

Charter School Application

Birchtree Charter School
BCS

Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Alaska
December 2, 2009

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1. Academic Policy Committee

- a) **Has the school's independent academic policy committee operated at an acceptable level?**
- b) Is there an independent academic policy on file?

1(a) Has the school's independent academic policy committee operated at an acceptable level?

The Academic Policy Committee grew out of the Birchtree Parent Guild (BPG). On June 18th, 2008 five parents filed an intent to open a Waldorf-inspired School for school year 2009-2010 with the MSBSD. A Charter Application was filed on October 1st, 2008. After conversations with MSBSD, it was decided that the parents involved would try again for school year 2010-2011. Since January 2009, the parents committed to Birchtree Charter School have met 8 times: February 2nd, March 2nd, April 6th, May 18th, August 3rd, September 2nd, September 28th, and October 26th, 2009. On August 3rd, 2009 the BPG split to form the Birchtree APC and the BPG. BPG will continue to work on possible funding sources and educating Valley residents about Waldorf Education. The APC will work towards hiring teachers and an administrator, setting policy, developing budgets and working with the Mat-Su Borough to secure a location. A designated member will be a liaison between BPG and the APC. At this time Lori Berrigan is that designated person.

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The Academic Policy Committee Members and Contact Information

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The Academic Policy Committee will supervise the academic operation of the charter school and ensure the fulfillment of the mission. Responsibilities will include, but are not limited to: establishing and approving all major educational and operational policies, approving all major contracts, approving the schools fiscal affairs, and selecting and evaluating the administrative staff.

Initially, the Academic Policy Committee will consist of the founding families, the Administrator (once hired) and two teachers (once hired), totaling eleven members. One member will relinquish their position yearly at which time the school body can nominate and vote in a new member.

The Administrator of Birchtree Charter School will be the liaison between the Academic Policy Committee and MSBSD.

Birchtree Parent Guild (BPG)

The founding families, the Parent Guild, met together for the purpose of starting a Waldorf methods charter school. The Parent Guild will supervise finding additional funding for the Charter School and disseminating information to the Mat-Su borough community. The Parent Guild received a \$5000 grant for the purpose of establishing the charter, hiring a grant writer, becoming a 501(3)c non-profit and purchasing rubrics and assessment methods. BPG has met seven times over the last year and has received a funding report from E2 Consulting (available upon request), purchased rubrics and assessments from Gradalis Educational Consulting Services, become a 501(3)c non-profit, received their EIN number, and held informational gatherings at the Palmer Library for the Mat-Su Community. BPG recently split to form the BPG and the APC board. Minutes are available upon request. The designated contact person for the BPG is Lori Berrigan.

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BPG Members and Contact Information

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1(b) Is there an independent academic policy on file?

**Birchtree Charter School
Waldorf-Inspired Education**

Table of Contents for Independent Academic Policy

- I. Mission**
- II. Philosophy**
- III. Description of Need**
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I. 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 the 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.

II. Program Philosophy

At the heart of the Waldorf-based Whole Child Curriculum is the recognition of how much children change from year to year. Our lesson plan places 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.

III. Description of Need

A. Advantages

Waldorf-inspired Education is based on the whole child. The rich curriculum provides a well-rounded education using academics, art, music, foreign language and movement that responds and enhances the child's developmental phases. It encourages children to have an imaginative inner life. Children who attend Waldorf programs are typically able to connect to nature, have a life-long passion for learning, and have a high emotional and social intelligence. According to a recent study of Waldorf graduates listed on the web site "Why Waldorf Works" (www.whywaldorfworks.org), 94% attended college, 47% chose humanities or arts as majors, 42% chose science as a major, 89% are highly satisfied in their occupation choice, 91% are still active in lifelong education, 90% highly value tolerance and other viewpoints. As we move forward into a world of unknowns, we will need critical thinkers that can imagine solutions to our everyday social problems.

B. Limited Opportunities

At this time, there is not school in the Mat-Su borough School District that offers a Waldorf-inspired or Whole Child Curriculum. In contrast, Anchorage has a Waldorf-Inspired program as well as two other Whole Child programs. These programs are Chugach Optional and Denali Montessori.

C. Support

At this time Birchtree Parent Guild has approximately 53 families with 100 children interested in a Waldorf-inspired charter school in the Valley. BPG has communicated with families from the Anchorage area who have stated that if they had this option in the Valley, they would consider moving from Anchorage.

IV. Performance and Programs

A. Performance

1. **Goals:** 80% of all students should be able to master 80% of rubrics listed in the Charter. There will be continuous practice and assessment throughout the school year to determine the progress and status of students in the program.
2. **Student Assessment and Parent Conferences:** Birchtree Parent Guild has purchased Assessments created by Gradalis Educational Consulting Services for grade 2 to 5 grade. Example of grade 2 can be found in the Appendix I. A comprehensive assessment will be prepared and provided to parents at the end of each school year for each child. This will include an overview of the course work for the year and a discussion of the child's achievement, performance, and growth in each of the various curriculum blocks, the specialty subjects (languages, handwork, recorder, movement), as well as social skills and work habits. In addition, the parents will receive a quarterly summary of the student's work in subject areas at the parent-teacher conferences. This will include a review of main lesson books and short summaries from language and handwork instructors. The children will also present their work at a child-led, child-parent-teacher conference. Report cards, as such, will not be given. Parents may also request a conference with the teacher if needed.
3. **Portfolios:** Comprehensive student portfolios will include samples such as main lesson books, practice papers, written work, reports, artwork etc.
4. **Teacher Observation:** A record of teacher observations of each child will be maintained. These will include a record of individual growth and achievement in all three main areas of concern (intellectual, physical and emotional).
5. **Exhibitions:** An open house will be planned at least once a year, during which student work will be exhibited and samples of the class work will be demonstrated.
6. **Assemblies:** School-wide assemblies will be planned monthly or bimonthly as a showcase of each grades' classroom work (recitations, songs, poems) starting at 1st grade. This will give parents, administrators and board members a glimpse of the students work throughout the year.
7. **Grade Level Benchmark Skills:** Students will also demonstrate their overall progress toward graduation readiness through a series of standardized tests to be given per Matanuska-Susitna Borough School Districts testing schedule starting in 3rd grade.

B. Program Goals

1. **Attendance:** All students must be at school each day to reap the benefit of instruction and to participate in learning opportunities. We will strive to have a high yearly attendance rate of 90%.
2. **Enrollment:** We will aim for re-enrollment of current students at the rate of 90%.
3. **Parent and Family Participation:** Parents will be encouraged to volunteer 35 hours a year. We also hope that all families will participate in conferences, programs, celebrations and special projects. Logs will be kept of volunteer hours in the school office.
4. **Community Involvement:** We hope to forge long and lasting relationships within the community that will help us both serve the community and meet our goals for our students.
5. **Academic Excellence:** Birchtree Charter School will strive to deliver highly motivating, enriching curriculum, and will provide appropriate resources through capable teachers and staff, materials, and other support as deemed necessary to achieve the greatest gain for the students. Classroom teachers and the Principal will keep records to show student growth

and achievement. The APC Governing Board will review these records regularly, as will teachers, to determine effectiveness and ways to improve instruction.

6. **Parent Classes:** BCS will offer educational classes to the Mat-Su community throughout the school year to assist parents in creating a home-life that best serves the child. Ongoing education for parents increases the likelihood of success for students.

V. Assessment and Evaluation

A. Foundations of Assessment

The foundations of Birchtree's learning plan rests on the following beliefs about assessment:

1. 100% of all students will participate in all assessment techniques.
2. Assessment is an ongoing process that helps identify, at various stages in the learning process, what a student knows, understands, and can do.
3. Assessment is a collaborative process.
4. Assessment should be a process that encourages, challenges and motivates students to higher levels of learning and awareness.
5. Multiple types of evidence must be used to better understand each learner's strengths and needs, and to plan for support and enrichment.
6. Students should be given authentic opportunities to display their accomplishments and demonstrate their learning.

B. Types of Assessment

At Birchtree Charter School, a variety of assessment methods will be used to measure and guide progress towards achievement of the school's performance standards. When deciding what type of assessment to use, the school/teachers will consider WHY they are doing the assessment, WHAT they are assessing, and WHAT are the criteria for success.

1. **Standardized Tests:** While a true Waldorf program does not utilize standardized testing as a way to measure student progress, Birchtree Charter School is willing to participate in all federal and state- required assessments starting in the third grade. Our rationale for delaying standardized testing until third grade is two-fold. First, students in Waldorf-inspired programs do not begin formal academics (e.g., reading instruction) until 1st grade. This approach to teaching reading, for example, is in alignment with brain studies that have demonstrated that "there is no absolute timetable for learning to read. Differences of three years are normal. Some children will be ready to read at 4 years; others, just as normal, will be ready at 7 or even 10 years. The child who reads at 7 might not be 'developmentally delayed' as many have diagnosed. In many countries, including Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and New Zealand (all with high literacy levels), formal reading instruction begins as late as age 7 or 8" (Jensen, 1998). Because of delayed formal reading instruction, traditional standardized tests would not be an accurate measure of academic progress for a 1st or 2nd grader in a Waldorf-inspired program. Secondly, by abstaining from standardized testing in the primary grades, Waldorf-inspired schools have more time to utilize alternative assessments such as portfolios, teacher observations, oral recitations, and exhibitions of completed student projects/artwork. Authentic assessments such as these "ensure greater retention of material and a more lively process, one that activates enthusiasm for learning rather than subject children to the undue stress" of high-stakes testing (Mitchell, Gerwin, Schuberth, Mancini, & Hofrichter, 2009).

References

Jensen, E. (1998). *Teaching with the brain in mind*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Mitchell, D., Gerwin, D., Schuberth, E., Mancini, M., & Hofrichter, H. (2009). *Assessment without High-Stakes Testing: Protecting Childhood and the Purpose of School*. Retrieved October 26, 2009 from http://www.whywaldorfworks.org/03_NewsEvents/documents/AlternativeAssessment.pdf

- a) **Participation in Testing:** Birchtree Charter School will participate in all federal and state-required assessments at the grade level required starting in 3rd grade. These assessments currently include:
 1. Terra Nova
 2. Standards Based Assessment (SBA) – Math, Science, Reading, Writing
 3. National Assessment of Educational Progress (if required)
- b) **Waiver Request:** Birchtree Charter requests to not participate in the MAP testing. It is our understanding that this is a computer-based test. As a Waldorf-inspired program, we will not introduce computers into our curriculum until the sixth grade. Therefore, we do not feel it is appropriate to require our students to take tests in an unfamiliar medium.

2. **Classroom Assessment:** The following types of assessment methods and tools will be utilized at BCS.

- a. Gradalis Assessments: Birchtree Parent Guild purchased Rubrics and Assessments developed by Bonnie River of Gradalis Educational Consulting Services. Waldorf teachers and administrators created these for Waldorf and Waldorf-inspired programs. The Assessments purchased contain a Teachers Manual, Student Testing booklet and Student scoring sheet. They are formatted similar to the Briggance Tests and are meant to gain an overview of the student's skills. Each student will have these completed by his or her teacher for grades 2nd to 5th.
- b. Portfolios: Comprehensive student portfolios will include samples such as main lesson books, practice papers, written work and reports, artwork etc.
- c. Teacher Observation: A record of teacher observations of each child will be maintained. These will include a record of individual growth and achievement in all three main areas of concern (intellectual, physical and emotional).
- d. Oral Recitations: Oral recitations, presentations, reports, performances, and demonstrations will occur regularly, by both individuals and groups.
- e. Exhibitions: An open house will be planned at least once a year, during which student work will be exhibited and samples of the class work will be demonstrated.
- f. Completed student projects/artwork, both individual and group, will be used in public exhibitions.
- g. Assemblies: School-wide assemblies will be planned monthly or bimonthly as a showcase of each grades' classroom work (recitations, songs, poems) starting at 1st grade. This will give parents, administrators and board members a glimpse of the students work throughout the year.

VI Reporting Progress

The staff at BCS will regularly use assessment in a variety of forms to drive and inform instruction. On a quarterly basis, teachers will review student assessments, portfolios and other evidence, and will meet with students and/or student's parents/guardians to discuss progress, growth, challenges and needs, and set new goals.

On an annual basis, teachers will assess each student using the assessments developed by Bonnie River of Gradalis Educational Consulting Services. A comprehensive assessment will be prepared and provided to parents at the end of each school year for each child. This will include an overview of the course work for the year, and a discussion of the child's achievement, performance, and growth in each of the various curriculum blocks, the specialty subjects (languages, handwork, recorder, movement), as well as social skills and work habits. In addition, the parents will receive a quarterly summary of the student's work in subject areas at the parent-teacher conferences. This will include a review of main lesson books and short summaries from language and handwork instructors. The children will also present their work at a child-lead, child-parent-teacher conference. Report cards, as such, will not be given. Parents may also request a conference with the teacher, if needed.

Birchtree Charter School will use an individualized action plan to help improve the performance of low achieving students. We are especially committed to working with such students because we are committed to keeping all students together with their peers of the same age group. The Waldorf based Whole Child Curriculum approach avoids retention or skipping a grade except in the most rare of circumstances.

In addition to the regular parent conferences, these are the steps we will take when a pupil is achieving poorly:

Faculty or members of the faculty will initiate a 'child study', part of the regular weekly faculty meeting, to discuss the individual child's situation. The impressions of several teachers who know the child will be sought. Groups of pupils with a similar achievement pattern will be discussed together. The faculty will then come up with an individualized intervention plan for the pupil(s). This can involve receiving supplemental support services, tutoring, alternative instructional materials, or a remediation program. The school will make every effort to get expert and lay volunteers to help as appropriate. Parents will be informed of the team's recommendations and kept apprised of intervention implementation. Their advice and insight regarding the issue will also be sought.

VII The Birchtree Learning Plan

Whole Child Curriculum: The Whole Child Curriculum based on the Waldorf educational approach at Birchtree Charter School is child-centric. It includes 14 learning strategies that attune what is taught, when it is taught, and how it is taught to the cognitive, psychosocial, and kinesthetic phases of child development:

A. Community Learning and Teaching:

BCS will use the classic "*class teacher*" model in which one teacher "loops" together with his or her class from grade to grade. This structure of continuity helps create a gradual transition from

home to the school community. BCS class teachers will make a commitment to remain with their class through Grade Five. Some master teachers stay with their class through 8th grade. The class teacher welcomes each child individually with a handshake and brief check-in at the beginning of each day and then teaches the academic “main lesson” which comprises the first two hours and usually some other lessons later in the day. He or she ends the pupil’s day with another handshake and check-in. This daily bonding and oversight ritual is the foundation of what is possible for individual students at BCS. The class teacher is not the only teacher the pupils see each day. Specialist teachers teach foreign languages, music, games and movement, handwork. Interesting guests will be integrated into the life of the school. Besides their parents or guardians, teachers are the most consistent relationships children have. BCS teachers will endeavor to work together as a group to support each other’s individual work.

Because formal education takes place in a community setting, it is essential for teachers to work collaboratively with each other and the parents out of an understanding of how they are shaping pupils’ relationship to learning. This is a solemn public responsibility that requires mutual collegial support. BCS will work outside the classroom to build our larger pupil/parent/teacher community through the use of regular seasonal festivals. These festivals provide an opportunity for the larger community to come together as a whole around a central seasonal theme. The centerpiece of these events is usually the presentation of student work be it music, drama or dance.

B. Focused concentration:

The structure of the school day at BCS is attuned to pupils’ inherent biorhythms. The most intense and focused learning happens at the beginning of the day when the students are most receptive. Each day begins with a two-hour period known as the “*main lesson*”. This teaching unit is integrated and cross-curricular and includes activities to awaken and focus attention. 40-45 minute subject lessons follow the main lesson. Academic subjects take priority in the morning. The afternoons are usually used for arts and crafts, outdoor activities, sport and practical work. Subjects such as music, movement, and foreign languages, which benefit from regular practice, are evenly spaced throughout the middle of the day whenever possible.

