

Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Newsletter

November 19, 2020

Dates to Remember:

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

Monday, November 30 On-line Scholastic Book Fair Starts

Monday, December 21 School Board Meeting at 5:30

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

In the Governor's announcement yesterday, he asked (among other things) that schools continue to follow **Safe Learning Plans** - *"a localized, data-driven approach that helps prioritize in-person learning for students when it is safe to do so and adapt learning models based on the prevalence of COVID in each community. The pause on social gatherings with people outside of your household does not include educational and care services for children and youth, including child care, educational support services for distance and hybrid learners, and other educational services"*.

Birch Grove Community School chose to start the school year with a hybrid plan even though the active COVID case rate was 0 at the time. Because we chose this model to begin with, we do not now have to switch to another model at this point. The Cook County active COVID case numbers indicate that we should be looking to change to a hybrid model for elementary – we are already implementing a hybrid plan. Birch Grove Community is going to stay on course.

Having said that, we do have some concerns about our student/Saplings holiday travel/holiday visitor's plan. Traveling or having visitors outside of the immediate family has the potential of

putting our school/Saplings program at risk if you do not quarantine afterwards and send your child to school/Saplings. Some families have contacted us to let us know they are planning on traveling over the holidays, but included in their plan is a 14-day quarantine upon return. THANK YOU! Thank you so much for being considerate of our students, staff, day care program, and elementary school as a whole. **We want to stay in school!**

- Elementary students learn best in person.
- All of our students, no matter what school they went to last year, lost months of precious on-site learning time. The academic loss is measurable.
- Should BGCS have to transition to an all distance model, more academic loss will occur no matter how great teachers are at distance learning.
- Negative financial impact will affect many households if/when BGCS transitions to an all distance model.
- We want to continue to safely serve our students on-site Monday -Thursday, and practice distance learning on Fridays

As you may, or may not know (☺), many children talk about home life at school, especially when they are excited about something. It is concerning to us when we hear a child talk about where they are going or who is coming to visit them on weekends, or the holidays, when there is not a quarantine period established. PLEASE consider that **we want to stay in school** when making plans.

We have many staff that have changed their traditional plans of gathering with extended family over the holidays. Instead, they are staying at home with those in their household so that they can be available to continue to teach and care for your children. THANK YOU, staff! You are all amazing! **We want to stay in school!**

As of today, we have had no known positive COVID cases in staff, students, or Saplings. Should we get a positive case on site, that will be the main indicator that it is time to transition to all distance learning. There may not be much notice should we move to all distance: **ALL families should be ready to go to distance learning - please have a plan in place!** If/when we move to an all distance learning model, there will be 2-3 days of Governor-given planning days before we implement the model. There will be no school and no Tier 1 care on these days. Have a plan. You will be notified of the move to distance learning by email, and by the voice messaging system.

Should we move to all distance learning, Tier 1 care will continue for all scheduled school days right here at Birch Grove. The buses run as normal. If we use our planning days, there will be no Tier 1 care on these days.

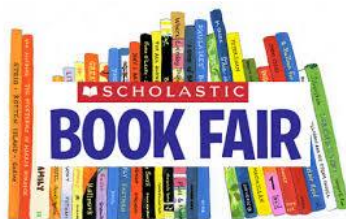
I would like to ask again that safety precautions be a priority in your home – **we want to stay in school!**

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

If you believe that you or 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!

The Saplings program: even though K-5 may change to distance learning, the Saplings program may still be open. However, you should still have a plan in place in the event that the Saplings program closes. Parents will be notified by email of any program changes. Please also be vigilant, as we want to keep the Saplings Program open!

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!**



Every year we have the Holiday Scholastic Book Fair here at Birch Grove in December. We open the fair to the public on the December Community Lunch day and before/after the winter musical evening performance. The Fair also comes with decorations and a Christmas tree! Alas, none of this is able to happen this year, so we will be switching to an on-line fair. The fair starts on November 30 and runs until Sunday, December 13. All orders are delivered to your home, and if you order \$25 or more, shipping is free. Orders placed on the last day of the fair will be delivered before Christmas. Books make fantastic gifts for children! BGCS receives Scholastic Dollars for 25% of the fair total - we use these Scholastic Dollars to put books on our library shelves and we also give gift books to Saplings-5th graders right before the winter break. You can find the book fair link on our Facebook page, or use the link below. Thank you!

