



## Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Weekly Newsletter

March 13, 2026

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  
Friday, April 3 ~ No School, PD for Staff  
Thursday, April 16 ~ Kindergarten Round Up!  
Tuesday, April 21 ~ School Board Meeting at 4:00  
Monday, April 20-Friday, April 24 ~ MCA Testing for 3-5<sup>th</sup> Grades

### 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*

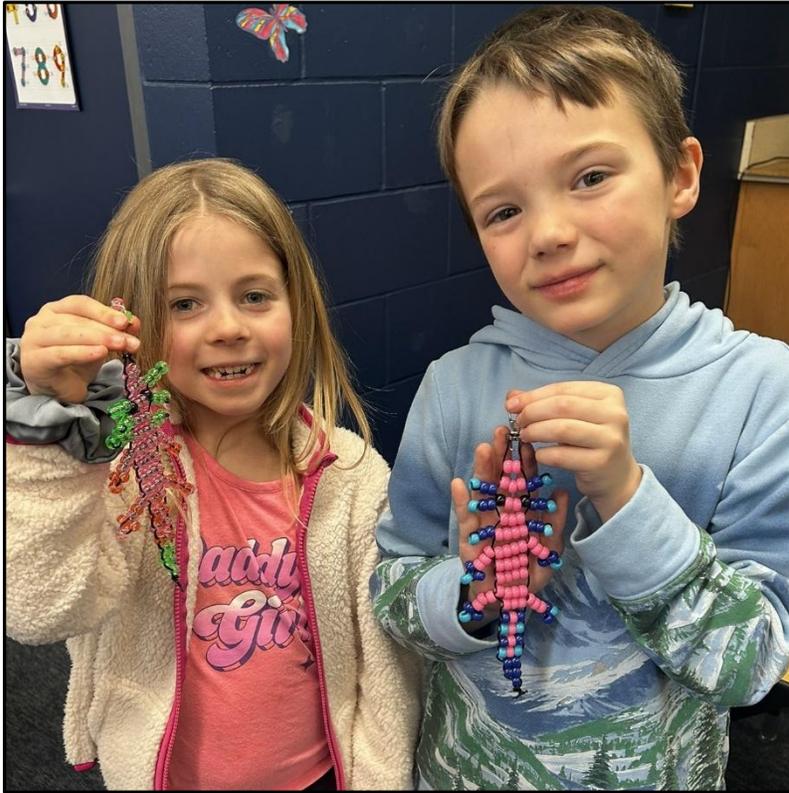
We have been busy, as we know spring break is coming up March 23-27. We have one more week of school to go before everyone can take a well-deserved break!

Please do your best to keep your scheduled conference with your child's classroom teacher so that staff can complete conferences and enjoy their break more fully knowing that this has been completed for all the students in their classroom. Much appreciated!

Welp, another snow day was just called for today - please be aware of the new calendar changes that will be posted in the next newsletter. We hope you enjoy what we hope is the last snow day of the year!



Amazing axolotls were created at Birch Buddies ~ BEADING! afterschool program this week!  
<https://www.birchgroveschool.com/birch-buddies>



More pictures can be found on  
the school Facebook page.

[Facebook](#)



## School Board Elections

Tuesday, April 21, 2026  
at the regular school board meeting at 4:00

### Seats Up:

Judy Motschenbacher: running unopposed

Mary VanDoren: running unopposed

Two seats remain open on the board.

One ballot will be sent to each BGCS family, staff and employee the beginning of April. Please send ballots back to Birch Grove by Monday, April 20.



Front row: Judy Motschenbacher, Skip Lamb.  
Back row: Sara Knottski, Mary VanDoren, Sarena Crowley.



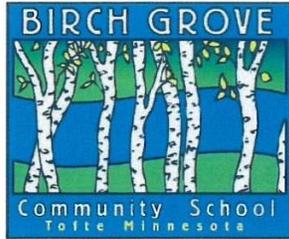
For more board or election information go to:  
<https://www.birchgroveschool.com/school-board>

In Birch Buddies ~ PAINT BY NUMBER! afterschool program, the children started creating paintings of our Walter, school therapy dog-in-training! Ms. Pam Holm used a photo of Walter and created the templates and also custom-made the palate of colors. Woof! Everyone was hard at work painting a custom-made Walter! <https://www.birchgroveschool.com/birch-buddies>



More pictures can be found on the school Facebook page.

