



# **Birchwood School Handbook**

Rules, Regulations  
&  
Policies

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## **MISSION STATEMENT**

**Our Mission** is to provide an educational setting where all students are given challenging and rigorous academic work according to ability, where an achievement culture espouses and builds strong work habits and healthy attitudes, and where a caring environment forges social responsibility.

Our tools in this building process are fourfold: 1) a school-wide ethos which continually inspires, challenges and expects the highest personal achievement according to personal abilities, 2) a curriculum which uses time-tested and research based methodology, and which maintains academic standards measured against benchmark programs across the state, 3) a close parent-teacher relationship for careful oversight of each child, and 4) a faculty which exemplifies the virtues we hope to inculcate.

Birchwood School was founded on and continues to adhere to the following four principles:

Pillar 1: We provide academic opportunities that will challenge all learners and academic expectations that will help all students reach their highest level of achievement.

Pillar 2: We create an experiential framework for achievement that enables children to forge good work habits, productive attitudes, and healthy relationships.

Pillar 3: We promote home-school collaboration that insures student achievement and growth.

Pillar 4: A strong school at large makes every individual related to the school better and stronger. For this reason, those individuals associated with, and committed to, Birchwood should understand the need to assume some level of personal responsibility for the welfare of the Birchwood community at large.

## **STAKEHOLDERS**

We identify our stakeholders as those people who have a vested interest in the success of Birchwood School. It is these people with whom we consult in the design and implementation of the curricula and related academic programs.

These stakeholders include, but are not limited to: 1) the Birchwood School administration, 2) Birchwood School teaching staff, 3) Birchwood School trustees, 4) parents of current Birchwood School students, 5) parents of former Birchwood School students, and 6) individuals from the community who have taken an active interest in our establishment, growth and development.

## **ADMISSIONS POLICY**

### **Admission Procedures for Pupils Currently Enrolled**

1. Intent to enroll is due at the end of January of each year.
2. Final registration for the following year is due February 1.
3. Last date to withdraw from the enrollment agreement is May 1.

### **Admission Procedures for New Pupils**

1. Parents interview with the director, submit student's academic records, and complete an application.
2. Student will visit the school for one day.
3. Student is tested in math, reading and writing.
4. Notice of admission is given at the end of February.
5. Parents sign the enrollment agreement in March.
6. Parents submit the following non-refundable fees with the enrollment agreement:
  - a. \$150 new student fee
  - b. Registration fees

### **General Admission Policies**

1. The school must have copies of the student's academic and medical records.
2. All pupils are accepted on a probationary basis. Continuance in the school is determined by the child's academic and behavioral performance, and upon the ability of the school to serve the student.

## **WITHDRAWAL POLICY**

At the time of student withdrawal, all student records will be forwarded to the receiving school upon payment of all obligations.

## **REFUND POLICY**

Our refund policy applies only to students attending Birchwood School by means of a voucher from the Cleveland Scholarship Program. When such a voucher student leaves Birchwood School within the academic year, we will prorate the year's tuition by the day the child was in school, and we will reimburse all remaining funds.

## **NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

Birchwood School recruits and admits students of any race, color or ethnic origin to all its rights, privileges, programs, and activities. In addition, the school will not discriminate on the basis of race, color or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational programs and athletics/extracurricular activities. Furthermore, the school is not intended to be an alternative to court or administrative agency ordered, or public school district initiated desegregation.

Birchwood School will not discriminate on the basis of race, color or ethnic origin in the hiring of its certified or non-certified personnel.

## **GENERAL BEHAVIOR POLICY**

It is our goal to create a culture of achievement at Birchwood School. An important part of this culture is a school environment that celebrates, honors and supports academic achievement. Guidelines for school behavior support this environment.

Adherence to our school regulations and rules pertains to both the letter of the rules and the spirit. We believe that a positive attitude is just as important as good behavior. Individual and/or group attitudes can significantly enhance or inhibit the learning environment. Therefore, we reserve the right to discipline any inappropriate attitudes as determined by our teachers and the administration.

Using inspirational openings and a school-wide training that fosters respectful behavior, we take anti-bullying programs beyond mere prevention. We also teach children how to build respectful and productive relationships with peers, younger students and older students. Our aspiration is to be proactive in the development of strong social understanding and social relationships.

## **SCHOOL DISCIPLINE**

A positive attitude toward school, work and personal growth is the best antidote to misbehavior. But children are children and we expect periodic misbehavior that we address through instruction and discipline. In general there are three levels of discipline.

