



## The Saplings (School Year) Program

Primarily for Children Primarily Ages 3-5

September - May According to the BGCS School Year Calendar

*Updated 4.28.2026*



[www.birchgroveschool.com/Saplings-Program](http://www.birchgroveschool.com/Saplings-Program)

9 Goodneighbor Hill Road, Tofte, MN 55615

Post Office Box 2383 Tofte, MN 55615

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

218-663-0170

## **Program Location**

The Saplings program is held at Birch Grove Community School located in Tofte, Minnesota. The Saplings have their own classroom as well as their own Saplings playground right outside the classroom exterior door. Additionally, the Saplings have access to the "Saplings Woods", the school gym and the outside pavilion area. There is plenty of room for the Saplings to learn and grow!

## **Nondiscrimination**

The Saplings program is happy to serve all children and will not discriminate based on religion, sex, race, national origin, creed, or color. Everyone, including each staff member, is here to learn and have fun!

## **Staff**

Only qualified, experienced, and caring staff work in our programs! Our staff works hard to ensure that your child has a positive, productive and fun experience. Staff members will have CPR/First Aid certification and in-service training annually with a focus on child growth, development, and behavioral guidance.

Many of our school staff are trained as adult caregivers for the Seedlings program. Besides the primary teacher in the room, we may use our other trained staff for lunch breaks, days off, or emergencies.

Staff are not allowed to smoke in the building during the hours children are in care.

## **Participation Fees**

The Saplings program is funded by participation fees, grants, county/township support and fundraising. Birch Grove Community Service has set the participation fees with varied incomes in mind. Participation fees may vary from year to year. There is no registration fee for these programs. This programming needs to be pre-paid two weeks in advance – there are no exceptions. If your child is absent on a scheduled day for any reason, you will still be billed.

## **Financial Assistance**

Some families may need financial assistance. For families living in Cook and Lake Counties, options for assistance are listed below:

Cook County - Cook County Social Services: Childcare Assistance Program 218-387-3620

Lake County - Lake County Social Services: Childcare Assistance Program 218-834-8400

## **Pathway scholarships**

Pathway Scholarships are available through Minnesota Department of Education. Applications are available on the Saplings website at: <https://www.birchgroveschool.com/Saplings-Program>



The program partners with 3 & 4 Star Parent Aware Programs that have shown a dedication to preparing children for kindergarten. The Saplings Program continues to receive a 4 of 4 STAR rating from Parent Aware.

Additionally, Birch Grove Community Services may have a limited number of scholarships available each year. To apply, please talk with a Community Service Coordinator. Preference for scholarships goes to children that are enrolled at Birch Grove School or a child that will be starting Kindergarten the following year. You will be asked to apply for the Childcare Assistance Program in your county prior to applying for a Birch Grove scholarship.

### **Billing**

The Saplings program is pre-pay only and two weeks in advance. There will be no exceptions.

In addition, parents will be charged the full rate for any day that the child is absent and for any reason, including a pre-planned vacation. Please be aware of this.

Any previous balances must be paid prior to the start of any Community Service program.

If you are having difficulty making payments, please speak to a Community Service Coordinator. Payment plans and other options can be explored.

### **Health Matters**

Please notify Birch Grove Community Services staff at 663-0170 or email [birchgrove@boreal.org](mailto:birchgrove@boreal.org) if your child is ill and will not be attending the program.

Please do not send your child when sick – even if it is a special occasion that your child doesn't want to miss. Your child probably won't enjoy themselves, and may infect other children or staff. Please assure your child that there will be plenty of other special occasions for them to experience another day when they feel better.

• **Children should be kept home if they have any of the following symptoms:**

- Fever over 100 degrees
- Impetigo
- Mouth sores
- Strep throat
- Tuberculosis
- Pink eye (suspected or diagnosed)
- Flu
- Unexplainable rash
- Severe cough
- Rapid or labored breathing
- Severe cold
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Yellowish skin or eyes
- Head lice
- Illness of any sort where child is lethargic and/or listless



*A child that has vomited or had the flu, a fever, or anything similar, should not attend for 24 hours after their last episode.*

Parents must notify staff of any contagious condition. The staff will then determine the conditions by which the child may re-enter the program dependent upon state health policy and the individual circumstances of the case. Failure to report a diagnosed condition to the staff poses a risk to the children and adults in the program.

