

## Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Weekly Newsletter

January 9, 2026

Tuesday, January 13 ~ Hearing & Vision Screening  
Monday-Friday, January 12-16 FastBridge Assessments  
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 Tettagouche 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*

Welcome back from winter break! It's great to be back and continue our learning journey through a brand new calendar year. Happy New Year to all!

We hit the ground running this week and are back into our normal routine. Classrooms are running smoothly, with staff commenting on how well students are doing upon return from a two week break with many retaining concepts taught previously. Yay, this was good to hear!

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 Treasures program will start next 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)! 😊 More information on this program will come out next week.



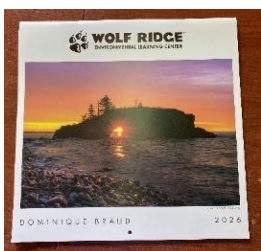


The January school lunch menu is posted on the school website. January looks yummy!

<https://www.birchgroveschool.com/School-Lunches>

New January sessions of Birch Buddies afterschool programs are posted and enrollment forms sent out! Birch Buddies ~ SKATE! and Birch Buddies ~ BOARD GAMES!

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



If you have not yet turned in your \$15 for a Wolf Ridge calendar, please do so now.  
Thank you!



❄️ Tuesday was a great day to go snowshoeing! The Saplings went on an adventure to explore the recent snowfall, and headed to the Tofte Forest Service next door, where they enjoyed an outdoor snack. All in all, an amazing day! <https://www.birchgroveschool.com/saplings-program>



More pictures can be found on the school Facebook page.

[Facebook](#)



The Birch Grove ice rink is now open and available to the public! The rink lights are now on a timer instead of automatically going on/off. The timer can be found in the warming hut (see picture). For those that don't know, there is also a bathroom connected to the warming hut for your convenience. Enjoy some skating ice on the North Shore! Many thanks to Tofte Township for this amazing rink!



K-3 went snowshoeing on Wednesday for gym! Ms. Grinnell and Ms. Klemmer led students (and Walter) on an adventure in the woods for some fresh air and exercise. Lovin' the Great Outdoors! <https://www.birchgroveschool.com/the-great-outdoors>

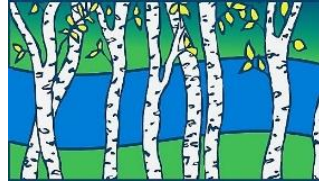
More pictures can be found on the school Facebook page.

[Facebook](#)

**These are the BEST gym days**



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.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*

It was wonderful to see all the Seedlings after our long break. We spent this week getting back into the routine of our day and learning about different animals that we might see at the zoo.

We read *Color Zoo* by Lois Ehlert. This book introduces shapes and colors by showing how animal faces can be created with different shapes. The book was accompanied by colorful foam shapes of various sizes that we used to try to create our own animals. *1-2-3 ZooBorns!* by Andrew Bleiman and Chris Eastland was another fun book that showed real life images of various animals that could be found in the zoo and also provided a fun way to practice counting skills.

Various zoo animal figures were added to our pretend play area and provided an opportunity for the children to learn new animal names such as alligator, rhinoceros, and hippopotamus, gorilla, giraffe, and lion. We moved our bodies this week by pretending to be different animals. We stomped and trumpeted like elephants, roared like lions, stretched our arms as tall as giraffes, and hopped like kangaroos.

Fine motor skills were practiced by coloring with markers, playing with play dough, and by creating a lion's mane by tearing brown and orange construction paper and gluing it to a paper plate ring.

Have a great weekend!

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**From Ms. Pam Holm**

*Sapling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

Welcome back from winter break! Saplings rang in the New Year with a snowshoe walk through the freshly fallen snow. An introductory lesson on analog time-telling methods was provided, focusing on the clock face, the 'big numbers', and the concept that the 'long hand' pointing up indicates a new hour has begun. We reviewed the accomplishments of the past year and the objectives for the upcoming year. We explored the concept of a resolution by reading *Squirrel's New Year Resolution* by Pat Miller. Each Sapling then wrote their own resolution.



This week's theme was centered around Jan Brett books with an emphasis on developing comprehension skills, such as predictions, retelling, sequencing, and cause and effect. After reading *Trouble With Trolls*, the Saplings completed a writing prompt about retrieving their dog if the Trolls took it. The Saplings developed their fine motor skills through a mitten-lacing activity and participated in a retelling of the Ukrainian fairy tale, *The Mitten*, by placing character animals inside their laced-up mittens. Thursday's reading of *The Hat* was followed by a creative activity. The Saplings decorated their own paper hats using oil pastels and tissue paper, and wrote descriptions of their stocking hat blowing off the line, just like Lisa's in the story. *The Christmas Sweater* was read on Friday followed by Sapling designing a sweater for their self-portraiture.

Our literacy entailed letter recognition, with a particular focus on T for time and trolls, Y for year, M for mitten, and H for Hat. We also addressed one-to-one correspondence counting in mathematics, employing mittens and hats. Moreover, we cultivated our patterning abilities. The study of calendar months remained an ongoing endeavor.

Happy New Year!

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**From Ms. Sara Knottski**

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

I can tell everyone had a great break! I heard many stories about what everyone did over winter break, and it sounded like a blast! We are all back from break and healthy, and we want to keep it that way! Could you make sure to talk with your child about handwashing, keeping their hands out of their mouth, nose, and eyes, and coughing into their elbow?

This week was spent getting back into routines and adjusting to the workload and expectations during learning. We revisited what it looks like to be on task and learning during various times of the day. First grade did a lot of reading this week, including new weekly assigned books. Our favorite book activity is to highlight our phonics in our decodable books. These books go home and can be read at home too! Kindergarten practice reading, phonics, and letter formation. Kindergarten is ahead of our schedule for the year, and we continue to work ahead!