1. Typical classroom misbehavior that requires disciplinary measures commensurate with the offense and followed by instruction that guides the child toward appropriate behavior. For example, if a child is repeatedly talking out of turn during a class discussion, he may be told he cannot participate in the discussion for the remainder of the period. Afterwards the teacher will explain the effects of this misbehavior: how it affects the teacher, the others in the class, and the misbehaving child.
2. Persistent misbehavior that is adversely affecting the learning environment. At this point parents will be contacted and a meeting will be set up to discuss intervention strategies that can address the behavior problem.
3. Misbehavior that has not responded to step #2. At this point the school and the parents will need to consider whether or not Birchwood is the best fit for the child. There may be underlying problems beyond the school's expertise.
4. Birchwood School reserves the right to forego all of the above steps and suspend a student immediately if we believe student behavior warrants a

severe response. Birchwood School administration shall determine when such circumstances exist.

### **CARE OF SCHOOL PROPERTY**

If students have a part in the care and appearance of the school they will also take pride in their school and have a sense of ownership. To this end, students will have cleaning assignments at the end of each school day. Seventh and eighth grade students will help in the oversight of the students' work.

Students and their parents are responsible for any vandalism or misuse of school property and will be required to repair or replace any item which has been defaced, damaged or destroyed by malice or misuse.

## **PARENT TEACHER COOPERATION**

Research and our experience show that pupil success and parental involvement go hand-in-hand. Therefore we strive to maintain a close working relationship with parents to ensure each child's success.

## **THE SCHOOL'S RESPONSIBILITY**

It is the school's responsibility to provide the best education possible. This requires four factors. First, we attempt to keep each student at an instructional level in all subject areas. Second, we help our staff remain abreast of the best time-tested and research-based teaching methods and strategies in each subject. Third, we work to maintain educational standards that are as high, if not higher, than the best educational programs in Northeast Ohio. Finally, we invite parents to maintain an on-going dialogue with teachers concerning their child's progress and development.

## **THE PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITY**

Parents are the primary determinant of a child's attitude and success in school. Before children reach their teen years, it is the parents who determine the development of habits and attitudes toward school, schoolwork and relationships at school. In our practice, we hope that parents will assume the major responsibility for the behavior, attitude and work habits of their children.

## **PARENT SERVICE/VOLUNTEER WORK**

With a view to maintain and strengthen the school's sense of family and mutuality, Birchwood School requests that parents participate in school service projects.

We recommend five to ten hours of school service work during the school year. However, Birchwood School requires five service hours per family every academic year. Service and service projects for the upcoming school year are outlined by the Birchwood School Parent Committee during the previous spring. Sign-up for volunteer work begins in May of the preceding school year.

The Birchwood School Parent Committee has valued volunteer hours at \$40 per hour. If a family is unable to commit to doing five hours for an academic year, they may donate \$200 in lieu of those hours.

## **HOMEWORK POLICY**

History and research confirm the vital role that homework plays in a child's education. We believe a good homework policy will:

1. Develop good study habits, including organization and time management.
2. Increase time-on-task, which results in greater understanding of content and automaticity in skill work.
3. Provide time for acceleration.
4. Provide time for remediation.

Parents can play an important role in helping children build study habits through homework assignments:

1. Review your child's homework notebook nightly. Check off assignments as they are finished.
2. Provide your child with a definite place to study where (s)he can keep supplies for work.
3. Help your child manage time by making daily and weekly schedules.
4. Keep in mind the time guidelines for homework in each subject. If your child is working too long or is completing homework too quickly, contact the respective teachers in order to make adjustments to the work load.

## **GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR HOMEWORK**

### **First and Second Grade**

Twenty minutes each for reading, language arts and mathematics.

### **Third and Fourth**

Twenty minutes for language arts, 25 minutes each for reading and mathematics, and 20 minutes for either science or social studies.

### **Fifth Grade**

Twenty five minutes for language arts, 25 minutes each for reading and mathematics, and 15 minutes each in science and social studies.

### **Sixth Grade**

Thirty minutes each for reading, mathematics, language arts, and either science or social studies.

### **Seventh and Eighth Grade**

Thirty minutes each for reading, mathematics, language arts, science, and social studies.

Parents of bright or gifted children should be aware of these guidelines because frequently your children will finish their work very quickly. However, you must be aware that these children must learn the same work habits and attitudes that all students must learn; therefore adjustments should be made to the nature of their homework in order that they receive the appropriate benefit.

## **ACADEMIC REPORTING POLICIES**

Parents will receive pupil progress reports four times per year following each grading period. There will be a parent-teacher conference for all students in kindergarten through seventh grade. Eighth grade conferences will be held in September as a part of the Ben Franklin Initiative.

Reporting will include:

1. Daily work and homework
2. Test and quiz results
3. Academic progress in relation to the class and other objective standards
4. Academic progress in relation to the individual
5. Social adjustment and character development

In addition, if a child is having any academic problems at school, we will notify parents through the progress report which is issued mid-quarter. Please note that students who are progressing successfully will **not** receive this report. If parents receive this report, it is their responsibility to send the report back to school signed. Parents and teachers can then discuss strategies to help the student.

