

Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Newsletter

October 8, 2020

Dates to Remember:

Wednesday, October 14 School Picture Day!

Thursday, October 15 No School MEA

Friday, October 16 No School MEA

Monday, October 19 Annual School Board Meeting at 5:30 via Zoom with
Regular Meeting To Follow

Friday, November 6 No School

Monday-Friday, November 9-13 Conferences

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

This has been a year like no other. We are lucky that our school resides in Cook County, Minnesota where the COVID cases are extremely low in comparison to the rest of the state and country. We are lucky that we have incredibly dedicated staff and school board members that have worked hard to get our doors open as safely as we can, and that we can have our Saplings and K-5 students on site M-TH, even with ALL of the challenges that we have faced. We are here! We are teaching! We are caring for children ages 3-5 and K-5th!

We have many new families and previous families that have enrolled at BGCS mainly for the following reasons:

- They have been at BGCS before and it is their school of choice!

- Parents/ Adults in the household want their child(ren) to be in school, on-site
- Some other schools are not offering as many on-site days as BGCS
- Parents/ Adult in the household need to work and are not able to stay home with their child(ren)
- Parents/ Adults/Children in the household did not have a positive experience with distance learning last year
- Parents/ Adults in the household realize that young children learn better on-site than from a distance, and want to make up for lost academic ground due to distance learning last year
- Parents/ Adults want their children to socialize with their peers in-person
- Parents/ Adults want some normalcy back in their lives that includes their child(ren) going to school

All good reasons! *Also, all the more reason to not jeopardize what we have* – for your family, for the 58 families that are sending their children to Birch Grove, and for the staff that are showing up and working extra hard for you and yours every day.

This leads me to the topic of family vacations during this pandemic. You can decide to take your family on vacation this school year, sure. We won't say no to that, as it is your choice. However, as a school, we are within our rights to ask you to quarantine your child(ren) from school for 14 days after you return home from a vacation, and engage in distance learning during this period. It is for the safety of everyone else here at BGCS, and it is so that the rest of the 58 families and staff are not forced into distance learning because a family chose not to follow this safety procedure.

All vacation requests that happen during the school calendar days have to come across my desk. Teachers can't approve the request, nor can paraprofessionals. Please give plenty of time to work with me on the request well before you plan to go. There are a few details that need to be addressed. Thank you to the families that have given notice weeks in advance so that we can talk through it, make a plan, and prepare. Your understanding and sense of responsibility to the rest of BGCS is appreciated.

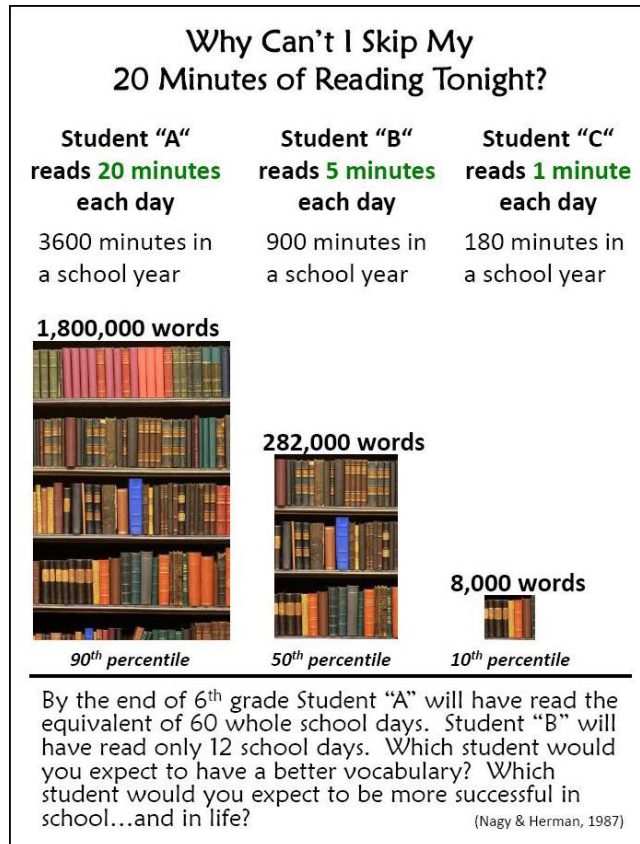
Trips on weekends or non-school days/or visitors to your home from out of state/out of Cook County/Lake County: BGCS can't control what families do, or where they go on weekends, or non-school days, or the MEA break that is coming up. We can ask you to act safely. Is it the best time to visit a city right now with a high case rate, or have visitors from an area with a high case rate? Have the visitors been COVID responsible? Are you visiting a COVID responsible household? There are a lot of questions that you might ask yourself. Are you willing to send your child to school not knowing if they have been exposed?

