

## Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Weekly Newsletter

May 1, 2026

Friday, May 1 ~ School is ON! Make Up Day!

Monday-Friday, May 4-8 ~ FastBridge Assessments for K-5

Wednesday-Friday, May 13-15 ~ Wolf Ridge Trip for 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>

Tuesday, May 19 ~ School Board Meeting at 4pm

Monday, May 25 ~ No School - Memorial Day

Thursday, May 28 ~ Last Day for Seedlings & Saplings (Until Summer Session)

Friday, May 29 ~ Graduation Celebration! 10:00am - ½ day of school. Release at 12:00.

Monday & Tuesday, June 1 & 2 ~ School is ON! FUN Make Up Days!

Saturday, June 6 ~ Gala for the Grove!

Monday, June 8 ~ First Day of Campsite Kids, Summer Seedlings & Saplings

### 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*

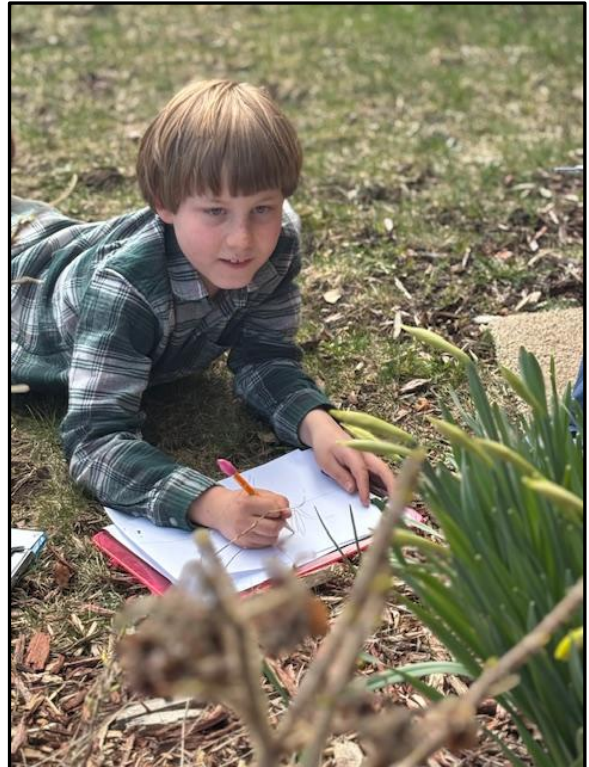
Last week we completed the MCAs and next week we will start on FastBridge assessments for K-5<sup>th</sup> grade. Please see that your child gets plenty of sleep, a good breakfast, and let them know that they should do their best work and show off their big brains next week! We look forward to measuring academic growth for the 25-26 year!

We are definitely heading toward the end of the school year and May is packed! Please be sure to continue to check the events above as there will be additions that staff are adding (like our annual COLOR! Day!) in the days ahead. While extra sleep is a good idea for assessments, it is also a good idea for year end as



there are many special events and activities, and a well-rested child is better able to navigate these special days than a tired one! We thank you in advance!

The 4/5 class spent time outside working on nature sketches. Students chose a special spot to focus on in front of Birch Grove. They will revisit this spot 3 more times over the next 2 weeks so that they can observe the changes that the warmth and sunshine will bring. We are crossing our fingers for warmer and sunnier days in May!



## [Gala for the Grove 2026!](#)

**2026 Theme: Hats & Horses: The Hometown Derby**  
A Kentucky Derby-Inspired Night of Racing, Roses,  
and Giving for Birch Grove