C. Thematic Learning:

Teachers present each subject in ‘blocks’ of time lasting several weeks. Teachers use the main lesson format to address a progressive range of competencies in mathematics, language arts, science, and humanities. Meaningful connections link subject areas and previous and future main-lessons – even main lessons years ahead or long in the past. The main lessons are part of a *block scheduling* system of themed learning that centers the schedule and organization of the day from 1st to 8th grade. Within the requirements of the curriculum, class teachers choose the material, presentation, and activities to suit the needs of the specific class. They aim to make each lesson an interesting and artistic whole that has rhythm, structure and purpose. Main lesson activities and content meets pupils’ cognitive, affective, and practical modes of learning.

D. A stimulating learning environment:

A regular change of activities stimulates students’ interest. Like any living system, BCS will create a rhythmically structured school day, week, and year with a built-in pressure-release system that keeps everything lively. Teachers will balance concentration and relaxation, mental and practical work, movement, listening and participating, observing and doing. Each lesson will balance cognitive, emotional/social, and active learning. Teachers will plan activities to suit the attention span of a given class and pay attention to the rhythm of the week.

E. Deep learning:

A rhythmic approach to teaching enhances learning and memory. Information that is not immediately ‘regurgitated’ can be absorbed and later ‘remembered’ within a wider context that includes the pupil’s own experiences. Teachers introduce new experiences allowing time for pupils to assimilate previously taught material. Teachers distinguish between subjects that need regular practice (foreign languages, music, spelling etc.) and subjects focusing on new content. Topics are dropped following a period of concentration of around 3-4 weeks. This allows for information to settle, and time for data and information to become knowledge and eventually understanding.

F. The Whole Class Dynamic:

Teachers focus on the class as a dynamic whole. Teachers constantly work to shift and reintegrate smaller groups - such as ability groups for math and reading - back into the whole class. A class of mixed ability children is a model of community. Pupils learn from each other. The whole-class dynamic celebrates differences. Teachers avoid giving rewards for being first or best. Teachers are aware that rewards and prizes make pupils compete for prizes rather than working from inherent motivation. Teachers aim for a creative balance between cooperation and competition among pupils, aiming for them to be enlightened and inspired by each other as well as the teacher.

G. Teaching Through Narrative:

The use of narrative gives pupils a conceptual framework within which they can orientate themselves and understand their experiences. Younger pupils listen to stories told by a teacher in his/her own words, not read from a book. Teachers inspire pupils to identify with characters in stories and develop linguistic and listening skills. Teachers use story as a classroom management tool with younger pupils. Inspirational or thought-provoking stories take the place of moralizing or lecturing older pupils.

History is taught initially through narrative and stories from a wide range of sources: fairy and folk tale, legend, fable, parables, mythology, and literature and then moves on to recorded history and historical fact. Teachers share content in oral form, not through written textbooks, especially in the earlier grades. Teachers use biography to strengthen pupil identification with people who made a difference. Communicating, exchanging viewpoints, dialogue and debate are part of lessons. The groundwork for such abilities is laid down in the younger classes. Teachers cultivate the quality of listening and speaking in class.

H. The Use of Imagery:

The use of imaginative “mental pictures” is an essential element of the Whole Child Curriculum. When presenting factual information, teachers will strive to present information with both a pictorial and emotional element. Teachers avoid abstract concepts throughout the primary years (ages 6- 12) and stress the pictorial element that grows with pupils’ changing understanding of the world. Teachers use imagery that evokes strong sensory impressions and stimulates the imagination wherever appropriate in speaking to the children up to the ages of 8 or 9. Teachers transition to more abstract intellectual processes after the age of 10 when the ability to think in abstract and causal terms begins to emerge. From 10 until puberty, teachers adopt metaphor, simile, and comparison to create mental images. In adolescence, teachers construct imagery from history and current events.

I. A “Living” Classroom:

Teachers use a wide variety of materials and resources including prepared worksheets, texts, vocabulary lists, maps, diagrams, and multimedia. Pupils are not taught by mass-produced textbooks but by live teachers. Teachers and pupils together develop the main lesson from a variety

of sources. Pupils use blank journals to write and illustrate what they have learned and observed into their main lesson books. As a matter of course, books such as dictionaries, atlases and other reference material are an integral part of the classroom. Assignments and projects arising out of the lesson theme require that the pupils develop competence in a range of information-retrieval skills by the time they reach age 12.

J. Learning to Lead:

The personal behavior of adults and teachers at BCS will be an example to the pupils. In addition, pupils will learn about how to be a leader in different ways at different stages of their development:

- Kindergarten teachers will endeavor to be a model of kindness, strength, and daily rhythm to the pupils, knowing that children at this age *imitate adult behavior* on their path towards becoming their own individual.
- Class teachers of grades one to five will endeavor to set clear guidance and boundaries for the class as a whole, knowing that children at this age *rely on guidance and boundaries* to continue developing their individuality.
- Class teachers of grades six to eight will endeavor to be experts in their subjects knowing that at this age pupils *want to be led by teachers they respect as experts* to develop themselves into enthusiastic lifelong learners.

K. Respect, tolerance, and understanding:

Each individual class within the school will be a multicultural, mixed ability educational environment that offers equal chances for all. Each class, moving through the years together, will be a learning community for respect and understanding of different individual academic and social gifts and challenges as well as for varied social and cultural backgrounds. The class – which includes the parents as an inextricable part of the whole – will develop principles that will enable the class to carry and deal with the kind of crises that occur as part of normal development. Kindness, sharing and the ability to listen to others will be actively encouraged.

Pupils are inspired to take pride in their work and to achieve the highest standards possible. Teachers will work to balance an atmosphere of positive competition and collaboration. Pupils will evaluate their fellow pupils' achievements in an objective, though positive and constructive way. Teamwork and problem solving will be practiced and the school community as a whole will work to reflect these principles.

L. The Continuous Learning Community:

Birchtree Charter School is designed to function as a living system that balances initiative and accountability. All teachers, staff, and participants will be asked to make a commitment to develop him or herself along with the pupils. Our fundamental assumption is that there is always room for improvement. We will endeavor to make planning, review, and ongoing educational research a creative, fruitful and effective process.

M. Living Systems Learning:

At BCS it is our intention to educate the whole child to see him or herself as living within the context of a whole environment. Developing the capacity to think ecologically is not just a matter of teaching about the importance of recycling or our reliance on fossil fuels. We intend to teach pupils to become aware of the inherent ecology of life and as something that is connected to everything we do, from a baby's exhale to the ozone, from a lit match to an exploding volcano. In the same way that each child must be taught as a whole human being, so the multidimensional, complex issue that is our world ecology must first be seen as a single unit with many interconnected parts. From there, specific aspects of ecology are woven into our curriculum, our building site and

our world view so that the child will fully understand the individual and collective relationship that child and every other person has with the planet.

N. Community Service:

One of our goals at Birchtree Charter School is to educate children in such a way that they are able to envision and create a peaceful world as adults. Doing things for others contributes to a sense of self-sufficiency, self-esteem, and accomplishment, as well as strengthen qualities of self-discipline, perseverance, patience, and imagination. Community service is an intrinsic part of that goal. Bringing children into contact with those less fortunate than themselves and caring for the environment helps broaden their understanding of the realities of our society. It helps them develop compassion and empathy for others as well as a desire and will to help. A service project for a class also helps build a spirit of community within the class. Working together towards a common goal helps develop skills in cooperation and working together. This is one reason why service projects are important even in the early grades. The children learn to work together and to trust one another.

VIII Admissions and Placement

A. Admissions Criteria

Enrollment policies, access to curriculum, services and activities of the program are nondiscriminatory with regard to religion, language, physical handicap, or national origin of children and their parents.

Children of the originators of the school and those who have actively participated in its initiation and organization will have a priority for enrollment up to ten percent (10%) of final enrollment.

The application procedure and timelines for admission will be the same as that of other alternative programs in MSBSD.

Admissions will be on a first come, first served basis. If the number of students applying for admission exceeds the openings available, entrance, except for the existing students of BCS and the understated preferences, shall be determined by lottery process. The following will be given preference for admission to the school:

- Siblings of students currently enrolled in the school.
- Students of Employees of the School.
- Students of Founding Families.

The minimum age of the children entering the school will be:

Kindergarten: Age 5 by September 1st

First Grade: Age 6 by September 1st

B. Lottery Process

Schedule for Intent Forms and Lottery

- No later than the last week of March – All Intent Forms available
- First week of April – Returning Student intent Forms due
- April 15 – New Student Intent Forms due
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Intent forms will be available no later than the last week of March from BCS Main Office (once the school opens) and may be downloaded from the BCS Web Site. These intent forms should be completed and returned as soon as possible but no later than April 15th. It is important to receive all intent forms from interested parties on or before April 15th, so that should the need arise, those names will be included in the lottery. They will be dated and times according to when they are received.

If there is more interest in attendance than what is filled by the children of BCS employees and the siblings of students currently in the program, we will hold a lottery (a random drawing) with the names from intent forms (turned in by April 15th) on the first Wednesday following April 15th at 7pm in the school foyer (once the school opens). An effort will be made to maintain a balance of boys and girls. Parents may attend the lottery, but are not obligated to do so. The results will be witnessed, and parents will be notified of the results. *BCS commits to making the lottery and enrollment procedures and practices clear and transparent to parents, staff and community.*

C. Once Admitted

Upon acceptance to Birchtree Charter School, parents will be asked to read the parent handbook and agree to the terms that are identified in the handbook. Birchtree Charter School will request support of the following, as well as other requirements:

- Encourage active support of the school through volunteering their time and/or other resources.
- Commitment to provide a home environment that is conducive to learning. In particular, this will mean agreeing to limit children's exposure to electronic media influences such as television, movies, video games, etc.
- The willingness of the parent to gain understanding of the Whole Child Curriculum and the Waldorf Educational approach and willingness of the parent to support the education in the home.
- During the admissions process, parents will be asked to become familiar with these obligations through written material and/or informational meetings. Families may be asked to take a tour of the school, fill out an application, and then, after the child is enrolled in the school, schedule a family interview. Prior to the interview, any existing school record or IEP for the child(ren) must be provided for confidential review by the BCS staff. During the interview, the family commitments listed above will be discussed. A family is expected to complete this process and also actively demonstrate their level of commitment to the school and its philosophy.

D. Admissions Procedures

- Intent to return forms: All returning students to BCS should submit an intent-to-return form to their classroom teacher or the office no later than the first week of April.
- Registration: Intent forms will be collected in the spring. Fall registration will take place the first full week of August.
- Withdrawals: Students/families who need to withdrawal for a extended period of time from BCS, for medical reasons, family emergencies, or some other legitimate reason will have their positions held at the top of the waiting list and will be readmitted as soon as space become available.
- Before school starts or as opening occur: If a family on the waiting list is offered an opening prior to the start of the school year or as space becomes available during the school

year, they have 48 hours to accept. If they decline the offer, their name is removed from the waiting list and they must resubmit an intent form the following spring, likely go through an interview, and possibly through a lottery.

- Vacancies in the fall: In the case that there are still vacancies after placing students from the waiting list, open enrollment will be posted and intent forms will be collected during the first two weeks of August. Procedures would be followed as outlined for the spring enrollment and lottery.

E. Class Placement Considerations

Students will be placed in classes heterogeneously following the Mat-Su School District's Enrollment Policy, including giving attention to pupil/teacher ratio guidelines in place at the time of the lottery, to gender balance, and to student behavior patterns.

IX Parent and Community Involvement

At BCS, we believe that there needs to be a strong partnership between home and school in order to accomplish the goal of educating children. When parents make the choice to send their child(ren) to our school, they have decided to be an active participant in their child(ren)'s education. At BCS, we believe that active involvement needs to include a commitment by parents to both support their child(ren)'s academic and social learning at home, and to support the larger Birchtree Charter School community through volunteering at the school.

A. Volunteer Requirements

Parents of BCS students are encouraged 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.

B. Community Partnerships

BCS will partner with community organizations and businesses, to help achieve its goals and better the Mat-Su community. BCS will actively seek involvement from members of the Mat-Su Valley to

- Provide learning opportunities in specialized areas such as dance, music, drama, art and foreign language.
- Provide meaningful opportunities for students to apply their learning
- Provide opportunities for service.
- Help broaden students understanding and acceptance of diverse people and perspectives.
- Increase student's knowledge of sustainability in nature through hands-on work within the Mat-Su Valley.
- To incorporate Native Alaskan Studies and increase knowledge of the Native Peoples of Alaska and their culture.

X Exemptions and Waivers (Exemptions to Common Practice)

A. Policies and Operations

1. Power of Operation: BCS will be responsible to operate with the allocated funds it receives, consistent with law, and will have the authority to independently exercise the following powers: Prepare a budget; accept and expend donations, gifts, or grants according to the specifications of the donor. The Board will be given written notice of all accepted gifts, donations, and grants that are channeled through the school's operating budget along with associated conditions.

2. Conduct Code: BCS will base their student code of conduct and behavior established by the school district in compliance with applicable federal and state laws.

3. Curriculum/Instructional Materials: Charter schools are allowed autonomy in choosing the curriculum, texts, and instructional materials for use in the school. This may be done without school board approval providing it meets or exceeds content standards accepted by the state and school district. This will allow BCS to better meet the unique needs of our program and student body.

4. Health Services: BCS will not have an on-site nurse on staff. Arrangements will be made with a qualified health professional to establish and maintain records for our students. This will include: immunizations, testing, screenings, and administration of medications. Medication will be dispensed only with written parental permission and according to accepted health and safety guidelines. *District, state and federal laws and policies will be followed.*

5. Travel Policy: BCS may involve students in day excursions or trips of a longer duration. Longer, more costly trips shall be demonstrated to be thoughtfully prepared with safeguards, security, and liability issues covered according to school district regulation. These trips would be a tool for extending learning and would have direct connection to educational outcomes.

6. Assessment and Report Cards: BCS is requesting exemption from any mandated testing required by the MSBSD School Board. Birchtree Charter School will participate in all federal and state-required assessments at the grade level required starting in 3rd grade. These assessments currently include:

- Terra Nova
- Standards Based Assessment (SBA) – Math, Science, Reading, Writing
- National Assessment of Educational Progress (if required)

BCS also requests to create and use other forms of reporting than the standardized report cards used by MSBSD. The following types of assessment methods and tools will be utilized at BCS.

- Gradalis Assessments: Birchtree Parent Guild purchased Rubrics and Assessments developed by Bonnie River of Gradalis Educational Consulting Services. Waldorf teachers and administrators created these for Waldorf and Waldorf-inspired programs. The Assessments purchased contain a Teachers Manual, Student Testing booklet and Student scoring sheet and are formatted similar to the Briggance Tests and are meant to gain an overview of the student's skills. Each student will have these completed by his or her teacher for grades 2 to 5.

- **Portfolios:** Comprehensive student portfolios will include samples such as main lesson books, practice papers, written work and reports, artwork etc.
- **Teacher Observation:** A record of teacher observations of each child will be maintained. These will include a record of individual growth and achievement in all three main areas of concern (intellectual, physical and emotional).
- **Oral Recitations:** Oral recitations, presentations, reports, performances, and demonstrations will occur regularly, by both individuals and groups.
- **Exhibitions:** An open house will be planned at least once a year, during which student work will be exhibited and samples of the class work will be demonstrated.
- **Completed student projects/artwork,** both individual and group, will be used in public exhibitions.
- **Assemblies:** School-wide assemblies will be planned monthly or bimonthly as a showcase of each grades' classroom work (recitations, songs, poems) starting at first grade. This will give parents, administrators and board members a glimpse of the students work throughout the year.

B. Structure of Program

1. School Day: The School Day will Commence at 8:30 am and End at 3:00.

2. Calendar: BCS will initially follow the MSBSD school calendar. We reserve the option to alter this calendar in the future by changing start and end dates, vacation days, parent conference days, and building development days when these changes better meet the goals and mission of BCS. BCS will fulfill the requirements of state law regardless to the number of attendance days, *BCS will inform the District promptly of any changes to the calendar.*

3. Lunches: Parents will be responsible for providing students with lunch each day. Staff supervision will ensure that no student goes without food. This will be a cost saving measure and will eliminate any requirements for floor space specified for that purpose.