[Facebook](#)



**Yee haw ~ Kindergarten Round Up!**

**Birch Grove Community School**

**Thursday, April 16**

**8:00 - 12:30**

**All children age eligible (must be 5 by September 1)**

**Are invited to spend a fun morning at BGCS!**

1/2 Day Kindergarten Experience:

- Special Projects & Fun Activities!
- Free School Lunch Provided!
- Spend Recess with Us!



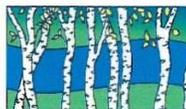
The school director and K/1 teacher will be available from 12:00-12:30 to answer questions.



*Cowboy/Cowgirl hats provided! Yee haw!*



Meet Walter, our school therapy dog-in-training, on the way to the classroom and again at recess!



**Giddyap to Kindergarten Round Up!**

Registration forms can be found on the school website

[www.birchgroveschool.com](http://www.birchgroveschool.com)

or email [birchgrove@boreal.org](mailto:birchgrove@boreal.org)

218-663-0170

Sled dog rides this week with Rita Wehseler! Smiles from students and staff alike lit up this already amazingly bright afternoon. Thank you so much Rita for, once again, giving us an amazing experience! Livin' Large on the North Shore!

<https://www.birchgroveschool.com/the-great-outdoors>



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!



[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*

This week the Seedlings learning was focused on the theme "Up in the sky". We had a lot of fun with bubbles and balloons this week! We also talked about things that we can find in the sky like the sun, moon, stars, clouds and lots more!

Our sensory table was filled with cotton ball "clouds" for the Seedlings to explore. They worked their fine motor skills by scooping the cotton balls with measuring cups and pouring them out. They also pinched and dropped the cotton balls into small plastic jars. For an added challenge, they tried twisting the lids on to the jars to close them and then open them up again. We also worked on counting skills as we counted how many cotton balls were in the jar.

The Seedlings enjoyed bubbles and balloons this week. They worked their gross motor skills by reaching up to pop bubbles and to throw their balloons up into the sky. We also worked on tossing and catching, as well as sharing when we played Pass the Balloon as a group. After we finished playing our game, the Seedlings enjoyed coloring a picture of a hot air balloon.



We read *Where Do Balloons Go? An Uplifting Mystery* by Jamie Lee Curtis. This book explores the mystery of what happens when a balloon floats up to the sky. By reading this story, we were able to see lots of things that are in the sky such as birds, airplanes, clouds, and stars. We sang songs that had a sky theme this week. We sang "Mr. Sun" and "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star". We also sang a fun movement song about bubbles to the theme of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" that the Seedlings loved dancing to.

Have a good weekend!

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**From Ms. Pam Holm**

*Sapling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

*In Like a Lion out Like a Lamb* is Sapling's theme this week. March is always the most questionable month when it comes to our weather as we go into Spring and watch all of the snow around us hopefully melt or not. Saplings tracked this change daily and explored weather patterns. For art they created a lion, wild and loud and a lamb, soft and calm to represent the shifting, unpredictable weather.

On Wednesday, Saplings acquired knowledge about leopards and their distinctive "rosettes" (rose-shaped spots), which facilitate their concealment in trees. They discovered that leopards possess exceptional climbing abilities, surpassing those of other big cats. During art activities, they created their own leopard hiding in a tree.

Thursday Saplings gained insight into the characteristics of llamas, those furry, friendly creatures native to South America. They were thrilled to discover that a baby llama is referred to as a cria. They learned that llamas are herbivores with thick wool to keep them warm. They counted llama droppings, colloquially known as llama beans, and compared sizes.



Throughout the week, the letter 'L' was the central theme, with an in-depth examination of animals whose names begin with the letter L, such as leopards, llamas, and lemurs. The Saplings participated in a variety of manipulative and math-based activities, including counting, pattern formation, and size sequencing, using a sensory bin filled with animals. Writing skills and pincer grip development

were further enhanced through varied prewriting practice line tracings, featuring animals from lions to lambs.