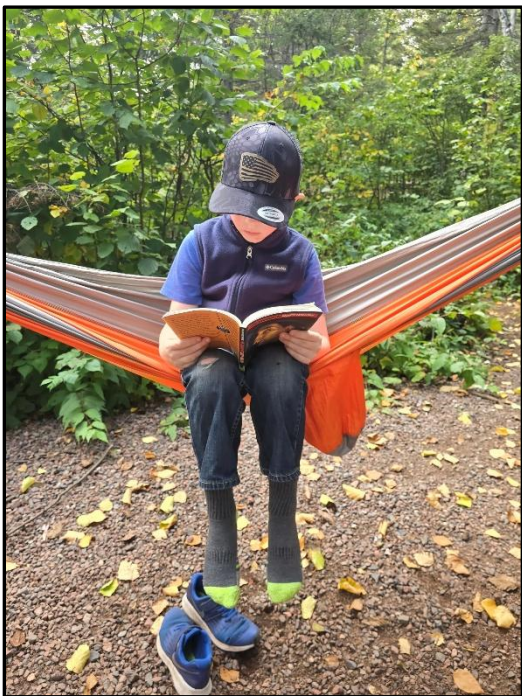
**Saturday, June 6, 2026**

The Gala for the Grove, a spirited fundraiser for Birch Grove Community School, is in the Lakeside Ballroom at Surfside in Tofte. Dress for the theme or not, the choice is yours – it will be a great time either way!

An announcement will be made when tickets are available for this annual fundraiser for Birch Grove!



<https://www.birchgroveschool.com/gala-for-the-grove>



Please check at home for overdue school library books! It is time to return them for the year, as checking out library books for home use ended last week. Students will still be able to read library books at school, but they are no longer taking them home. Please return all library books asap – don't forget to check under the bed! 😊



Also, the school library is under construction as we turn it into an amazing castle with funds from the state that are to be spent *specifically and only on school libraries!* We hope to have a grand opening of the library at the annual Dress To Play Open House on Tuesday, August 11 from 5pm-7pm.



**!!WOW!!** BGCS received \$11,000 from the Don and Wanda Tracy Charity Fund of the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln as recommended by Don and Wanda Tracy and Amelia George. Thank you so very much! BGCS appreciates your support and your belief in what we do!

The May hot lunch menu is up! Following tradition, each 5th grader created their own menu for one day the last month of school! Who knew tacos-in-a-bag and scrambled eggs went together? Mmmm...there will be some happy 5th graders in May!

Menu link: [May-2026-Menu.pdf](#)

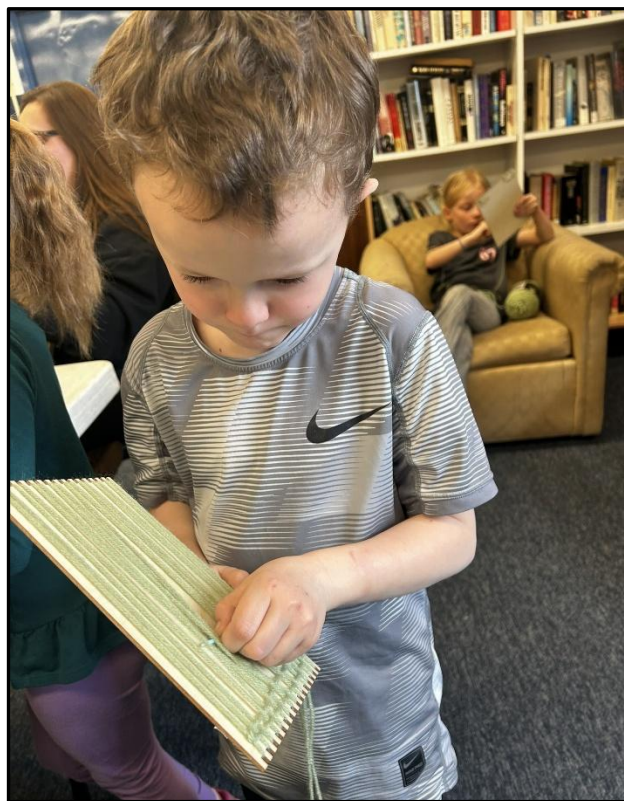


The last Birch Buddies crochet session was a hit! Children stepped outside their comfort zones, learned new skills, and showed incredible perseverance along the way. There were a few tricky moments, but we kept reminding ourselves: we can do hard things! 🧡 By the end, there were many proud smiles and a real sense of accomplishment. All in all, it was a huge success – and we can't wait to keep creating together! <https://www.birchgroveschool.com/birch-buddies>



More pictures can be found on the school Facebook page.

