

## Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Weekly Newsletter

January 30, 2026

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

Monday, February 9 ~ Dental Checks

Thursday, February 12 ~ Afternoon Valentine Celebration

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:**

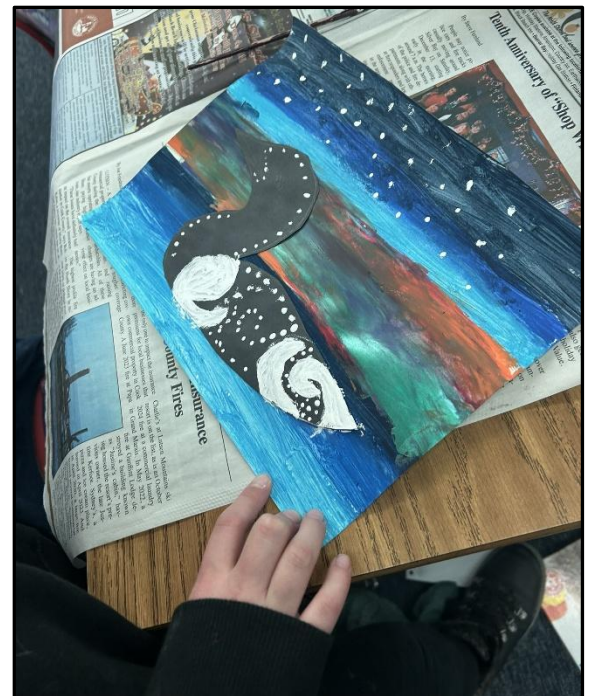
*School Director, Birch Grove Community School*

*Lead Coordinator, Birch Grove Community Service*

It was a chilly week with limited time outside, making the energy in the building a bit higher than normal, but that is to be expected. We carried on!

Semester report cards for K-5 will be sent home at the end of the week, including the latest FastBridge assessment data. FastBridge data will also be discussed at the next few teacher meetings with plans moving forward towards the end of the year. Should you have any questions on report cards or the information contained within, please reach out, as we would be happy to discuss your child with you! Please be sure to return the form acknowledging that you received your child's report card and assessment data information.

K-5 head to Tettegouche State Park next week for a field trip! Please read the information in this newsletter about



the trip and let us know if you have any questions. PLEASE be sure to send a cold lunch and dress your child for outdoor activities. Complete winter gear is needed: winter jacket, snow pants, winter boots, gloves and a hat – maybe a facemask and scarf for good measure! 😊

The February school lunch menu is up and on the school website:  
<https://www.birchgroveschool.com/school-lunches>



It was Paraprofessional Recognition Week last week! (I got a Facebook post in, but it did not make the newsletter – oops! ) We love our K-5 paraprofessionals Jenny Buckman, Jessica Klemmer, and Gayle Grinnell! Be sure to show them some love when you see them. They are the BEST! We also welcome new paraprofessional Cheyenne Mcintee who just started last week - welcome to Birch Grove!





Birch Grove had a visit from the Criss Cross Racing team this week! Julia Cross is the musher, and Amy Tuccie helped out as the dog handler. Students learned about sled dog equipment, sled dog attributes, team positions during the race, and care needed to own sled dogs. Julia and her team ran the John Beargrease 40 mile and earned 4th place! We thank them for sharing their sled dog passion with our K-5 and Saplings! <https://www.facebook.com/crisscrossracing>



More pictures can be found on the school Facebook page.

[Facebook](#)





Many thanks to Library Friends of Cook County for grant funds that allowed BGCS to purchase 2 interactive white boards! Sara Silence, teacher at Birch Grove, found an incredible deal on this technology and spearheaded the Library Friends grant. The interactive boards have been placed in the 2/3 and 4/5 classrooms to support whole and small group reading instruction.

