

BIRCHTREE CHARTER SCHOOL

Family Guide 2015-2016
School Year



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Birchtree Charter School Family Guide

Part I: Introduction to our Program

Welcome

Welcome to the Birchtree Charter School Community! The Family Guide is a supplement to the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District Student Handbook which is available on the District Website at www.matsuk12.us. Important topics such as Student Rights and Responsibilities, Attendance and Discipline are covered in the District Handbook with additional guidelines specific to Birchtree in this Family Guide. This Guide provides basic information about the school schedule, policies, school-home communication, and Waldorf-inspired philosophy. Please do not hesitate to contact school administration or members of the APC if you have any questions that we have not answered. Parents are the founders of Birchtree Charter School and they are viewed within the Birchtree community as partners with the school staff in the education of Birchtree students.

Mission Statement

Birchtree Charter School will provide an innovative, standards-based education, enhancing the growth of student creativity and imagination through the arts. Our aim is to provide a holistic learning environment and demonstrate that all children are natural and inspired learners who can achieve. To do this, we will use a whole child curriculum, based on the Waldorf educational philosophy. Our mission is to nurture and promote the development of healthy, responsible, and creative human beings. We aim to enliven and support families in our local community. Specially trained teachers will use developmentally attuned approaches and the arts to encourage academic achievement, creativity, social intelligence, and ecological awareness.

Program Philosophy

At the heart of our Waldorf-inspired whole child curriculum is the recognition of how much children change from year to year, placing pivotal importance on the mental, emotional, and physical nature of each grade level. The curriculum ensures that the material presented – and how it is presented – is developmentally attuned to the appropriate age at every grade level. This model values the stages of childhood development, greater interaction between child and teacher, and the integration of the arts into a rigorous academic program.

Whole child education focuses on educating children intellectually, emotionally, socially, and physically, often referred to as “head, heart, and hands.” Another aspect of whole child education is the consideration of different learning styles. Storytelling, language arts, math, science, art, music, drama, and movement are integrated to provide students with opportunities to receive information through many modes of learning.

Governance Structure

Academic Policy Committee (APC)

Birchtree’s APC is the governing body of the school that makes decisions about administrative staffing, budget, and policy, while holding the school to the vision of the charter. The bylaws of the APC are modeled on other successful charter schools and have been reviewed by the MSBSD School Board and the State Board of Education. APC members are unpaid volunteers who welcome your feedback, concerns, ideas, and help toward improving Birchtree’s program. All APC official meetings are open to the public and will be announced with notice so parents can attend and give testimony and input if they desire. Please check our website for upcoming APC meeting dates.

Birchtree Parents' Guild (BPG)

The Birchtree Parents' Guild is a 501(c)3 that serves the school in two main areas - fundraising and parent education. Examples of fundraising events have included Auction, Fall Faire, May Faire, and craft shows. Birchtree parents are welcome to participate by attending the monthly meetings and/or participating as part of a committee. We welcome your feedback and ideas!

Pedagogical Council

The mission of the Pedagogical Council is to uphold Waldorf ideals and pedagogy in making recommendations, regarding both curricular and extracurricular practices, to Birchtree's administration. These recommendations are given in light of the school's charter, the principles of Waldorf education, and the experience of certified Waldorf teachers. The Council consists of administration and a cross section of six Waldorf-trained teachers representing the school's early childhood classes, primary, middle, upper grades, specialty subjects and special education. Matters brought before the Pedagogical Council are typically those that are either inherently complex or that require collaborative decision-making amongst the leadership bodies within the school's governance. The Council's sole authority is to provide carefully considered recommendations. All final decisions rest with Birchtree's administration and/or APC.

Curriculum Overview

Kindergarten: children learn primarily through imitation and imagination. The goal of the kindergarten is to develop a sense of wonder in the young child and reverence for all living things. This creates an eagerness for the academics that follow in the grades. Kindergarten activities include:

- storytelling, puppetry, creative play
- singing, movement
- games and finger plays
- painting, drawing, and beeswax modeling
- baking and cooking, nature walks
- circle time for festival and seasonal celebrations

Grades 1-8: children learn through the guidance of class teachers who stay with, or "loop," with the same class for grades 1-5 and grades 6-8. The curriculum includes:

- English--based on world literature, myths, and legends
- history that is chronological and inclusive of the world's great civilizations
- science that surveys geography, astronomy, meteorology, and physical and life sciences
- mathematics that develops competence in arithmetic, algebra, and geometry
- foreign languages; physical education (movement); music and orchestra
- arts--including music, painting, sculpture, drama, sketching
- handwork such as knitting and woodworking

- cooking and gardening

For a more detailed description of the curriculum for each individual grade, please see the curriculum page on our website or speak to your child's teacher.