4. Transportation: Parents/guardians are responsible for providing reliable transportation to and from school each day. This includes the arrangements for car pools and other such organized transportation. Bus transportation may be contracted to transport students to and from field trips.

C. Employee-Related

1. Personal Leave: There shall be no time limit in the number of teachers who can take personal leave at the same time. As a small school, it would be impractical to enforce the rule that only a small percentage of teachers be allowed leave on a particular day. Prudence and good judgment will be our guide.

2. District Building Development: BCS will provide Waldorf specific training to all teachers on staff. Professional development in Waldorf specific curriculum is essential to support the school philosophy, and the goals and objectives of BCS. Building Development days may be scheduled differently than the district's dates when there are appropriate conferences, workshops, or instructions available to meet the needs of our staff.

3. Hiring: BCS is a Waldorf-inspired program. We ask that we be able to advertise for Waldorf-trained/certified teachers within and outside of Alaska utilizing the media and technology at our disposal.

4. Unit Administrator/Principal/Advisor: this individual will be the teachers' immediate supervisor as determined by the APC Board and District. The designated administrator with a Type B certificate shall aid in the recruitment and selection of teachers, and will have the responsibility for evaluating teachers, advising and mediating in the school. A qualified person that the APC board approves, and the School District agrees to, shall evaluate the Principal.

5. Involuntary Transfer: Per Alaska State Statute, a teacher may not be involuntarily transferred to a charter school. At BCS, this is particularly important, due to the specialized nature of the teaching staff.

XI Other Policies and Provisions

A. Personnel Policies/Compliance

Principal, teachers and other staff at BCS are employees of BCS, as well as employees of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District, and will be covered by the personnel policies of the District. BCS principal/Administrator is responsible for supervising, evaluating, acting as the governing board's (APC) agent in hiring and terminating its employees and other responsibilities as deemed appropriate. District guidelines and policies regarding terms and conditions of employment, with exception as to items noted in the Charter, will be followed.

BCS is subject to all federal and state rules and regulations concerning recruitment of applicants, including without limitation, requirements concerning recruitment and use of background and criminal checks. BCS employees will follow the MSBSD procedures utilized in administering salary and retirement programs.

BCS will adopt MSBSD's written policies and will operate in compliance with federal and state law, concerning the recruitment, promotion, evaluation, discipline, and termination of personnel.

B. Insurance

BCS will be covered under the District insurance coverage as any other public school in the Mat-Su School District. Coverage will be provided for building and employees through the District recommended insurance broker. BCS has reserved money in its budget to pay for this policy.

C. Risk Management

BCS shall adequately protect against liability and risk through an active risk management program. BCS shall operate in such a manner as to minimize the risk of injury or harm to students, employees and others. School operations and activities shall be reviewed by the MSBSD Risk Manager for compliance with appropriate local, state, and federal safety practices/codes and school Board policies.

D. Proposed Charter Contract Term

BCS requests the term of the contract to be five (5) academic operating years commencing acceptance of the Birchtree Charter School by MSBSD and the Alaska Board of Education for school year 2010-2011, as provided under Alaska State charter school law (AS14.03.255).

A long-term commitment provides the greatest benefit for students and parents who commit to the whole child curriculum of Waldorf-Inspired Education. We believe that BCS should be able to make a commitment to parents who enroll their children in this program that, barring unforeseen circumstances, BCS will be here to support them through this rewarding educational experience/endeavor.

2. Law Provisions

- a) To be valid, the application must include a separate, signed, charter school contract with the district, addressing the fourteen provisions as listed under AS 14.03.255(c)(1 – 14).
- b) Have the responsibilities of the academic policy committee regarding provisions of the law been fully addressed?
- c) Is the charter school within the bounds of the most current applicable statutory and regulatory requirements?

2(a) To be valid, the application must include a separate, signed, charter school contract with the district, addressing the fourteen provisions as listed under AS 14.03.255(c)(1 – 14).

The Birchtree Charter School APC will administer the contract with the MSBSD for the operation of the Charter School pursuant to the terms therein.

This Charter Contract is a draft and will be reviewed, revised and signed after approval of the proposal by the Mat-Su Borough School Board. The contract addresses the fourteen provisions listed under AS 14.03.255 (c) (1-14), and follows this section.

2(b) Have the responsibilities of the academic policy committee regarding provisions of the law been fully addressed?

The roles and responsibility of the Academic Policy Committee and Parent Guild and their members are clearly laid out in the Bylaws. A copy of the bylaws for both Birchtree Parent Guild and Birchtree Academic Policy committee follows this section. Minutes of the Board meetings where the bylaws were accepted can be found in Appendix IV.

2(c) Is the charter school within the bounds of the most current applicable statutory and regulatory requirements?

The APC shall oversee all aspects of the School and shall be responsible for the establishment and management of policies for the school, and shall fulfill the duties as prescribed in A.S. 14.03.250. These are fully addressed in the APC bylaws under Article II.

Nonsectarian Statement

Birchtree Charter School offers a nonsectarian, multi-cultural curriculum. In this curriculum, a variety of cultural traditions throughout history are presented through story meeting the children at each developmental stage. World traditions and religions are examined through the context of history, and are connected to the curriculum, allowing students to gain a deeper understanding of mankind's evolution over time.

Charter School Contract with the MSBSD School Board
Birchtree Charter School

Contract Between
Matanuska Susitna Borough School District
And
Birchtree Charter School

THIS AGREEMENT is between Birchtree Charter School (hereafter “Charter School”) Academic Policy Committee on behalf of Charter School, whose physical address is (*to be determined*), Wasilla-Palmer area; and with the Matanuska Susitna School Board, whose address is 501 Gulkana, Palmer, Alaska 99645, hereafter “ School Board”.

WHEREAS, Charter School desires to operate within the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District (hereafter “School District”) in conformance with Alaska 14.03.250.290 and applicable School Board policies and procedures; and

WHEREAS, the School Board has reviewed and unanimously approved Charter School’s application amended in accordance with conditions noted by the School Board;

NOW THEREFORE, in consideration of the mutual covenants and agreements contained in this contract, the parties agree as follows:

AS 14.03.255 (b)

1. Birchtree Charter School will keep all financial records of the Charter School.
2. The Academic Policy Committee will select a full-time principal. The principal will possess a current Alaska Type A Teaching Certificate and a current Type B Administrative Certificate and be either an existing principal in MSBSD, be on the district’s Eligible for Hire list for administrators, or be a retired administrator in good standing with MSBSD. Additionally, the principal will be selected based on experience, vision, and commitment to the principles of Waldorf education. The principal shall be the liaison between MSBSD and the APC. The Governing Board of the APC agrees to oversee its operations with BCS to ensure the terms of the contract are met.
3. The Birchtree Charter School’s Academic Policy Council (comprised of parents, teachers, community members and administrators) is responsible for the educational outcomes and to ensure the overall educational practices and quality of participation is consistent with the vision of the school. One of the standing committees of the APC is the Legal Compliance Committee. This committee will be responsible for tracking overall school performance as it pertains to MSBSD standards. If school academic performance is in need of improvement, this committee will work with MSBSD in a plan of improvement. This plan will undergo approval by both MSBSD and the Academic Policy Committee.
4. Proposed plan is to meet yearly to monitor progress in achieving the committee’s policies and goals.

AS 14.03.255 (c)

1. 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 the 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 and creativity, social intelligence and ecological awareness.

Charter School shall provide an educational program in the School District subject to the terms and conditions of this contract that shall commence with the first day of school of the school year. The contract becomes effective on the date of its execution.

2. Achievement Levels: Birchtree Charter School's educational program shall commit itself to attaining the levels of achievement specified in the Charter School proposal.

- A. Evaluation/Assessment: Charter School shall offer kindergarten through eighth grade and will evaluate students using objective and subjective assessment tools. Multiple assessment tools will be used to document student achievement including but not limited to: standardized tests, performance assessment, rubrics, student portfolios, and teacher assessment. All assessment will remain in compliance with Alaska State Standards and testing. A combination of these assessments will be used to develop an individual student monitoring plan wherein a collaborative effort will be made by students, parents, and teachers to continue to track and evaluate individual progress.
- B. Birchtree Charter School will assist each child in achieving his or her maximum potential. Individual student plans will be developed and utilized to record and monitor growth/progress over time. Success will be defined, not by single test scores, but through the measurement of individual growth/progress over a minimum of three years, and achievement of individual goals.
- C. 80% of students will perform at a minimum of 80% mastery on the Bonnie River's Gradalis Education Assessment.

Reporting: The Birchtree Board will conduct an annual review of academic progress in meeting its performance goals. The Board will review formative and standardized assessment information. Staff will use assessment data to drive decisions made in curriculum and instruction. Report of results is to be given to the School Board on an annual basis as per Board Policy 6190.

How the curriculum is aligned to measurable outcomes and assessments:

Measurable Outcomes	Assessment Tools
<p>Language Arts: Students are literate and articulate. They can clearly demonstrate reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. Students can communicate clearly to others, both orally and in writing. Students can comprehend and interpret a variety of forms of written expression.</p>	<p>State mandated test Teacher assessment Portfolio Exhibits</p>
<p>Math: Students can reason logically and understand and apply mathematical processes, concepts, and techniques. The four basic processes, Fractions, Decimals, Geometry, Percent, Interest, Algebra, Areas, Solid Geometry.</p>	<p>State mandated test Teacher assessment Portfolio Exhibits</p>
<p>Science: Students understand general principles of the scientific method and can apply these to several branches of science including Life Sciences, Physical Sciences, and Earth Sciences.</p>	<p>State mandated tests Teacher assessment Portfolio Exhibits</p>
<p>Sustainable Communities: Pupils learn lessons about sustainable human community from natural ecosystems. Pupils understand the circle of life and the seasons, know how to plant and garden, compost, and recycle. Birchtree Charter School may implement <i>The Edible School yard</i>, a model to create and sustain an organic garden and landscape which is wholly integrated into the school lunch program for schools and communities</p>	<p>Teacher assessment Portfolio Exhibits</p>
<p>Social studies: Continuity, change and belief systems in different cultures. Students possess knowledge and understanding of a variety of cultures around the world, including their history and geography, food, music, and games.</p>	<p>Teacher assessment Portfolio Exhibits</p>
<p>Foreign Language: Students speak, understand, and have writing skills in two languages in addition to their native language.</p>	<p>Teacher assessment Portfolio Exhibits</p>

<p>Handwork and Practical Skills: Students can knit, crochet, sew, make patterns, cross-stitch, weave, make toys, and do woodwork. Bricks & mortar, tents, teepees, dwellings, basic word processing and computer skills beginning in 6th Grade.</p>	<p>Teacher assessment Portfolio Exhibits</p>
<p>Visual Arts: Students draw, model in beeswax and clay, sculpt in stone, do watercolor, form drawing, and perspective drawing. Music: Students learn to play the recorder, a string instrument, and a wind instrument. They learn how to read music. Singing is taught as a subject and incorporated in other subjects. Brass and percussion is available. Visual and Performing Arts: Presentations (e.g.. Class Plays, Art Exhibitions, Concerts, and Recitals) related to the curriculum, presented over the course of the year.</p>	<p>Teacher assessment Portfolio Exhibits Assemblies Concerts</p>
<p>Physical Education and Movement: Gymnastics, group games, and, in older grades, appropriate organized sports. Dance and, when possible, eurythmy</p>	<p>Teacher assessment Portfolio Exhibits</p>
<p>Human Development & Life Skills: Self-esteem, conflict resolution, human development and health.</p>	<p>Teacher assessment</p>
<p>Leadership & Citizenship: Community service (helping in the classroom, the school, at home and volunteering in the community)</p>	<p>Teacher assessment Portfolio Exhibits</p>

3. Admissions Criteria

Enrollment policies, access to curriculum, services and activities of the program are nondiscriminatory with regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, marital or parental status, physical or mental disability, pregnancy, or any other unlawful consideration.

Children of the originators of the school and those who have actively participated in its initiation and organization will have a priority for enrollment up to ten percent (10%) of final enrollment.

Admissions will be on a first come, first served basis. If the number of students applying for admission exceeds the openings available, entrance, except for the existing students of BCS and the understated preferences, shall be determined by lottery process. The following will be given preference for admission to the school:

- Siblings of students currently enrolled in the School.
- Students of Employees of the School.
- Students of founding families of the School.

The minimum age of the children entering the school will be:

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Intent forms will be stamped-in in the order they are received.

Intent forms will be available no later than the last week of March from BCS Main Office (once the school opens) and may be downloaded from the BCS Web Site at <http://www.birchtreecharterschool.org>. These intent forms should be completed and returned as soon as possible but no later than April 15th. It is important to receive all intent forms from interested parties on or before April 15th, so that should the need arise, those names will be included in the lottery. They will be dated and times according to when they are received.

If there is more interest in attendance than what is filled by the children of BCS employees and the siblings of students currently in the program, we will hold a lottery (a random drawing) with the names from intent forms (turned in by April 15th) on the first Wednesday following April 15th at 7pm in the school foyer (once the school opens). Parents may attend the lottery, but are not obligated to do so. The results will be witnessed, and parents will be notified of the results. *BCS commits to making the lottery and enrollment procedures and practices clear and transparent to parents, staff and community.*

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Class Placement Considerations

Students will be placed in classes heterogeneously following the Mat-Su School District's Enrollment Policy, including giving attention to pupil/teacher ratio guidelines in place at the time of the lottery, to gender balance, and to student behavior patterns.

4. Administrative Policies and Procedures: Charter School warrants that it shall comply with all state and federal laws and regulations applicable to public schools and all requirements imposed by School Board Policy and regulations on the operation of charter schools.

5. Funding: School district shall allocate funding for Charter School based on a per-pupil proportional share of funding received by the School District for students attending Charter School, less administrative costs retained by the School District, determined by applying the DOE approved indirect cost rate. Projected funds will be available to the Charter School at the beginning of the school year. Enrollment Adjustment to Actual will happen on November 15th of each school year. Charter School student transfers after final count day will be handled in the same manner as other student transfers in the School District.

- A. School District Charges: Materials and services provided directly by School District to Charter School shall be charged to Charter School at School District cost as per current procedure for all District Schools. These costs shall be charged only if the School

District incurs a cost, if it is not addressed elsewhere as an agreement, and it is not included in the administrative costs retained by the School District.

- B. **Student Fees and Charges:** No tuition shall be charged to Charter School students who reside in the School District.

6. The charter school will account for receipts and expenditures by using and complying with district accounting, audit and fiscal procedures. Birchtree Charter School will allow district personnel or district auditors access to financial information to perform the annual or special audit and accounting information. Birchtree Charter School shall cooperate with the School Board and the Department of Education in complying with applicable State law.

7. **Location and Facility:** Members of Birchtree Parent Guild and APC board are working together to secure a location for Birchtree Charter School. Birchtree Charter School shall be operated at the following location: *(to be determined)*, Charter School covenants and warrants that the facility shall comply, on the first day of occupancy, with all federal, state, and local health and safety requirements applicable to the operation of the charter school. Any lease agreement may not exceed the term of this contract.

8. **Teachers and Staff:** The Charter School expects to include nine full time certified teachers, one half-time special education teacher, one full-time administrator, one FT specialty teacher, two teacher aides and one full-time Administrative Secretary. At this time, Donna Levesque, a certified teacher and Waldorf-trained teacher, is being considered as a possible teacher/mentor for the school. Additionally, teachers will be selected based on experience and commitment to the principles of Waldorf education. Waldorf teacher training will be provided prior to the start of classes for those teachers who do not possess a teaching certificate from a recognized Waldorf teacher training college or institute. *All certified positions will be advertised, interviewed and selected by the Administrator and APC Board, and in a manner consistent with District Policy and procedures.*

The Charter School shall promptly provide the School District with written notice of any proposed changes to the school's staff. It is agreed and understood that all teachers must sign a written contract with the School District before providing services. All hires, retentions, and non-retentions of Charter School employees must be approved by the School Board.