<https://www.facebook.com/WeSupportLibraries>



As 2/3 explored Anishinaabe constellations, they found an artist from Duluth named Sam Zimmerman. Students loved that he was from the North Shore. They were so excited and inspired by his work, they had asked to create their own versions. Each student created their "Maang/Evening Swim" painting using acrylic paint and a recent learned skill of blending to create this loon with constellations on the body. Check out Sam's work! He is very talented and represents our beloved area so well. <https://sivertson.com/artist/sam-zimmerman/>





K-5 will be taking a field trip to Silver Bay on **Thursday, February 5** to go to Tettegouche State Park where 3 naturalists are assigned to Birch Grove for breakout sessions focused on nature. Outdoor activities are included, so be sure to send your child with **full outdoor clothing**.

**Please send:**

- A back pack
- A water bottle
- A cold lunch
- **Full outdoor clothing** including snow pants, winter jacket, boots, mittens, and hat.

**8:15am Bus Will Leave Birch Grove and go to Tettegouche**

- Students that get picked up in the a.m. at the Two Harbors stop, the Beaver Bay stop, and the Silver Bay stop will all be dropped off at the Tettegouche visitor's center around 7:37am so that they don't have to go all the way to BG and then back to Tettegouche. Students will be supervised by BG staff until the rest of the school arrives. We have a room dedicated to Birch Grove.
- If Tettegouche is your child's normal am bus stop, please bring your child to the visitor center where school staff will be waiting starting at 7:30 am. These students will be supervised by BG staff until the rest of the school arrives. We have a room there dedicated to Birch Grove.

**Bus Routes Will Leave As Normal After School**

- Students from the Two Harbors stop, the Beaver Bay stop, and the Silver Bay stop will stay with staff at Tettegouche after programming, and the bus will pick them all up at 3:37 and resume the normal route.
- If Tettegouche is your child's normal pm bus stop, please pick up your child at the visitor center at normal time (3:37pm). These students will be supervised by BG staff until pick up (3:37pm). We have a room there dedicated to Birch Grove.



## Saplings and Seedlings!!

Due to the K-5 field trip on Thursday, February 5, there will not be school hot lunch on this day. Please be sure to pack a cold lunch from home.

Thank you!



## Birch Buddies ~ *PAINT BY NUMBER!* Afterschool Program

For Grades 2-5

3:15-5:00

Tuesday, February 3  
Tuesday, February 10  
Tuesday, February 17

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



There are 3 remaining days of Birch Buddies ~ *SKATE!*

3:15-5:00

Monday, February 2  
Monday, February 9  
Monday, February 23

Due to the cold temperatures this week, *SKATE!* stayed inside and practiced hockey skills in the gym. We anticipate that the remaining days will be spent on the ice!

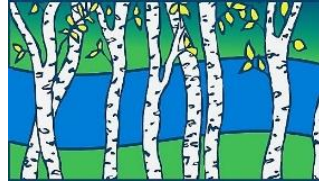
<https://www.birchgroveschool.com/birch-buddies>



## CAMPSITE KIDS ~ SUMMER 2026

Believe it or not, we have already had inquiries about Campsite Kids for this coming summer from Birch Grove and non-Birch Grove families. This has happened for the past few years now. The first day of Campsite Kids will be on Monday, June 8 and the last day will be Thursday, August 20. Enrollment is offered to Birch Grove Community School families first, as always. If there are slots open after that, we will open the program to the general public. There is no other program like Campsite Kids in either Cook or Lake County, so when registration forms come home and you want to register your child(ren), turn your forms in as soon as possible so that your child is ensured a spot in the program. <https://www.birchgroveschool.com/campsite-kids>

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.logosoftwear.com/> You can use GRAB15 for 15% off

Face Book: [Birch Grove Community School and Community Services #4145 | Facebook](#)