## **ATTENDANCE**

### **Absences and Tardiness**

Students are expected to attend school daily. Birchwood School considers the time spent in class essential to the learning process. Broadly speaking, excused absences are considered: personal illness, emergency medical or dental appointments, religious holidays or special family circumstances. If an absence does not fall clearly under a category, it will be considered on a case by case basis. The school prefers that doctor and dental appointments be made during non-school hours whenever possible.

If your child will not be in school, it is extremely important that you report that information to the school office by 8:30 a.m. **by phone**. Homework may be requested at that time. If parental notification is not received by 9 a.m., the school secretary will attempt to call parent(s) **one time**. If no one is reached and parental notification is not provided by school day's end, the student will be considered truant. In the event of an emergency in which the school needs to contact the family of a student, only a member of the Birchwood faculty or staff will make this contact. It is also of critical importance that the school has the telephone number of the caregiver when parents are out-of-town or otherwise unavailable.

### **Illness & Other Excused Absences**

As noted earlier, an excused absence at Birchwood School falls into one of the following categories: illness, death in the family, or other emergencies. If an absence does not fall clearly into one of these categories, it will be considered on a case by case basis.

If a child has an excused absence for any period of time, parents may obtain assignments from the child's teachers so that the work may be done at home. If a child's absence is excused, the child will be allowed to make up work with no deduction in grade.

It is the school's policy that a child should **not** come to school or **return to school** (if they were sent home due to illness) if (s)he:

1. Has had a fever over the past 24 hours.
2. Is coughing a lot or has a very deep cough.
3. Has vomited or had diarrhea in the past 24 hours.
4. Has a rash.
5. Has been on medication less than 24 hours.

If your child becomes ill during the school day and needs to go home, (s)he will be sent to the Main Office. The school secretary will contact the parent(s) and facilitate departure. A student will **not** be permitted to remain at school or attend any school-sponsored activities (either on- or off-site) if they have any of the above illnesses (including fever or vomiting), or in the event of any other

circumstances which necessitate a child to be sent home. The child **must** be picked up from school within one hour of the parent(s) being contacted. Once a child has been dismissed from school due to illness, the child is **not** permitted to return to school until they have gone 24 hours without a fever, vomiting, diarrhea, or other severe symptoms, or have been on medication for 24 hours.

If you think your child may be coming down with an illness, please do not send your child to school with the idea that we can send them home later if they are not well. The child should stay at home and come to school later if (s)he is well.

We also request that you do not give your child medication for fever or body aches before (s)he comes to school. The medicine may help a child feel better, but if a fever is present, the virus can still spread to other children.

If a child has a chronic medical condition which might exempt them from these policies, the school requires a doctor's note from the child's pediatrician stating the condition and the approved exemptions. Please note, this documentation cannot come from a physician related to the child.

Any medical absence or illness of **three days** or greater requires a doctor's note be presented to the school. Finally, if a child must leave school before the end of the scheduled day, the only homework that can be provided will be that from classes that occur prior to the student's departure. Parents are welcome to return at the end of the school day or make other arrangements to collect homework for the classes not attended.

### **Unexcused Absences**

In cases of unexcused absences or extended absences, teachers **will not** prepare homework. Families must coordinate with other students to obtain the work, and families should be prepared to work with their students after an unexcused absence to make up any missed work or assignments.

### **Absences-Cleveland Scholarship Students**

As required by the State of Ohio, Cleveland Scholarship students must comport with state law as regards absences and tardies. Parents of such students are required to acquaint themselves with those laws.

### **Vacation**

We recommend that parents schedule family vacations during the summer, winter or spring breaks. If parents plan vacations at times other than on Birchwood's schedule, students often miss classroom work that cannot be made up; we discourage this practice. On the other hand, we understand that due to the international nature of our parent population, and due to the professional schedules of our parents, sometimes family vacation schedules conflict with the school schedule. Nevertheless, if parents choose to take their children out of school for a family vacation during scheduled school days,

teachers will not be required to prepare makeup classwork or homework. Rather, families must coordinate with other students and families within the student's homeroom to gather any makeup work for missed days. Teachers will do their best to make the transition back into the classroom as smooth as possible, but parents should be prepared to designate extra time to complete missed work. Furthermore, parents should avoid making any vacation plans during testing for the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills and during the weeks preceding major performances or competitions. Finally, if parents schedule vacations during the parent-conferences, those conferences will not be rescheduled.

### **Tardiness**

Students should arrive at school between 8 a.m. and 8:10 a.m. They should be seated in their classroom by 8:15 a.m. after which time they will be marked tardy. If a child is tardy, (s)he must be escorted to the Main Office by a parent or guardian and be signed in.

It is important for children to build the habit of being prompt. It teaches them responsibility and respect to people and institutions. Promptness is also important because the school schedule is designed to maximize the learning experience.