- A. **Evaluation:** Type B Principal/Administrator will evaluate teachers in a manner equivalent to that used for other district teachers.
- B. **Collective Bargaining:** Unless the School District and any association representing an employee agree to an exemption, all provisions of any existing negotiated or collective bargaining agreement applicable to any employee shall remain in effect while the employee provides services at Charter School.
- C. **Retirement:** All employees of the Charter School shall be members of the Teacher's Retirement System or the Public Employee's Retirement Association and subject to the requirements of those systems, if they are eligible.

9. **Teachers to Student Ratio:** Charter School will seek to maintain a teacher-to-student ratio of 1:24. We recognize that some classes may have less than 24 students.

10. Number of Students Served/ Enrollment: We propose to begin our charter with two Kindergartens (am and pm), two 1st grade classes, two 2nd grade classes, one 3rd and one 4th, one combined 5/6 class, and one combined 7/8 class serving 160 students. The full time equivalent number of students is 160.

11. Term of Contract: This contract shall be effective upon execution for a period of five (5) years, and shall expire on _____, unless terminated as provided elsewhere within. This contract will be reviewed annually, and may be extended by mutual agreement of the parties for a term not to exceed ten (10) years.

12. Termination: This contract may be terminated by School Board for School's failure to meet educational achievement goals or fiscal management standards, for a default in any material provision of this agreement or for other good causes. If there is evidence of a breach of contract, the District administration or the legally designated representative of the Charter School shall have a right to investigate this breach of contract and make recommendation to the School Board regarding remedy. Based on this recommendation, the School Board actions could include but not limited to 1) immediate corrective action for the situation at either the Charter School or School District, 2) Charter School on probationary status for a specified time period to correct deficiencies, 3) provide 30 days written notice to Charter School of its intent to terminate this contract and the reasons therefore. If Charter School fails to remedy the cause for termination within the time provided in this notice, this contract will automatically terminate at the end of the stated time. A charter school's contract may be terminated by the district school board for the school's failure to meet educational achievement goals or fiscal management standards, or for other good cause. During the charter school's annual review with the School Board, each party's compliance with the provisions of the contract will be reviewed. If any allegations of noncompliance with the charter school contract are presented either during the annual review or at any other time, then the School Board, through the Superintendent or designee, shall investigate these allegations. Prior to terminating the charter school contract, the School Board and the charter school Academic Policy Committee shall attempt to remedy any violations of the contract. The school board shall provide written notice to the charter school Academic Policy Committee of its intent to terminate the contract and the reasons therefore. Should the Charter School contract be terminated all unused funds and/or assets shall remain with the School District. Dissemination of funds and/or assets will be determined by the Superintendent or designee.

13. Receipt and Use of Public Money: Charter School covenants and agrees that it shall comply with all state and federal requirements for receipt and use of public money.

14. Exemptions/Waivers: Birchtree Charter School requests the following exemptions:

- A. Future mandated testing requirements implemented by the MSBSD School Board or School District. Birchtree Charter School will participate in the mandated SBA testing.
- B. Standardized Report Cards. Birchtree Charter School shall use Assessment materials purchased from Gradalis Educational Services for Grade 2 through 5 (example of grade 2 found in Appendix 1) and teachers/staff will create additional written assessments for each child enrolled in BCS for all grades. All Kindergarten Children will be assessed for first grade readiness using Waldorf principles.
- C. Birchtree Charter requests to not participate in MAP testing. It is our understanding that these are computer-based tests. As a Waldorf-inspired program, we will not introduce computers into our curriculum until the fifth grade. Therefore, we do not feel it is appropriate to require our students to take tests in an unfamiliar medium.

Additionally:

15. **Academic Policies:** The academic policies and goals for the Charter School shall be established by the Academic Policy Committee's Governing Board. The APC's Governing Board will include teachers and school administrator and will meet at least four (4) times per year to assess and monitor progress in achieving the APC's policies and goals. Initial academic policies are detailed in the Independent Academic Policy, Section 1, pages 7-20, of the application. These policies are subject to review by the APC, and may be changed by a 2/3 vote of the APC.

16. **Budgeting and Accounting:** The Charter School budget and accounting information is set forth in Section 8 and 9 of this application.

Charter School shall provide an annual budget to the School Board for approval at a time designated by the District. Charter School shall account for receipts and expenditures by using and complying with the School District's accounting, audit, and other fiscal procedures.

17. **Contract Compliance:** The Governing Board of the APC agrees to oversee operations of Birchtree Charter School to ensure the terms of this contract are met. The Board agrees to meet regularly with members of the APC (the current parents, teachers. Staff and community members who have applied and been approved) and students (where appropriate) to review, evaluate, and improve operations of BCS.

18. **Conflict Resolution:** Each charter school shall adopt a conflict resolution policy. Conflicts not resolved may be appealed to the Birchtree Academic Policy Committee. In addition to the mutual covenants and agreements set forth above, this charter shall bind Birchtree Charter School to its stated purpose, goals, operational procedures and all other aspects of the approved proposal, excepting the APC Bylaws and the Independent Academic Policy, which may be changed by a 2/3 majority vote of the APC Governing Board.

19. **Notice:** Any written notice required to be given to the Charter School shall be sent certified mail or delivered to the following person(s) or at the following addresses:

BCS Chair
Lori Berrigan
P.O. Box 4501
Palmer, Alaska 99645

Any applicable deadlines or identified time periods shall run from the date of receipt of such notice.

Dated: _____
Colleen Vague, School Board President

Dated: _____
Lori Berrigan, Birchtree APC Chair

STATE OF ALASKA
THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT ss.

Subscribed and sworn to me this _____ day of _____, 2009.

NOTARY PUBLIC in and for Alaska

My commission expires: _____

Charter School Bylaws

Birchtree Charter School

Bylaws

Adopted by the Academic Policy Committee on

September 28th, 2009

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ARTICLE I

Name, Office, Fiscal Year, and Governance

SECTION 1. Name. The name of the organization shall be "Birchtree Charter School" and shall hereinafter be referred to as "the School" or "Birchtree Charter School."

SECTION 2. office. The principal office shall be at the facility of Birchtree Charter School located in Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Alaska.

SECTION 3. Fiscal Year. The fiscal year of Birchtree Charter School shall coincide with the fiscal year of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District (July 1 through June 30).

SECTION 4. Governance. The School shall be governed by the Academic Policy Committee.

ARTICLE II

Academic Policy Committee

SECTION 1. General Powers. Birchtree Charter School shall have an Academic Policy Committee (APC) , which is the primary governing body designated to oversee and supervise all aspects of the

School. No members of the APC shall act on his/her own in the name of the APC unless so authorized by these bylaws or by resolution of the APC. The APC shall have the maximum power permitted by law, shall establish policy for the school, shall fulfill the duties prescribed in A.S. 14.03.250, et seq., and as set forth in these Bylaws, and shall perform the following functions, including, but not limited to:

- A. Ensure the fulfillment of the mission of Birchtree Charter School as stated in the Birchtree Charter School/Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District contract;
- B. Oversee and have ultimate accountability and responsibility for academics, curriculum, legal/risk management, personnel issues, finances, operations /maintenance and budgeting issues, and as otherwise permitted or required by the above-mentioned contract or by law;
- C. Promote professional conduct in accordance with Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District policies;
- D. Contract with a Type B certificated administrator;
- E. Delegate to the Principal those tasks deemed appropriate by the APC and render to the Principal and/or Teacher-In-Charge opinions regarding the hiring, evaluation, and/or termination or non-retention of teachers, staff, and other personnel to the extent permitted by law;
- F. Review contracts;
- G. Review, upon request by any parent, teacher, or staff, requests for any purchase of materials initially denied by the Principal or Teacher-In-Charge; and
- H. Review and rule on any other questions, issues, or policies that may from time to time arise, to the extent permitted by law.

SECTION 2. Members of the Academic Policy Committee. The number of APC members constituting the entire board shall be between eight (8) to eleven (11) voting members. Five (5) to eight (8) of the members shall be parents of the students currently enrolled in the school; one (1) of the members shall be a teacher then under contract to the School; one (1) of the members shall be a teacher or teacher's aide then under contract to the School; and one (1) of the members shall be a board member of the Parent Teacher Organization ("PTO") executive committee as elected by the PTO ("PTO Liaison"). Teachers and teachers' aides who are then under contract to the School and who also are parents of one or more children enrolled in the School shall be eligible only for the two teacher/teacher's aide APC positions, not the five to eight parent APC positions. The Principal or Acting Principal then under contract to the School shall be a perpetual "ex official member of the APC, but shall have no vote.

SECTION 3. Term. The term of all elected members of the APC shall be two (2) years. It is the goal of these Bylaws that at any regular election one (1) of the APC teacher positions and four (4) of the APC parent positions shall be open for re-election, and that the remaining one (1) teacher and four (4) parent positions shall come up for re-election at the following year's regular election. If at any time this balance is not maintained, the APC may extend (but not shorten) the term of any APC member(s) until this balance is achieved. A majority vote of the full APC shall be required to

extend any term. The APC members as of the date of adoption of these bylaws shall consist of the following members for the terms indicated:

(open)	Principal	
Tracy Houser	Parent	September 2009
Lori Berrigan	Parent	September 2009
Kelly Leonard	Parent	September 2009
Jill Farris	Parent	September 2009
Cathy Lee	Parent	September 2009
Jessica Dryden	Parent	September 2009
Kelly Nelius	Parent	September 2009
Cara Horvath	Parent	October 2009

SECTION 4. Term Limitations. There shall be no limitation on the number of consecutive or non-consecutive terms that any member of the APC may serve.

SECTION 5. Vacancies. Any vacancy occurring on the APC shall be filled by majority vote of 100% of the remaining members of the APC. The replacement member of the APC shall be elected for the unexpired term of his/her predecessor in office.

SECTION 6. Compensation. Members of the APC shall not receive any salaries for their services.

SECTION 7. Resignation. Any APC member may resign at any time by giving written notice to the Chair or Secretary of the APC. Such resignation shall take effect at the time specified therein and, unless otherwise stated, the acceptance of such resignation shall not be necessary to make it effective.

SECTION B.: Expectations and Removal: APC members are expected to attend, at a minimum, all regular monthly APC meetings. Although absences at times cannot be avoided, the APC may remove any APC member who fails to attend three such meetings during his/her term. Additionally, the APC may remove a member with or without cause when it determines that the best interests of the APC and the school would be served thereby. Removal shall require a super majority vote of the APC, including the APC member who is subject to removal.

SECTION 9. Conflict of Interest. Service on the APC is a trust created in the interest of the common good and for the benefit of the School. It is the intent of these Bylaws to maintain confidence and prevent the use of this membership for private gain or any other improper purpose. To avoid conflict of interest, excepting the two teacher/teacher's aide APC positions no voting member of the APC shall be a paid staff member of the School, inclusive of the Principal and any other person who receives any monetary compensation from the School.

ARTICLE III

Election of Members to the Academic Policy Committee

SECTION 1. Elections Committee. In January of each year, the Chair of the APC shall appoint an Elections Committee of three (3) persons. One person shall be a parent member of the APC, one person shall be a teacher member of the APC, and one person shall be a parent of a student enrolled in the School but who is not a member of the APC. The Elections Committee shall oversee the election process for positions on the APC. The Elections Committee shall do the following:

- A. Solicit _____ and accept applications from _____ candidates for membership _____ to the APC;
- B. In its discretion, **nominate individuals who** have not submitted an application as candidates for positions on the APC;
- c. Make available within the School office copies of any statements any candidate chooses to submit to the nominating committee or to the parents, students, or personnel;
- D. May establish a forum for public introduction of each candidate;
- E. Prepare a secret ballot listing the candidates, **plus** a space for write-in candidates;
- F. Distribute and collect the secret ballots and otherwise oversee the election so that it is conducted in a fair manner;
- G. Advise the candidates and the APC of the election results;
- H. Prepare a report stating the results of the election, which report shall be kept at the principal office of the School and be made available for review by interested parents, teachers, or staff members of the School.

SECTION 2. Eligibility to Vote. Only parents or legal guardians of students enrolled in the School on the day of the election, the Principal, teachers, aides, School staff employed by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District, each with a current contract for the School which is effective on the date of the election, not to exceed one vote per family per open position, are eligible to vote in elections. By way of example, if a family has two children enrolled at the School, only one parent or legal guardian may vote. The parents or legal guardians shall decide amongst themselves how to cast their family vote. The Elections Committee shall be responsible for monitoring voter eligibility and resolving any disputes involving the casting of ballots.

SECTION 3. Casting of Ballots. Voting may occur in three ways:

(1) at any time during the date of the annual meeting up until the time of the annual meeting, by obtaining from and submitting to the School office the secret ballot prepared by the Elections Committee, (2) by completing the secret ballot in person at the annual meeting, or (3) by absentee ballot completed according to procedures established by the Elections Committee.

- A. Write-in candidates may be added to the secret ballot by any voter.
- B. Proxy, facsimile, e-mail, or other method of voting not expressly authorized above are not permitted or valid.
- C. All eligible voters, as defined in ARTICLE III, SECTION 2 above, may vote for both parent and teacher positions on the APC. By way of example, if there are three parent positions open and **seven parent nominees, and** one teacher position open and three teacher nominees, a parent or legal guardian may cast three votes for the parent positions, and one vote for the teacher position. Likewise, a teacher may also cast three votes for the parent positions, and one vote for the teacher positions.

ARTICLE IV
Officers of the Academic Policy Committee

SECTION 1. Officers. The officers of the APC shall be Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer, each of whom must simultaneously be a member of the APC. The APC may elect or appoint such other officers, including one or more assistant secretaries, as it shall deem desirable, such officers to have the authority and perform the duties prescribed, from time to time, by the APC.

SECTION 2. Election and Term of Office. The term of all officers of the APC shall be one (1) year. The officers of the APC shall be elected annually by a majority of a quorum of the APC at the first regular meeting following the annual meeting of the APC. If the election of officers shall not be held at such meeting, elections shall be held as soon thereafter as conveniently may be held.

SECTION 3. Removal. Any officer elected or appointed by the APC may be removed from office (but not from the APC) by a majority vote of the full APC whenever in its judgment the best interests of the School would be served thereby.

SECTION 4. Vacancies. A vacancy in any office because of death, resignation, removal, disqualification, or otherwise may be filled by a majority vote of the full APC for the unexpired portion of the term.

SECTION 5. Chair. The Chair shall be a parent member of the APC, and shall be the presiding officer at all meetings of the APC. The Chair shall have such authority and perform such duties as shall be directed by the APC from time to time.

SECTION 6. Vice Chair. The Vice Chair shall be a parent member of the APC. In the absence of the Chair, or in the event of his/her death, inability or refusal to act, the Vice Chair or other APC member designated by the Chair shall perform the duties of the Chair, and when so acting, shall have all the powers of and be subject to all the restrictions upon the Chair. Any Vice Chair shall perform such other duties as from time to time may be assigned to him/her by the APC.

SECTION 7. Secretary. The Secretary shall keep the minutes of the meetings of the APC in computer files and/or one or more books provided for that purpose, see that all notices and agendas are duly given and posted in accordance with the provisions of these Bylaws or as required by law, keep an updated list of the mailing address, e-mail address, and telephone numbers of each member of the APC, and in general perform such other duties as from time to time may be assigned to him/her by the APC.

SECTION B. Treasurer. Each October, the Treasurer shall present to the APC the annual budget for the forthcoming year which has been prepared by the School, and shall ensure that it justly supports the mission and goals of the School. The Treasurer will present an update on the budget at each APC meeting, and in all ways shall be accountable to the APC and the School Board. The Treasurer shall cause to be completed the audits specified in ARTICLE VIII, SECTION 3 of these Bylaws. The Treasurer will serve as the financial liaison for all fund raising entities and will serve as the coordinator of all School funds.