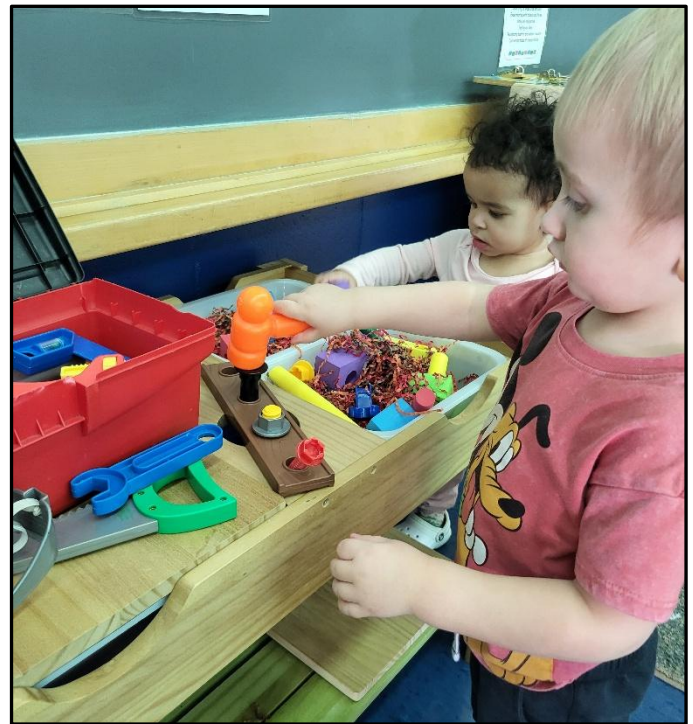


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**From Ms. Emily VanDoren**

*Seedling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

Building on our transportation theme from last week, the Seedlings learned about construction trucks and tools. Our sensory table was transformed into a work bench filled with various tools that the Seedlings used to "build". We practiced fine motor skills by twisting wrenches and screwdrivers to put together nuts and bolts.

Our books this week showed us different construction trucks and the jobs that they do on a construction site. We started the week with *Fun Trucks: Construction Crew* by Finn Coyle to learn the names of the construction trucks and the jobs that they can do. We also read *Mighty, Mighty Construction Site*, *Goodnight Goodnight Construction Site*, and *Three Cheers for Kid McGrear*, all written by Sherri Duskey Rinker and Tom Lichtenheld. We finished the week by reading *Dig, Dump, Roll* by Sally Sutton, which showed the Seedlings the different steps that take place to build a building.



We continued to practice our problem solving skills by putting together the vehicle puzzles from last week. We also worked fine motor and pencil grip by coloring a picture of a backhoe loader. We worked our gross motor skills by moving our arms and bodies in different ways just like the construction trucks do. We crawled with our arms out like a dozer, lifted our arms up high like a crane, and spun around like a cement mixer.

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 with the running of the John Beargrease sled dog marathon. Julia Cross stopped by with her sled dog team to the school, after finishing 4th in the Beargrease 40! We learned the different roles and positions held by dogs in dogsled teams. Each dog has a different role and strength.... Yet they must work together as a team in order to be successful! For example, a wheel dog is often a source of great physical strength and endurance. A lead dog possesses leadership qualities and is a good listener and able to infer and sense where a trail may be.

For literacy Saplings became familiar with mushing terminology, including *Gee*, the right turn command, *Haw*, the left turn

command, *Mush!* and *Hike!*, the commands to start the team in motion, and *Whoa!*, the command to bring the team to a halt, accompanied by heavy braking.



In the Dramatic Play area, a veterinary clinic was set up, complete with stuffed dogs and kittens, for the examination of sled dogs. The Library was repurposed as a waiting room, offering books about various pets, including dogs and cats. A Lego STEM activity was created in the sensory bin, where Saplings had to build a dogsled with an attached gangline string. The math and manipulative tables included a dog counting and balancing scale, link counting and matching the gangline and dog kennel patterns, counting and matching. In addition to the other activities, Saplings took part in sled dog bingo throughout the week.

With the cold weather Saplings ran the Ikidarod inside. The Saplings emulated mushers and sled dogs, racing across the trail. With one Sapling seated in the sled, the others took on the role of sled dogs, pulling them along. At the checkpoint (our classroom) along the trail we had a snack and a discussion about the Beargrease and the Iditarod. This enjoyable experience incorporated implicit learning, as the Saplings acquired knowledge about the sport's history and culture.

