

# Saplings Program



## Parent/Guardian Handbook

Birch Grove Community School  
"Where Roots Grow Deep and Branches Reach High!"  
Post Office Box 2242  
Tofte, MN 55615  
(218) 663-0170  
Saplings extension #23  
[birchgrove@boreal.org](mailto:birchgrove@boreal.org)

**Welcome to the "Saplings" program...**  
**"Where roots grow deep and branches reach high"!**

**Program Description:**

Our Saplings program is designed to socially and academically prepare children for Kindergarten, while providing a safe, fun, and play-based environment for them. The program serves BGCS children but also has open enrollment. We believe if we work as a team, we can ensure that your child has a quality experience that will benefit him/her for years to come!

The foundation of the Saplings curriculum is the Minnesota Early Learning Standards. Together with that we weave in other developmentally appropriate activities and practices to create a comprehensive well-rounded curriculum.

**Program Location**

The Saplings program is housed in the Birch Grove Community Center located in Tofte. The Saplings classroom is left of the entry and down the hall on the right. The room is clearly marked.

The Saplings program is part of our Community Education Department and is licensed as Group Family Daycare. We are allowed 10 preschool age children in the classroom with one teacher and no more than 14 with two teachers. Children in the Saplings program are 3 to 5 years old.

**Nondiscrimination**

Birch Grove Community School is happy to serve all students and will not discriminate based on religion, sex, race, national origin, creed, or color. Everyone, including each teacher, is here to learn and have fun!

**Program Availability**

Our Saplings program is unique to Cook and Lake Counties. The program has been designed to be flexible and fit the needs and wants of parents, children, and families. We have worked hard to ensure that your child will have a quality program that is available five days a week with hours that will accommodate your busy schedule! The Saplings program is open:

Mondays 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Tuesdays 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Wednesdays 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Thursdays 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Fridays 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

## **A Typical Day at Saplings!**

Though it might vary slightly, a day in our Saplings program would be structured as follows:

<b>7:00 - 8:45</b>	<b>Arrival and free play</b>
8:45 - 9:15	Welcome and morning circle
9:15 - 10:00	Centers - art, hands-on math, active play, literacy
10:00 - 10:20	Bathroom break, snack
10:20 - 10:50	Morning recess
10:50 - 11:15	Literacy circle, table time
11:15 - 11:30	Clean up, bathroom break
<b>11:30 - 12:00</b>	<b>Lunch</b>
12:00 - 12:15	Quiet books and story time
12:15 - 12:30	Afternoon circle
12:30 - 1:00	Afternoon recess
1:00 - 1:20	Math and numbers table time
1:20 - 1:30	Bathroom break
1:30 - 2:00	Rest time
2:00 - 2:15	Afternoon snack
2:15 - 2:45	Theme related project
2:45 - 3:15	Free play
<b>3:15 - 5:00</b>	<b>After school programming</b>

## **Summer Schedule**

Saplings programming continues through the summer with a slightly different schedule. We have a more adventurous and hands on approach to each unit, with a focus on science and love of the outdoors. The program continues to run Monday through Friday, 7-5.

## **The Saplings staff**

Our staff works closely with parents to ensure that each child's attendance at Saplings is a positive growth experience. We are committed to giving children our very best. We continually strive to have more than the necessary training required by the state, since we know that continuing our own education is essential to helping others grow into a lifetime love of learning. Staff members will have CPR/First Aid certification and at least 16 hours of in-service training annually with a focus on child growth and development and behavioral guidance.

### **Participation Fees**

Operation of the Saplings program is funded by **participation fees, grants and fundraising alone!** We have set the participation fee with varied incomes in mind. Participation fees may vary from year to year. There is no registration fee for the Saplings program. **The current charge is \$3.25 per hour.** Because there is no outside funding for this program it is expedient that parents/guardians keep their accounts current. If a family becomes more than two weeks behind in payment, their child may be suspended from the program. If there is difficulty paying the bill, payment plans and other options can be explored. It is up to the family to seek out help through the school director, and sources that may you may be referred to.

### **Billing**

Parents/Guardians will receive an invoice approximately every two weeks for program use. Payment is expected upon receipt. If you are having difficulty keeping your account up to date, please speak to the school director.

If you know of a child that could benefit from this program, please let the parents know about this worthwhile opportunity. If this program is fully utilized, it will be around serving children for years to come!

### **Attendance**

If your child will be absent on a scheduled day, please call and notify staff. We do not charge for days that your child is not in attendance, but as a courtesy to the teacher and for planning purposes, we appreciate a call letting us know your child will be absent. Thanks!

### **Enrolled students and Occasional students**

We realize that the needs and development of children ages three to five can vary greatly. For this reason we have made the program flexible and open to parental scheduling. You may enroll your child for half days, full days, two days a week, or perhaps all day every day, the choice is yours. As space allows, with prior notice you can also vary the days your child attends to fit your schedule.

We have two options for children to participate in the Saplings program – enrolled and occasional users.

*Enrolled students*-- The first option is to enroll your child in the program on a regular, even if not full-time basis. This option ensures that there is room for your child to attend. We encourage you to register your child early, as space may be limited!