- Between 8 a.m. and 8:15 a.m. students prepare themselves for the day, hanging up their coats, putting away boots, emptying book bags, turning in notes from home, and sharpening pencils. Tardiness impacts student success and classroom management.
- At 8:15 a.m. instruction begins with the daily opening time of inspiration. When a student walks into class late, it disrupts the inspirational atmosphere and conveys disrespect to everyone present.

Excessive tardiness is defined by four tardy marks in one quarter. Upon the fifth time of tardiness in one quarter, students will not be permitted to join their first period class on the day they are tardy. They will receive an unexcused absence for this class.

A student who arrives after 8:15 a.m. should enter through the main doors, accompanied by an adult who will sign their child into school at the Main Office.

## **BIRCHWOOD SCHOOL DRESS CODE**

The Birchwood School dress code reflects our desire to maintain an academic atmosphere and does not reflect personal or administrative opinions about dress or style. Our dress code is intended to minimize personal and social distractions often connected with young peoples' preoccupation with fashion and to help students focus on their academic responsibilities. We ask parents to understand the intention and purpose of our dress code and help us head off problems before the school must exercise discipline.

Preschool students do not have an assigned dress code, but they are required to wear athletic shoes. See page 29 for the preschool dress code.

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>TYPE</b>	<b>STYLE</b>	<b>COLORS</b>	<b>VIOLATIONS</b>
SHIRTS	SHORT SLEEVED LONG SLEEVED  (visible layers must be dress code colors)	Polo Collared Turtleneck	<u>Solid Colors</u> Navy Blue Forest Green White Red	Tank Tops Sleeveless T-shirts Midriff revealing Logos other than Birchwood
PANTS	LONG PANTS CAPRIS for girls	Dress	Khaki Navy Blue Black	Midriff revealing Excessively baggy Cargo/leg pockets Bell Bottoms Jeans Gym Pants Leggings worn as pants
SHORTS	LONG SHORTS (no shorter than 2 inches above the top of the knee)	Dress	Khaki Navy Blue Black	Midriff revealing Excessively baggy Cargo/leg pockets Jeans
SWEATERS	SHORT SLEEVED LONG SLEEVED VEST	Pull-over or Cardigan (with buttons or zippers)	<u>Solid Colors</u> Navy Blue, Forest Green, White, Black, Grey, Red	Logos other than Birchwood
SWEATSHIRTS (during winter months)	LONG SLEEVED	Pull-over, Hoodie or Fleece	(same as SWEATER colors above)	Not wearing an appropriate polo, collared, or turtleneck shirt underneath Logos other than Birchwood (continued on next page)

ITEM	TYPE	STYLE	COLORS	VIOLATIONS
SHOES*  *Pre-K and K students must wear athletic shoes with rubber soles – if possible Velcro or slip-on	ATHLETIC DRESS	Flat soles (no heels)	Athletic Prominent Color: White, Black, Grey; moderate markings Shoelaces: White, Black, Grey Dress Black or Brown (non-marking)	Fluorescent colors Open toe shoes, sandals Crocs, clogs, slippers, moccasins Boots Rhinestone/sparkles
SKIRTS for girls	SKIRTS/SKORTS (no shorter than 2 inches above the top of the knee)	Dress	Solid Colors Khaki Navy Blue Black	Jean
JUMPERS for girls	(no shorter than 2 inches above the top of the knee)	Dress	Khaki, Navy Blue, Black Plaid: Navy Blue or Forest Green  <b>Acceptable Plaid at Lands' End:</b> Classic Navy/Evergreen Plaid <b>Acceptable Plaid at Schoolbelles:</b> #121	Jean
BELTS (if worn)		Dress	Black or Brown	
HAIR for boys	SHORT	Clean-cut, off the ear, off the collar, out of the eyes		
HAIR for girls		Neat and off the face	Hair clips and bands must be school colors	Any decorative item such as beads, flowers, streaks of color, etc.

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>TYPE</b>	<b>STYLE</b>	<b>COLORS</b>	<b>VIOLATIONS</b>
SOCKS, TIGHTS and LEGGINGS	DRESS		<u>Solid Color</u> Navy Blue, Forest Green, White, Grey, Brown, Tan, Black	Prints, patterns or stripes
GYM SHIRTS	SHORT or LONG SLEEVED	T-shirt	<u>Solid Colors</u> Grey, White, or colored BW t-shirt or BW competition t-shirt	Sleeveless Logos other than Birchwood School
GYM SHORTS	LONG (no shorter than 2 inches above knee)	Athletic	Navy Blue Black Grey	
GYM PANTS	LONG (or capris for girls)	Sweat, Athletic	Navy Blue, Black, Grey	
GYM SWEATSHIRTS	LONG SLEEVED	Pull-over or Hoodie	<u>Solid Colors</u> Navy Blue, Forest Green, White, Black, Grey	Logos other than Birchwood School