218-663-0170 ext. 6

[pam.holmbgcs@gmail.com](mailto:pam.holmbgcs@gmail.com)

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**From Ms. Sara Knottski**

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

K/1 is learning about the moon! This week, we read a book about astronauts going to the moon, what they found there, and how they got to the moon. We tracked how the moon changes in a 28-day cycle and tried to catch a glimpse of the moon in the daylight through the clouds. We ended the week by making different moon phases with Oreos! It was a blast!

The Kindergarteners learned about the letter Sh this week. We have body motions for every letter we know! Sh's body motion is shhhhhh finger over the mouth! Ask your child about the rest of the body motions! The first graders are learning about long vowels. We are learning about how magic e changes the sound of the vowel. We are practicing reading every day now. The students are reading to self, reading to someone, and listening to reading every day during reading rotations. We are working on inferring when reading stories and increasing our fluency. In math, we are learning about comparing and place value. We played a variety of number games up to 100 game noticing how many tens and ones are in each number, drawing or showing the numbers with base ten blocks, and adding two-digit numbers with one-digit numbers.



Reminder: Valentine's Day is in two weeks. K/1 will have a card exchange on Thursday, February 12<sup>th</sup>. If your child wants to make cards, I can supply paper and coloring materials. Just let me know!

218-663-0170 ext. 2

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

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**From Ms. Samantha Forster**

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

The cold weather has made our classroom full of energy! As always, my class is taking on each activity with lots of enthusiasm and excitement. We started our week by interacting with Criss Cross Racing and their dog sled team! This was a unique experience that we are so lucky to have! We finished up our artwork inspired by Sam Zimmerman this week which turned out amazing. Next week, we will be doing another piece of work inspired by him at our field trip to Tettegouche on Thursday! We focused on life cycles in science. This helped us prep for our "Create a Creature" project. We ended our week with a brief ice skating outing to burn off some energy as the weather was less frigid. This was another highlight of student's week. Report cards went home in folders in an orange envelope.



There is a signature sheet in the envelope. Please sign and return in the envelope to ensure that you have received their report card along with their family report from Fastbridge.

In reading, we focused on the sequence of events and the main idea. This was paired with a couple readings on fictional and nonfiction texts. We also looked at different word parts and created words that had those word parts. Word manipulation is always a fun word study activity for students and it helps build vocabulary. We also looked at what makes the /j/ sound and the /s/ sound. We are writing our book pages right now about each student's favorite Minnesota animal. We will continue to work on this for the next few weeks.

In math, second graders focused on 3 digit addition and subtraction. This was so much fun to watch because of the growth from the beginning of the year. This will be a main focus for the rest of the year. The third graders focused on fractions all week. This is a hard concept and we have been working with manipulatives to help us build understanding. Math's main focus for the next part of the year is revisiting harder concepts and making sure to build a strong foundation.

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*

The days are getting longer each day, but the temps have remained cold so thank you for sending your child to school with all of their outdoor gear each day. Next Thursday our whole K-5 school will travel to Tettegouche State Park to meet with naturalists for an outdoor learning day. We Cross Country Skied on Friday to practice our skills prior to going to Tettegouche. Thank you for returning the permission slips and also don't forget to pack a bag lunch that day.

In math this week we focused on fractions. So far we have used manipulatives to have concrete practice for core understanding and then we moved into drawing pictures and finally we moved to the abstract with paper and pencil. We have mastered how to draw, add, subtract, compare and convert fractions and mixed numbers. Next week we will continue working with fractions with unlike denominators. Fifth graders will learn how to multiply and divide fractions and then simplify to the lowest terms. Our class also learned a game called "Fraction Capture" to reinforce these skills.



In reading and social studies we are learning about the American Revolution. We read our story called, "Can't You Make Them Behave, King George?" and identified facts and opinions. We liked how a made up story about real historical events made it easy to learn history. In social studies we are spending time learning more about how our country broke away from England and formed 13



colonies, the New England, Middle and Southern Colonies. Like the sorting hat in Harry Potter, each student came up to find out what colonist they would be during this unit. At the end of our learning these colonists will be on a talk show where they will answer interview questions about their colonial life!

Report cards and Fastbridge Family Reports will come home on Friday. Please sign and return the signature paper and return it with the empty envelope. Thank you!

218-663-0170 ext. 4

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