

Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Weekly Newsletter

September 24, 2026

Monday, September 28 ~ K-5 Painting By the Lake with Mary
Friday, October 2 ~ K-5 Pizza Party w/ Firewood Hearth Oven
Wednesday, October 7 ~ Fire Prevention Visit-Tofte Fire & Rescue
Wednesday, October 14 ~ K-5 Trip to Sugarloaf w/ Naturalists
Thursday & Friday, October 15 & 16 ~ No School – MEA
Tuesday, October 20 ~ School Board Meeting at 4:00
Sunday, October 25 ~ Annual Halloween Carnival 2:00-4:00

Mission Statement:

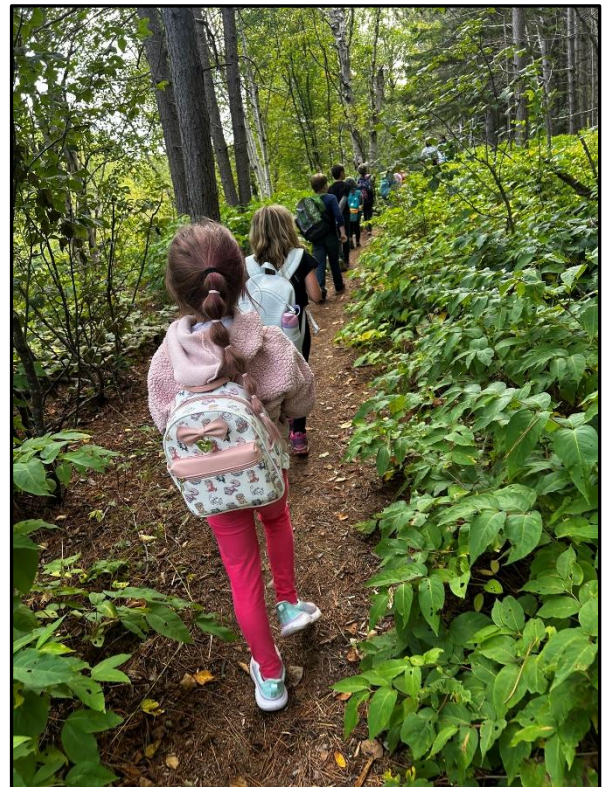
Birch Grove Community School will promote academic excellence utilizing our unique natural setting to prepare students to become socially and environmentally responsible, self-directed, life-long learners.

From Ms. Diane Blanchette:

*School Director, Birch Grove Community School
Lead Coordinator, Birch Grove Community Service*

It has been an amazing start to a school year! Our schedule has been packed with learning opportunities and we have been amazed at how fast each day goes by. Please continue to check the calendar for upcoming events and activities.

Our annual painting in the woods with Mary has been switched up a bit this year and we are planning to paint at Tofte Park right by the big lake on Monday, so we will be spending the entire day outside. Please send your child in layers. Should the weather not cooperate, we plan on doing it on Tuesday. Angie will be packing a cold lunch for all students featuring the ever-popular peanut butter and jelly – sides will be included. If your child does not like PB & J, please pack a cold lunch for this day. As always, the art created on this day will be displayed in rotating shifts at Birch Grove throughout the school year. Paintings are sent



home on the last day of the school year at the end of year celebration. We hope they hang in a special place in your home! 😊

Angie Fernlund, our school cook, took second place at the Johnson's Foods first annual chili cook-off contest! Congratulations! Her winning chili is on the school hot lunch menu in October! Looking forward to it! <https://www.birchgroveschool.com/school-lunches>



Annual Halloween Carnival at Birch Grove!

Sunday, October 25

2:00-4:00

It's coming soon!

And we will need volunteers to make it happen!

Please watch for a sign-up link.



Ms. Knottski's K/1 class has the responsibility of filling all of the bird feeders around the building windows. Last week was the first filling of the year. Bird feeders have also been added to the Campsite, so they have included that in their rotation. Seeing birds outside of our windows is especially enjoyable in the winter months. Thank you K/1!



More pictures can be found on the
school Facebook page.

[Facebook](#)

The warm scent of cinnamon and baked apples filled the Saplings room as they transformed into little bakers. 🍌🍏 Baking apple pie provided the perfect backdrop for exploring math, science, and fine motor skills through hands-on fun. We squeezed a mountain of learning into our baking adventure: 🍏 The 5 Senses Test: Before baking, we explored different types of apples. We tasted tart green, sweet red and crisp yellow slices, using words like juicy, crunchy, and sour. We even graphed our favorites on a big chart!

🍌 Kitchen Math: Measuring out the cinnamon, sugar, and flour gave them a chance to practice counting and scoop-by-scoop volume comparisons. They even had fun measuring with the leftover apple peels!

🍌 Fine Motor Work: Rolling out dough and pressing it into tins gave their little hands and fingers an excellent workout, as did cranking the handle on the apple peeler.



More pictures can be found on the school Facebook page.

[Facebook](#)

Saplings back to school mural project that sparks joy!