**Sample of Approved Plaid**



**Other Violations**

- Hats and hoods are not to be worn in the school building
- Excessive jewelry: no dangling earrings; one other piece of modest-sized, non-distracting jewelry allowed
- No make-up or nail-polish; no tattoos
- No backpacks, purses or decorative bags allowed in classes
- Use of electronics not allowed during school day

**Dress Down Days**

- The first school day of each month beginning in October as a reward for students who comply with the school dress code daily
- Early dismissal days
- Children may wear clothing of their choice with the exception of sleeveless shirts, clothes with holes, or inappropriate logos or graphics; shoes must have a closed toe and heel

**Field Trips**

- School dress code should be followed unless otherwise indicated on field trip form
- When asked to dress up, students are not allowed to wear jeans, shorts or t-shirts
- When allowed to dress down, students should follow the dress down day policy
- Students must follow dress code policy for shoes on all field trips

**Consequences for Dress Code Violations**

- First warning – verbal reminder to student
- Second warning – written reminder sent home to parent requiring parent signature
- Third warning – student will not be allowed in class until violation is corrected

## SCHOOL HOURS

### **Before School Care**

For the safety and security of Birchwood Students, the school has established a Before School Care program. This is the only forum set-up to provide safe monitoring of students. Outside of this program, staff does not have the capacity to watch students. The program is available from 7 a.m. to 8 a.m. Students must be buzzed in at the Main Entrance during these hours.

Please note all other school doors open at 8 a.m. Parents should not drop their children off at school before this time unless arrangements have been made with the Before Care Program.

### **Drop-off Procedures—Arriving at School at 8 a.m.**

A teacher or class aide will greet students arriving in the car line. Students should be in their seats, ready for class work at 8:15 a.m. Otherwise they will be marked tardy. If a child is tardy, (s)he must be escorted to the Main Office by a parent or guardian and be signed in.

***Please note that there is no Before School or After School Care the first day of school.***

### **Pick-up Procedures—Dismissal from School at 3:20 p.m.**

Students will be dismissed from class at 3:20 p.m. Their transportation should be waiting in the car line unless other arrangements have been made directly with the Main Office. Teachers will remain with students in the pick-up area until 3:30 p.m. at which time the remaining children will be escorted to the After School Care program.

Parents **must** provide dismissal instructions by 2 p.m. to the Main Office if there is a change to the regular dismissal arrangements.

**Please note a few important guidelines for afternoon pick up:** the parking lot will be opened by 3 p.m. daily. School officials are the only people permitted to move the orange cones and/or open the back gate. Further, we ask that the pick-up line remain a mobile free zone to the fullest extent possible for the safety of our staff and students.

### **After School Care**

For the safety and security of Birchwood Students, the school has established an After School Care program. This is the only forum set up to provide safe monitoring of students. Outside of this program, staff does not have the capacity to watch students.

Therefore, those students not picked up by parents, guardians or other responsible parties by 3:30 p.m. **must** report to After School Care.

## **STUDENT SAFETY**

### **Drills**

Fire, tornado, rapid dismissals, and safety/lock-down drills are conducted throughout the year. Students should move through the drill silently and obey the direction of the adults in charge.

### **First Aid**

First aid will be administered for minor scrapes and cuts. In the event of a serious emergency requiring professional attention parents will be notified immediately. For this reason, parents must maintain up-to-date emergency information at the school. In case of illness or injury, the school will care for the child until parents arrive or make other arrangements for prompt care.

### **Medication**

In order for your child to receive any medication at school, the following must be followed:

1. A written request must be obtained from the physician and/or the parent/guardian before any medication may be administered by school personnel. The request must include instructions as to the name of the medication, dosage, time and duration, and possible side effects.
2. The medication must be in its original container and have an affixed label including the student's name, name of medication, dosage, method of administration, and time of administration. Any expired medication will be returned to parents and will not be administered to students.
3. New request forms must be submitted each school year and when a medication order changes. If your child is taken off the medication or will no longer receive it at school, please send a dated note for our files.
4. The medication and signed permission forms must be brought to the school by the parent/guardian.
5. If your child has an allergy requiring medication or on-site treatment, a medical directive/action plan must be on file in the Main Office.

### **Searches of School Property**

All property of the school, including students' desks and lockers as well as their contents, may be searched or inspected at any time without notice. School personnel have an unrestricted right to search these structures as well as any containers, book bags, purses, or articles of clothing that are left unattended on school property.

### **Searches of Student's Person and Personal Property**

The search of a student's person or handbag currently carried is permissible when there is any suspicion that the student may be carrying contraband. Contraband, for purposes here, shall include but is not limited to any weapon, illegal drug, drug paraphernalia, or other item, the possession of which is prohibited by law or by school policy.

