



Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Newsletter

January 7, 2022

Dates to Remember:

Monday, January 17 School Board Meeting at 5:30 at BGCS
Tuesday, January 18 MAPS K-5 Reading Test
Wednesday, January 19 MAPS K-5 Math Test
Thursday, January 20 MAPS Make Up Testing
Friday, January 21 No School PD/Workshop for Staff

Mission Statement:

Birch Grove Community School will promote academic excellence utilizing our unique natural setting allowing students to reach their potential, preparing them to become socially and environmentally responsible, self-directed, lifelong learners.

From Ms. Diane Blanchette:

Director, Birch Grove Community School

Lead Coordinator, Birch Grove Community Service

We hope that everyone has had a great break! It was great to see all of our students and staff come back on Monday - everyone was so happy to be here and we had a couple of excellent days this week. Unfortunately, as some of you already know, we also had our first case of on-site COVID exposure since the beginning of the pandemic (let's hope it's the last). If your child was exposed, you received a phone call from me with a follow up email.

Typically contact tracing is done by Cook County Public Health staff, but Grace Grinager let me know that their staff is overwhelmed right now and that I would need to use my "support staff" to make all of the calls. Ha! I said that I would be making the calls and she gave me the script with dates to inform all exposed. I also sent a follow up letter from Cook County Public Health reiterating what I told you by phone. Should you have any questions, please call the number on the bottom of the letter, or you can call me and if I don't know the answer, I will find out.

For those students in quarantine:

We will not be doing distance learning as we have in the past. Teachers will not be on-line for student/class meetings or for on-line direct instruction. Teachers will be assigning work to be done at home independently, or with help from those at home – mostly on-line platforms and/or with hard books/packets. Teachers may also have a time slot where you can call and get help and/or teachers may check in with your student to see if they need any help and how they are doing. Please watch for an email from your child’s teacher. Work given and completed for each day will result in being marked “present” for school. Please be patient with teachers as they are teaching in the classroom during the day. We look forward to January 17 and getting all of our students back to school after the quarantine period.

If your quarantined child needs a device for on-line platforms, please let us know asap! We are hoping that families will pick up devices from the bus stops. We will put devices on the bus, and you can pick them up at your child’s normal bus stop at the normal time, if you let us know you need one. We can also have devices here at BG for you to pick up if that works better. In some cases, we may be able to deliver to your home. Please be sure that your child treats the tablet/Chromebook/iPad carefully and keep the charging cord with the device. Please return devices and cords in good order. Thank you!

I know that this quarantine situation is frustrating for many. We hear you! We have been very fortunate to avoid exposure up to this point. Please remember to:

Keep your child home if they are ill: if they have a cough, fever, sore throat, any indication of illness. We want to keep our K-5 learning on-site and we want to keep the Saplings Program open! If you are not sure if you should keep your child home, err on the side of caution and keep your child home. Also, if you are concerned enough to have your child tested for COVID, they should not be in school until you have received negative results back. Thank you!

MAPS testing that was scheduled to take place next week, will be rescheduled to Jan 18, 19, & 20. The school calendar will be corrected to reflect this. We will also be making adding another day to the end of the calendar to make up for the December snow day. A new school calendar reflecting these changes will be emailed to you soon. You can also find the school calendar on the school website at www.birchgroveschool.com

One of the joys of living up North -
Every Friday is “Flannel Friday” at Birch Grove! Join us!



If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us:
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Birch Grove Community School and Community Service #4145

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**From Ms. Alayna Carrier and Ms. Mari Maldonado**  
*Sapling Teachers, Birch Grove Community Service*

This week our theme was Snowflakes. The Saplings learned about how snowflakes form, and different types of snowflakes. With black paper we spread out a spoonful of snow, and used magnifying glasses to study and see if we could identify any of them. Another experiment we did was make a snowflake out of pipe cleaners and let it rest in salt water for a few days, the salt crystalizes and it ends up looking like a snowflake! Our math center had different memory games, mazes and puzzles that were winter themed. Our Art center had various color sheets of snowflakes for the Saplings to color in. Our science and sensory center had fake snow with buckets and shovels for them to feel and explore with.

Our focus this week was reviewing vowels. We had some fun worksheets where the Saplings would match the uppercase letter to the lowercase letter and another one of matching the letter to the picture it goes with. We worked on tracing the vowels, and coloring in a vowel packet. The Saplings have loved playing in all of this snow, enjoy your weekend!

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From Ms. Sara Knottski
K & 1 Grade Elementary Teacher

I can tell everyone got a lot of rest over break! We were all ready to jump right back into learning! I heard lots of stories about what everyone did over winter break and it sounded like a blast!

The kindergarteners learned about the letter E and practiced bumping lines to make letters the correct size. In math, they learned about how to make teen numbers with a ten and ones, and partners of 6 and 7. The first graders reviewed sight words and practiced reading this week. We read a few different nonfiction books and talked about what is an essential element in a nonfiction text. In math, we learned about adding a two-digit number with a one-digit number.

It has been very cold this week! Just a reminder, we do go outside even if it is frigid! Please ensure that students are sent to school with plenty of layers, snow pants, a hat, waterproof gloves, and a neck scarf. We want to make sure they are warm!

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**From Ms. Sara Silence**

*2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Elementary Teacher*

Pine Martens this week have been focusing on music. We have read several texts about instruments, rhyming, and rhythm. We took a virtual musical tour with the Music Instrument Museum in Phoenix, Arizona. We also did some science with music as we created a classic game "telephone" and learned how sound travels. For our greetings this week we focused on hearing syllables and patterns along with copying patterns in activities and songs. We even took a look in history to learn about the "talking drum" that originated in West Africa.

In math both groups continue to work on adding two numbers and making a new group. Our friend Puzzled Penguin needed some help this week as he made some common errors while he was adding. The students identified the problems and helped solve the problems correctly. Also in our new groups math theme, this week students picked a method that works for them to add. This may be different from the "carry the one" version that most of us learned in school. Several students use the Show All Totals Method and others are still making a proof drawing (ten sticks and ones) to "see" the numbers come together. All methods work and are totally acceptable to use for math practice at home! Feel free to discuss what ways work for you and which ones don't. It will be a great conversation starter.

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From Ms. Heidi Helgesen

4th & 5th Grade Elementary Teacher

Fourth and fifth graders have been working so hard this week! We started our afternoon math sessions, working as math detectives to crack the language code of geometry. Students are learning to converse like mathematicians, using various geometry terms in conversation to describe their work. Students also learned how to use a protractor, identify different types of angles, and name triangles by side and by angle!

During regular math sessions, fourth graders kept working hard on their multi-step word problems. Students practiced writing equations to describe what is happening in a story, showing their work clearly, and writing a full sentence answer to a story problem. Students rose to this incredible challenge and did amazing work! Meanwhile in fifth grade, students started a new unit in fractions. Fifth graders learned about equivalent fractions and how to compare fractions by finding common denominators. Fifth graders did an amazing job recalling what they learned last school year and applying it to our new unit!

In reading, both grade levels read stories about Lewis and Clark's great expedition. Fourth grade learned specifically about Sacagawea and her many contributions and struggles while accompanying the Corps of Discovery. Fifth graders read excerpts from Lewis and Clark's journals and learned about the expedition as a whole. Our weekly stories connected to our new writing assignment. Students are working on writing informative essays about the life of York, the African American slave who accompanied Lewis and Clark on their expedition. This week, students completed background reading about York's life. They read three sources, working to underline the main idea in each paragraph and take notes about what they read.

It has been a great week getting back into the swing of things since winter break! As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to me at any time.

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