<https://www.scholastic.com/bf/bgcs>

We are so happy that Ms. Milner has returned and that her back is on the mend. We missed her! Please be sure to tell her, and all of the staff for that matter, that you appreciate all that they do. Three cheers to our staff members!! Have a great and safe weekend!

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



From Ms. Sheryl Martinson

Saplings Teacher, Birch Grove Community Service

Another week has flown by in the Sapling classroom. Every day is busy with new ideas and activities. Some of those ideas are initiated by me, many by the children. They often ask questions or share experiences that lead our discussions. Our theme this week was a continuation of "My Body." We added a heart, lungs, brain and digestive system to our "Sam the Sapling." We did some exercising to get the heart and lungs moving. The digestive system was of particular interest to the children. Anything a little gross or relating the bathroom is always extra fun for preschoolers. And of course, our brain is just amazing at any age. Next week we will move on to a Thanksgiving theme.

We worked on recognizing and drawing triangles. We also continued our focus on drawing a person. I encourage the children to be creative in their drawing. When coloring a picture, I ask, "What could you add to the picture to make it more interesting?" When they draw or paint a picture, I ask them to tell me about the picture without guessing what I think it looks like. If they tell me they drew a dinosaur, then that is exactly what it looks like! It is very fun to see their skill and confidence increase as they stretch to try new ideas.

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From Ms. Sara Knottski

K & 1 Grade Elementary Teacher

Another great week in K/1! These past few weeks we have been talking about the weather and we've become 'Weather Watchers.' This a good topic to practice our science skills because everyone already has some background knowledge on the weather!

In Kindergarten, we focused on the letter i this week and the word to. We are starting to read words and practice reading sight words in books! In math, we are working on addition and subtraction stories!

First grade learned about a biography and non-fiction text features. We also focused on s blends and are starting to get fluent with reading words with blends. In math, we are finishing up a unit about subtraction and addition!

Remember to keep reading with your student at home! Practice makes perfect!

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From Ms. Sara Silence

2nd & 3rd Grade Elementary Teacher

Second and third graders spent the week with some traditional folk tales from around the world. We compared stories and tried to figure out the hidden lesson or moral of the story. There were a few other places we had to use our inferring or detective skills including in math. Third grade math used their detective skills to continue to work on story problems and which operation to use. Second grade math had to be very precise as we worked with place value and adding numbers together.

For science this week we focused on inventions and engineering. We were once again using our detective skills as we evaluated whether our idea would work and if it didn't, what went wrong. There were some hands-on experiments with water on Wednesday as groups tried to figure out how to invent an irrigation system that would water a plant for two weeks. No group was successful in the sense of finding a solution, but all groups worked together to share ideas (the hardest part!), and did not get discouraged when ideas and tests failed. They were very persistent!

I will be submitting one last book order this Saturday. The next order will be during our book fair in December. More information to come about our virtual book fair.

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**From Ms. Heidi Milner**

*4th & 5th Grade Elementary Teacher*

4/5th grade has had another busy week. We began a new topic in science, studying matter using the website PBS LearningMedia. We have been learning new vocabulary terms and working to understand what matter is made of. We also have used PBS LearningMedia to study music! We are learning music theory online, studying rhythm and learning about different rhythm patterns. We then took our conceptual knowledge of rhythm and wrote our own rhythm compositions using a game on PBS LearningMedia. We had fun sharing our work with each other and naming our composition.

In 4th grade, we read the story, "José Born to Dance" and identified the author's purpose in writing the story. Meanwhile, 5th graders read an informational text called "Cougars" and identified the main idea and supporting details in the story.

Our math work in 4th grade has had us working to multiply multi digit numbers and check our work with estimated answers. In 5th grade, we have been practicing double digit division and working to critically think through our work to make sure our answers make sense.

An email was sent out early this week for parent teacher conferences sign up. If you have not set up a meeting time, please respond to the email. If you have questions, please let me know!

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