## **STUDENT SPECIAL OCCASIONS**

### **Birthdays and Occasions Involving Food**

Each teacher has preferences when it comes to celebrating special occasions. First and foremost, please speak with your child's teacher before undertaking any plans. Generally, children are permitted to bring a birthday treat for their classroom. We ask that the treat provided is an individual serving for each child, which can be easily distributed at a time according to the homeroom teacher's discretion such as cupcakes, muffins or individually packaged items. Remember, some children have food allergies so it's best to check with your students' teacher to see if there are any such limitations. Please do not send a cake or other foods requiring staff distribution or cutting.

We also request that you do not send party invitations or thank you cards to the classroom for distribution.

### **Classroom Lunches**

On occasion, parents enjoy treating their child's class to lunch. **Special arrangements for a class lunch should be made in advance** with your child's homeroom teacher. Students will need to eat in their homeroom for a special lunch. An adult other than Birchwood staff should be available for set-up, serving and clean up.

## **TEACHER CERTIFICATION AND QUALIFICATIONS**

According to state regulations, teachers in private schools must hold a college degree from a four-year accredited institution. All teaching staff must have either a license to teach or a non-tax certificate issued by the Ohio Department of Education.

Birchwood maintains the following qualifications and accountability measures for teachers:

1. Teachers must learn and adapt to our system of education, learning the rationale and research behind our approach to education.
2. Teachers are held accountable for the quality of education they provide. Teachers must meet pupil performance objectives yearly.
3. Teachers must evidence professional progress. We expect our teachers to visit benchmark schools, maintain membership in their respective professional organizations, stay abreast of current publications in their field, attend workshops and/or complete additional coursework.
4. Teachers are expected to work closely with their colleagues; therefore they must maintain a professional and personal demeanor which promotes harmony and collaboration.
5. Teachers are expected to model the same character and virtue that we hope to instill in our students.

Also please note that all school aides and substitutes hold licensure as is required by the State of Ohio.



# **Birchwood School Early Childhood Addendum**

2014-2015

## **PRESCHOOL PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE**

Birchwood's Early Childhood program, like Birchwood School itself, grounds itself in a philosophy which attends to the unique growth of each child.

*"From birth, every child is created with the potential to become a great human being, one who is productive, just and compassionate. But such great potential requires cultivation, careful nurturing of shining qualities under the vision of loving parents and teachers."  
(See [birchwoodschoo.org](http://birchwoodschoo.org) for our philosophic underpinnings and research.)*

Our philosophy leads us to a particular vision for Birchwood graduates – **well-educated, hard-working, productive, and compassionate**. From this vision, we construct our academic programming and do everything in our power so that **each student** might reach these lofty expectations. Our Early Childhood program provides children with an early foundation toward realizing this vision by offering a *unique academic starting gate* for each child through the implementation of an *unbounded curriculum*.

***Unique academic starting gate*** ... We believe that children are endowed with particular interests and abilities, growing and developing at their own pace. Thus, our teachers' primary focus is each child's daily and on-going development. In this way, they are able to recognize the "spark" of readiness in each child as they are ready to progress. This means that the teacher creates an environment and curriculum to match a child's instructional level. The appropriate instructional level presents opportunity for appropriately challenging engagement, which requires the child's focus and development of attending skills in order to practice, comprehend and/or master concepts and skills. Thus, the child not only experiences accomplishment but also develops those skills and work habits which forge strong character and prepare him or her for future learning opportunities. Practically, the unique academic starting gate means that children who are ready to read, write or engage mathematically may do so as soon as they are ready, whether they are 3 or 6 years old.

***Unbounded-eclectic curriculum*** ... To honor children's development, we cannot prioritize the value of one educational theory or particular curriculum over what "fits" the engagement of each child at their stage of development. We ground our practice in time-tested research, thus we do not discount Piaget's developmental stages or the evidence of preschool learning through play, for example. We also highly regard the vision and practice of Montessori education, especially as it taps into children's desire to be productive, fosters

autonomy and responsibility in learning, and provides an orderly and thoughtfully prepared learning environment. Our teachers thus draw on a rich knowledge base and pool of resources to intentionally meet each Birchwood student at their unique academic starting gate. No single curriculum model or age-defined standard limits the possibilities or pace of a child's growth in our school.

The mission of Birchwood School is *to provide an educational setting where challenging academics build solid work habits, an achievement culture nurtures healthy attitudes, and a caring environment forges social responsibility.* At the early childhood level, we believe we enact our mission in developmentally appropriate ways. In a loving, warm atmosphere, our teachers set the tone by modeling how we value each one in our community according to the unique beings we were created to be. By attending to our own growth and respecting and supporting the unique growth of others, we enable the possibility of compassionate and just community.

### **OPEN DOOR POLICY**

The preschool and kindergarten staff of Birchwood School have an ongoing open door policy. Parents are welcome to observe how their children are interacting with the environment and their peers in the classroom. The teachers enjoy any feedback that may benefit the students and the program. We ask only that parents contact the teachers ahead of time, whenever possible, to indicate their intent to visit the classroom. When parents are observing in our classroom, they are reminded to come to the teacher or teacher aids if they have a concern with another child's behavior.