*Occasional students* – The second option for attendance is as an occasional student. With this option, you may bring your child on any day that we are open. Please know however, that the program may be full and we may not be able to accommodate your child that day. It is a good idea to call 663-0170 ext. 23 prior

to arriving at the Birch Grove Community Center to ensure there is room for your child.

### **Financial Assistance**

Some families may need financial assistance. For families living in Cook and Lake Counties, options for assistance are listed below:

#### Cook County

Applications are available in the office at Birch Grove Community School.  
Cook County Social Services: Childcare Assistance Program 218-387-3620  
166 Community Education/ECFE: 387-2271 Ext. 446

#### Lake County

Lake County Social Services: Childcare Assistance Program 218-834-8400

The Saplings program has a limited amount of partial scholarships available each year. To apply, please talk with the school director. Preference for scholarships goes to children that will be starting kindergarten the following year. You may be asked to apply for the Childcare Assistance Program in your county prior to applying for a scholarship from the Saplings program.

### **Entrance to the Building**

Upon registration parents will be given a code to enter the building. If you are dropping off or picking up your child and the front door is locked, you will need to enter your 5 digit code followed by the # sign. In the event that your code does not work, please use the phone in the front entry to call the school director or staff at 663-0170. For the safety of our students, children and staff, please do not share this code with others. Please keep the code card in a secure place. Your help is appreciated!

### **Lunch and Snacks**

Every Tuesday and Friday a nutritious hot lunch is offered for the cost of \$3.00 per ticket. Parents/guardians can either purchase a lunch ticket for these days or send a bag lunch. A monthly hot lunch menu will be sent home and is available on the website.

Milk is also available to complement your child's cold lunch. Milk tickets are available for .50 and should be pre-paid.

Saplings eat in the gym with Birch Grove Community School students. They will however, have their own table. This gives the Birch Grove students a chance to stop by the Saplings table and say "hi!", and allows an opportunity for the Saplings to feel like "big kids"!

The second Tuesday of each month Birch Grove offers a Community Lunch that the Saplings attend. Parents, family, and friends are encouraged to attend this event. Students love it when parents, family, and friends come to see them on their turf! Tickets for adults are \$5.00 at the door.

On Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday all students need to bring a lunch and drink from home or they may purchase milk for 50 cents.

Sapling children enjoy two snack times each day. In the morning, it is a group snack, often corresponding to the day's theme. You may occasionally be asked to contribute a box of crackers toward this. In the afternoon, the children have a snack of something left from their lunch or something specifically packed by the parent.

### **Transportation**

Parents or guardians are responsible to arrange transportation to and from the Saplings program. Transportation *may be* available for your child using Birch Grove Community School's bus routes. To see if this is an option for your family, please call Birch Grove Community School at 663-0170 for more information.

Transportation for special trips may be arranged on the Arrowhead bus, the BGCS school bus with the staff, or in vans with staff. The vans are equipped with certified Child Passenger Seats. Parents will be notified in advance of any field trips and permission slips are sent home for signatures.

### **Drop off/Pick up policy**

Parents/Guardians are responsible for signing their child in and out daily. If someone other than a parent is picking up your child, please let staff know in writing. The non-parent will be asked to show photo identification prior to picking up a child. We have the safety of our students in mind!

We strongly urge you to drop off and pick up your child in a timely manner. Children remaining at the program after 5:00 may be charged an additional late fee of \$1.00 per minute.

### **Rest and Quiet time**

Rest and quiet time occurs daily. Each child has their own labeled sleeping mat. While children are not required to sleep, we feel that it is important that children have an opportunity to rest. Children are allowed to bring a comfort item from home for this time. A special blanket or a stuffed toy can make a child feel secure and close to home during rest time.

### **Potty Training**

Children who attend Saplings must be potty trained (or wearing pull-ups, but are able to use the toilet). Occasional accidents are expected and acceptable. Parents should send wipes and extra pull-ups to school.

## **Forms**

All enrollment forms are required by the state. Please fill them out completely and return in a timely manner.

## **Medications**

We can only administer medication that is in the original container. A "Permission to Administer Medication" form must be filled out.

## **Supplies Needed:**

- ❖ Sufficient warm clothing for the season, as we go outside in all but the worst weather.
- ❖ Please make sure your child has a pair of inside shoes to keep in the classroom all winter. We use inside shoes to reduce the spread of snow and water on the carpet in the winter. Please send shoes that your child can take off and put on with minimal assistance.
- ❖ Please dress your child in comfortable clothes they can work in without worry of soiling. Please do not dress your child in really good clothing. The teacher makes every effort to use washable materials and smocks, however in the process of working/creating your child is probably going to get some materials on his/ her clothing.
- ❖ School bus riders must wear appropriate outdoor clothing on the bus.
- ❖ Sometimes projects get messy, sometimes accidents happen, so each child needs a seasonally appropriate, full change of clothes to be left at school.
- ❖ A lunch with a healthy drink and healthy snacks. All students will need a bag lunch on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. On Tuesdays and Fridays, they need either a cold lunch or \$3.00 for a hot lunch ticket.
- ❖ A container of disinfectant wipes

## **The Saplings Calendar**

The Saplings program follows the same calendar as the Birch Grove Community School. Copies of the calendar are available in the school office and on the school website.