Part II: Practical Information

School Hours

School hours are as follows:

- Grades 1 – 8: 8:30 a.m. – 3:10 p.m. Mon. Tues. Wed. Fri.
Thurs. 8:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
- Kindergarten 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Mon. Tues. Wed. Fri.
Thurs. 8:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
- **Early Release – Every Thursday from 8:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.**

Drop-off and Pick-up Procedures

In order to protect the safety of the children, the speed limit at all times in the school parking area is **5 miles per hour**. Please drive slowly and carefully around the drop off area while watching for children who may be walking to and from cars.

Drop-off for all students begins at 8:15 a.m. A staff member or parent volunteer will be waiting to greet the children as they enter the building. You may wish to escort kindergarten students into the school, particularly at the beginning of the year until they grow accustomed to the daily routine. If you park your car and walk, please supervise your children closely in the parking lot and watch for cars. Children are able to go to their classrooms at 8:20 a.m. Classes begin promptly at 8:30 a.m.

Kindergarten teachers will release their students directly to parents at 12:30 p.m. There are two options for picking up your children. You may pick them up in the classroom or you may pick them up outside. Please read more about these options below:

Option #1: Parents park and come into the school to pick up child from 3:10-3:15 (1:30 to 1:35 on Early Release Thursday).

- From 3:10-3:15 (1:30 to 1:35 on Early Release Thursday) students will be ready for pick-up by parents in the classrooms.
- Please, park in the lower parking lot nearest the Playscape. (new parking area)
- Please wait until 3:10 (1:30 on Early Release Thursday) p.m. to enter the classrooms.
- The classroom teacher will release each child to the parents.
- Parents and students will walk to parked vehicles using the crosswalk area.

Option #2: Parents pick-up students outside from 3:15-3:30 (1:35 to 1:50 on Early Release Thursday).

- All students who have not been picked up in their classrooms by 3:15 (1:35 on Early Release Thursday) will be brought outside.
- Parents may pull into the **single pick-up lane**, which is the lane closest to the school.
- Children will walk to the vehicle, staying on the passenger side of the vehicle until they reach their specific vehicle.

- Children will get into the vehicle using the doors on the passenger side if possible.
- Parents will pull into the by-pass lane to exit as soon as their children are loaded and ready to go.
- A crossing guard will stop traffic from time-to-time to allow people to use the cross walk.
- At 3:30 (1:45 on Early Release Thursday), all remaining students will be brought into the school and parents should come into the school to pick them up.

Important note: Please contact the main office if someone other than your child's parent or legal guardian is going to pick up your child from school.

Late Arrival or Early Pick-up

If you arrive at school after 8:30 a.m., please park your car and walk with your child to the office. Students may not go directly to class if they arrive late. In the office, please sign your child in as a late arrival on the counter computer. Recurring late arrival negatively affects academic achievement and the harmony of the classroom environment, so please plan accordingly.

If your child has an appointment and must be picked up early, please write a note to be delivered to the office. When you arrive on campus, please come to the office to sign your child out and then your child will be called from class.

Cell Phones and Electronic Devices

Please keep electronic games and personal music devices at home. Cell phones or pagers are permitted on school property for safety purposes, but should be turned off and stored in students' backpacks during the school day.

School Supplies

Supplies used in Waldorf schools are high-quality specialty items that can last children many years. Since these supplies are not available locally, Birchtree will order them in bulk for families to purchase at a significant discount. We ask that families pay \$125 per child each year. Since this money only covers a portion of our total cost, parents may make additional donations to the supply fund if they wish. The \$125 may be split up into two payments (\$60/\$65), one in August at registration and one in January. Families may also apply for a supply scholarship through the Birchtree Parent Guild.

Lost and Found

A lost-and-found area will be kept on campus. Please check it regularly, as unclaimed items are donated to charity at the end of each quarter.