### **PARENT/TEACHER COMMUNICATION**

Birchwood "works" because parents and teachers enjoy intimate and on-going communication regarding the children in their care. The preschool staff welcomes parent teacher communication throughout the year as well as during scheduled parent teacher conferences. If parents have any concerns, whether minor or major, regarding their child or any aspect of the preschool program they are encouraged to contact their child's classroom teacher or the director of early childhood programs. The staff at Birchwood School feel that when a concern is addressed right away it can be resolved quickly and calmly for the sake of the children.

**The first parent/teacher conference will be held within the first six weeks of school, so that parents and teachers can make a clear plan for each child for the year. This is different from the school's schedule for conferences regarding older children. Please check the school and Early Childhood calendars for this school year.**

## **ASSESSMENT**

On-going assessment of children's growth is a cornerstone of our work. In order to find each child's unique starting gate and match his or her instructional level, we need to get to know the children as quickly as possible. Both formal and informal tools help us to discover a child's body of knowledge and skills, as well as their temperament and social-emotional development. Through the course of the year, teachers assess children formatively as the children work. Concepts and materials are introduced to children in ascending skill levels, and teachers observe not only a child's comprehension but also the pace at which comprehension comes. Children move through concepts and skills as they are ready and in the timing that suits their development and ability. Four times a year, teachers make more summative and formal assessments of children's developmental growth through written progress reports and parent-teacher conferences. As a baseline benchmark, our program aligns curriculum and instruction to the Ohio State Preschool and Kindergarten Standards. In our program, however, children often move beyond these standards, so we extend our assessment benchmarks to first through third grade Common Core State Standards to clearly convey children's progress. Supplementing these standards, we note children's progress through national and international resources, including the National Association for the Education of Young Children and academic resources such as the Singapore Math Program and the Scott Foresman Reading and Language Arts Program.

## **FIRST WEEK OF SCHOOL**

Kindergarten students will follow the schedule of first through eighth grade. The first day of school, Wednesday, is a half day, and the formal, full day schedule will begin the following day, Thursday.

Seedlings and Sprouts will begin on the Thursday of the first week of school. This is a half day, and the formal, full day schedule will begin the following Friday.

More information, including specific dates, will be available to parents through the school calendar and welcome letters sent home during the summer.

## **DAILY ROUTINE**

In kindergarten, the children begin their day journaling with words and art, as they transition into the school environment. They share in the community of the classroom through discussion of their day and calendar activities before beginning a Chinese or Spanish lesson. The children will spend two days in each language per week. The remaining block of morning time is dedicated to math and literacy, with a break for morning recess.

Kindergartners eat their lunch in their rooms with their teachers, and upon completion of the meal, the students play outdoors. The afternoon routine changes daily but includes hands-on literacy based science and social studies activities as well as specials such as music, computer, art, and gym.

The daily preschool schedule provides opportunity for children who are full- and part-time to engage in the diversity of the curriculum. All children will experience the community of their classroom through circle time in the morning, as well as a long period of free play together, both indoors and outdoors. The schedule also includes a morning block specifically devoted to number, problem solving and literacy activities. The morning schedule allows for a class potty break as well.

Alternating between days will be activities that help the children to get to know their world through science, culture and art play in the morning and afternoon. All preschool students, except half-day Seedings who leave at 11:15 a.m., will eat lunch together, play outdoors and rest until 1:30 p.m. (see Rest Time Procedures). A block of time will be set aside for children to engage more deeply with activities and skills visited in the morning math and literacy times.

Eighth graders join all of the Early Childhood children to prepare for dismissal. Dismissal will be at 3:20 p.m.

### **OUTDOOR PLAY**

The Early Childhood program at Birchwood School includes a strong emphasis on outdoor play. In order to nurture a learning spirit, we encourage the children's curiosity in every environment. At this age, observation and engagement are powerful ways children come to understand their world and their own place within it. We believe that the outdoor experiences support physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of children as they explore what each season has to offer. Thus, the students will have scheduled outdoor time each day whether it be sunny, lightly raining or snowing.

We ask that parents dress their children accordingly and have weather appropriate jackets and winter clothing to support their outdoor play experiences. **On the first day of school, please bring a pair of boots and an extra set of mittens and a hat for the children to keep at school.**

## **EARLY CHILDHOOD DRESS CODE**

We consider kindergarten a transition year for the dress code. Kindergarten students follow the same dress code as the first through eighth grade students. There is some lenience exercised as the children adapt to “school” clothes.

The preschool students do not have an assigned dress code. The students will be participating in hands-on art activities during which they may get their clothes dirty. Parents are asked to dress their children accordingly in order for the children to explore all aspects of the preschool curriculum with the freedom they desire. Appropriate attire includes outdoor gear which will adequately protect the children as they enjoy nature, rain or shine.

