



Birch Grove Community School & Community Service Newsletter

September 30, 2021

Dates to Remember:

Thursday, October 7 Tofte Fire Department Visit for Fire Prevention Week

Friday, October 8 No School - Teacher Workshop

Monday, October 18 ~ Annual School Board Meeting and Elections

at 5:30 Followed by Regular Meeting at BGCS

Thursday, October 21 MEA - No School

Friday, October 22 MEA - No School

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 had quite a few illnesses this week (non-covid), mostly with staff. Thank you to all of the healthy staff that helped to fill in where needed this week. Monday's hot lunch was canceled Sunday afternoon, with families being notified through email and on Facebook. I apologize if not everyone was aware. We have never had to cancel hot lunch before, and I would have subbed for the day, but I was also sick. Please know that an instance like this is rare, but could happen. Sending a backup lunch would help on these rare occasions, or when a cold lunch is forgotten at home or on the bus. We do have food items on hand in the event that your child does not have a backup lunch. We would never let a child go without eating lunch, even if that means running to Holiday to pick something up.

While there has been some illness on site, we have not yet (knock on wood) had any cases of COVID. We will continue with our practices here at school, including temp taking and hand sanitizing upon entry, windows open all day, frequent and proper hand washing, daily cleaning, spacing between students as much as possible, and spending time outdoors. Thank you all for continuing the handwashing at home, keeping your child(ren) home when sick, and all of the other measures that you are practicing. We want to stay in school! 😊

School board elections are on Monday, October 18. We have 3 seats that are up: Skip Lamb, Sarena Nelson, and newly appointed Mary VanDoren. While no one is running against them, we are still required to go through the motions of an election. 1 ballot will be sent home to all K-5 families, employees, and current school board members. Families will find their ballot in an envelope sent home in Take Home Folders today. Please fill out your ballot and return in the folder, or you can drop off here at Birch Grove.

Family vacations: I have had multiple inquiries about family vacations. Should your family choose to go on vacation during school days, please let us know in advance so that we can mark your child absent-excused. Classroom teachers are not required to prepare homework for your child for the days you will be gone. Most likely, teachers may suggest on-line platforms that your child can access to refine skills and concepts previously taught. Each teacher will decide what action they will take concerning students gone due to vacation. Also please keep in mind that absences can add up fast, especially if your child gets ill during the school year. Thank you!

When emailing about your child's absence or about the end of day transportation, please email more than 1 staff member. You should email your child's teacher and me both, as that increases the odds of someone getting the email before the school day is over. Teacher emails are in their sections below in every newsletter, and can also be found on the school website at www.birchgroveschool.com. The main school email comes directly to me at birchgrove@boreal.org.

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. Alayna Carrier and Ms. Mari Maldonado**

*Sapling Teachers, Birch Grove Community Service*

This week our theme was “manners”. We have heard many “please” and “thank you’s” coming from the Saplings, and it has been great to hear! We practiced waiting our turn with an outdoor obstacle course where the children watched each of their friends complete it until it was their turn. We played a sharing game, where we sat in a circle and we shared our toy with a friend beside us. We also practiced sharing by doing an art project where each Sapling was given one color, if they wanted a different color, they had to ask that friend nicely for it, wait their turn, and say please and thank you. We also talked about how we can have manners with germs. We made a “use a tissue” craft as well, and demonstrated how to use a tissue to wipe our noses and why it’s polite to clean ourselves so that we don’t spread germs to other people. Our last germ activity was “Germ Charades”. We acted out how to sneeze properly, how to wash hands correctly, covering our mouths for a cough or sneeze and a few others.

Our focus this week was the letter “Ii” and the color yellow. Recognition, sound, and tracing were all introduced. There were some fun work pages we did together like finding the letter “Ii” and coloring it yellow. The Saplings also love using the dotter markers, so we had a letter “Ii” printed out where they follow and mark the dots to create the letter! For the color Yellow- we have been painting with yellow, and coloring a whole lot of bananas in the art center! In our science center, we have yellow corn for them to feel and play with. In the math center, we have them sort bananas from lemons and play a game where they count the number of bananas, and then circle the correct number to match. If I didn’t know all the words to *Yellow Submarine* before... I sure do now! :)

It has been a great week; we are so proud of what the Saplings have shown us as a class already. We have a great crew equipped with listening ears, quiet voices, and eyes to watch the teachers. Have a great weekend!