Chain of Communication for Parent Concerns

Addressing parent concerns is a high priority at Birchtree and all concerns will receive prompt and thoughtful attention. The health and harmony of our school community depends on all parties taking a responsible and constructive approach to raising and resolving concerns. When raising a concern, it is essential to speak directly to the person(s) involved. Speaking directly may be difficult but it is the most effective way to resolve a concern. When you go directly to the person involved and let them know of your concern you can work together to find a solution.

Chain of communication for concerns regarding classroom issues:

- 1) Speak directly to your child's teacher and try to find resolution at this level.
- 2) If you are unable to find resolution after speaking to the teacher, speak to an administrator.

- 3) All approaches to resolving concerns and conflicts including mediation will be considered, if needed.
- 4) Our *Conflict Resolution Form* can be found on the school website. Please, use this form to file a formal request for mediation.

For concerns regarding school operations and policies it is best to contact the principal or assistant principal directly.

Communication Between School and Home

Birchtree Charter School uses the following methods to communicate with families:

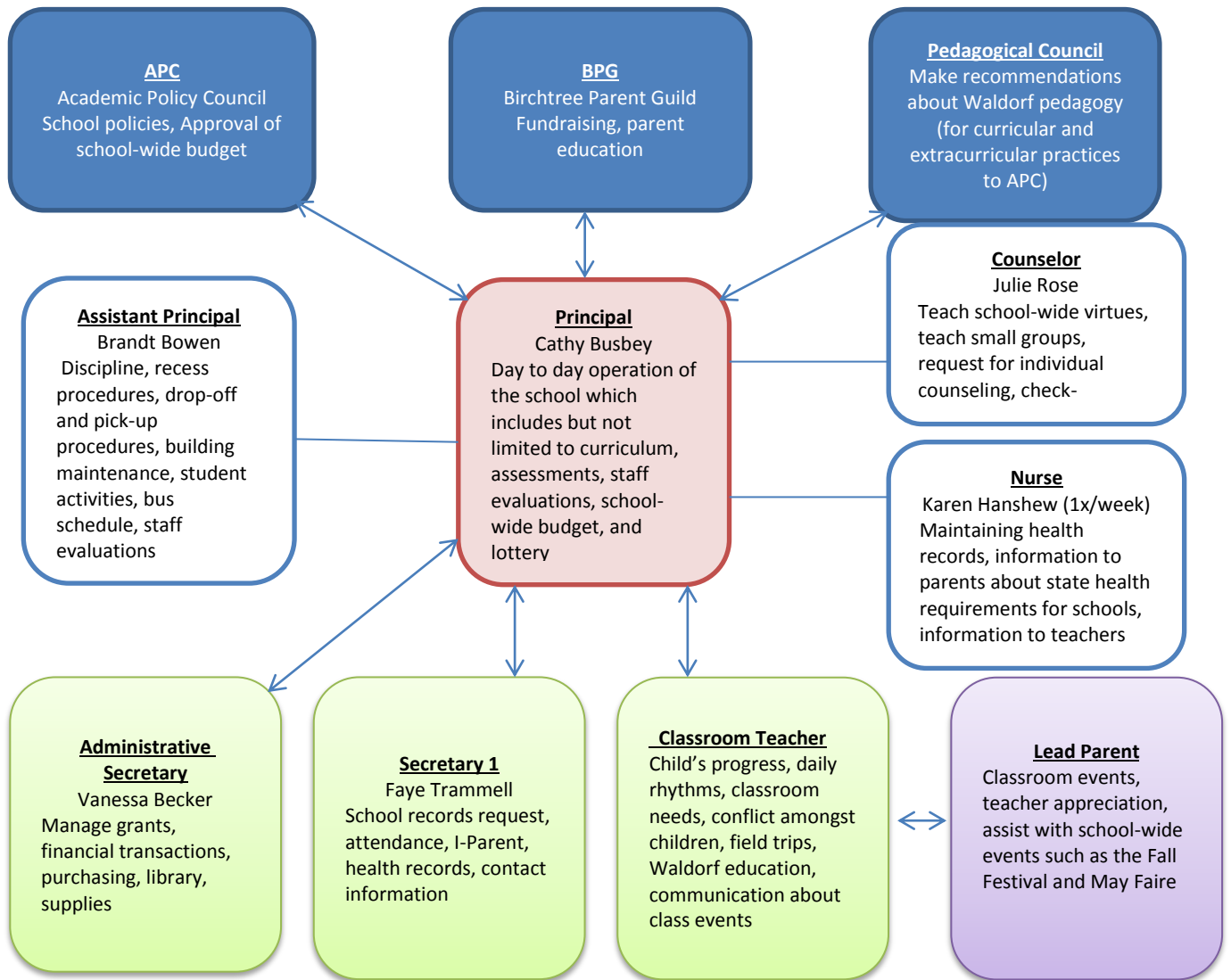
- Email through our gmail account
- Newsletters and updates sent via email and hard copy
- Birchtree Charter School website
- Facebook closed group “Birchtree Charter School”
- Parent/teacher conferences and conversations
- Class meetings