As we get back into the swing of things and continue forward in winter, just a reminder, we do go outside even if it is frigid! Please ensure that students are sent to school with plenty of layers, snow pants, a hat, waterproof gloves, and a neck scarf. We are always excited to play in the snow!

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**From Ms. Samantha Forster**

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

Welcome back! We started the new year out with tons of excitement and energy. It was a beautiful week out and the students were able to burn off some energy by playing out in the snow, snowshoeing, and ice skating. It was a great way to start the year off. We also did some Antarctic inspired art as this is the continent we are exploring this month. We have FastBridge assessments next week so students practiced online math testing to prepare for those tests. In science, we explored weather patterns and natural hazards. This involved collecting data, engineering a home with paper and various materials, and lots of discussion with partners (my favorite way to learn.) This was fun as students recognized blizzards as our unique snow system that we are used to and some of the hazards that come with a blizzard.

I could tell students have been solid in their reading skills as students came back without skipping a beat. We read nonfiction books about Helen Keller and a police officer that has a K-9 partner. This was paired with a graphic organizer that helped identify different facts from the texts. Students also





practiced opinion writing pieces using facts from a passage. This was a new skill that will help students as they conduct their biography research paper in the next couple months. We did some word sorts with various spelling patterns and read decodable texts that correlated with those patterns. We went over two prefixes this week as well. Reviewing word parts help studies spell and read as they can help students identify these separate parts and help build meaning.

In math, we reviewed time in second grade. Since this is a skill that we had been practicing throughout the fall, this was an easy concept for students. In third grade, we focused on finishing our unit about time, fractions, and data. This will be the main focus in the next few months as these concepts are foundational for 4th grade and is something they will encounter on standardized tests. We also talked about perimeter and area.

We will be outside lots this winter and students may need additional sets of winter gear here, just in case they forget something. If you or your student need any items, please reach out and we will be able to find some. Also just a reminder, Wednesdays are cold lunch days! My class eats 1 to 2 snacks a day. Please pack at least one snack for them each day. Thank you! It was great to have everyone back and healthy!

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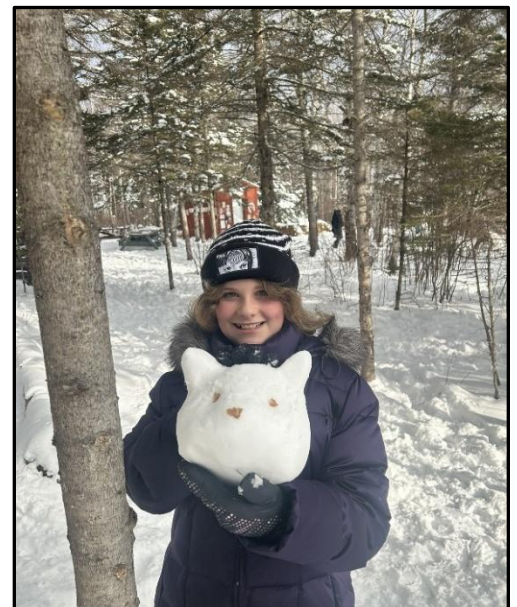
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**From Ms. Stacy Coronis**

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

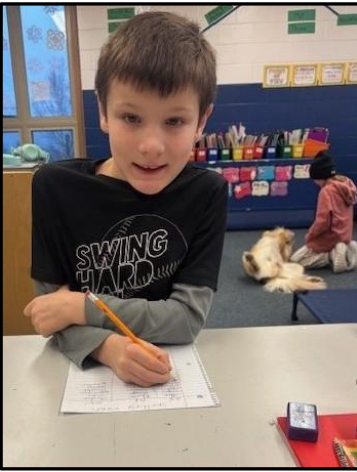
Students (and staff) in the 4/5 classroom had mixed feelings about returning to school after winter break. While we all missed the cozy days at home filled with treats, relaxation and play time, it felt good to see everyone's smiling faces this week and have the chance to reconnect with friends at school! By Wednesday everyone had settled back into the regular school routine. Cooper was our guest author this week and here is what he had to say about our learning this week.

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*Cooper VanDoren 4/5 Student*

In math we started an algebra unit and learned four new vocabulary words; variable, expression, equation and relation symbols. We learned how to substitute a number in place of a variable to solve expressions and we learned the “teeter totter” method of balancing out equations. This was tricky at first but each day got a little easier. We ended the week by writing equations on our own for story problems and then solving them to find the value of the variable.

Our story in reading this week was a nonfiction informational story called “Cougars”. We practiced identifying main ideas and supporting details and recorded them in our reading journals using graphic organizers. We also updated our reading logs and recorded the books we read over break and the books we are currently reading.

We published two winter poems after going through the writing process of brainstorming ideas in a circle map, writing our first drafts, editing with classmates, revising with Mrs. Coronis and lastly publishing a final copy. We wrote chain verse poems and winter Haiku poems. We reviewed what adjectives were and added them to our poetry to add description. Finally we created some 3D snowflakes and a winter scene using oil pastels to go along with our poetry. They look great and will be sent home later in the school year!

We are conducting an experiment during our daily morning meeting with our therapy dog, Walter. Each morning we time him as he solves a puzzle to get treats hidden in a toy. We are rounding his time to the nearest  $\frac{1}{2}$  minute and so far he is improving his time each day. It is fun to cheer him on and use this data to practice finding the mean, median, mode and range of the data. Walter loves it too of course because he gets cheered on as he solves the puzzle and gobbles up his treats!

FastBridge math and reading tests will take place next week on Wednesday and Thursday morning. This will give us a good idea of how much we have grown since fall and what we need to continue to work on. Make sure your child gets a good night of sleep and healthy breakfast so that they can do their very best.