



# Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Newsletter

**November 12, 2020**

## Dates to Remember:

Monday-Friday, November 9-13 Conferences

Monday, November 16 School Board Meeting at 5:30

Thursday, November 19 Picture Re-takes

Thursday-Friday, November 26 & 27 No School – Thanksgiving Break

Wednesday, December 23 – January 1 No School – Winter Break

## 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*

Families and Staff:

As COVID case rates continue to rise in both Lake and Cook Counties, I would like to ask again that safety precautions be a priority in your home – **we want to stay in school!**

- Wash hands regularly
- Wear a mask
- Stay 6 feet from others
- Carefully consider weekend, holiday, and non-school day plans

The active case count in Cook and Lake County is just one piece of data that will be looked at concerning any decision to go to distance learning (I have learned that we can use other data to make this decision, not JUST and ONLY the case rate). Should the active cases in Cook/Lake County rise to 50+, we will also consider what is happening right here at BGCS. If our school continues to be COVID

free, that will be weighed in the decision as well. What you do, or don't do, at home concerning COVID can affect our entire school. THANK YOU EVERYONE! So far, we have had no known positive cases in staff, students, or Saplings! Stay vigilant! **We want to stay in school!**

If you believe that your child has been exposed to COVID-19, **please keep your child at home!** Then contact Lake/Cook County Public Health or your child's primary health care facility and give them exposure information. They will let you know what you should do. Please play it safe! If you need to quarantine, so be it, if they say you can send your child to school the next day, spectacular!

What should you do with your child if you find that they are home unexpectedly? Stockpile some books! Have them read or read to them. When in doubt, READ!

Parent/Family- Teacher Conferences: One of our annual school goals is 100% participation for conferences. I don't recall a year where we didn't have 100% participation! 😊 With the exception of students in 4/5<sup>th</sup> grade (we have had to push these conferences into the near future), conferences are mostly completed. Thank you for sharing with us and please contact your child's teacher should you have any issues or concerns.

We have snow! Please be sure to send your child to school with outside winter gear. We go outside in all but the most extreme weather. We do have extras here at school, just let us know what you need.



The Tofte General Store gave a \$10 produce voucher for every child, Sapling-5th grade, and one to each staff member - just in time for Thanksgiving grocery shopping. Thank you, Tofte General Store, - how thoughtful! Vouchers went out in Take Home Folders this week. Look for them!

For end of day pick up – please pick up your child by 3:15. We have had a multiple late pick ups lately, please be on time and pick your child(ren) up before 3:15. We still have work to do inside! Thank you!

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

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Look for:

Birch Grove Community School and Community Service #4145

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**From Ms. Sheryl Martinson**

*Saplings Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service*

We knew it was coming, but nevertheless, we are a little bummed to feel the approach of winter temperatures. You know the drill, please be sure to send snow pants, mittens, hats, and boots – all that your child needs to be comfortable outside. And again, if you need help with winter apparel, please let me know. I have some resources that are happy to assist! It is very helpful if you label your child’s mittens and snow pants. They all kind of look the same and it is easy to get them mixed up. We spent some time each day this week getting into the routine of dealing with winter clothing. Putting stuff on, taking it off, and hanging it up multiple times, easily adds a half hour onto our day. So, the effort it takes to learn routines and be as efficient as possible is time well invested.

Last week we covered the theme of “Healthy Bodies.” We will continue the body theme for two more weeks, learning about our bodies – inside and out. This week we discussed the face and extremities. We also explored our skeletons. We have a “Sample Sapling” traced, cut out, and hanging on the wall. We call him “Sam.” We will be adding some parts and referring to him often. Along with the study of bodies the children are working to learn how to draw a person. “Mat Man” helps us with that.

The focus this week has been on the letter B, b and circles. The children are also enjoying a new dramatic play area. The former “pizzeria” has been transformed into an “auto shop.” So, if you need any car repair, let me know. I have 15 Saplings who are practicing up and are ready to assist you! 😊

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**From Ms. Sara Knottski**

*K & 1 Grade Elementary Teacher*

It has been a busy week! Thank you to all the parents for meeting during conferences. It was great getting to share what I see in the classroom and to hear what you see at home. I get a lot of good insight into every student by talking to you!

In language arts, we are focusing on reading strategies. We always look at the words and try to sound out words we do not know. We use pictures for clues and to understand a story better. Students should be practicing reading every day at home! In math, first graders are learning about subtraction strategies. Kindergarteners are learning a unit about numbers up to 10, shapes, and 5-groups.

Winter is approaching! Please make sure all outdoor gear is waterproof and your student has a hat, mittens, snow pants, and a proper winter coat every day!

Have a great weekend!

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**From Ms. Sara Silence**  
*2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Elementary Teacher*

This week was parent teacher conferences. It was wonderful to see everyone's faces at our video conference. We have started with our classroom and individual goals for math, reading, and writing. Parents unanimously asked how they could help students meet their goals. I will be sending home some games and riddle ideas next week, but overall the best way to increase skills is just by increasing practice. The more students read and are read to (even if they can read) the more they will grow. Likewise, the more they practice using critical thinking and number skills, the more at ease they become with math.

Our week was focused on finishing up some projects we have been working on for several weeks. The excitement was real in our classroom as students began to see all of the parts they had been working on come together. Of course they were also excited to be using the art materials for various projects as well. We looked at using art as a way to share information when we read books about cave drawings. We also discovered that artists can be architects, or costume designers, not just people who paint! Our projects we finished this week include our true story of ourself, a fictional story with illustrations, collaging our pencil boxes, and finally creating a timeline of the history of Veteran's Day. Now you see what I mean, we were busy wrapping things up!

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**From Ms. Heidi Milner**  
*4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Elementary Teacher*

Ms. Milner is back (long distance) in 4/5th grade! Thank you for all the support from parents, students, and staff as I continue my recovery. It feels great to be working with students again and I am so impressed by the work they are accomplishing at school. 4/5th grade has a truly remarkable group of students.

This week, we continued on in our fourth grade exploration of the meaning behind multi digit multiplication. Students didn't miss a beat, practicing multiplication in various ways to show understanding as to how we get our long multiplication answers. Students are breezing ahead of schedule and practicing short-hand, or regrouping multiplication with ease! Keep up the great work 4th graders!

5th graders have finished another unit in math, fully understanding how to multiply decimals. We finished our unit with real-life focus problems, solving multi-step decimal multiplication problems with ease. Students used their knowledge of charts to help them find information on the lengths of insects and then used multiplication to compare different bugs which were listed in the chart. Great work 5th grade, now on to dividing decimals!

Our reading this week looked at inferences and drawing conclusions for both 4th and 5th grade. In 4th grade, we read the humorous story "Dear Mr. Winston" about a girl who brings a snake into a library and accidentally scares the librarian. Students are doing a good job finding details and evidence in stories. For Writing Wednesday, students wrote a new letter as the main character writing about what happens next in the story, using our knowledge of the character and events to direct our writing. Students wrote clever and hilarious letters, just as the author did, pretending to be the main character in a new situation with the missing snake.

In 5th grade, we read the story "Storm Warriors," about the character Nathan finding courage to help people caught in a hurricane. We did a great job practicing finding main ideas and supporting details from the story. We also extended our knowledge of the character, Nathan, from the story in our writing assignment for the week. We developed a new situation on the ocean for Nathan to show his courage and skills as a doctor. We found inspiration from the "I Survived" novels we independently know and have read to help shape our story. Students did an excellent job creating a full story in under an hour!

Great work this week, 4/5th grade!

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