Request to Change Teachers

Waldorf Education places high value on providing consistency throughout the child’s elementary and middle school years. Therefore, transferring a child to another teacher will be a last resort at Birchtree. If a parent has a conflict with a teacher, the following steps need to be taken:

- The parent will meet with the teacher, clearly stating the area of concern and working towards a resolution.
- After 4 weeks, if the parent feels that there has been no resolution to his/her concern, the parent will request a meeting with an administrator and the teacher. Possible resolutions will be discussed at this time and a written agreement will be drafted and signed by the teacher and parent.
- After 8 weeks, if the written agreement has not been effective in creating a resolution, then the parent will submit a formal request in writing to the principal asking for a change in teacher for his/her child. The principal will then take the request into consideration. If the principal decides that the child’s best interest would be served by changing teachers, then that change would not take place until the next school year.
- The written request must be submitted by May 1st.

Whom Do I Ask?



Homework

At Birchtree Charter School, the objective of homework is to develop a student's independence and sense of responsibility. Homework is intended to be a purposeful activity, involving meaningful work, and is given in accordance with the developmental model of Waldorf education. One underlying tenet in Waldorf education is that students be provided time each day for physical and artistic pursuits in addition to intellectual work. Homework assignments may include activities that depart from traditional assignments, such as helping to prepare dinner, taking a walk to make specific observations, or handwork.

Regularly scheduled homework can be expected in 3rd grade through 8th grade. While the rigor and time devoted to homework increases at each grade level, the time required to complete homework will vary with individual children.

Will development, original work, and creativity are inherent to Waldorf education. Computers will not be employed for homework until assigned in grades 6, 7, or 8. An exception may be made for students requiring a learning adaptation.

Parents can anticipate homework from specialty teachers as well, beginning in 4th grade.

Parents are expected to support their children's learning in the following areas:

- **Organization:** build a routine for homework at home to include a consistent time and a quiet place for completing homework.
- **Reading:** read to, listen to, or share reading with their children (depending on their ages) 20 minutes each day
- **German:** ask 4th-8th grade students (only) to teach parents the weekly vocabulary
- **Orchestra:** listen to students in grades 4-8 practice their string instrument on a daily basis. The strings teacher specifies practice assignments on a daily practice log, which is required to be turned in weekly.

Additionally, attendance and participation at two concerts each school year is mandatory for all 4th– 8th grade students. Only under prearranged circumstances or medical emergencies will alternate assignments be given.

Complete and timely submission of homework is a basic expectation to maintain good standing in relevant subject areas. Students who habitually do not complete homework assignments will not be held in good standing, which may affect their eligibility to participate in extracurricular events and athletic programs.

Student Assessment

In lieu of traditional letter grades, Birchtree Charter School uses many assessment tools to monitor the growth and development of students. These include:

- Standards based report cards
- Standardized assessments such as Measures of Academic Progress
- Portfolios
- Teacher observation
- Oral recitations
- Exhibitions

- Student projects
- Assemblies

Throughout the year, parents are informed of student growth in the following ways:

- Informal conversation with teacher
- Parent nights at least twice a year
- Twice a year report cards (middle and end of the year) - The report cards are standards based. The standards listed are expected to be met by the end of the school year.
- Twice a year parent/teacher conferences (first and third quarter)

Mandated Standardized Tests

As per our charter, Birchtree students will participate in all federal and state required assessments and screeners. These include the Alaska Measures of Progress (AMP Testing) given annually to students in grades 3-8 and the MAP tests for students in grades 5-8. Literacy screenings will be done for grades K-3 beginning in the 2015-16 school year.