Please, please, use care so that we can continue to have our kids on-site. There are quite a few families that have enrolled their children because our doors are OPEN. We don't want to close them. (Although it may be that we will have to close at some time this year should active cases come our way or should the cases in Cook County climb.) Please stay vigilant. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation. *Help us to stay in school.* 😊

School picture day is Wednesday, October 14. You can fill out the forms sent home, with a check, and return in Take Home Folders, or you can order on-line at:

<http://my.lifetouch.com/mylifetouch/pictureDayId/EVT2997HJ>

There is no school next week on Thursday and Friday. Enjoy the time off and please be safe – again, we want to be in school! Also, please have your children read (or be read to) every day for at least 20 minutes.



Thank you to the Tofte Fire and Rescue today for the cool drive by! Pictures have also been posted on the school Facebook page. Check it out! 😊



Please continue to social distance at home so that we can keep coming to school!
Have a great weekend!

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*

I almost passed over the “leaf theme” this year. There are other things I am anxious to move on to, I considered skipping leaves. I’m so glad I didn’t! The leaves have been extra vibrant and beautiful this year. It would have been a shame not to explore the topic. And explore we did! The week began with a discussion of the four seasons. The following days we zeroed in on fall and the main event of fall – the changing and falling leaves. The children observed a variety of shapes, sizes and colors among leaves. We walked in the woods and each child chose one special leaf to bring back to the classroom. They then determined various aspects that set that leaf apart, size, color, etc. There were many opportunities to practice sorting and matching with real leaves, pictures of leaves and manipulatives. As I sit here on Wednesday evening, I am contemplating how I can deliver enough leaves to our “backyard” for the children to jump in. Hmmmm, we’ll see if I can make that happen.

For the focus we reviewed L, F and T. Orange was the color of the week. The children enjoyed a couple activities of mixing red and yellow to make orange – paint, frosting and play dough.

It was another busy and productive week in the Sapling classroom. Enjoy the coming weekend. Go out and see what remains of the leaves!

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From Ms. Sara Knottski

K & 1 Grade Elementary Teacher

I can't believe how quickly the leaves popped over the past week! This week, we used some of the fallen leaves to practice our science skills of classifying, observing, and recording.

In Kindergarten, we are learning the letter D this week. We also read a story about pets. We used inferencing skills to predict what will happen in the story. In math, we are practicing writing numbers 0-20 and we learned about circles, rectangles, and squares.

The first-grade students are continuing to practice reading and reviewing letter sounds. We read a story call *Curious George Goes to School*. We talked about the sequence of events in a story. We summarized the events that happened to Curious George in a flow chart. In math, we learned all of our addition partners up to 10!

We spent some time in the woods this week exploring and learning about our 5 senses. We used our science skills to observe and discover different things outside! We also spent some of our playtimes in the woods! Fall is in the air!

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**From Ms. Sara Silence**

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

This week the Pine Martens did some new tasks on the computers. Now that we are more familiar with using a laptop, we were able to learn how to get to and login to other sites that we will be using throughout the year. We spent time in class in our Google Classroom so that students can become more independent, completing and turning in assignments.

One of the major sites/platforms that we use for online education is Think Central. This is the online version of our math curriculum. We were able to complete a days lesson, take a quiz, and start a long beginning of the year assessment. Students were able to adjust to using the program rather quickly.

Our reading focus has been on volunteering and helping out the community. We will take the knowledge and understanding of those topics into next week as we start to contemplate what we can do to help the communities we are a part of.

On Wednesday parents were sent home a "Getting to know your child" survey. This will give parents a time to share what strengths their child has, what their children enjoy, and just help me get to know families a little better. Send it back when you are done, and as always, reach out to me if there is something you need or want to let me know.

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From Ms. Heidi Milner

4th & 5th Grade Elementary Teacher

We have had a busy week in 4/5th grade. We spent our science lessons learning about investigating solutions to our prompt of designing a hearing enhancing device. We learned about historic devices, such as ear trumpets and listening posts, and how they used low tech to funnel sounds and improve hearing. We also learned about animal adaptations that allow for creatures, such as the fox and aye-aye to hear creatures underneath them while hunting. Next week, we will use our research to develop our own hearing enhancing devices.

In math, 4th grade has continued to study multiplication. We have delved into multiplying by 10's and using area models to help multiply. In 5th grade we have been practicing multiplying decimals, learning tricks to help us compute our answers as well as rationale to help us determine if our answers make sense.

Our readings this week have each shared about the power of kids! In 4th grade we read a play about a young girl who organizes a successful fundraiser to save the local bookmobile. In 5th grade, we read about the Snazzy Steppers, a jump rope team from Long Island that has worked hard to become some of the best jump ropers in the world. We also continued our class book clubs for *Bridge to Terabithia* and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

A reminder to students and parents to use the Friday checklist to help organize the completion of student work. Please remember, if work is not completed on Friday it will be returned the next week to be done as homework. If you have questions or concerns about assignments, please send a note in with the work so I can help to problem solve. Thank you!

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