Every effort is made to reduce the communication of germs. High use areas such as tables and faucets are cleaned daily. While it is inevitable that children will experience some illness, we appreciate your assistance in keeping the spread of illness to a minimum! Staff will perform a visual check of your child each morning upon arrival.

If symptoms begin while a child is at a program, parents will be notified to pick up the child and the child will be able to rest in a quiet part of the room until parents/designated pick up arrive.

### **Medications**

We can only administer medication that is in the original container. A "Permission to Administer Medication" form must be filled out. Please see staff if you need a form.

### **Behavior**

We are committed to promoting learning within an environment of care and concern for one another! We celebrate and appreciate our individual differences and expect the following behavior:

- *Treat yourself, others, and property with respect!*

Positive behavior will be reinforced on a daily basis. Children will be recognized for positive behavior! If a serious behavior issue or repeated issues do arise however, the staff, parents and child will work together to resolve the issue. We want to work with you for the benefit of your child.

### **Items from Home**

We do not encourage bringing toys or unnecessary items from home. This program has everything that your child will need! We do, however, allow a comfort item from home for rest/quiet time. If a child brings a toy to play with, they will be expected to share it with everyone.

### **Termination**

If for some reason your child will be leaving mid-program, please give us as much notice as possible. This allows us to give children time to say good-bye and to talk with any families that may be on the waiting list.

We have qualified staff that are ready to meet any challenges that come up with students. If after every effort has been made, and we feel that we are not able to meet your child's needs, you will be given at least a two-week notice to find other programming that may be more suitable for your child.

### **Referrals**

Please refer these programs to other families. The more this program is used, the more likely it is that the program will continue to serve children and families in the community for years to come.

### **The BrightWheel Payment System**

The BrightWheel payment system allows you to pay your bill on-line with either a debit/credit card, or your bank account with paperless invoices and email receipts. Payments can automatically be withdrawn, or you can choose when to make your transactions. Invoices, totals and receipts can be found on this site, as well as year-end information for your daycare tax-deductions.

### **Program Description**

The Saplings program is designed to socially and academically prepare children for kindergarten, while providing a safe, fun, and play based environment for them. The program serves all children that enroll in both Cook and Lake County. We believe if we work as a team, we can ensure that your child has a quality experience that will benefit your child for years to come! This program runs under a daycare license and has a long-standing status of a 4 of 4 STAR RATING from Parent Aware.



The foundation of the Saplings curriculum is the Minnesota Early Learning Standards. Together with that we weave in other developmentally appropriate activities and practices to create a comprehensive well-rounded curriculum.

### **Program Availability**

The Saplings program is unique to Cook and Lake Counties, and is available to primarily 3-5 year olds. The program has been designed to be flexible and fit the needs and wants of parents, children, and families. The Saplings program is open:

Mondays 8:00 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.

Tuesdays 8:00 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.

Wednesdays 8:00 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.

Thursdays 8:00 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.

Fridays 8:00 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.

**Fees**

Half Day Rate 0-3.5 hours - \$20.00

Full Day Rate 3.5-7:25 hours - \$40.00

**A Typical Day at Saplings!**

Though it might vary slightly, a day in our Saplings program would be structured as follows: Literacy circle, table time, individual instruction

8:00am - Arrival and free play in Learning Center

8:45am - Morning Curriculum - based on weekly theme

9:00am - Art or Science

9:50am - Morning Snack

Bathroom

10:00am - Outside Exploration

11:30am - Lunch

Bathroom

12:00pm - Group Story followed by Rest Time

1:45pm - Rise and Shine

Bathroom

1:45pm - Table Time - literacy or math manipulatives

2:10pm - Afternoon Snack

Bathroom

2:20pm - Group Music and Movement or Outside Play

3:00pm - Pick-up/Load on buses

**Lunch and Snacks**

Every Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday a nutritious hot lunch is offered for the cost of \$3.25 per ticket. Parents/guardians can either purchase a lunch ticket for these days or send a cold lunch. A monthly hot lunch menu is available on the website ([www.birchgroveschool.com](http://www.birchgroveschool.com)).

Milk is also available to complement your child's cold lunch. Milk tickets are available for .50 and should be pre-paid.

On Wednesdays all Saplings need to bring a cold lunch from home.