**Kindergarten and preschool children must wear tennis shoes with rubber soles.** This is to prevent slipping and falling. If possible, shoes should be Velcro or slip-on, especially for the preschool students.

## **REST TIME PROCEDURES**

In kindergarten, the teachers find a quiet rest time beneficial to the children both in terms of rejuvenation for the rest of the day as well as for building a long term habit of quieting the mind and body. Kindergarten students rest for 30 minutes in the afternoon. During the first half of the year, this rest time is for sleeping or quiet reading. In the second half of the year, the activities may extend to puzzles and other quiet activities.

In preschool, children typically still require a nap. Seedlings are given at least 1-½ hours of rest, while Sprouts rest for at least an hour. If children cannot sleep, they are given quiet activities, such as books or puzzles to keep them occupied. The preschool nap time begins around 12:30 p.m.

In terms of rest time procedures, kindergarten and preschool children will use the bathroom before lying down on cots. Cots will be labeled with each child’s name so that children will use the same cot every day. Cots will be wiped down with disinfectant regularly and stored in the classroom. **Please provide your child with a blanket/pillow from home, which will be stored in their cubby.** On the last day of the week for each child, the child will bring their blanket home to be laundered and returned when the child comes back to school after the weekend.

## **PRESCHOOL BEHAVIOR GUIDANCE**

In kindergarten, the teachers work with the children to make wise choices about their behavior and its effect on their classroom community. A multi-light system, similar to a traffic light, is used to communicate children's progress every day. The children all begin on green and may move their marker to other colors which reflect behavior that contributes positively to the classroom or detracts from a harmonious, productive environment. While the class shares universal values for each color, individual plans for behavior guidance are discussed with the children and their parents, if necessary, on a daily basis. Detailed communication about this system will be provided to families at Parent Night before school begins.

The preschool teachers use a re-direction procedure when a child is causing disruption or is exhibiting behavior that may cause harm to another child. The child will be gently instructed to find another area to work in the classroom or will complete an activity at a table as assigned by his or her teacher. At the end of the day the child's parents will be contacted to 1) discuss what negative behavior was observed, 2) what measures were taken to address the situation, and 3) any concerns or suggestions that the parents may have to support the preschool students optimal engagement inside and outside the classroom.

## **DISMISSAL PROCEDURES**

As the school grows, we will need to amend our dismissal procedures. Please look for detailed instructions in the months to come before school begins.

## **FIELD TRIP PROCEDURES**

Kindergarteners and preschoolers will attend minimum of three field trip experiences to supplement their learning. Teachers will supply parents with information and permission slips about these trips in a timely manner. Transportation to and from our destination will be provided by parent volunteers in the volunteers' vehicles, unless the destination is within walking distance of the school. Parents must provide a car/booster seat for their child in compliance with Ohio law. The best case scenario includes parents driving their own children to these field trips whenever possible. All parents are welcome to join the children on each trip.

## **BIRTHDAYS**

Please follow the school handbook policies on birthday celebrations. This is a reminder that, if you choose to bring in a treat for your child's classmates, that the Early Childhood hall is **nut free** and to only bring a small snack. In addition, please do not bring invitations or goodie bags to school.

## **NUT FREE CLASSROOMS**

The preschool and kindergarten classrooms are **nut free** which means that children or parents are not permitted to bring any food containing nuts, nut butters, or traces of nuts into the classrooms.

## **SPECIAL EVENTS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD**

Early Childhood plans and practices all year for our annual Sharing Show. Families are invited to watch the children recite poetry, perform dances, sing songs, and share memorable activities from their classroom experiences. This show is held in March before spring break.

The entire school, including kindergarten and preschool, participates in an artist-in-residence program after Thanksgiving. During this two-week event, professional artists in dance and drama instruct the children in their craft. The experience culminates with a school-wide demonstration of what the children have learned. Families are encouraged to attend.

The Early Childhood program invites grandparents or friends to attend Grandfriends' Day in October. Fathers are welcome to enjoy "Donuts with Dad" in April, and mothers may enjoy "Muffins with Mom" in May. Kindergarten also hosts a Fall Festival, Thanksgiving lunch, and the 100 Days Celebration, among others. Preschool invites families to enjoy both their Thanksgiving brunch and Winter Festival. Exact dates will be included on an Early Childhood calendar distributed at the beginning of the school year.

Please check the school calendar for these other important dates. The Early Childhood program will conduct parent-teacher conferences in September and March. Between conferences, parents may expect written progress reports in January and May. The last week of school involves a special schedule. The last Monday of school will be a field trip, and the last Tuesday will be a half day comprised of outdoor activities, end-of-the-year ceremonies, and a potluck. Kindergarten and preschool students do not need to attend the 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduation ceremony on Wednesday.