ARTICLE V
Meetings of the Academic Policy Committee

SECTION 1. Annual and Regular Meetings. The APC hereby formally adopts the Open Meetings Act, A.S. 44.62.310 et seq. ("the Act") . All meetings shall be conducted and all notices and agendas posted in accordance with the Act. If any portion of these Bylaws are more specific than the Act, than that portion of these Bylaws shall control over the Act, unless prohibited by law.

The annual meeting of **the APC shall be held** on the third Thursday of February in each year, beginning at the hour of 6:30 p.m., for the purpose of electing members of the APC and for the transaction of such other business as may come before the meeting. If the annual meeting or election of membership to the APC shall not be held on the day designated herein for any annual meeting and election, the APC shall cause the annual meeting and election to be held at a special meeting as soon thereafter as conveniently may be held. The APC shall also hold regular meetings typically monthly but at least four (4) times a year. Parents, teachers, and staff members of the School are hereby invited to such meetings.

SECTION 2. Special Meetings. Special meetings of the APC may be called by the Chair, Principal, or any three members of the APC.

SECTION 3. Place of Meetings. The APC may designate any place within the Matanuska-Susitna Borough as the place of meeting for any annual meeting, regular meeting, or special meeting. If no designation is made, the place of meeting shall be at the School.

SECTION 4. Notice of Meetings. Notice of annual, regular, or special meetings stating **the place, day, and** hour of any meeting shall be delivered, either personally, by mail, by facsimile, or by e-mail, to each member of the APC not less than one (1) day before the date set for such meeting. In addition, at least twenty-four (24) hours prior to each meeting, notice of and the agenda for each meeting shall be hosted at the School. New issues not posted on the agenda may nonetheless be raised, discussed, and voted upon at any meeting.

SECTION 5. Informal Action by Members. Any action that otherwise may be taken at any meeting of the APC may be taken without a meeting if a consent in writing, setting forth the action so taken, is signed and unanimously agreed upon in writing or e-mail by 100% of the members of the APC entitled to vote with respect to the subject matter thereof.

SECTION 6. Quorum. Greater than fifty percent (500-1) of the voting members of the APC constitutes a quorum. Telephonic participation is permitted.

SECTION 7. Manner of Acting. The act of a majority of the members of the APC at a meeting at which a quorum is present either in person or telephonically shall be the act of the APC, unless the act of a greater number is required by law or by these Bylaws.

SECTION 8. Executive Sessions. All regular and special meetings of the APC shall be open to the public, except that, upon a vote of a majority of the members present, an executive session may be held to discuss matters including but not limited to:

1. Attorney-client matters;
2. Contract proposals or negotiations;
3. Sensitive personnel matters; and

4. Student discipline matters.

The motion requesting the executive session shall state the nature of the matter to be discussed. Only those persons invited by the APC or permitted by law may be present during the executive session. Unless invited or permitted by law, no teacher/ teacher's aide APC member shall be entitled to attend any executive session in which personnel issues specific to a particular employee are discussed, and no teacher/teacher's aide APC member shall be entitled to vote on any such issue in public session. The APC shall not make final policy decisions, nor shall any resolution, rule, regulation, or formal action or any action approving a contract or any other final action, be approved at any session which is closed to the general public. Matters discussed during the executive sessions shall remain confidential among those attending. The Secretary of the APC shall maintain topical minutes of all executive sessions.

SECTION 9. No Proxies. Members of the APC may not vote by proxy.

ARTICLE VI

Principal

SECTION 1. Selection/Removal. ~~The Principal shall be selected by the Birchtree Charter School Academic Policy Committee. Removal of the Principal will require a majority vote of the full APC when in its judgment the best interest of the School would be served hereby.~~

The Principal and/or Vice Principal position(s) will be selected through a 4 to 6 member hiring committee that will consist of 1 to 2 APC members, 1 to 2 staff, 1 BPG member and current Principal or Vice Principal. The Committee Chair will be an APC member.

Removal of the Principal will require a majority vote of the full APC when in its judgment the best interest of the School would be served hereby.

SECTION 2. Duties and Responsibilities. The Principal shall have those day-to-day management and other duties as assigned and delegated by the APC, or as required by law. With the advice of the APC, the Principal shall ~~select, appoint, or otherwise~~ supervise employees of the School. Hiring, selection, or appointment of school employees/teachers will be done by the Principal and a 3 to 5 member hiring committee. Hiring committee members will consist only of 1 to 2 APC members, 1 to 2 staff, and 1 BPG member (when available to be on committee). Final grade placement of the teachers will be made by the principal. The Principal shall see that all policies, orders, and resolutions of the APC are carried into effect. Upon delegation by the APC, the Principal shall:

1. Maintain financial records of the School;
2. Manage the day-to-day operation of the School to ensure that the terms of the contract are met;
3. Meet regularly with parents and with teachers of the School to review, evaluate, and improve operations of the School;
4. Meet with the APC regularly and often to monitor progress in achieving the APC's policies and goals;
5. Submit appropriate information as required by the School District, Department of Education or Federal and State Agencies; and
6. Submit for approval or disapproval to the APC all significant policy and financial decisions that may have a substantial impact upon the School.

ARTICLE VII

Committees

SECTION 1. Membership of Committees. The APC, by resolution adopted by a majority of a quorum of the APC, may designate and appoint one or more committees to perform specific tasks assigned by the APC. Members will be selected by the APC from a list of volunteers who are parents of children attending the School, community members at large, the Principal, teachers, or teachers' assistants.

SECTION 2. Instruction and Responsibility. Each committee shall be clearly instructed as to the length of time each member is being asked to serve, the service the APC wishes each committee to render, the extent and limitations of responsibility, the resources the APC will provide, and the approximate dates on which the APC wishes to receive reports. Recommendations of special advisory committees shall be based on research and fact and shall be advisory to the APC.

SECTION 3. APC Powers and Prerogatives. All recommendations of a committee must be submitted to the APC for official action. The APC shall have the power to dissolve any committee and shall reserve the right to exercise this power at any time during the life of any committee.

SECTION 4. Meetings. Special committees to the APC shall comply with the requirements concerning public meetings that are specific in ARTICLE V, SECTION 4, Notice of Meetings, above.

ARTICLE VIII **Contracts, Checks, Deposits, Funds and Accounting**

SECTION 1. Contracts. The APC will use MSBSD policy and resources to enter into contracts, execute and deliver instruments, and otherwise legally bind the School. The APC may delegate this authority, either in specific instances or in general, to the Principal or his/her designee, or to any officer of the APC.

SECTION 2. Bank Accounts, Checks, Withdrawals, Etc. All School monies not held by the District shall be deposited in a bank account(s) in the name of the School. Signatories on any such accounts shall be the Principal and the APC officers. Withdrawals or transfers from any and all District monitored school funds, bank accounts, budget transfers, and any expenditures over five hundred dollars shall be approved by both the APC Treasurer and the Principal, with APC approval obtained for all major expenses and budget changes. Any expenditures or changes in the budget less than five hundred dollars require only the approval of the Principal.

SECTION 3. Accounting. The Principal or his/her designee shall present to the APC at each regular monthly APC meeting a ledger itemizing all income, expenses and budget transfers since the prior APC regular monthly meeting, and copies of all accompanying bank account statements. The APC may at any time cause a full or partial independent audit of School monies to occur.

ARTICLE IX - **Indemnification**

SECTION 1. Indemnification. The School may, to the maximum extent permitted by law and in the absence of School or District insurance, defend, hold harmless and indemnify all current and former members of the APC, all persons who at the request of the APC have acted or not acted, and all persons currently or previously employed by the School, from and against any claims, civil or criminal, in which that person is made a party by reason, in whole or in part, of being or having

been an APC member or officer, at the request of the APC have acted or not acted, or being or having been an employee of the School, when that person has acted within the course or scope of his or her duties to the School. Indemnification shall be provided by a majority vote of a quorum of the APC, on a case-by-case basis.

ARTICLE X
Amendments to Bylaws

SECTION 1. Amendments. These Bylaws may be altered, amended, or repealed and new bylaws may be adopted by a two-thirds vote of the APC who are present at any regular meeting or any special meeting (where a quorum is present) , provided that the proposed change in the Bylaws has been submitted in writing to all of the members of the APC and posted publicly in the School I s of f ice at least two (2) days prior to the meeting at which the proposed change will come up for a vote. Proposed changes to the Bylaws may be submitted by any member of the APC, by parents with students currently enrolled in the School, or by the Principal, Teacher-In-Charge, or teachers, each then under contract with the School, for consideration by the APC.

Date Adopted: _____

Secretary

Chair

Birchtree Parents Guild

Bylaws

Adopted by the Birchtree Parents Guild
on

March 2nd, 2009
Palmer, Alaska

Birchtree Charter School
Mat-Su Borough
Alaska
www.Birchtreecharterschool.org

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PREAMBLE

The Birchtree Parents Guild is a Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) affiliated with the Birchtree Charter School. Birchtree Academic Policy Committee (APC) will be the School's governing body; it makes all decisions about the School's staffing, budget and programs. The APC holds the School to the vision stated in its Charter. The APC operates within the framework of the Anchorage School District, which is the governing body for all public schools in Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Alaska.

The Guild is a parents' group; its mission is to support the Birchtree Charter School and its teachers for the betterment of the children attending the School. The Guild comes together to solve problems, promote communications within the Birchtree community as a whole, discuss issues and to help decide where outside financial contributions are best spent. "Membership" in the Guild is open to all parents and teachers interested in Birchtree Charter School, as well as other such persons interested and accepted by the Guild's Board of Directors.

The Guild is currently applying for a non-profit organization registered within the State of Alaska and organized under Section 501 (c)(3) of the United States Government Internal Revenue Service Code of 1986. The following Bylaws apply to the Guild only; other instruments govern the actions of the Birchtree Charter School and its Academic Policy Committee.

ARTICLE I

Name, Office, Fiscal Year and Governance

SECTION 1. Name. The name of the organization shall be "Birchtree Parents Guild," hereinafter be referred to as "the Guild" or "BPG".

SECTION 2. Office. The principal office shall be at the facility of Birchtree Charter School, when decided. Currently all communications shall go through the chair, Lori Berrigan PO Box 4501 Palmer, AK 99645. (907) 745 4884.

SECTION 3. Fiscal Year. The fiscal year of the Guild shall coincide with that of the Birchtree Charter School, which in turn coincides with the fiscal year of the Mat-Su Borough School District (July 1 through June 30).

SECTION 4. Governance. The Birchtree Charter School shall have a Parents Guild, which shall be the Parent Teacher Organization. The Guild shall be governed by the Board of Directors hereinafter described-.

ARTICLE II

Purpose and General Responsibilities

SECTION 1. Purpose. The Guild will be a nonprofit corporation dedicated to engaging in charitable and educational activities within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, or the corresponding provisions of any future United

States internal revenue law, including but not limited to, supporting the Birchtree Charter School and its teachers for the betterment of the children attending the school, and for any other purpose for which a nonprofit corporation may be organized under the laws of the State of Alaska.

SECTION 2. General Responsibilities. The Guild’s general responsibilities shall include:

- A. Supporting the Birchtree APC in the fulfillment of the mission of Birchtree Charter School as stated in the Birchtree Charter.
- B. Raising funds for the Birchtree Charter School, as provided for in the IRS Code Section 501 (c)(3).
- C. Dispersing funds in accordance with the applicable rules and regulations for purposes consistent with the Guild’s charitable mission.
- D. Reviewing contracts for products and services consistent with its mission.

ARTICLE III **Membership**

SECTION 1. Members. The Guild Corporation shall have no members.

SECTION 2. Associated Individuals. Association with the Birchtree Parents Guild is open to all parents and teachers interested in Birchtree Charter School, as well as other such persons interested and accepted by the Guild’s Board of Directors. Individuals associated with the Guild may be called “members,” but common use of this term does not imply legal membership in the corporation itself. No individuals associated with the Guild shall act on his/her own in the name of the Guild unless so authorized by these Bylaws or by resolution of the Guild.

ARTICLE IV **Board of Directors**

SECTION 1. General Powers and Duties. Management of the affairs of the Birchtree Parents Guild shall be vested in its Board of Directors. The Board of Directors shall possess and may exercise any and all powers granted to the Guild under the Alaska Nonprofit Corporation Act and its Articles of Incorporations, subject to the limitations set forth in the Articles and these Bylaws.

SECTION 2. Members and Number of Directors. The Birchtree Parents Guild shall elect from its associated members a Board of Directors to act as its governing body. The number of BPG Guild board members constituting the entire board shall be between five (5) to eleven (11) voting members as follows:

The Directors may be parents or teachers who are interested in helping with the vision of Birchtree Charter School. Once the school is established, One (1) of the Directors shall be a teacher currently under contract to the Birchtree Charter School; one (1) additional Director may be a teacher or teacher's aide currently under contract to the School; and one (1) Director shall be a board member of the Academic Policy Committee (“APC”) Executive Committee as elected by the APC (This person shall be designated the APC’s “PTO Liaison”). Teachers and teachers' aides who are currently under contract to the School, and who also are parents of one or more children enrolled in the School, shall be eligible only for the two teacher/teacher's aide BPG Board positions.

At the discretion of the Board, one position may be reserved for a corporate sponsor of the School.

No voting Director shall be a paid staff member of the School, nor shall a voting Director be any other person who receives monetary compensation from the School (see also Section 10 below).

SECTION 3. Non-voting Director. The Chosen Principal or Acting Principal, once under contract to the Birchtree Charter School, shall be a perpetual “ex officio” member of the Board, but shall have no vote.

SECTION 4. Terms. All current directors shall be in office until the start of school year 2010-2011. Once the school is in place, the term of all elected Directors of the Board shall be two (2) years. It is the goal of these Bylaws that at any regular election (see Article III) one (1) of the BPG teacher positions and four (4) of the BPG parent positions shall be open for re-election, and that the remaining one (1) teacher and four (4) parent positions shall come up for re-election at the following year's regular election. If at any time this balance is not maintained, the BPG Board may extend, but not shorten, the term of any Director(s) until this balance is achieved. A majority vote of the full BPG Board shall be required to extend any term. **The Board may provide by resolution for staggered terms for its directors.**

SECTION 5. Term Limitations. There shall be no limitation on the number of consecutive or non-consecutive terms that any Director may serve.

SECTION 6. Vacancies. Any vacancy occurring on the BPG Board shall be filled by majority vote of the remaining Directors. The replacement Director shall be elected for the unexpired term of his/her predecessor.

SECTION 7. Compensation. Directors shall receive no salary or other financial compensation for their services.

SECTION 8. Resignation. Any Director may resign at any time by giving written notice to the Chair or Secretary of the Board. Such resignation shall take effect at the time specified therein and, unless otherwise stated, the acceptance of such resignation shall not be necessary to make it effective.

SECTION 9. Removal. Directors are expected to attend, at a minimum, all regular BPG Board meetings. Although absences at times cannot be avoided, the Board may remove any Director who fails to attend three (3) such meetings during his/her term. Removal shall require a majority vote of the Board, including the Director who is subject to removal.

SECTION 10. Conflict of Interest. Service on the BPG Board is a trust created in the interest of the Common Good and for the benefit of the Birchtree Charter School. It is the intent of these Bylaws to maintain the Birchtree community's confidence by preventing the use of membership on the Guild's Board of Directors for private gain or any other improper purpose.

ARTICLE V **Election of Directors**

SECTION 1. Calls for Election and Nominations. When positions on the Birchtree Parents Guild Board of Directors become vacant, the Chair or Vice Chair may call for elections of new Directors. Any Director may submit nominations to the Board for any vacancy that is to be filled, and elections may occur at any regular meeting of the Board.

SECTION 2. Notification. At least ten days prior to the meeting during which an election for the Board of Directors will be held and as part of the general meeting notice, the Secretary of the Board shall give notice that an election will take place.