[Facebook](#)



Birch Buddies ~ Spring HIKE! afterschool program decided to cancel the hike to Temperance River and stay closer to home due to the weather. Children had snack, played games in the gym, and then headed out beyond the Campsite for some woods and water stomping. It was wet but WONDERFUL! Lovin' the North Shore! <https://www.birchgroveschool.com/birch-buddies>



\$10,000 was awarded to Birch Grove Community School and Birch Grove Community Services from Empty Bowls! Thank you so much for helping us to provide our in-house hot lunch program, free breakfast bars and free snacks for several programs throughout the building and throughout the calendar year. Your support makes a difference. Many thanks! Empty Bowls : Grand Marais, MN



♥ Saplings Building Resilience Jumping into puddles, digging their hands into mud, and feeling rain on their faces, something important is happening. They're not "just getting dirty". They're learning.

☁️ Rain and mud play builds resilience – children learn to adapt, persist, and find joy in changing conditions. 🧠 It supports brain development – rich sensory input strengthens neural connections. 🏃 It strengthens bodies – balancing, squishing, lifting, slipping, and climbing build coordination and strength. 🌱 It deepens connection to nature – children learn respect, curiosity, and care for the natural world by being in it. 🤗 It nurtures emotional well-being – free outdoor play reduces stress and invites confidence, creativity, and calm. Mud washes off. Wet clothes dry. But the learning stays. Because childhood was never meant to be spotless. It was meant to be lived. 🌻

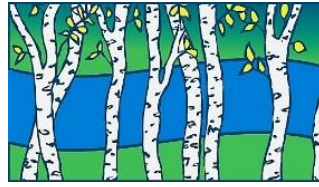
<https://www.birchgroveschool.com/saplings-program>



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](#)



**From Ms. Emily VanDoren**

*Seedling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

This week the Seedlings learned about all things outer space. The sensory bin was filled with various colors and sizes of dried beans to represent the different colors that would be seen on the planets in our solar system. The sensory bin also included pictures of the planets and rocket ships. We talked about the colors of the planets and practiced saying their names. We also worked on counting and number recognition using the rocket ships.

We read various books about the planets, rocket ships, star constellations, and astronauts. We sang songs and recited rhymes that had references to stars and astronauts. We played a group game where we rolled planets (balls) back and forth to each other. This game helped the Seedlings to practice patience and turn taking while working on their motor skills and hand-eye coordination. The Seedlings worked on their color recognition and fine motor skills by coloring pictures of the planets and an astronaut.

Have a good weekend!

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**From Ms. Pam Holm**

*Sapling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

*April Showers Bring May Flowers* was this week's theme in the Sapling's room. It commenced with a fitting rumbling thunderstorm on Monday. We talked about how lightning is a powerful electrical discharge that heats the air to extreme temperatures, creating a shockwave that we hear as thunder. We made rain sounds by patting our legs and clapping hands, and then imitating thunder with a loud "boom" as the storm intensified. Saplings used a simple dot-to-dot template to draw themselves under an umbrella. They added their own interior lines to create dimension. Then finished by filling each section with color, patterns, or both.

On Tuesday, the Saplings honed their writing skills and searched the room for objects starting with the letter 'R'. The Raindrop suncatchers activity proved to be a great hit, enhancing their fine motor skills.

Saplings undertook an engaging and interactive exploration of *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* by Judi Barrett on Wednesday. The discussions encompassed fantastical elements, prediction activities, sequencing exercises, and food-themed writing, culminating in the creation of their own Chewandswallow city.

Thursday Saplings engaged in a conversation about rain, examining the distinct sounds it produces when sprinkling, misty, or pouring. A rain stick demonstration was provided, with each Sapling given the opportunity to use it. Following this, we worked together to craft our own rain sticks.

Friday began with a reading of Eric Carle's *Little Cloud*, a basic picture book that explores the various shapes of a single cloud. This reading was supplemented by a lesson on the three main types of clouds:

Cirrus clouds are the high, thin, wispy clouds that you can see through.

Stratus clouds are the thick, mid-level clouds that coat the sky like a sheet.