Part III: Attendance and Discipline

Please note that these are the two areas that can lead to a student being dismissed from Birchtree Charter School.

Attendance Policy

As a school, we greatly value rhythm and regularity. Both contribute to our students' individual and collective well-being in ways that are subtle and profound. Little else replaces the experience of lessons delivered as live education, particularly in Waldorf education where learning especially during the main lesson time is primarily auditory.

Expectations for Attendance

1. Class begins promptly at 8:30 and students are expected to be in class by that time. Drop-off time at 8:20 helps to ensure that your child will be ready to begin the school day on time.
2. Absences will be recorded as follows:
 - a. Students who arrive between 8:30 and 9:00 will be counted as tardy.
 - b. Students who arrive between 9:00 and 11:00 will be counted for a half-day absence.
 - c. Students who arrive after 11:00 or leave prior to 11:00 will be counted for a full day absence.
 - d. Students who leave prior to 2:00 will be counted for a half-day absence.
3. Consequences of Chronic Tardiness & Absence
 - a. For students with 8 or more absences at any time during the school year, a written notice will be sent to parents reminding them of our attendance expectations.
 - b. For students with 12 or more absences any time during the school year, a conference will be scheduled to discuss how to improve the child's attendance at

school, including the consideration of other schooling alternatives. For parents who wish to continue the enrollment of their children at Birchtree, parents will be asked to sign an Attendance Contract committing to their child's improved attendance. The contract will consider how school staff can provide assistance to parents and to the child towards improving their child's attendance.

- c. For students with 15 or more absences within a school year, a notice of "probationary enrollment" for the remainder of the semester will be sent to parents.
- d. Any student who has 20 absences will be dropped from enrollment at either the last day of the first semester (December) or the last day of the second semester (May). Parents may re-enter the lottery for the following year, but any preference for the lottery will not be re-instated.
- e. Extenuating circumstances will be considered only for medical issues, child custody issues, and/or family illness. Valid documentation of the issue would need to be provided to the school.
- f. Any school sponsored activity such as Battle of the Books or a class field trip if the activity is during the school day would not be considered an absence for the student.

Family Travel

Please attempt to schedule family travel during school vacation times. Family travel is still considered an absence per the attendance policy, However if family travel occurs during the school year the following criteria needs to be followed to maintain the student's academic level:

- a) Written notice of at least 2 weeks is provided to the teacher.
- b) A plan is developed with the teacher for the completion of commensurate work.
- c) The plan is completed to the teacher's satisfaction.

Discipline Philosophy

We believe that children have a right to a quality education in a safe and caring environment. We hope to accomplish this by fostering respect for self and others and by promoting pro-social behavior among our students. Students will be held to the highest standards of conduct in order to maintain a healthy learning atmosphere for everyone.

Any student who chooses to interfere with others' learning will be held accountable. In order for this discipline program to be consistent and effective, it is important that parents and school staff work together to support each other. Age appropriate discipline will be the school's guide. (i.e. What might be considered "severe" in an eighth grader may not be considered such in a first grader.)

The Mat-Su Borough School District School Board policy 5144.1 states the following:

Certain student conduct is prohibited because it diminishes the learning abilities of that student or other students in the educational community. Students who fail to conform to the required conduct may be subject to appropriate corrective action. Such action may range from simple

discipline to expulsion depending on the nature of the conduct and the potential or actual harm caused by the conduct. Illegal as well as other wrongful behaviors are subject to disciplinary action by the school district.

