



Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Newsletter

May 27, 2021

Dates to Remember:

Friday, May 28 Last Day of School On Site - Graduation Ceremony at 10:30 and Early Release at 12:00

Monday, June 7 First day of Campsite Kids and Summer Saplings

Monday, June 14 School Board Meeting at 5:30 via Zoom

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

It is hard to believe that this is the last week of school for the 20-21 school year, and it has been a year like no other! There are so many thank you's to be given, but here are some from the top:

- Thank you again to ALL West End families that have been dropping off and picking up your child(ren) all year long to make room on the bus for new students attending from further away. You are all amazing and are examples of how a community can work together. What great examples for your/our kids!
- Thank you to all families for packing a cold lunch everyday this year!
- Thank you to families for your understanding in all decision that were made here this year, even if you didn't agree. Everyone had tough choices of one kind or another to make this past year and a half.
- Thank you everyone for the work done in distance learning. It was a learning experience for all!
- Thank you to all of the students for working so hard this year!

- Thank you to all of the staff: Sara Knottski, Sara Silence, Heidi Milner, Michelle Blanck, Sheryl Martinson, Jessica Klemmer, Rista Sharma, Connie Wees, Kaitlyn Mumm (currently out but returning in September), Luciana Ranelli (part of the year), Deb Allen (part of the year), and Mari Maldonado. Your performance in a challenging year was nothing short of spectacular! We are lucky to have such committed and wonderful staff – MANY thanks! You deserve the best summer of all time! 😊
- Thank you to everyone for your diligence concerning COVID. Not one positive case made it into the building – THANK YOU!
- Thank you to the Saplings families that picked up and dropped off your children this year as K-5 had priority on limited seating to school.
- Thank you to all of our families for supporting Birch Grove Community School and the Saplings program in a year that will go down in history!

Tomorrow, Friday, May 28 Last Day of School ~ Small Ceremony at 10:30 and Early Release at 12:00

We will have a small graduation ceremony tomorrow starting at 10:30. The ceremony will be outside on the grounds by the playground. We will also have the paint by number projects set up in the tennis court for families to view. Please pack a cold lunch for your child this day that does not need to be heated – children will eat lunch before the end of the day, and leave at 12:00. Families of students may attend – we are asking that guests be limited to immediate family (no general public will be invited). Masks are not mandatory as long as everyone is social distancing. Please, if you are able, bring a camp/lawn chair for your use. We will have chairs available for family, but if you can bring a chair, it would be greatly appreciated. In the event of rain, the ceremony will be held inside with students only, so pay close attention to the weather, please. Should it look like rain, we will notify families as soon as possible that we will be moving inside with a ceremony for students only.

Congratulations to Sheryl Martinson who retires this year from BGCS. Sheryl has worked for many years as a paraprofessional, and as the Saplings teacher. She is known widely for her knowledge, skills, creativity, and dedication to her students. She has had a great influence on many children in both Cook and Lake County. She will be GREATLY missed. Please send well wishes to: BGCS PO 2383 Tofte, MN 55615.

Next year in the Saplings program Mari Maldonado and Alayna Carrier will be co-teachers! Both will work together each day, M-F, as Sapling teachers. Mari Maldonado has been shadowing Ms. Martinson since mid-March. Mari has a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Teaching Elementary Kindergarten-3rd grade in Puerto Rico and is very excited to be a part of the program. Alayna Carrier worked in the Saplings program with Sheryl last year and has worked in our Summer Saplings program as well. Alayna is currently working in a daycare in South Dakota, but will be back in August to catch the last week of Summer Saplings and then will start full time with Mari in September. We look forward to seeing what this great team will do!

I am pleased to say that all of our current K-5 staff will be returning next year – Woot! Birch Grove couldn't be happier to see all of the staff returning in September to continue to serve our students well – hopefully, next year will be less of a challenge. 😊

Report cards and year end information will be sent out in the next few weeks. Please look for these. Emails will also be sent to each K-5 family with pictures of your child(ren) from the school year.

Gala for the Grove ~ Unfortunately, we will not be able to have our traditional Gala for the Grove fundraising event in person this year. However, we be having an on-line auction! The on-line auction is June 5th-12th. You can find the auction at:

<https://www.charityauctionstoday.com/auctions/Gala-for-the-Grove-2021-23180>

Follow us on Facebook for event updates and highlights of the auction items. Thank you in advance for your support of Birch Grove Community School! I have also attached a letter about the Gala 2021.

Summer programming – Campsite Kids (K-5) and Summer Saplings (ages 3-5) will start on Monday, June 7. For any questions prior to that, email birchgrove@boreal.org. For billing questions, email jessica.klemmerbgcs@gmail.com.

We hope that everyone has a great summer, and ask that you continue to make reading a part of your child’s daily life. Setting aside time to read to your child, or to have your child read independently, is very important. Set some time aside for some quiet reading yourself and show your child that you value reading time! Reading over the summer can help to decrease the “summer slide” and help your child to stay on track for the following school year. If you need to utilize the school library books, please give me a call and we can make that happen!

Everyone here at Birch Grove hopes that you will all have a beautiful summer – you deserve it!