SECTION 3. Eligibility to Vote. Once the school is established, the following are the only people eligible to vote in the elections for the Board of Directors, not to exceed one vote per person:
Parents or legal guardians of students enrolled in the School on the day of the election; and the Principal, teachers, and teachers' aides and staff of the Birchtree charter School employed by the Matanuska-Susitna School District, each of whom must have a contract with the School effective on the date of the election.

SECTION 4. Casting of Ballots. Voting may occur in two ways:

- 1) The Chair or Vice Chair may call for a voice vote; or
- 2) The Chair or Vice Chair may call for a secret ballot.

Newly elected directors will assume their duties immediately. The results of elections shall be noted in the minutes of each meeting by the Board Secretary.

ARTICLE VI **Officers**

SECTION 1. Officers. The officers of the Birchtree Parents Guild shall be Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer, each of whom must simultaneously be a member of the Board. The BPG Board may elect or appoint such other officers, including one or more assistant secretaries, as it shall deem desirable. Such officers shall have the authority and perform the duties prescribed, from time to time, by the members and Board of the Guild.

SECTION 2. Election and Terms of Office. The term of all officers shall be one (2) years. New officers shall be elected annually by a majority of the persons eligible to vote under Article V following the annual meeting of the Guild. The goal of the term is to provide for staggering of terms. If the election of officers shall not be held at such meeting, elections shall be held as soon thereafter as possible.

SECTION 3. Removal. Any officer may be removed from office, but not from the Board, by a majority vote of the full BPG Board whenever in its judgment the best interests of the School would be served thereby.

SECTION 4. Vacancies. A vacancy in any office may be filled by a majority vote of the full BPG Board for the unexpired portion of the term.

SECTION 5. Chair. The Chair shall be a parent member of the BPG, and shall be the presiding officer at all meetings of the Guild, including Board meetings. The Chair shall have such authority and perform such duties as shall be directed by the Board.

SECTION 6. Vice Chair. The Vice Chair shall be a parent member of the BPG. In the absence of the Chair, or in the event of his/her inability or refusal to act, the Vice Chair or other BPG Board member designated by the Chair shall perform the duties of the Chair, and when so acting, shall have all the powers of, and be subject to, all the restrictions upon the Chair. Any Vice Chair shall perform such other duties as from time to time may be assigned to him/her by the Board.

SECTION 7. Secretary. The Secretary shall cause the minutes of Guild meetings to be kept in computer files and/or in one or more books provided for that purpose. The Secretary shall also see that all notices and agendas are duly given and posted in accordance with the provisions of these Bylaws or as required by law, keep an updated list of the mailing address, e-mail address, and telephone numbers of each Director and “member” of the Guild, as well as a current list of Birchtree volunteers. In general the Secretary shall perform such other duties as from time to time may be assigned to him/her by the Board.

SECTION 8. Treasurer. Each October, the Treasurer shall present to the BPG Board the annual budget for the forthcoming year that has been prepared by the School, and shall ensure that it justly supports the mission and goals of the Birchtree Charter School. The Treasurer will also present an update on the budget at each Board meeting, and in all ways shall be accountable to the BPG Board. The Treasurer shall cause to be completed the audits specified in ARTICLE IX, SECTION 3 of these Bylaws. The Treasurer will serve as the financial liaison for all fund raising entities and will serve as the coordinator of all School funds.

SECTION 9. Provisional Board of Directors. As of the date of adoption of these Bylaws, a provisional Board of Directors consists of the following Officers and Directors for the terms indicated:

Name	Position	Beginning term
Lori Berrigan	Chair	March 2009
Nicole Reynolds	Vice-Chair	March 2009
Nicole Kelp	Secretary	March 2009
Monica Gilpin	Treasurer	March 2009
Jennifer Budee	Parent	March 2009

An official election shall be held after the adoption of the Bylaws to confirm the leadership of the Guild.

ARTICLE VII **Meetings**

SECTION 1. Annual and Regular Meetings. The Birchtree Parents Guild hereby formally adopts the Open Meetings Act, A.S. 44.62.310 *et seq.* (“The Act”). All meetings shall be conducted and all notices and agendas posted in accordance with the Act. If any portion of these Bylaws are more

specific than the Act, than that portion of these Bylaws shall control over the Act, unless prohibited by law.

The annual meeting of the BPG Board shall be held during March in each year at a convenient and agreed time, for the purpose of electing members of the Board and for the transaction of such other business as may come before the meeting. If the annual meeting or election of membership to the BPG Board shall not be held on the day designated herein for any annual meeting and election, the Board shall cause the annual meeting and election to be held at a special meeting as soon thereafter as possible. The BPG Board shall also hold regular meetings, typically monthly but at least four (4) times a year. Parents, teachers, and staff members of the Birchtree Charter School (once the school is established) are hereby invited to such meetings.

SECTION 2. Special Meetings. Special meetings of the BPG Board may be called by the Chair, Principal, or any three members of the Board. The Secretary shall notify Directors and BPG “members” as with other meetings.

SECTION 3. Place of Meetings. The BPG Board may designate any place within the Mat-Su Valley as the place of meeting for any annual meeting, regular meeting, or special meeting. If no designation is made, the place of meeting shall be at the Birchtree Charter School (once the school is established).

SECTION 4. Notice of Meetings. The BPG Secretary shall cause notice of annual, regular, or special meetings to be delivered, either personally, by mail, by facsimile, by posting at the school, or by e-mail, to each member of the BPG Board not less than one (1) day before the date set for such meeting. Notification shall state the place, day, and hour of any meeting. In addition, at least twenty-four (24) hours prior to each meeting, notice of and the agenda for each meeting shall be posted on the Birchtree Charter School website, www.birchtreecharterschool.org. Issues not posted on the agenda may nonetheless be raised, discussed, and voted upon at any meeting.

SECTION 5. Informal Action by Members. Any action that otherwise may be taken at any meeting of the BPG Board may be taken without a meeting if a consent in writing, setting forth the action so taken, is signed and unanimously agreed upon in writing or e-mail by all of the members of the Guild entitled to vote with respect to the subject matter thereof.

SECTION 6. Quorum. Greater than fifty percent (50%+1) of the voting members of the BPG Board constitutes a quorum. Telephonic participation is permitted.

SECTION 7. Manner of Acting. The act of a majority of the members of the BPG Board at a meeting at which a quorum is present either in person or telephonically shall be the act of the Guild, unless the act of a greater number is required by law or by these Bylaws.

SECTION 8. Executive Sessions. All regular and special meetings of the BPG Board shall be open to the public, except that, upon a vote of a majority of the members present, an executive session may be held to discuss matters including:

1. Attorney-client matters;
2. Contract proposals or negotiations; and
3. Other matters as determined by the Chair of the BPG Board.

The motion requesting the executive session shall state the nature of the matter to be discussed. Only those persons invited by the BPG Board or permitted by law may be present during an executive session. The BPG Board shall not make final policy decisions, nor shall any resolution, rule, regulation, or formal action or any action approving a contract or any other final action, be approved at any session which is closed to the general public. Matters discussed during the executive sessions shall remain confidential among those attending. The Secretary shall maintain topical minutes of all executive sessions.

SECTION 9. No Proxies. Members of the BPG Board may not vote by proxy. Voting of the Board may be conducted by email or by telephone when necessary at the discretion of the Chair.

ARTICLE VIII **Committees**

SECTION 1. Membership. The BPG Board, by resolution adopted by a majority of a quorum, may designate and appoint one or more committees to perform specific tasks. committee members may include members of the BPG Board as well as others selected by the Board from a list of volunteers.

SECTION 2. Instructions and Responsibilities. Each committee shall be clearly instructed as to the length of time each member is being asked to serve, the service the BPG Board wishes each committee to render, the extent and limitations of responsibility, the resources the Board will provide, and the approximate dates on which the BPG Board wishes to receive reports. Recommendations of special advisory committees shall be based on research and fact and shall be advisory to the Guild.

SECTION 3. Powers and Prerogatives. All recommendations of a committee must be submitted to the BPG Board for official action. The BPG Board shall have the power to dissolve any committee and shall reserve the right to exercise this power at any time during the life of any committee.

SECTION 4. Meetings. BPG Committees shall comply with the requirements concerning public meetings that are specific in ARTICLE VII, SECTION 4 above.

ARTICLE IX **Contracts, Checks, Deposits, Funds and Accounting**

SECTION 1. Contracts. The BPG Board shall have the authority to enter into contracts, execute and deliver instruments, and otherwise legally bind the Guild. The Board may delegate this authority, either in specific instances or in general, to the Birchtree Charter School Principal or his/her designee, or to any officer of the BPG Board.

SECTION 2. Bank Accounts and Financial Transactions. All Guild monies not held by the Matanuska Susitna Borough School District shall be deposited in a bank account(s) in the name of the Birchtree Parents Guild. Signatories on any such accounts shall be the Birchtree Charter School Principal and the Officers of the Guild. Withdrawals or transfers from any Guild funds, bank accounts, budget transfers, and any expenditures more than Five Hundred Dollars (\$500.00) shall be approved by both the BPG Treasurer and Chair with BPG Board approval obtained for all major expenses and budget changes. Any expenditures or changes in the budget less than Five Hundred Dollars (\$500.00) shall require only the approval of the Chair.

SECTION 3. Accounting. The Treasurer or his/her designee shall present to the BPG Board at each regular meeting a ledger itemizing all income, expenses and budget transfers since the prior regular meeting of the Guild, and copies of all accompanying bank account statements. The BPG Board may at any time cause a full or partial independent audit of guild monies to occur.

ARTICLE X
Indemnification

To the full extent permitted by the Alaska Nonprofit Corporation Act, as it now exists or is subsequently amended, the Birchtree Parents Guild may, to the maximum extent permitted by law and in the absence of School or Matanuska Susitna Borough School District insurance, defend, hold harmless and indemnify all current and former members of the BPG Board, all persons who at the request of the Board have acted or not acted, and all persons currently or previously employed by the School, from and against any claims, civil or criminal, in which that person is made a party by reason, in whole or in part, of being or having been an BPG Director or “member,” at the request of the BPG Board have acted or not acted, or being or having been an employee of the School, when that person has acted within the course or scope of his or her duties to the School. Indemnification shall be provided by a majority vote of a quorum of the BPG, on a case-by-case basis.

ARTICLE XI
Limitation of Director Liability

To the full extent permitted by the Alaska Nonprofit Corporations Act, as it now exists or is subsequently amended, regarding the limitation or elimination of the liability of directors and officers, a Director or Officer of the Birchtree Parents Guild shall not be liable to the Guild for monetary damages for breach of fiduciary duty as a director or officer. Any amendment or repeal of this section shall not adversely affect any right or protection of a Director or Officer for or with respect to any acts or omissions of such Director or Officer occurring prior to such amendment or repeal.

ARTICLE XII
Amendments to Bylaws

These Bylaws may be altered, amended, or repealed and new bylaws may be adopted by a two-thirds vote of the BPG Board who are present at any regular meeting or any special meeting (where a quorum is present), provided that the proposed change in the Bylaws has been submitted in writing to all of the members of the BPG Board and posted publicly in the School office at least two (2) days prior to the meeting at which the proposed change will come up for a vote. Proposed changes to the Bylaws may be submitted by any member of the BPG Board, by parents with students once enrolled in the School, or by the Principal,

Teacher-In-Charge, or teachers, once under contract with the Birchtree Charter School, for consideration by the BPG Board.

CERTIFICATION

The undersigned Secretary of the Birchtree Parents Guild hereby certifies that the above Bylaws were duly adopted by the Board of Directors of the Guild on the _____ day of _____ 20__.

Secretary

Chair

WALDORF-INSPIRED EDUCATION IN THE VALLEY

Come meet with us if you are interested in a Waldorf – Inspired Charter School in the Mat-Su Valley.

We have filed our letter of intent and would like to open fall 2009-2010.

Some things that make a Waldorf-Inspired Charter school different are:

- ❖ ½ day Kindergarten with an emphasis on imaginative play.
- ❖ Class teachers that stay with your children throughout their elementary education.
- ❖ Texts books are created by the children throughout the year with an integral use of art.
 - ❖ Foreign language is taught starting in 1st grade vs. in high school.
- ❖ In grade school, math instruction begins by teaching from the whole to the parts to encourage flexible thinking and discourage the one “right” answer (for example, $12 = 3+9$ or $12 = 4 \times 3$).
 - ❖ Science is taught experientially.
 - ❖ Movement is integral in Waldorf education.

If you would like to find out more information, please come to one of our meet and greets at a local park or look at our web page

www.birchtreearcharterschool.org

We look forward to seeing or hearing from you!

MEET AND GREETS

AUGUST 5TH, 2008

MAT-SU RIVER PARK, PALMER 10:30 TO 1

HOSTED BY SUKIE BERBERICH

745 2359

AUGUST 12TH, 2008

MAT-SU RIVER PARK, PALMER 10:30 TO 1

HOSTED BY LORI BERRIGAN

745 4884

AUGUST 12TH, 2008

WONDERLAND PARK, WASILLA 10:30 TO 1 HOSTED BY

JENNIFER BUDDE

232 5852

Come meet members of the BPG and find out more about
Birchtree Charter School while exploring the artistic side of
Waldorf-Inspired Education

2009 Dates and Times are

April 11th 10am to 1pm

In April parents and children will create a spring-time
mobile and learn about wet-on-wet painting.

June 27th 11:30am to 2:30pm

August 22nd 11:30am to 2:30pm

September 26th 11:30am to 2:30pm

October 31st 11:30am to 2:30pm

November 28th 11:30 am to 2:30pm

Waldorf-Inspired Education
Whole Child Education relevant to our world today
Hands, Heart and Head

Contact: Lori Berrigan at 745 4884 or Berrigan@mtaonline.net

www.birchtreecharterschool.org

3. Education Programs

- a) Has the school made reasonable progress in meeting its academic goals?
- b) Has the school demonstrated progress, where applicable, on the statewide assessment?
- c) Has the school demonstrated progress, where applicable, on other assessments?
- d) Does the school use its assessment data to drive decision-making in curriculum and instruction?
- e) Where performance-based assessments are used, does the school have clear criteria?

3(a) Has the school made reasonable progress in meeting its academic goals

Mission Statement

Birchtree Charter School will meet its academic goals by providing 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 the 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 and creativity, social intelligence and ecological awareness.

Program Philosophy

At the heart of the Waldorf-based Whole Child Curriculum is the recognition of how much children change from year to year. Our lesson plan places 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.

3(b) Has the school demonstrated progress, where applicable, on the statewide assessment?

This is unknown at this time as the school has yet to open.

3(c) Has the school demonstrated progress, where applicable, on other assessments?

This is unknown at this time as the school has yet to open.

3(d) Does the school use its assessment data to drive decision-making in curriculum and instruction?

The BCS budget allocates \$45,000 for professional development. The BPG is looking to finding additional funding to help supplement additional teacher training. BCS teachers and administration are to participate in Waldorf training through various universities, programs, and conferences. As a staff we will begin book studies beginning in January of 2011. It is our intention to increase our shared body of knowledge thus increasing our ability to come to consensus and to fully align our procedures and policies with the vision and mission of the school. The proposed staff development plan follows:

Training Offered	June '10	July '10	Aug '10	Sept '10	Oct '10	Nov '10	Dec '10	Jan '11	Feb '11	Mar '11	Apr '11	May '11	June '11	July '11
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Waldorf Grade Level Methods	X	X	X	X									X	X
Waldorf Education and NCLB	X	X	X		X		X		X		X		X	X
Waldorf Education and A.S.S.	X	X	X	X		X		X		X		X		X
Creating the Waldorf Classroom	X	X	X				X				X			X

BCS administration and APC are committed to keeping teacher training a top priority and will continue to allocate available funds to help teachers pay for their professional development using the following priority scale:

- 1) training leading to full Waldorf certification
- 2) training to benefit the entire school population
- 3) training intended to benefit an individual class or individual teachers

When possible, the administration and APC will allocate funding for both school and teacher Waldorf mentors. Preferred mentors will have both private and public experience allowing them to bridge the gap between the two by bringing a deeper understanding of how Waldorf methods can be successful in the public sector.

