

Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Weekly Newsletter

March 20, 2026

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 3-5th 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*

The week before spring break is historically a busy one – this week was not an exception. Classrooms have been getting in benchmarks and standards, conferences are spread throughout the week, projects are being finalized, special events are happening, and some spring cleanup and organization is happening, so that when we come back after a week of break, we can jump right back into learning. A busy week indeed. Many thanks to Birch Grove's amazing staff for the additional effort this week!

Thanks to parents for attending conferences and communicating with your child's teacher. Remember that conferences are not the only time that you can check in – we are available throughout the year should you have any questions or concerns about your child or if you think that we need to be aware of anything. Our doors are open!



While we know that your family may have special plans for the week off, please continue to have your child read or be read to over the break. This is one of the best things that you can do to support your child's academic growth. Remember that tickets can also be earned through reading for the Tickets to Treasure program.

A note from Ms. Forster:

As many of you know, I will be taking a leave of absence coming up very soon (pending baby arrival). It will be before April 9th until the end of the school year. My incredible team and I created a plan that is accommodating for all students and will not be disrupting their regular routine. Mrs. Knottski and I have spent the year co-teaching and students have spent time transitioning between our rooms for instructional time and supported learning time. This will continue to function as we have been with Mrs. Knottski conducting the instructional time. Again, this has been a regular routine throughout the year so it will not be a routine disruption. Please reach out with any questions! Additionally, during the leave of absence direct all the questions to Mrs. Knottski and Ms. Blanchette. Thank you for such a great year with your students and I will see you all in the fall!



Wishing Ms. Forster well on the upcoming new addition to her family!



Changes to the school calendar:

Due to the additional last snow day (that happened on a make-up day for the previous snow day), we have had to extend the school year calendar into June. There will now be school on Monday and Tuesday, June 1 and 2. We will keep the graduation celebration day the same, so this will still happen on Friday, May 29 with an early release, as we do every year. Students will return to school the following Monday and Tuesday for some planned fun events they won't want to miss! The new updated calendar has been sent home to all K-5 families along with this newsletter. Saplings and Seedlings are not affected by this change.

CAMPSITE KIDS!



Campsite Kids 2026 is full! Thank you so much to everyone that registered their child(ren) to this unique and spectacular program! We are very much looking forward to an amazing summer out at the campsite with bonfires, woods, trails, projects and fun activities!

We will also be having one overnight this summer – date to be announced later – we know it will be on a Thursday! Yay!

The 2026 Campsite Kids staff all have multiple years of experience in the program:



Sara Knottski!
Diane Blanchette!
Gayle Grinnell!
Jenny Buckman!
Sub: Jessica Klemmer!

Friday afternoon, the day before spring break, we enjoyed all school Glow Wands & Black Out Bingo, then students made a personal choice between three different activities: board games, arts & crafts, or a movie. It was a nice end to the week and a nice start to spring break! We hope everyone has a safe and happy break! Go Birch Grove!



In March, the Seussville Saplings room celebrated Dr. Seuss' birthday with a Seusstastic week! Scroll through these fun photos to see Saplings having fun while learning!

<https://www.birchgroveschool.com/saplings-program>



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.

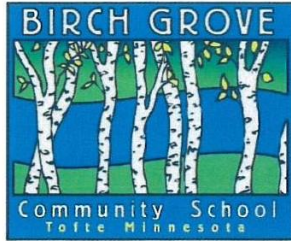
One ballot will be sent to each BGCS family, staff and employee the beginning of April. Please send ballots back to Birch Grove by Monday, April 20.



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>



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!



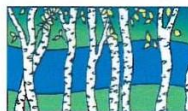
The school director and K/1 teacher will be available from 12:00-12:30 to answer questions.



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!

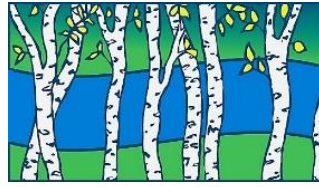
Registration forms can be found on the school website

www.birchgroveschool.com

or email birchgrove@boreal.org

218-663-0170

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](#)



From Ms. Emily VanDoren

Seedling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service

Our theme for the week was the color green and St. Patrick's day. The sensory table was filled with dry pasta that had been dyed green to create a field of "shamrocks" for the Seedlings to search through. They were provided with scoops and jars to fill and empty. While they played, they found gold nuggets (large rocks painted gold) and gold coins to place into their "pots of gold". We practiced counting the cold coins and nuggets as we placed them in the jars and also practiced sharing and taking turns.

