige Horak. Thank you Paige for helping to summarize our week of learning!

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*Paige Horak 4/5 Student*

In math we have still been working on Algebraic equations by reading story problems and using graphs to write equations and then solving them. Part of math on Wednesday was spent looking at data and finding the mode, median, range, mean and outliers. One data question we looked at was how many minutes it takes to get to Birch Grove from our houses and we had a huge range from just a few minutes to over an hour. We also played some math fact games to help us prepare for our math FastBridge test on Thursday.

In reading this we did our fluency reading test with Mrs. Coronis and then took our reading FastBridge test. We were happy to have extra time to read our IDR books since we did not work on a new skill and story this week. We started a new read aloud book last week called Tuck Everlasting and each day we learn and write about things like character change, personification, similes and settings. We love the book and all want to watch the movie at school when we finish it!

In writing we reviewed the parts of a paragraph including the topic sentence, details and conclusion sentence. In Social Studies we learned the history of the Beargrease Race and then wrote letters that will be mailed on the dog sleds by trail mail. We made our own personal "Flat Stanley" that will travel in the dog sleds and then return to us at Birch Grove. On Monday, January 26 a sled dog team and their musher will be visiting our school. We are excited! Finally we learned a lot about Martin Luther King Jr.'s life and the things that he believed.