Expected Behaviors

- 1) **Academic Honesty** – Students will reach their full potential only by being honest with themselves and with others.
- 2) **Attendance** - Students are expected to be in class on time and to make proper use of the instructional setting by assuming the responsibility of being on task and completing all assignments.
- 3) **Proper Attire** – please see guidelines under the dress code.
- 4) **Safety** -Students are expected to honor all safety guidelines, respecting the need for an environment where students are physically and emotionally safe. Students will refrain from bringing the following prohibited substances to school:
 - a. Alcoholic beverages
 - b. Over the counter medications (If a student needs medication, it needs to be turned in to the front office.)
 - c. Drug paraphernalia and illegal substances
 - d. Tobacco
 - e. Weapons (any item used with the intent to do harm or cause fear of harm may be deemed a weapon)
 - f. Replicas of weapons, unless permission to do so is obtained from an administrator or teacher.
- 5) **Respect for others** - Students are expected to treat others with respect and consideration, using polite language with no profanity, teasing or put-downs.
- 6) **Respect for property** - Students are expected to treat the school property and environment with respect and use it responsibly. This includes desks, bathrooms, equipment, books, and materials.
- 7) **Peaceful Conflict Resolution** - Students are to treat others as they would like to be treated. As such, students are expected to choose positive alternatives to physical or verbally abusive confrontations. Such alternatives may include seeking teacher assistance for help in conflict management.
- 8) **Cooperation with School Personnel** - Students will stay within school boundaries and within sight of adult supervision. When instructed to do so students will line up quietly and promptly. Students must obey the lawful instructions of all Birchtree employees.
- 9) **Proper Use of Electronic Devices** – Cell phones, pagers, electronic games, and personal music devices are not permitted at school unless there is prior approval by the principal or teacher. This includes school activities that are off campus. If approval is given for a cell phone, the student must keep the cell phone turned off and in a backpack or cubby during the school day. The cell phone may be used for appropriate reasons (i.e. calling for a ride after 3:25) after school and outside of the building. District computers and networks are not to be used by students outside of computer class or when being supervised by a teacher. They are only to be used for educational purposes.

Consequences of Inappropriate Behavior

When a student chooses to not follow the rules and guidelines, the teacher or responsible adult will work with the student to help him or her respect the rules and regain self-control. The teacher will complete a discipline slip to ensure communication with administration and parents. Examples of behavior slips follow. A low/moderate slip is filled out for behaviors that have been worked on at school but need additional support from home.

Birchtree Charter School Low/Moderate Behavior Form

Student: _____ Staff Member: _____ Grade Track: _____

Incident	Date:	Time:	
Location	Problem Behavior	Staff Intervention Administered	
<input type="checkbox"/> Classroom <input type="checkbox"/> Playground <input type="checkbox"/> Office <input type="checkbox"/> Hallway <input type="checkbox"/> Restrooms <input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Following Instructions <input type="checkbox"/> Staying on Task <input type="checkbox"/> Getting Teacher's Attention <input type="checkbox"/> Accepting "No" for an Answer <input type="checkbox"/> Disagreeing Appropriately <input type="checkbox"/> Working with Others <input type="checkbox"/> Property misuse <input type="checkbox"/> Dress code <input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate language <input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Clarified how behavior did not meet expectations <input type="checkbox"/> Re-taught/practiced the behavior skill class group <input type="checkbox"/> Identified environmental predictors <input type="checkbox"/> Utilized pre-correction techniques <input type="checkbox"/> Established a behavioral cue/prompt <input type="checkbox"/> Provided a structured choice <input type="checkbox"/> Reviewed common assessment data <input type="checkbox"/> Contacted parent: ___/___/___ phone call copy sent <input type="checkbox"/> _____	

The low/moderate slip is sent to the office and the referring adult may take any of the following actions:

- Informal talk
- Discipline conference with student and teacher
- Request for parent conference
- Time to refocus
- Restriction of privileges
- Send student to the office to speak with an administrator (if behavior is habitual)

A severe slip is used for a more severe offense and the slip and the student will be sent to the principal or assistant principal who will contact the parents. The consequences will be determined by the nature of the offense and may include in- or out-of-school suspension.