Sapling children enjoy two snack times each day. In the morning, it is a group snack provided in house, often corresponding to the day's theme. You may occasionally be asked to contribute a box of crackers toward this. In the afternoon, the children have a snack of something left from their lunch or something specifically packed by the parent.

## **Transportation**

Parents or guardians are responsible to arrange transportation to and from the Saplings program. Transportation *may be* available for your child using Birch Grove Community School's bus routes. To see if this is an option for your family, please call Birch Grove Community School at 663-0170 for more information.

Transportation for special trips may take place. Parents will be notified in advance of any field trips and permission slips are sent home for signatures.

## **Drop off/Pick up policy**

Parents/Guardians are responsible for signing their child in and out daily. If someone other than a parent is picking up your child, please let staff know in writing. The non-parent will be asked to show photo identification prior to picking up a child. We have the safety of our children in mind!

Please do not bring your child to the program prior to the program opening time, and we strongly urge you to pick up your child in a timely manner. There will be charged a late fee of \$1 per minute.

## **Rest and Quiet time**

Rest/quiet time will occur daily. Children will each have their own labeled sleeping/resting mat. While children are not required to sleep, we feel that it is important that children have an opportunity to rest. Children are encouraged to bring a small comfort item from home for this time. It could be a blanket, a stuffed toy, or whatever helps your child feel comfortable!

## **Potty Training**

Children who attend Saplings must be potty trained and able to use a child sized toilet with little assistance. Occasional accidents are expected and acceptable. Parents should send wipes and extra clothing for when accidents arise. Exceptions may be made for students who are progressing in skills but not independent and will be decided by Community Education Coordinators and Saplings teacher.

There are many resources online for tips and tricks to have success with the transition from diapers. If you need assistance finding or printing applicable resources, please let a staff member know, and we can help.



## **Forms**

All enrollment forms are required by the state. Please fill them out completely and return them in a timely manner, including Immunization Forms. We must have a copy of your child's immunization record on file. Please be sure that we have an up to date record prior to your child's attendance.

## **Supplies Needed:**

- **3 containers of disinfectant wipes**
- **1 box of tissues**
- **Backpack**
- **Water Bottle**
- **2 Snacks**
- **Lunch (if not having hot lunch Mon, Tue, Thur or Fri)**
- **Blanket**
- **2 changes of clothes**
- **Outdoor footwear- can be kept at school (winter boots, rain boots outdoor shoes)**
- **Indoor shoes**
- **Rain Gear**
- **Outdoor gear- jacket, snow pants, hat, mittens, neck warmer, sunhat or baseball cap and sunglasses**
- **Sunscreen**
- **Bug spray**

## **The Saplings Calendar**

The Saplings program follows the same calendar as Birch Grove Community School. Copies of the calendar are available in the school office and on the school website at [www.birchgroveschool.com](http://www.birchgroveschool.com)

## **Bad Weather Closure**

If Birch Grove Community School is closed due to the weather, the Saplings program will be closed as well. If Birch Grove is closing early, the Saplings program will close early. School closings due to bad weather are posted on Facebook, the school website, and calls are made through Bright Arrow - Auto Calls (home and cell phone numbers listed on your child's enrollment paperwork). This is a recorded message that will reach you at home or work to notify you of any closings/late starts/early releases. Telephone calls will be made to both the home and work place of parents to notify them of the early closing. You may also call the school office at 663-0170 to check on the status of the program if the weather looks questionable.



### **Drills**

We practice drills regularly. Sapling children walk out with the Sapling teacher(s) and meet the rest of the BGCS children on the grass across from the front of the school. The Saplings also practice all other drills with the K-5 students.

### **Contact Information**

The school main line is (218) 663-0170. The extension for the Saplings room is 21. For child related questions or comments, please speak directly to the Sapling teacher or leave a voice message on the classroom phone.

### **Presence of Pets:**

We do have a therapy dog on the premises. The therapy dog is for the kindergarten - fifth classrooms and is brought to classrooms on a leash.

### **Conferences**

Conferences will be held once yearly for enrolled Saplings students. If you have any issues during the year that you would like to address, feel free to set up an appointment with your child's teacher. It is sometimes difficult to talk in depth with the teacher when dropping off or picking up your child. It is for this reason that we encourage you to set up an appointment - this way, you will have concentrated time to discuss your child and any issues that may concern you.

**Early Childhood Screenings**

Childhood screenings are available from the county that the child resides in. We can help to initiate this process if needed.