BCS is looking to hire Donna Levesque as a teacher and mentor. Donna Levesque is both a certified and Waldorf-trained teacher with 25 years teaching experience. She currently mentors teachers at Aurora Waldorf School, a private Waldorf School (grades K-8), located in Anchorage, Alaska. Donna is more than qualified to do in-house training and lead Waldorf-inspired book studies. Her resume is available upon request. Donna is currently listed in the MSBSD as a certified teacher eligible for hire.

If BCS students are not meeting the assessment goals, the Governing Board of the APC, staff and BCS mentors will come together to devise a plan to either purchase additional materials for teachers or to hire additional mentors. It is our belief that as teachers continue to complete their Waldorf Teacher training, they will possess the skills needed to assure that all students will meet their assessment goals.

3(e) Where performance-based assessments are used, does the school have clear criteria?

Curriculum Alignment to Measurable outcomes and Assessments

The foundations of Birchtree's learning plan rests on the following beliefs about assessment:

- 100% of all students will participate in all assessment techniques.

- Assessment is an ongoing process that helps identify, at various stages in the learning process, what a student knows, understands, and can do.
- Assessment is a collaborative process.
- Assessment should be a process that encourages, challenges and motivates students to higher levels of learning and awareness.
- Multiple types of evidence must be used to better understand each learner's strengths and needs, and to plan for support and enrichment.
- Students should be given authentic opportunities to display their accomplishments and demonstrate their learning.

Kindergarten and First Grade Readiness

The Waldorf Kindergarten is a place where the child is preparing to learn academics. The Waldorf Kindergartener is given time to expand their imagination, they are required to sit and listen in preparation for grade studies, and they are learning to work, play, and get along within a diverse group of children.

An article written by Alicia Benoit-Clark, who has taught special education in public schools for a number of years, outlines assessments used in Waldorf Kindergartens to determine first grade readiness. Alicia Benoit-Clark is now a morning garden (pre-kindergarten) teacher at the Green Mountain Waldorf School and at her own Waldorf-inspired playgroup in Walden, VT.

Help Your Child by Getting the Timing Right

by Alicia Benoit-Clark

Studies indicate that children who start school too soon can experience a number of difficulties. Researchers James Uphoff and June Gilmore found that children who started first grade under six years three months tended to have greater difficulties than older children in the classes. These younger children tended not to do well in their grades or on their scores on standardized tests. They tended to repeat a grade more often and showed signs of learning disabilities more frequently. The academic problems of the younger children often lasted right into adolescence and adulthood. The findings of Uphoff and Gilmore make us aware of the seriousness in determining first grade readiness.

And Uphoff and Gilmore are not alone in their findings. National Public Radio's *All Things Considered* recently reported on a growing national concern:

The old expression goes: 'You're never too old to learn.' But maybe there's such a thing as being too young... Child development experts now are saying that too much, too early, does not give your child a head start, and that being on the fast track may even do harm... Learning for children comes naturally, and when children are ready to learn, you can't stop them. But it has again to do with that word 'readiness', and readiness is an individual matter.

There are signs you can look for to know if a child is ready for first grade. In the physical realm, the first grade child's limbs are now in proportion with the body and head. There is a loss of baby fat and greater definition in the face. In the emotional realm the young child who once expressed strong emotions through sudden outbursts now has feelings that begin to deepen. A child will talk of "hurt

feelings" and being sad. Socially, the first grade ready child begins to form friendships that go deeper than before. The child feels loyalty for friends and often expresses the desire to be with them.

In the mental realm, there is the birth of free memory. This is different than the memory of a four year old. The younger child's memory must be triggered by a sight, smell, or rhythmic verse. When the memory is freed around age six or seven the child can find the memory and recall at will.

Along with memory, children begin to develop a capacity to understand symbolic concepts. Richard Cohen studies how children learn at a special research kindergarten run by UCLA's School of Education. "Kids learn through their experiences. They're not able to sit back and think symbolically, the way we like to think most of us are able to do. So most children under the age of 6 or 7 learn best by handling and manipulating real objects, and experiencing real things. They need to explore their world for a long time before they can begin to attach symbols or concepts to things."

Another mental change is in the realm of imagination, which is different than fantasy. Fantasy play requires props. Imagination is born when a child does not need physical objects to see the play in their minds. They are happy just to sit and play with visions in their heads. First grade ready children become interested in language arts and mathematics. They love to play with words, make rhymes or change words in songs and verses.

Joan Almon, in her article, *Education for Creative Thinking: The Waldorf Approach*, relates a story from the childhood of the well-known Viennese kindergarten teacher Bronja Zahlingen:

As a child, she loved to play with small objects on a deep window seat in her bedroom. She would create a scene with little dolls and houses and play with them for long periods of time. She remembers that one day, when she was about six years old, she set up a scene as usual but then closed her eyes and played 'inside'. Imagination had been born, and she was able to participate in her play in a new way.

Almon uses this story to point up the essential reason why the academic subjects must wait for the development of this inner imagination, and why imagination should be a central pillar of the first grade curriculum:

The development of imagination is an essential step in thinking, but where the development of fantasy has been curtailed, the development of imagination also suffers. Without imagination, one cannot picture an event in history, a verbal problem in mathematics, or the characters of a book. To approach academic subjects without imagination is a dull affair at best, and it is not surprising that children who are being educated without benefit of imagination at the elementary level find learning so uninteresting. Their newborn imagination is not being fed and nourished. Those who have been asked to master academics at the kindergarten level may suffer an even deeper problem, for in them imagination may be aborted before being born. There are indications that children who learn to read before age six or seven lose their early advantages, for they lose interest in reading and may eventually suffer burnout. This is not surprising when one thinks of how dull reading and learning are without the benefit of imagination to bring them alive. In contrast, in my experience, the children who are the best players in the kindergarten and have the most active fantasy tend to

become the most imaginative elementary pupils with the greatest interest in reading. They also tend to be the best adjusted emotionally, both as children and even as adolescents and adults.

As the first grade ready child leaves the world of fantasy and enters the world of imagination, she or he also leaves the world of imitation and enters the world of authority. The child looks to the adult for direction and as one who "knows." David Elkind, a psychologist and president of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, points out some of the implications of this belief in adult authority:

I think we don't appreciate it fully, but when we ask a child to, say, perform in reading or math and he's not prepared to do that, he blames himself. He thinks, here's an adult, adults know everything, they understand everything, if they're telling me to do this, then I should be able to do it, and if I'm not able to do it, there's something wrong with me. So they blame themselves, and if we expose them to inappropriate learning experiences at that age, then they blame themselves for not learning, and that inhibits the whole learning process and their self-esteem and so on. So it's a very critical period for learning attitudes about oneself, about school, and about learning. And if we don't give children opportunities to really succeed, to feel good about themselves in the learning environment, then one risk is long-term problems with learning, schooling, and self-esteem.

One can also sometimes look to children's drawings to find a developmental readiness for first grade; drawings of people with reasonably realistic proportions, complete and upright houses, and symmetrical drawings all tend to indicate the degree of maturity needed for first grade. An additional area to look at is the child's degree of sexual awareness. This is the age when children show an interest in each other's bodies.

Joan Almon, in the Waldorf Kindergarten Association's booklet, *First Grade Readiness and Related Issues*, concludes:

When all these changes are thoughtfully considered, one usually feels strongly that a child is either ready for first grade or needs to wait another year. Sometimes, however, the situation is less clear and in such cases my rule of thumb has been that if I am not certain, it is better to let the child wait, simply because when a child is ready it is so evident. Occasionally, though, one also needs to consider the relationship of the child to his classmates who are going on to first grade, or the relationship of the child to the first grade teacher. There can be the rare exception where the child is not quite ready to go on but life circumstances dictate that it is best for the child to move forward...

In countries such as Scandinavia, which use age seven as the normal age for first grade, readiness is not a major issue... Where age six is used, however, the likelihood of unreadiness is so great, and the price paid by the child so enormous, that one needs to be well versed about first grade readiness in order to make the best decision for the child... In the final analysis, it is knowing the child at the deepest levels that guides parents and teachers towards the right decision for that child.

Types of Assessment

At Birchtree Charter School, a variety of assessment methods will be used to measure and guide progress towards achievement of the school's performance standards. When deciding what type of assessment to use, the school/teachers will consider WHY they are doing the assessment, WHAT they are assessing, and WHAT are the criteria for success.

1. Standardized Tests: While a true Waldorf program does not utilize standardized testing as a way to measure student progress, Birchtree Charter School is willing to participate in all federal and state- required assessments starting in the third grade. Our rationale for delaying standardized testing until third grade is two-fold:

First, students in Waldorf-inspired programs do not begin formal academics (e.g., reading instruction) until first grade. This approach to teaching reading, for example, is in alignment with brain studies that have demonstrated that "there is no absolute timetable for learning to read. Differences of three years are normal. Some children will be ready to read at 4 years; others, just as normal, will be ready at 7 or even 10 years. The child who reads at 7 might not be 'developmentally delayed' as many have diagnosed. In many countries, including Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and New Zealand (all with high literacy levels), formal reading instruction begins as late as age 7 or 8" (Jensen, 1998). Because of delayed formal reading instruction, traditional standardized tests would not be an accurate measure of academic progress for a first- or second-grader in a Waldorf-inspired program.

Secondly, by abstaining from standardized testing in the primary grades, Waldorf-inspired schools have more time to utilize alternative assessments such as portfolios, teacher observations, oral recitations, and exhibitions of completed student projects/artwork. Authentic assessments such as these "ensure greater retention of material and a more lively process, one that activates enthusiasm for learning rather than subject children to the undue stress" of high-stakes testing (Mitchell, Gerwin, Schuberth, Mancini, & Hofrichter, 2009).

References

Jensen, E. (1998). *Teaching with the brain in mind*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Mitchell, D., Gerwin, D., Schuberth, E., Mancini, M., & Hofrichter, H. (2009).

Assessment without High-Stakes Testing: Protecting Childhood and the Purpose of School. Retrieved October 26, 2009 from

http://www.whywaldorfworks.org/03_NewsEvents/documents/AlternativeAssessment.pdf

Participation in Testing

Birchtree Charter School will participate in all federal and state-required assessments at the grade level required starting in 3rd grade. These assessments currently include:

- Terra Nova
- Standards Based Assessment (SBA) – Math, Science, Reading, Writing
- National Assessment of Educational Progress (if required)

Waiver Request: Birchtree Charter requests to not participate in MAP testing. It is our understanding that these are computer-based tests. As a Waldorf-inspired program, we will not introduce computers into our curriculum until the fifth grade. Therefore, we do not feel it is

appropriate to require our students to take tests in an unfamiliar medium.

2. Classroom Assessment: The following types of assessment methods and tools will be utilized at BCS.

- **Gradalis Assessments:** Birchtree Parent Guild purchased Rubrics and Assessments developed by Bonnie River of Gradalis Educational Consulting Services. Waldorf teachers and administrators created these for Waldorf and Waldorf-inspired programs. The Assessments purchased contain a Teachers Manual, Student Testing booklet and Student scoring sheet and are formatted similar to the Briggance Tests and are meant to gain an overview of the student's skills. Each student will have these completed by his or her teacher for grades 2 to 5.
- **Portfolios:** Comprehensive student portfolios will include samples such as main lesson books, practice papers, written work and reports, artwork etc.
- **Teacher Observation:** A record of teacher observations of each child will be maintained. These will include a record of individual growth and achievement in all three main areas of concern (intellectual, physical and emotional).
- **Oral Recitations:** Oral recitations, presentations, reports, performances, and demonstrations will occur regularly, by both individuals and groups.
- **Exhibitions:** An open house will be planned at least once a year, during which student work will be exhibited and samples of the class work will be demonstrated.
- **Completed student projects/artwork,** both individual and group, will be used in public exhibitions.
- **Assemblies:** School-wide assemblies will be planned monthly or bimonthly as a showcase of each grades' classroom work (recitations, songs, poems) starting at first grade. This will give parents, administrators and board members a glimpse of the students work throughout the year.

Grade 2 Assessment, developed by Bonnie River and *Gradalis Education & Consulting Services*, is available in Appendix I. BPG has purchased Assessments developed by Bonnie River and *Gradalis Education & Consulting Services* for grades two to five.

Following are Curriculum Standards and Assessment Rubrics for grades two, five and seven. BPG has purchased Curriculum Standards and Assessment Rubrics for grades one to eight. All rubrics are not included due to space limitations.

Benchmark Goals and Standard Alignment

Birchtree Charter School

Curriculum Alignment with Alaska State Performance Standards

*Curriculum
Standards*

&

*Assessment
Rubrics*

Gradalis Education & Consulting Services

Bonnie River, M.Ed.

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GRADE TWO CURRICULUM STANDARDS

Objectives: Unless specified otherwise, the criterion for the following objectives are that 80% of students will perform at a minimum of 80% mastery.

Language Arts

Speaking, Listening and Memory Skills. Given oral presentations of stories up to 20 minutes in length and a 24-hour interval, students will recall the main sequence and details of the story. Stories will include legends, fables and nature stories. Students will also create drawings and/or paintings depicting scenes from the stories.

Given activities and games (such as "Simon Says") with increasing degrees of difficulty, students will increase their abilities to stay in the game, thus developing auditory discrimination, depth and sequencing.

Given oral practice and stage directions, students will perform plays before an audience (minimum: 2 per year).

Given tongue twisters and sequencing designed to pronounce specific sounds, students will perform in a group the exercises with clarity. Movement and gestures will often be used to help in these exercises.

Given poems, students will chorally recite the poems with good diction, meter and expression. Selected poems will be performed in front of audiences at assemblies.

(Alaska Performance Standards R1.1, R1.3, R1.4, R1.5, R1.6, R1.8, & R1.10)

Writing/Spelling Skills. Given an oral story, students will help compose a synopsis. The teacher will print this synopsis on the board, and students will copy it and create illustrated books. (Students will decrease their writing size over the year and increase their accuracy and neatness.) Cursive writing is introduced in the first semester.

Given examples written on the board, students will properly include initial capitalization, capitalization of proper nouns, periods, commas, quotation marks and question marks.

Given an imaginative story and examples, students will master writing and recognition of lower case letters.

Given oral and written statements and questions, students will discriminate between statements and questions. **(R1.2, R1.4, W1.1, W1.2, & W1.3)**

Reading Skills. Given lists of word families, students will develop a book or folder in which they spell the words given to them orally by the teacher. Children will learn to categorize words according to word families and spelling rules.

Given common sight words, basic reading vocabulary words, practice and review, students will print dictated sentences with accurate spellings.

To increase receptive language skills, students will be read stories at least three times per week, and be told stories at least two times per week.

Given teacher and student created storybooks (based on classroom activities), and curriculum appropriate readers, students will develop basic skills in word recognition, comprehension, fluency, intonation and expression as well as work in level-appropriate smaller groups.

Given phonics, principles, games, practice and review, students will identify sounds for letter combinations and develop word-attack skills in "sounding out" words.

Given reading classes, students will exhibit "approach" behaviors (excitement over reading periods, favorable comments, quick formation of reading groups, and reluctance to stop reading).

Given a basic eye screening, visual health is ascertained.

(R1.1, R1.2, R1.3, & R1.6)

Basic Sensory-Integrative Skills

Visual-Motor. Students will create drawings, paintings and other art medium projects to illustrate stories heard during language and math blocks.

Through playing a pentatonic flute children will learn to isolate and control individual finger movements.

Through wet-on-wet watercolor paintings, children will learn to control a medium through proper use of a paintbrush.

Through drawing large symmetry forms, the children will practice control of the hand and be asked to create matching sides in a mirror form. Pencil grip and pressure will thereby be introduced.

Balance and Movement. See sections from the first grade curriculum.

Mathematics

Basic Computation Skills. Given story problems, skill-building and repeated practice, students will begin to use sequential memory skills.

Given story problems and manipulatives, students will write a computational formula representation of the mathematical aspects of the story using the four basic computation skills.