Inspired by Pop Artist Keith Haring.

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

The expressive, life-size body tracings combine social-emotional learning with gross-motor play. Because the Saplings are still building fine-motor control, this collaborative project focused on big movements, bold colors and teamwork to create a stunning hallway display. Saplings loved examining their outlines, choosing bright colors, and working together to bring the giant artwork to life.



More pictures can be found on the school Facebook page.

[Facebook](#)



K/1 & 2/3 joined at the Campsite last Friday afternoon with a choice of cooking a cinnamon roll or roasting a marshmallow for a s'more over a bonfire. It was a tasty treat to end a great week!



More pictures can be found on the school Facebook page.

[Facebook](#)



The 4/5 class participated in the annual DNR Field Day held at Birch Grove for Cook County 5th graders - both Sawtooth and Great Expectations participated. It was an amazing day of learning about watersheds, forestry, ecosystems, tagging moose, fisheries and strategies used to fight wildfires! Thank you so much for the amazing day, DNR!



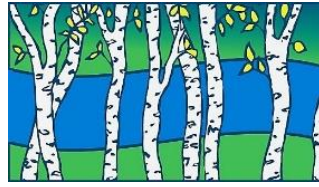


More pictures can be found on the school
Facebook page.
[Facebook](#)





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
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](#)



~~~~~  
**From Ms. Emily VanDoren**

*Seedling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

Leaves are falling and autumn is calling! This week we focused on the fall leaves that are beginning to change color. When heading outside for our playtime, we noticed that the leaves are starting to change from green to yellow, orange, and red. We even found some fallen brown leaves on the ground that made a crunch sound when we walked on them.

Our sensory table was filled with paper grass and foam leaf cutouts. This provided a fun activity for the Seedlings to search through the "leaf piles" to find the different leaf shapes and colors such as red, orange and yellow. We closed out the week with real leaves from maple trees that I brought in to share with the Seedlings so they could experience the real deal.

During our morning circle time we read books that shared information about why the leaves change color, and also read books that show all the fun that can be had during the fall. *Fresh Fall Leaves* by Betsy

Franco is a fun story that shows all of the fun things that can be done with leaves such as jumping in them or throwing them in the air. *One Windy Day* by Tammi Salzano is a fun little story of how the wind can blow things up and down, left and right, or over and under. It is a great book to introduce opposites. We sang songs that worked on their counting as "leaves" fell



from the tree, and also worked on their color recognition as they named the colors that were seen on the tree. We also played a matching game all together and sorted leaves by their color and then by their size.

We had a couple of fun art projects this week as well. The Seedlings created their own fall trees in two different ways. They added leaves to a bare tree by using red, orange, green, and yellow dot markers. The other project required the Seedlings to really work their fine motor skills. They had to tear pieces of construction paper into "leaves" and then added them to a tree. This also worked their pincer grasp as they had to pick up the small pieces.

Have a great weekend!

218-663-0170 ext. 7

[emily.vandorenbgcs@gmail.com](mailto:emily.vandorenbgcs@gmail.com)

~~~~~  
From Ms. Pam Holm

Sapling Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service

This week, Saplings thoroughly enjoyed the apple-themed activities. On Wednesday the warm scent of cinnamon and baked apples filled the Saplings room as they transformed into little bakers to mix and bake their very own personal apple pies. They used their fine motor skills to blend and roll out dough and followed sequential steps involving coring, measuring, and mixing the filling. Each sapling peeled apples, with an apple peeler. They then utilized the peels as rulers to measure both individuals and objects around the room.

Our Dramatic Play was transformed into an apple orchard, inspiring dialogue on customer service and apple-based goods like pies, cider and butter. Many conversations were had regarding who liked apples, the parts of an apple, colors of apples, if apples float, who eats apples, etc.

Our Monday morning was filled with creativity and coordination! The Saplings rolled up their sleeves for a "rip art" project, tearing vibrant bits of paper to create arbitrary apple masterpieces atop hand-created plaid backgrounds.

During Tuesday's class, Saplings delved into the history of apples in America with a reading of *Johnny Appleseed* by Steven Kellogg. They then participated in a tasting of tart green, sweet red and



crisp yellow slices. Using words like juicy, crunchy, and sour they graphed their favorites on a big chart! This was followed by a discussion on the distinct taste differences and shared characteristics of the apples. The Saplings used real apple slices as stamps to create a beautiful collective bushel of apples!

Following a reading of *From Seed To Apple Tree* by Steven Anderson on Thursday, Saplings worked together to create the life cycle of an apple, covering the science of apple components, such as stem, skin, flesh, and pips, and incorporating positional words and directional skills.

Throughout the week, Saplings took part in various apple-themed songs and fingerplays. One popular activity was the fingerplay *10 Red Apples Growing on a Tree*, where they predicted the location of the worm behind one of the apples. A range of math and manipulative activities were offered, including categorizing apples by size and color, counting apples and seeds, and the sensory apple pie-making bin. Literacy instruction centered on the letter A, supported by interactive magic apple alphabet cards that revealed hidden letters by shining a light behind the apple cards. Saplings also crafted an apple featuring their name spelled out in the seeds, a fun and creative way for them to learn to spell their names.