NEW! Saplings is now open on non-school days (M-F). You must register your child for non-school day care in advance.

## **Bad weather closure**

If Birch Grove Community School is closed due to the weather, the Saplings program will be closed as well. If Birch Grove is closing early, the Saplings program will close early. School closings due to bad weather are posted on Duluth news channels and on Boreal. Also, home and cell phone numbers listed on your child's enrollment paperwork will be included in the school voice messaging system – this is a recorded message that will reach you at home or work to notify you of any closings/late starts/early releases. Telephone calls will

be made to both the home and work place of parents to notify them of the early closing. You may also call the Birch Grove Community School office at 663-0170 to check on the status of the program if the weather looks questionable.

We practice fire drills regularly. Sapling children walk out with a teacher and meet the rest of the BGCS children on the grass across from the front of the school. The Saplings storm drill location is the adult bathroom on the west side of the building.

### **Contact Information**

The school main line is (218)663-0170. The extension for the Saplings room is 23. For child related questions or comments, please speak directly to the Sapling teacher or leave a voice message on the classroom phone.

### **Health Matters**

Please notify Birch Grove Community Education at 663-0170 if your child is ill and will not be attending the Saplings program.

Every effort is made to reduce the communication of germs in our Saplings program. High use areas such as tables and faucets are cleaned daily. While it is inevitable that children will experience some illness, we appreciate your assistance in keeping the spread of illness to a minimum! The Saplings teacher will perform a visual check of your child each morning upon arrival.

Please do not send a sick child to the Saplings Program—even if it is a special occasion that he/she doesn't want to miss. Your child probably won't enjoy themselves, and he/she will infect other children. Please assure your child that there will be plenty of other special occasions for him/her to experience another day when they feel better.

Please notify the Saplings teacher or the Birch Grove School director of any contagious condition. The Saplings teacher or director will then determine the conditions by which the student may re-enter the program dependent upon state health policy and the individual circumstances of the case. Failure to report a diagnosed condition to the teacher/director poses a serious risk to the students and adults in the building.

### **Children should be kept home if they have any of the following symptoms:**

- Temperature over 98.6 degrees
- Impetigo
- Mouth sores
- Strep throat
- Tuberculosis
- Pink eye
- Flu
- Unexplainable rash



- Severe cough
- Rapid or labored breathing
- Severe cold
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Yellowish skin or eyes
- Head lice
- Illness of any sort where child is lethargic and/or listless

If symptoms begin at school, parents will be notified to pick up the child and the child will be able to rest in a quiet part of the room until parents arrive.

**A child that has vomited or had the flu, a fever, etc, should not attend Saplings for 24 hours after their last episode.**

### **Behavior**

The Saplings staff is committed to promoting learning within an environment of care and concern for one another! We celebrate and appreciate our individual differences while expecting the following behavior:

- *Treat yourself, others, and property with respect!*

Positive behavior will be reinforced at the Saplings program on a daily basis. Students will be recognized for positive behavior!

If a serious behavior issue does arise however, the teacher, parent and student will work together to resolve the issue. We want to work with you for the benefit of your child!

### **Conferences**

Conferences will be held in the spring for enrolled Saplings students. If you have any issues during the year that you would like to address, feel free to set up an appointment with your child's teacher. It is sometimes difficult to talk in depth with the teacher when dropping off or picking up your child. It is for this reason that we encourage you to set up an appointment – this way, you will have concentrated time to discuss your child and any issues that may concern you.

### **Items from Home**

We do not encourage bringing toys/items from home. The Saplings program has everything that your child will need! We do, however, allow a comfort item from home for rest/quiet time.

### **Childhood Screening**

Childhood screening is available from the county that the child resides in. We can help to initiate this process if needed.

**Parent Involvement**

The Saplings program was developed because parents have asked for a quality child care program in our area. Parents are *always* welcome at the Saplings program! If you would like to volunteer time, or would like to donate needed items, please make arrangements with the classroom teacher. The teacher will be glad to accommodate you in whatever way you would like to give to the program!

Parent concerns and comments are always welcome. Please let us know how we can improve this program! You can direct issues, concerns, and comments to the Saplings teacher or the Birch Grove School Director.

**Termination**

If for some reason your child will no longer be attending the Saplings program, please give us as much notice as possible. This allows us to give children time to say good-bye and to talk with any families that may be on the waiting list.

We have qualified staff that ready to meet any challenges that come up with students. If after every effort has been made, we feel it is best for the child to have services elsewhere you will be given at least a two week notice.

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**Agreement to Handbook Terms and Conditions**

I have read and understand the Parent/Guardian Handbook and agree to abide by its terms, conditions and policies. Please turn in this form prior to your child attending the Saplings program

Parent/Guardian Signature

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Date \_\_\_\_\_