During morning playtime, the Seedlings had the choice of several puzzles that they could work on. We had picture puzzles of a leprechaun sitting on a rainbow as well as a shamrock puzzle. Each puzzle was 6 large pieces that the older Seedlings needed to match up to create the complete picture. We also had a leprechaun hat shape puzzle. The Seedlings had to place the different shape pieces on the hat in the matching spots. Even our younger Seedlings tried their hand at this puzzle and correctly placed a few! It also provided the opportunity to name the different shapes as well as their color as the Seedlings tried to match them on the hat.



We sang songs and rhymes that had a focus on leprechauns and shamrocks during our morning snack time. We also sang a classroom favorite, "Five Green and Speckled Frogs" and used visuals to help the Seedlings see a representation of the numbers as we sang about the frogs. Our books this week included *Skyfire* by Frank Asch, *How to Catch a Leprechaun* by Adam Wallace, and *Little Blue and Little Yellow* by Leo Lionni.

This week the Seedlings worked their fine motor skills by creating a tissue paper collage rainbow. The Seedlings had to pick up small squares of tissue paper and place them onto an outline of a rainbow that had been painted with a water/glue mixture. The Seedlings also painted a shamrock using green paint. We closed out our week with green play dough which helps to exercise hand muscles that can improve fine motor skills and pencil grip.

I hope you have a wonderful spring break and we will see you again on Monday, March 30th!

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**From Ms. Pam Holm**

*Sapling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

Saplings had a week of shamrock fun as we celebrated St. Patrick's Day! Once again they boarded our plane, this time to Ireland. They explored the Emerald Isle and Irish culture, enjoying green and lucky theme experiences. A Lucky sensory bin was set up, where they practiced stacking and corresponding counting with gold coins and lucky shamrocks, rainbow color sorting. Using flashlights Saplings identified letters in our magic Pot of Gold area.



Monday's focus was on the Celtic appreciation for nature, music, and intricate art. The Saplings explored 'never-ending' lines by tracing simple Celtic knots and designing their own patterns. This exercise enhanced fine motor skills and introduced the idea of patterns in ancient design. Using recycled materials, they built small models of Celtic roundhouses, gaining insight into the communal living arrangements of ancient families. An age-appropriate legend of Selkies, creatures that transform from seals to humans, was shared. The Lucky Charms snack was a delight, with the children sorting and counting the lucky marshmallows.

Tuesday Saplings applied their problem-solving and sequencing skills to build traps for catching a leprechaun. Inspired by artist Romero Britto they crafted their own lucky shamrocks. Saplings prepared minty pudding parfaits for snack.

Ireland's landscape is dotted with numerous castles. Wednesday Saplings constructed their own castles by building with blocks and then painting one using sponges to stamp a brick design.

On Thursday, Saplings discovered the colors - red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet - create a rainbow. They delved into the characteristics and science of rainbows, including single or double arches, before or after a storm, reflection, refraction, and dispersion of light in water. They explored shades and mixed colors through experiments and honed their sequencing skills with crafting a rainbow formation.

It was a hoopla on Friday as we transformed into Notre Dame basketball players for March Madness. Saplings participated in several activities, including dribble counting, measuring the distance to the hoop, recognizing shapes like circles and cylinders, and expanding our vocabulary with terms such as court, dribble, and referee. The saplings displayed good sportsmanship by sharing the ball, taking turns, and supporting their teammates. We practiced fingertip dribbling. Simulating raindrops Saplings attempted low-to-the-ground dribbling. Additionally, I instructed some mirror defense strategies, where they moved side-to-side in defensive positions.