Wishing you an appletastic weekend!

218-663-0170 ext. 6

pam.holmbgcs@gmail.com

~~~~~  
**From Ms. Sara Knottski**

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

I can't believe it's only the third week of school! The children learned the rules quickly and are comfortable already! We created our own classroom rules and posted them in our classroom. The students also came up with consequences for themselves if they break their rules. They were very reasonable consequences. 😊 We finished the week creating classroom jobs.

In Kindergarten, the students learned the letters A and G this week. We read a book about building a school and made connections to our school. We practiced identifying letters in our name and writing our names! In math, we learned the numbers 0-5 and counting. We will continue to practice writing and counting numbers 0-5.

The first-grade students are reviewing letters and learning to read and spell words such as what, he, for, and too. We also read stories about pals. We learned about main idea and supporting details in a book. In math, we are learning



about all the different ways to make 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10. We are also learning addition patterns of adding 0 and 1.

Often, we will have multiple assignments a day that the students are expected to work on in class. Some of those assignments will go home incomplete because I do not require finished work; I look for the students trying their best and working during their work time. If you find unfinished work sent home, you can work on it with your child! The worksheet will give a good idea of what your child is learning in school and what they may need to practice.

Have a wonderful weekend!

218-663-0170 ext. 2

[sara.knottskibgcs@gmail.com](mailto:sara.knottskibgcs@gmail.com)

~~~~~  
From Ms. Samantha Forster

2nd & 3rd Grade Elementary Teacher

This week has been so fun and such beautiful fall weather. We were able to pick out some vegetables from the community garden giveaway (big thanks to them!) We also participated in some fall art in the campsite by making some fall leaves to hang in our classroom to bring some of the outdoors inside. In science, we focused on animal adaptations and how the frogfish is able to use its “structures” to influence its “behavior.” This was paired with practicing following multi-step directions, talking to our turn and talk partner, and how to complete a field journal.



In reading, we started our reading groups. Throughout every group, we focused on syllable types and syllable division which is essential when starting to read multi-syllable words. Students continued to practice in their independent work and on Lexia. We also read a book about a school and the story elements within that story. I introduce the “Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How” model and combine that with story elements so students can get a better understanding of what characters, setting, problem, solution, and theme are. This is a great strategy to ask your students at home and is a very important part of reading. It helps students learn how to monitor their comprehension and begin to ask questions about the stories they are reading. We are reading “Charlie and the Chocolate Factory” as a whole class. This has been such a fun story to start the year with and we will be pairing it with the movie when completed.

In math, I have separated the class into their grade levels. Second graders are working on manipulating numbers under 20. Next week, they will start with numbers up to 200. Third graders are working on building their understanding of strategies for multiplication. We are up to fact families up to 5. We will continue to work through this in the next few weeks. I will be having IXL logins (same as last year) for students coming soon so that students can work at home if they choose. If you would like this sooner, please reach out and I can send it home.

Next week, we are having a painting by the lake day on Monday and a pizza party on Friday with the outdoor oven. These are great elements of our program at Birch Grove and I am so excited to do them in one week! Please make sure students are sent with clothing that will get them through extended periods of time outside. I want everyone to feel like they can take on the day!

218-663-0170 ext. 2

samantha.forsterbgcs@gmail.com

~~~~~  
**From Ms. Stacy Coronis**

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

The 4/5 students had a week full of many special activities! Our classroom loved spending the entire day outside learning about the environment, ecology, fisheries, watersheds along with many other topics. Many thanks to the DNR for organizing this wonderful event! Some highlights included tracking moose collars, shooting fire hoses and learning all about the Lake Superior watershed.

The class also earned their 100 compliments and now have hamster Steve in our classroom! Each student had a chance to pet and hold Steve and we all agree he is adorable when he zips around the classroom in his plastic ball. We have been learning a lot about hamsters in our read aloud chapter book The World According to Humphrey. We use the text in this book to study literary devices, plot elements and character traits.

Another special event this past week was the start of our Pirate Island social studies project. We are reviewing how to use a key, scale, compass rose and landforms on a map. Students will use these embedded building blocks of learning to create their own Pirate Island in early October.



Students have now completed their final fall reading assessments this past week and we began our reading groups. Students are placed in a reading group based on their differentiated needs to help maximize their growth as a reader. These groupings are flexible and may change throughout the

school year. The level of rigor will differ from group to group, but all students will use the curriculum Journeys, participate in book clubs, practice fluency and comprehension, study word morphology and demonstrate growth on Lexia and Power Up. Students are expected to read for 30 minutes at home each night and ARE allowed to bring their book from school home to read each night as long as they remember to bring it back the next day. I love to see all of the enthusiastic readers that we have in class!

218-663-0170 ext. 4

[stacy.coronisbgcs@gmail.com](mailto:stacy.coronisbgcs@gmail.com)