Music from the Lion King was featured throughout the week. Saplings performed a scarf dance to the music, symbolizing the wind (lion) and gentle swaying (lamb), followed by a lion hunt.

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

This week, K/1 was interested in dance and color mixing for play. We spent most of our playtime listening to freeze dance songs and regular songs and dancing! We also explored mixing colors in kinetic sand. This led to a creation of a bake shop which involved writing, counting, money, and social skills!

Kindergarten has learned most of our phonics for the year. We are working on cementing letter sounds and letter names. We are also practicing reading and spelling every day. This is a great time to improve our fluency and comprehension while reading. 1<sup>st</sup> grade has learned about bossy r the last two weeks. We practice reading and writing words with ar, or, ir, ur, and er. We are also working on extending and improving our writing skills. In math, this week has been all graphing and comparing and finding the difference in numbers! K/1 created bar graphs, solved story problems, and practice comparing items on a graph.

Thank you signing up for conferences next week! I look forward to talking with everyone and showing you all the great growth your child has accomplished this year! If you have not yet had a chance to sign up, feel free to email me and we can schedule a time!



Have a great weekend!

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**From Ms. Samantha Forster**

*2nd & 3rd Grade Elementary Teacher*

We have been working so hard at trying to complete our biographies! This week, the main focus was on our slideshow and timeline. Some students were finishing up final drafts but quickly were able to move onto slideshows. We are finishing up this project within the next two weeks (before spring break) and they will be getting ready to present to each other in April. This has been a source of pride for the students and they have loved being able to showcase all the skills they have learned this year. We also did art inspired by Bronwyn Bancroft, an Aboriginal Australian artist. Thank you for taking the time to sign up for conferences! Last note, it is getting nice and sloppy outside. Please ensure your students are coming with dry winter clothes each day to go and play in the snow while it is still here!

We have been focusing less on sounds this week and more on comprehension strategies. The strategy we worked on was sequencing events on two different types of stories. This helped students create a mental model in their head as they were reading. We also went over the word endings “-tion” and “-ture” as these are two hard spellings to sound out. Third graders are continuing to prepare for the MCA’s by working on testing strategy. This week’s strategy was eliminating wrong answers on test questions.

Students worked in different groups on different skills this week. One group focused on multiplication fluency while the other group worked on adding 3 to 4 numbers that had 3 addends each. On Monday, there was lots of frustration but by Tuesday, students had quickly gotten the hang of it. It was a realization to many of them that things are really hard when we start them but get easier with lots of practice!

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**From Ms. Stacy Coronis**

*4th & 5th Grade Elementary Teacher*

This week we have wrapped up our unit on decimals. Our class sure learned a lot about how to read, write, compare, order, add and subtract decimals. Fifth graders learned how to multiply and divide decimals as well. We wrapped up our week by spending a few days learning about how to plot

ordered pairs on a coordinate grid which was new to most students and is always a favorite skill to learn. To practice this skill the class played Coordinate Grid Battleship with a partner which was a fun way to reinforce this skill.

During our reading groups we completed several comprehension activities and reading skills to start preparing for the MCA reading test. Some of these skills included comparing and contrasting, identifying author's purpose, identifying main idea, and determining chronological order in a text passage. Our class also continues to make great progress on their independent chapter books and our online reading curriculum Lexia. Keep reading at home and recording those minutes for our Tickets to Treasure drawing later this spring!



Our class is reading the BEST read aloud right now called *Emmy and the Incredible Shrinking Rat* which is a fan favorite so far. We work on different skills each day and record them in our read aloud book. This week we did a text to text comparison by comparing and contrasting the protagonist Emmy with Winnie from our last read aloud book. During read aloud time the kids have time to create art as well. It is a great way to ease back into learning after lunch and recess.

A highlight of the week was spending time with Rita and her sled dog team! Check out the great pictures! I look forward to meeting with you next week during spring conferences to celebrate the growth your child has had this year.

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