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From Ms. Sara Knottski

K & 1 Grade Elementary Teacher

This week we finished creating classroom rules together, got classroom jobs, and brainstormed ideas of what we should do if we are not following the rules. It was a busy week of collaborating and working on social studies skills.

Kindergarten focused on the letter G and numbers up to 10. We are really getting good at learning new letters and numbers. We are really focusing and responding well. We also read some books and focused on the main idea of a book.

The first graders continue to practice numbers and letters. We are working on blending letters together to read words and review sight words. We read a few stories and focused on understanding a character's actions.

Please send students with emergency clothes, a backup mask, and a backup lunch to keep in their locker.

As always feel free to contact me by phone, email, or in-person if you have any questions!

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**From Ms. Sara Silence**

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

I feel like we have really hit our stride this week in the Pine Martens. We have been able to move through our math and language arts group rotations with minimal direction and have gotten right to work when needed. Our focus on skills continues to be review of the previous years content and becoming familiar with one another. We continue to use "Math Talk" to find out and discuss how students and adults approach a problem differently. We will continue this throughout the year so that students learn more than one way to solve problems (flexible thinking) and so they create a toolbox of skills to use for math skills. Although, that flexible/creative thinking is a skill that comes in handy as an adult!

In language arts we have continued to build our writing stamina and are becoming more comfortable with free writing. The first hurdle as they move to this class is that they will need to sound out words, instead of asking for help. This moves kids past only using words they can spell in writing as well as taking away the fear of spelling things wrong. Sounding out and spelling rules is what we work on all year! We have read several books about families and music this week and we work through our unit on community. They may come home asking about their family both current and past!

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From Ms. Heidi Helgesen

4th & 5th Grade Elementary Teacher

What a whirlwind of a week! 4/5th grade is going strong, continuing to grow our brains in new ways! Our stories in reading were about preserving nature. We read a reader's theater about a group of kids who worked together to speak up for a rare species of turtle in their area, spreading the word to adults in their community to help protect the endangered animal. We also learned about John Muir, the father of our National Parks. In our persuasive essay, we read how he loved to walk to explore nature and learn about the world around him. We talked about elements of persuasion and analyzed the text to figure out that the author wanted us to spend time outdoors and learn more about nature, just like John Muir.

Our reading lessons tied nicely with our social studies work this week. We continued talking about being an activist, standing up for what we believe in. Students worked on self-portraits, using mirrors to draw themselves as an activist. Art work showed students helping animals, feeding people

who are hungry, and taking care of the planet. Students did a great job with their artwork and identifying how they want to help the world.

In science, we started a new lesson with the main challenge of designing a structure that would help to mitigate erosion and provide a safe path for people to walk up a steep hill with a washed out path. We learned about criteria and constraints, and using them to help us come up with the best solutions to problems. We also refreshed our memory, reviewing what erosion is and what causes erosion. Next, we created a model to help us understand the erosion happening on the hill and better plan a solution to the problem. Students were amazing engineers and worked together to help solve the challenge problem of the week.

In math, students in fourth grade worked on adding and subtracting greater numbers, learned how the operations can go together to check our work. Students did a great job remembering their work from last year and continuing to build their understanding. In fifth grade, we learned about rounding decimal numbers (which is almost identical to rounding whole numbers) and we practiced our addition and subtraction with decimal numbers. Students did a great job and worked hard all week!

Parents, please remember to send a water bottle each day and to have a backup lunch ready to go in their locker. This can be as simple as a can of spaghetti-o's and a fruit cup. It helps to have the backup lunch ready to go, just in case a lunch is forgotten, misplaced, or plans change.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, or just need to get in contact with me, I am available either by phone or email. I work to check my email several times a day, so that is the quickest way to get ahold of me. Otherwise, I do check my phone messages at the end of each school day to be sure I didn't miss a call during the day. I will do my best to respond to notes within 24 hours!

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