Cumulus clouds are the puffy fair weather clouds that we see on sunny days.

In art, Saplings created their own cloud shapes inspired by *Little Cloud*.

Throughout the week math manipulatives of counting raindrops, lightning bolts, and cloud sizing were available for the Saplings. The writing center included an uppercase to lowercase raindrop



matching activity. Moreover, rain theme puzzles were utilized to provide a foundational understanding of fractions.

To celebrate May Day, Saplings made traditional May Day baskets, leaving them anonymously on classroom door handles. Teaching the kindness of giving.

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

Sunshine, flowers, and fresh air have been wonderful for the kids this week. They are feeling spring and gaining energy from the warmer weather! For the rest of the year, we will be spending Fridays outside as long as the weather cooperates. Please ensure your child has enough layers and proper footwear to spend long periods outside.

K/1er were excited to share the story “The Sun and The Wind” with 2/3 and 4/5. “The Sun and the Wind” is a play about showing kindness instead of force. Each student chose a role to play and practiced acting it out. They created costumes and props and learned about how to read a script.

In math, we are focusing on measuring this week! Students have learned about different tools to measure various things and practiced measuring, comparing, and recording! We are moving into the time of year where we are starting to look forward to some 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>-grade math concepts. K/1 is all very excited to continue to learn more!



Checking out library books for the year has ended. Students will still have library time and get to enjoy reading books with 4/5 friends. We will be moving to the campsite for library if the weather cooperates in May!

Have a great weekend and remember to read!

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**From Ms. Sara Knottski (Subbing for Ms. Forster during her maternity leave)**  
*2nd & 3rd Grade Elementary Teacher*

2/3 started two different project-based learning lessons with an educational Lego set and Finch coding robots. Students split into two groups, with half working on coding and the other half on engineering with Legos. Students will work on their projects all this week and then switch to the other project next week. With the Lego set, students created a movable hockey player and goalie. Students conducted an experiment on how far a puck can travel under variable conditions, such as force and friction! Students working with the Finch robots created a route on the floor and coded to make their robots maneuver around the route. They had to measure distance and angle and code appropriately.



In reading, students are finishing their 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade curriculum. May is a month where we take the time to look forward to what we will be learning next year. We will continue to practice our reading comprehension, writing, and literacy skills in the month of May. In math, students are continuing to learn about different units of measurement and practicing converting. Reminders: Checking books out from the library has ended for the year. Students will still participate in library and enjoy a variety of books with classmates, but no more books will be sent home.

We will be spending most of Fridays outside for the rest of the year. Students need to come to school dressed appropriately for spending time outside, including good, closed-toed shoes!

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**From Ms. Stacy Coronis**  
*4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Elementary Teacher*

It was nice to return to our normal schedule after the week of MCA testing! In math this week the 4<sup>th</sup> graders reviewed geometry topics such as identifying triangles by their side lengths and angle measurements. They also learned how to create angles inside of a circle and how to find missing

angles without using a protractor by writing equations. Ooof.... It was challenging but great to see the excitement on the kids' faces when they "got it". The 5th graders are working on simplifying expressions using the order of operations. The problems "leveled up" because they included multiplying and dividing fractions and decimals. Many skills were embedded in these types of problems and the 5th graders handled the challenge well!

In reading we read the classic story, "The Black Stallion" and used it to review identifying story elements of fictional text. We also wrapped up our read aloud book, "Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH". We created story plot maps for both stories and then enjoyed the movie "The Secret of NIMH" and found out that we liked the book much better!

In science we went outside to create nature sketch #1 of a growing or budding plant. We will sketch the same plant over the next two weeks and observe the changes. We are hoping for some sunny and warm weather! Students also reviewed the stages of the water cycle including accumulation/collection, evaporation, condensation, and precipitation. The 4/5 graders used a rubric to create a water cycle poster illustrating the cycle and telling the story of their poster through an interactive role play. Ask them about it, we had a lot of fun!

Next week brings more testing, this time our class will take the reading and math FastBridge tests. You will receive the results from this test along with the end of the year report card. Thank you for sending back the Wolf Ridge permission slips! We are looking forward to our trip!

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