BIRCHTREE CHARTER SCHOOL SEVERE BEHAVIOR FORM

STUDENT _____ GRADE _____ CLASS TEACHER _____

Date _____ Time _____ Referred by _____

Location:	Severe Misbehavior	Contributing Factor	Trigger
_____ Others involved: <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Peers (Name/s) _____ _____ Student has: <input type="checkbox"/> Check-in, check-out <input type="checkbox"/> IEP <input type="checkbox"/> 504 <input type="checkbox"/> Behavior contract	<input type="checkbox"/> Strong defiance <input type="checkbox"/> Physical aggression (choking, biting, hitting with a fist, hitting with a stick, throwing an object that could cause harm, touching private parts, intentional kicking) to self and others <input type="checkbox"/> Severe verbal aggression (cursing and physical threats) <input type="checkbox"/> Verbal/emotional bullying <input type="checkbox"/> Severe and violent class disruption <input type="checkbox"/> Severe destruction of school or personal property <input type="checkbox"/> Intentionally leaving instruction (running off) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Adult request/ directive <input type="checkbox"/> Individual work at desk <input type="checkbox"/> Group work <input type="checkbox"/> Managing materials/ tools <input type="checkbox"/> Transition <input type="checkbox"/> External interruption <input type="checkbox"/> Teasing from peers <input type="checkbox"/> Changes to routine <input type="checkbox"/> Substitute teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Assembly <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Need for quiet <input type="checkbox"/> Overwhelmed <input type="checkbox"/> Need for support <input type="checkbox"/> Avoidance of adults/ peers <input type="checkbox"/> Obtain adult / peer attention <input type="checkbox"/> Insecurity / fear <input type="checkbox"/> Overstimulation <input type="checkbox"/> Confusion of expectations <input type="checkbox"/> Avoidance of task/ activity <input type="checkbox"/> Avoidance of social situation <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

Brief description of incident: _____

Administrator Action: In-school suspension (___ days) Out-of-school suspension (___ days) Other _____

Administrator's signature _____ Date _____

Dismissal from Birchtree Charter School for continued severe discipline issues will be on a case by case basis with the final decision by the principal.

PART IV: How You Can Support Your Child at Birchtree Charter School

We offer the following “10 Needs for a Healthy Childhood and Educational Experience” for your consideration. These recommendations were shared with our teachers through their Waldorf training.

1. Proper Nutrition: A good, hot, nutritious breakfast every day before school. Breakfast, snack and lunch should contain lots of protein, and no sugar or food additives.
2. Adequate Sleep: Be in bed no later than 8:00 p.m. on school nights. Most young children still need 10 to 12 hours of sleep each night.
3. Minimal Media: No computer, TV, video games, or other screen time on Sundays through Thursdays. No murder, mayhem, or adult movies or videos on the weekend, ever.
4. Quiet Time: Provide some daily quiet time, without radio, CDs or tapes. Give your child the gift of silence.
5. Time in Nature: Spend some time in nature every day. Experience the weather; pay attention to the seasons, moon stars, and sky.
6. Chores at Home: Assign some responsibilities for taking care of the home, pets, and yard.
7. Appropriate Dress: Pay attention to keeping your child warm and dry while at school, especially their feet.
8. Cultivate Reverence: All traditions offer practices that help to develop the reverence for life that supports home, school, and community relationships.
9. Support Your Child’s Education: Help to develop healthy homework habits, participate in school activities, and communicate honestly about your concerns with your child’s teachers.
10. Support the Class Community: Get to school on time. Plan vacations during breaks. Support the class code of conduct. Children need shared values and alignment among their adult role models.

Birchtree Dress Recommendations

Please consult the Mat-Su Borough School District Handbook (on the district’s website) for details about the District’s Dress Code. The District Student Handbook states:

Student dress and general appearance is a shared responsibility among students, parents/guardians, and the school. The Board of Education requires students to attend school in appropriate dress that meets health and safety standards and does not interfere with the learning process. Certain classes may require students to wear appropriate protective gear. Attire bearing expression or insignia which is obscene, libelous, or which advocates racial, religious, or other prejudice is prohibited. Attire which advertises illegal substances for school age students is prohibited, as are items which suggest sex, alcohol, or tobacco products. Clothing which does not

cover undergarments is prohibited. Students wearing prohibited attire will be asked to cover it, change it, or go home until proper attire is worn.

Explanation of things not permitted: See through tops, low-cut tops, and tops that show underclothes. Attire with holes above the knees is not to be worn. Low cut pants that reveal midriff and/or show your underwear, etc. Pants with holes above the knee, unless you are wearing solid-colored leggings or tights under them. Skirts and shorts must not be higher than three (3) inches above the knee. If you wear leggings, jeggings, skin-tights, yoga pants, riding pants or other similar very tight pants they must be solid colored and not partially opaque or see through. In addition, your top must be at thigh length when wearing these types of pants or leggings. Pajamas and sleep-wear such as jammie-pants are prohibited unless approved by administration for special class activities.

In addition, we ask that you attempt to follow some dress guidelines that are in the spirit of Waldorf-inspired education. In order to reduce classroom distractions, we respectfully ask that students avoid wearing clothing with media images such as large commercial logos or cartoon characters.