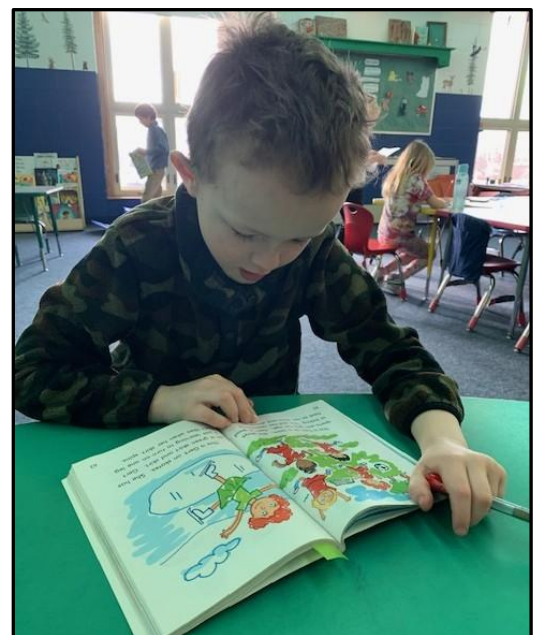
Throughout the week, Saplings were treated to an engaging experience of lively Irish music, always accompanied by a lively dance party. A large motor game was played, where Saplings rolled a dice to choose their actions, which included bending like a rainbow, throwing a horseshoe, look like a shamrock; by jumping in the air with arms and legs out, stomping leprechaun footprints on the ground, stirring the pot of gold, and sneaking like a leprechaun.

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

Thank you to all for coming to school for conferences. It was great to share with you all the learning we are doing every day! Continue to read and get your children on our online platforms.

We reviewed shapes, and numbers this week in math. Kindergarten learned about 3d shapes and enjoyed making the shapes in play dough! 1st grade learned about 2d shapes and the characteristic of those shapes. They build shapes using a geo-board this week! In language arts, we discussed sequence of events and cause and effect. Kindergarten reviewed the alphabet and 1st grade reviewed blends and vowel sounds.



Over spring break please continue to reinforce and practice math and reading skills at home. Make sure to continue to read for 20 minutes every day. Every student can read out loud to you if the right book is chosen. Make sure to be logging this time spent in the reading/ math log for tickets to treasure. The students can earn prizes at the end of the year with their tickets. Please use the online resources and read over the break!! We have had such great growth this year and I want to continue that!

Have a great spring break!

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From Ms. Samantha Forster

2nd & 3rd Grade Elementary Teacher

We have spent the week wrapping things up! We completed our biography projects, math units, cleaning our desks, and making sure we were set to begin new things in the month of April. We also were able to do an art project inspired by Betty Mbitjana! It feels good and like we are ready for spring! I will be sending out a letter explaining the transition for the spring as I will be taking my leave in the beginning of the month. As I spoke about in conferences, things will remain very consistent to the routine that is already established. Students will spend the spring fine tuning the skills that we have spent all year working on. I sent everything home to be cleaned before spring break, please ensure students still have winter gear when they come back from the break.

In reading, we focused on story elements (again!) and cause and effect within stories. Third graders worked on multiple test prep strategies to help prepare them for testing that will be coming up in April. They have been taking this very seriously. We worked on different phonics elements like silent consonants and the /aw/ sound. Students have been working on constructing sentences with vocabulary words but also encouraged to write narratives as this helps them work on a variety of writing styles.

Math has been all about learning and practicing fundamental skills. Second graders have started to work on the concept of multiplication which has been so fun and exciting for these students. The third graders continue to refresh fractions by playing games and drawing pictures to help solve problems. This review of skills has helped all the students because of the amount of extra practice we



have been able to do. It also has helped that we have been using a variety of engagement tools (group games, drawing, Jeopardy, manipulatives, etc.) to help students build understanding.

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From Ms. Stacy Coronis

4th & 5th Grade Elementary Teacher

As I write this our class is playing a game called Land Hog in which they compete against each other to create quadrilaterals to “gobble up” the available land on the grid paper game board. This game cements the concept of determining area and being able to spatially understand the concept. I am so impressed at how well this group of students can get into random partners (not just a best friend), play math games using good sportsmanship and then clean up after themselves. What a wonderful group I have to work with everyday! This week we learned about the formula for determining the area of any quadrilateral and triangles. We also started exploring the concept of surface area.



We are taking a break from our science/ social studies units to work on some geometry concepts. It is important to cover these topics prior to the spring assessments so that the students are prepared for all of the 4th and 5th grade math standards. In the afternoon we will use games, art projects and hands-on activities to explore the properties of quadrilaterals, triangles and other polygons as well as 3D solids.

In reading we began a new unit on fictional stories. We are using what we have learned about plot maps to determine the protagonist, antagonist, settings, type of central conflict, rising action, climax, resolution and point of view. We also created a plot map for our current and very popular read aloud book, *Emmy and the Incredible Shrinking Rat*.

We wrapped up the week with our PJ day and enjoyed an afternoon of glow up BINGO with Ms. Blanchette and then had three choices after that to join a room with board games, crafts or a movie. It was a great way to ease into our well deserved Spring Break. Have fun everyone!

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