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us:

birchgrove@boreal.org ~ Birch Grove Community School Email

bgcommunityservice@boreal.org ~ Community Service Email

218-663-0170 ~ School Phone

218-663-0170 ext. 26 Community Service Phone

Website: www.birchgroveschool.com



Birch Grove Community School and Community Service #4145

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**From Ms. Sheryl Martinson**

*Saplings Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

Whew! It was a whirlwind week filled with many special activities in the Sapling classroom. The children loved seeing the forest service firetruck. They were excited about the arrival of a new playhouse and “mud kitchen.” We all enjoyed pizza with the big kids. The children practiced, practiced, practiced, and performed our “Sapling Celebration.” Thank you to all the parents who were able to come and see the children sing and recite. I am so proud of each of my students. They have all made amazing progress and I know have great things in store for them next year and beyond.

It is with some sadness that I write my last official Sapling newsletter submission. While I am looking forward to retirement and increased freedom to come and go, I will surely miss the children. They have the ability to make me forget whatever else is going on in my world as I simply enter into their fun and exploration. These young ones are especially fun because everything is new and they are quick to show enthusiasm. It's lovely to be their "favorite teacher" because I'm the only teacher they've ever had! 😊

So, one more time I would like to express my appreciation for all the support and encouragement you have provided our Sapling program. It has been a joy and a privilege to be a part of it! I look forward to seeing the children around town and hopefully there will be opportunities to visit. Have a wonderful summer!

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From Ms. Sara Knottski

K & 1 Grade Elementary Teacher

Happy last week of school! Thank you to all the parents for all the support throughout the school year. Together we ensured that each child learned and grew! This year has been fabulous and full of great memories. It has been a pleasure to teach each kid in the K/1 classroom. I am excited to see the Kindergarteners return to the K/1 classroom next year as 1st graders! I have seen great growth throughout this year and I am excited to continue to see them grow next year! I am also excited to see the 1st graders continue to grow next year. They are off to new adventures in 2nd grade and in a new classroom. I know they will succeed in their new classroom!

Have a great summer!

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**From Ms. Sara Silence**

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

Our last week consisted of deep cleaning everything in the classroom and putting things back. All our zoo posters were able to be finished and we should have them on display for graduation on Friday. Zoo projects completed four of our social studies standards on economics, the last of our writing standards, and of course we practiced about 12 other things! The hardest part of the project was working as a team and sharing ideas. Some groups had a very hard time sharing ideas and building something together instead of working individually and voting for the "best" one. With some help though, all groups were able to complete a finished project.

At math we practiced all our yearly math as we played a variety of games and finished the last couple of lessons in our math book. We made sure our assessments were done for report cards but even that included time on our favorite math game prodigy. Students have covered and mastered a

lot of skills this year. As a class we were able to fill in those holes that were created last year with time distance learning for those that did not have daily math class.

We are very excited for the end of year and most students have made plans to see each other over summer. About half of us will see each other at Campsite Kids so we are eagerly planning some of the things we will do!

Students will have access to Epic, Raz-Kids, and Prodigy all summer. Keep reading and practicing those math skills to keep the forward momentum growing!

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From Ms. Heidi Milner

4th & 5th Grade Elementary Teacher

What an end to the school year! 4/5th grade filled the final week with so much learning! We kicked off the week with a set of lessons on seeds and plants from the Finland Food Chain. Dan and Kaylee stopped by the school and led some outdoor activities for the group including a seed dissection, taste testing of microgreens, planting of radishes and green beans, and playing a plant-themed game of tag! We learned the difference between monocots and dicots, the parts of a seed, and talked about how to make plants grow. In the afternoon, we made pinch pot clay bowls with leaf imprints during art!

On Tuesday, students participated in an online lesson from Wolf Ridge, learning about energy consumption and conservation. During the lesson, we made solar pizza ovens out of tin foil, plastic wrap, and a cardboard box. Thankfully we found a few hours of sun to cook our pizzas outside, with very yummy results!

On Wednesday, we started the day with a video conference presentation from the International Owl Center in Houston, MN. We learned the different ways to identify owls, based on sight and sound. We even got to meet a cute little Eastern Screech Owl named R.J.! Next, we dissected an owl pellet. We used charts and diagrams to figure out exactly what the owl ate and then made a food chain with our discoveries. In the afternoon, we headed to the lake! We had lunch on the shore and then walked to a rocky beach. We met up with Steve and Caroline from the Tofte Forest Service and learned about geological time. We learned that most of the rocks on the beach are made of basalt and are about 1.1 billion years old. We also learned that some of the oldest rocks in the world are found in Minnesota! We connected our learning to some sweet treats, comparing sedimentary rocks to rice krispie bars, metamorphic rocks to brownies, and igneous rocks to chocolate sauce!

On Thursday, we finished up our Lego STEM Challenge of colonizing Mars. We designed and developed a plan to create a sustainable environment on Mars with all the things we would need to survive: food, water, shelter, oxygen, and energy. We also talked about wilderness survival and practiced making shelters and cooking over a fire!

It's been a full week in 4/5th grade. We have had so much fun extending our learning and celebrating the school year. Thank you 4/5th grade students for all of your hard work and persistence this school year!

It has definitely been a memorable school year. Thank you so much to parents and loved ones for all of your help and support as we found our way to continue learning in times of COVID. Thank you for entrusting us with your child's education, we are so glad you chose Birch Grove. As always, if there is anything you need, please feel free to reach out. If not, I hope you have a wonderful summer and I'll see you next year!

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