Alternatives to the above would be clothing comprised of:

- Solid colors,
- Stripes,
- Polka dots,
- Or patterns.

We also ask that all outerwear and accessories (including indoor shoes and lunch boxes) also follow these guidelines. Please choose plain shoes that do not include electronic lights, sounds, wheels, or commercially produced pictures.

Our goal is to foster a learning environment with minimal distractions for students. Thank you for your commitment to creating and maintaining the highest quality environment for our children!

Outdoor Clothing

Birchtree students will spend significant periods of time outside playing, walking, or doing activities--even on cold, rainy, or windy days. The Mat-Su Borough School District's minimum temperature for outdoor recess is -10 Fahrenheit; taking the wind chill factor into consideration, this policy will be our guide. Please send your child to school prepared to go outside each day based on the following seasonal recommendations:

Fall/Spring-

- Rain boots
- Rain coat and rain pants
- Warm layer - fleece or wool top
- Stocking cap
- Light gloves or mittens
- Warm socks

Winter-

- Winter boots
- Winter coat and snow pants, or snowsuit
- Winter hat

- Neck warmer
- Winter gloves or mittens
- Warm socks

Lunch and Nutrition Guidelines

Students in grades 1 – 8 will need to bring a healthy snack and lunch every day. Please pack a well-balanced lunch focusing on whole and healthful foods, such as whole grains, protein, fruits and vegetables.

A Sample Tool-kit for School Lunches:

- Re-usable water bottle
- Thermos to keep soups warm
- Insulated lunch box with ice pack
- Eating utensils

If your child has special nutritional needs or if you have questions about any of these guidelines, please let your child’s teacher know. Food allergies must be listed on the emergency medical form and be made known to the teacher at the beginning of the school year.

If your child forgets his/her lunch, the school will provide a snack two times per quarter. The school will call home in order for the parent to bring a lunch to the student.

Birthday Celebrations

Each class will have its own birthday protocol to honor students. If you would like to bring in a wholesome snack in celebration of your child’s birthday, please check with your child’s teacher regarding food allergies. In general, we suggest birthday treats such as popcorn, fruit, vegetables, or homemade goods. Please, avoid artificial dyes and additives as many children are sensitive to these ingredients.

Media Philosophy

In our society, the media in all its forms (television, movies, video games, computers, etc.) is an ever-growing presence in our lives. We as educators and parents face the difficult choice of deciding how much to let the various media into our lives and how to use them wisely.

With growing children this question becomes even more urgent. Current research increasingly points to a direct adverse effect on brain development from excessive exposure to media. In schools as well as the home, we are confronted by many forms of attention deficit disorders and other learning disabilities. We also see a fading of the powers of imagination and wonder. Young children are by nature “doers.” The media expose children to an artificial world that allows no engagement of their own will and imagination. Not only is the nature of the media foreign and directly harmful to the child’s developing brain and inner being, the content of most television programs, video games and movies is glaring in its disregard for what childhood really is meant to be. Because of this, exposure to the media works at cross purposes with what Waldorf education aims to bring.

Therefore, we recommend limiting television, video games or movies to weekends, leaving the school week free for creative learning and other hobbies.

Parent Involvement

Parents of Birchtree students are expected to volunteer a minimum of four (4) hours per month or thirty-six (36) hours per year, per family. This consideration is given so that volunteer time does not become a burden to families with more than one child attending the school. However, parents are encouraged and welcomed to increase their volunteer time as they are able and willing. Please contact the parent representative of your child's class to see about volunteering.

Sample Volunteer Opportunities:

- Fundraising
- Volunteering in the classroom
- Helping with outdoor site activities
- Building projects around the school
- Sewing projects
- Baking
- Cleaning and organizing
- Traffic/outdoor safety duty
- School store

Lead Parents

Each grade will have 1-2 parents who support the teachers and keep in touch regarding the needs of the classes. This may include setting up a phone tree, arranging field trip drivers, organizing class events, helping with class plays, and gathering special classroom supplies. If you are interested in being a Lead Parent please contact your child's teacher.

Closing

We would like to thank all of you for embarking on this journey with us. Your participation at Birchtree will have a positive impact on your child and the community in which he or she lives. Please do not hesitate to contact any member of the school staff, the Academic Policy Committee, or the Parents' Guild if you have questions or concerns. We look forward to both the challenges and the exciting learning opportunities this year will bring!