Given a computational formula representation, students will write a vertical representation of the problem. Students will work vertical problems with increasing accuracy and will learn laws, such as "commutative laws" to check accuracy.

Given story problems and numeric representation of these problems, students will carry digits in single and double-digit addition.

Given word problems, students will complete subtraction problems using single-digit numbers, single- and double-digit numbers and double-digit numbers.

Students will complete simple math problems (all operations) without use of objects or written assistance (mental arithmetic).

Using games providing skill/capacity and practice, students will answer questions such as "what is 12 plus 12"? (**M1.1.3, M1.1.7, M3.1.2, & M4.1.2**)

Math Concepts. Given imaginative characters representing the four mathematical operations and the concept of equal, students will verbally describe the nature of each operation and the concept of equivalency.

Given rhythmic practice and games, students will count to 100 by ones, twos, fives, and tens.

Given rhythmic games and activities, students will correctly identify any integer as even or odd.

Given rhythmic practice, students will recite the times tables 1-5 giving the product first (rhythmic memory).

Given rhythmic activities, students will be exposed to the times tables 6-12.

Given a story and pictorial imagination, students will master the concept of place value in a base ten number system. Students will group and regroup numbers according to place value.

Given an array of different length objects, students will order them correctly according to lengths.

Given an array of objects that can be sub-grouped, students will name groups and subgroups and identify which is larger in number and explain why (e.g., there are more flowers because roses are flowers). Students will correctly identify inclusive group even when the subgroup is larger (e.g., 4 tulips, 10 roses, 3 daisies—are there more roses or more flowers? Why?).

Given drawings and activities, students will recognize and describe number patterns. (Example: given the story of "King 12" and how he grouped members of his kingdom, students will circle all possible groupings of 12 and by comparing it to other numbers recognize it as the "richest" number.)

Given verbal numbers 1-1,000, students will correctly write the number on a sheet of paper. Students will become increasingly accurate in reading numeric representations. Students will write four digit numbers accurately from dictation.

Given daily practice and reminders, students become familiar with the weekly and monthly calendar.

(M1.1.1, M1.1.2, M1.1.5, M1.1.6, M2.1.1, M2.1.2, M2.1.3, M3.1.4, & M4.1.1)

Social Studies

Given walks in the school area, students will identify major features of the area, including businesses and neighbors.

Given good examples, contingencies, reminders, and reinforcement, students will further develop social use of language skills (saying excuse me, thank you, etc.).

Through stories and discussion, students will increase awareness of social life, past and present.

Through games (especially cooperative ones) students will learn to play constructively together (take turns, be fair, etc.).

Science

Given songs, poems and plays about the seasons, students will increase their awareness of the seasons and their changes.

Given stories, nature walks, poems, activities and exercises, students will display increased observation skills.

Given various objects in and from nature, students will place them into categories.

Given the grouping in above, students will identify sub and super-groups.

Given event descriptions or pictures, students will properly sequence them (e.g., a seed, a sprout, a plant, a flowering plant, a fruiting plant, a dying plant) and indicate the circular nature of the process (e.g., the dying plant followed by seed sprouting).

Music

Given a melody played on a xylophone, recorder (flute) or sung, students will increase their abilities to accurately echo the melody with and without words.

Given finger exercises and melodies played on a pentatonic flute, students will echo with increasing fluidity.

Given clapping exercises, students will demonstrate abilities to maintain a beat by participating and leading a group (students will be divided into sub-groups).

Through increasingly complex clapping, walking and dancing patterns to poems and songs, students will increase their coordination and rhythmic capacities.

Through imaginative stories and images students will begin to write musical notation and read simple melody line notation.

GRADE TWO ASSESSMENT RUBRICS

Definitions and Explanation of Terms:

Visual-Spatial Arrangement: A student's ability to place written and drawn objects on paper using consistent size, placement and planning. A caution here: Young children do not "naturally" write in straight lines and with very consistent size in letters. Many teachers are explicitly teaching this skill, using lined writing books and liners in main lesson books. This skill is best observed during the form drawing lessons.

How Long Should a Young Student (First Three Grades) Maintain Focus, Quiet and Individual Work? While this certainly varies according to a student's learning style, modality or use of intelligences for learning, in general a student should be able to stay on task and quiet for a period of fifteen to twenty minutes.

De-coding and Early Reading Skills: A second grade student usually demonstrates an ability to decode initial and final consonants, sound out a middle and simple short vowel and guess at a word because of contextual cues. When students do not show that these early reading skills are emerging, a deeper look is indicated. Some students are "just plain ole Late Bloomers" while in other students, an inability or avoidance of the development of the above reading skills is an indication that further assessment is needed. If the student is showing "below target" in sensory skills and language art skills or math skills are also lacking, this child could need a deeper look and assessment by educational support.

Math Strategies: A number of strategies for math computation are employed in "mathematical reasoning." Some children rely on their fingers, some jot down numbers, some work better with partners who can "hold" parts of the problem or interact to find an answer, some "just know" an answer but can't explain how they got it. As children become more competent in math computation, they begin to make groups of numbers usually starting with all the combinations that comprise the number ten. Then they will begin to be able to tell you how they thought of a mentally-given computation problem.

There are many correct approaches to solving a math problem, it is important for the teacher to know that the student is exploring strategies for thinking in mathematical reasoning modes.

<i>Student Name:</i> GRADE TWO SENSORY-MOTOR SKILLS	EMERGING SKILL	DEVELOPING SKILL	ACHIEVED SKILL	STRENGTH	FUTURE INSTRUCTION	NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Student exhibits a growing skill in execution of visual-motor integration. This is demonstrated in form drawing, writing, crafts and other class activities.						
Student exhibits growing skills in execution of visual-spatial arrangements. This is shown in the student's overall organizational skills in crafts, painting, writing and other classroom visual art based activities.						
Student demonstrates a growing awareness of and ability to identify and copy geometrically based drawings while exhibiting proper grip on drawing and writing utensils. While engaged in these activities, student maintains appropriate posture and attends well to task.						
Student displays a growing visual memory skill and visual discrimination skill through copy work in form drawing, drawing and other activities wherein the student copies work from the blackboard or other displays generated by the teacher.						
Student works with increasing focus and concentration in visual-motor based activities and does not distract or need inordinate amounts of help or redirection.						
Student demonstrates a growing skill and enjoyment in craft and other handwork activities.						
Student demonstrates a growing ability to execute isolated finger movements as in playing the recorder, knitting and other such activities.						
Student demonstrates an ability to listen to instructions, focus to task and remain on task for period of as much as forty-five minutes.						
Student demonstrates an ability to maintain quiet and appropriate posture during classroom activities which require this. (Such as while listening to story or receiving directions.)						
Student is able to participate fully in movement activities and after the required and reasonable time is given to rehearsal, is able to execute these movements with ease. This is seen in circle time, games, handwork and other class activities.						
Student is able to maintain appropriate physical boundaries throughout activities.						
Student displays an ability to listen and follow-through on verbal directions.						
Student appears to understand verbal and non-verbal communications.						
Student is socially included and inclusive in play as well as in classroom activities.						
Student demonstrates increasing ability in use of working, sequential, short-term memory skills as seen in mental arithmetic, dictation, following directions and other general classroom activities.						
Comments: 						

<i>Student Name:</i> GRADE TWO LANGUAGE ARTS	EMERGING SKILL	DEVELOPING SKILL	ACHIEVED SKILL	STRENGTH	FUTURE INSTRUCTION	NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Student exhibits good listening, verbal memory and comprehension skills through participation in class story recall after a twenty-four hour period has elapsed						
Student exhibits a full engagement in the verbally told story material, through free rendering and other artistic projects depicting the material and the student's relationship to it.						
Student uses vocabulary from the verbally told stories, thereby exhibiting an expanding word finding and vocabulary building skill.						
Student exhibits a growing ability to use short term, working and sequential memory skills as exhibited in story recall, attention to and follow-through on directions and general timely participation in classroom activities.						
Student displays an ability to acquire verbally memorized material and recite this material while participating in movements as seen in circle-time activities or class plays.						
Student exhibits clear articulation and language pragmatics appropriate to age.						
Student demonstrates a growing awareness of sound discrimination, recognizes rhyming words, alliterative words and other word groupings as exhibited in recitation and class participation in finding word groupings.						
Student demonstrates skill in sound-symbol relationships, shows an ability to identify initial consonantal sounds and long and short vowel sounds. This is observed in class participation in question and answer based sessions as well as group activities involving identification of sounds related to symbols. Is encoding and decoding simple words in reading group.						
Comments: 						

<i>Student Name:</i> GRADE TWO LANGUAGE ARTS (CONT'D)	EMERGING SKILL	DEVELOPING SKILL	ACHIEVED SKILL	STRENGTH	FUTURE INSTRUCTION	NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Student demonstrates reading approach skills: enthusiasm to story material, looking at books and interpreting pictures conveying story material and searching for word correspondences, reading simple self-constructed sentences, attention and focus to the written word, eye tracking skills necessary to information gathering.						
Student displays growing skills in writing: is able to copy upper and lower case letters, and is growing capable in placing letters and words in appropriate spatial arrangements in self generated working books (main lesson books).						
Student is able to produce self-generated simple sentences. Form of letters and placement on the paper exhibits emerging visual-motor skills appropriate to grade expectations.						
Student's spelling is phonetically appropriate in self-generated writing projects and teacher dictated short sentences.						
Student shows emerging memory and retention of basic spelling rules, introduced to the entire class.						
Student can identify simple misspelled words in self-generated independent writing.						
Student recognizes basic sentence structure and is able to generate simple complete sentences.						
Comments: 						

<i>Student Name:</i> GRADE TWO MATHEMATICS SKILLS	EMERGING SKILL	DEVELOPING SKILL	ACHIEVED SKILL	STRENGTH	FUTURE INSTRUCTION	NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Student exhibits adequate achievement of skills in the first grade mathematics rubric.						
Student exhibits an ability to count forward and backward by 2's, 3's, 4's, 5's, and 10's when participating in class groups and individually presented skills.						
Student is able to use manipulatives and demonstrate knowledge of the four number processes using calculations using single and double-digit numbers up to 144.						
Student is able to record basic computational formula representations of all four basic math processes. (Vertical as opposed to sentence structure).						
Student writes accurate vertical representations of dictated problems in addition, subtraction and multiplication. Student copies division problems with proper placement of divisor and dividend digits.						
Student demonstrates emerging understanding of place value of numbers up to and including the thousands column. Student can write and read these numbers from verbal dictations.						
Student demonstrates an emerging ability to work addition and subtraction problems containing double-digit figures.						
Student demonstrates various strategies for solving mental arithmetic problems. Uses number grouping, and re-grouping skills, multiple additions as well as using times tables, etc.						
Student is able to mentally calculate the four number processes.						
Student is able to listen to a simple word problem and mentally calculate the response to the question posed.						
Student demonstrates an understanding of the concepts of the four main number processes and the meaning of "equal". This is evidenced through student written responses to verbally given word problems.						
Student can use manipulatives (including fingers) and/or not, to do simple mathematical calculations.						
Comments: 						

<i>Student Name:</i> GRADE TWO MATHEMATICS SKILLS (CONT'D)	EMERGING SKILL	DEVELOPING SKILL	ACHIEVED SKILL	STRENGTH	FUTURE INSTRUCTION	NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Student can identify even and odd integers, number patterns and groups of numbers belonging in categories. This is demonstrated in written and oral work.						
Student has mastered the times tables, 1-5 and is acquiring tables 6-12 as verbally demonstrated to the teacher, seen in practice books, and in class recitation activities.						
Student recognizes and uses a number of strategies for accomplishing factoring of whole numbers, addition, subtraction and division of numbers.						
Student can categorize manipulatives according to length, size and volume.						
Comments: 						

<i>Student Name:</i> GRADE TWO SCIENCE SKILLS	EMERGING SKILL	DEVELOPING SKILL	ACHIEVED SKILL	STRENGTH	FUTURE INSTRUCTION	NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Social Sciences and Skills						
Student demonstrates an awareness of his/her classmates varied family and cultural backgrounds and demonstrates an emerging interest in and acceptance of differences. This is seen through student participation in festivals both personal (birthdays) and in generally shared holidays.						
Student demonstrates and emerging skill in social use of language. This is observed in the student's use of language markers such as "please" and "thank-you".						
Student demonstrates a growing awareness of the group needs and is able to appropriately adjust self-needs to group needs. This is seen in such behaviors as waiting for his/her turn, helping others, listening and speaking as needed and, in general, contributing to the on-going class ambience.						
Student demonstrates an awareness of and growing ability to inwardly experience the comparisons and contrasts between modern life and life in times past. Recognition of this ability is seen as facial expressions, remarks and drawings the children may do in direct relationship with curriculum content.						
Comments: 						

<i>Student Name:</i> GRADE TWO SCIENCE SKILLS (CONT'D)	EMERGING SKILL	DEVELOPING SKILL	ACHIEVED SKILL	STRENGTH	FUTURE INSTRUCTION	NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Life Sciences and Skills						
Student exhibits an awareness of the seasonal changes and the markers of these. This is seen in students use of language markers, dress, awareness of festivals etc.						
Student demonstrates a growing awareness of seasonal effects on plant and animal life. This is seen in participation in gardening classes, care of animals and general knowledge exemplified in drawings and painting.						
Student demonstrates an emerging vocabulary for the names of the seasons, the elemental changes in the seasons (ice, snow, rain, sleet, frost, mist, dew etc.) This is heard as the student contributes to story re-telling and as student shares experiences related to class activities, especially field trips.						
Student demonstrates emerging awareness and vocabulary for contrasts and polarities within natural laws. This is seen as student responds appropriately to metaphoric language used in story material, as "light as a feather" or "heavy as a millstone."						
Student displays emerging understanding of basic geographical terminology such as mountains, islands, volcanoes, rivers, streams, rivulets, etc. This is seen in not only the use of these terms, as heard in story content, but also the drawings and paintings of these or even in the free explorative play with water and landscaping in the sand pit.						
Student is able to identify changes in plant growth; he/she identified these changes, either in garden observations or in observations of bulbs or other plants in the classroom.						
Student demonstrates an awareness of the qualities of items from the various kingdoms of nature. This is seen in free and creative play with wood, (sticks, branches, boards etc.) and various minerals (stones, bricks etc.) Student participated in play which explored such forces as those seen in levers, dynamic tensions etc.						
Student is able to place objects of nature, in categories and subcategories as necessary for use, thus the attainment of general knowledge of super or sub-groups is observed.						
Comments: 						

GRADE FIVE CURRICULUM STANDARDS

Objectives: Unless otherwise specified, the criteria for the following objectives are that 80% of students will perform at 80% or better.

Language Arts

Speaking Skills. Given daily practice in choral and individual speaking in poetry, prose, story recapitulation and oral reports generated from curriculum areas students will demonstrate:

- Good diction
- Appropriate cadence
- Proper meter
- Appropriate syntax
- Appropriate volume
- Appropriate rate
- Artistic expression, and increased skills noticeably throughout the school year.

Listening Skills. Given daily practice, students will exhibit sustained attention to the primary speaker.

Students will follow directions up to six sequential tasks without continuous need for repetition. **(Alaska Performance Standard R2.6)**

Spelling Skills. Given a dictionary and oral instructions of its use, students will be able to find words as needed for writing.

Given a dictionary, students will be able to identify and use guidewords to find a word. **(W2.6)**

Students will be able to pronounce words given simple phonetic dictionary rules.

Given rules for syllabication, students will be able to syllabicate words that follow the rules.

Given a list of ten or more words beginning with at least the same first three letters, students will be able to correctly alphabetize them.

Students will learn the spelling of at least ten words per week generated from the curriculum or from misspelling in individual work.

Given corrected compositions of their own and simple editing instructions, students will increase their ability to proofread for spelling. **(W2.3)**

Given teacher and pupil generated weekly tests and spelling strategies, students will develop strategies that allow them to obtain an expected average accuracy on tests. (Expectations are set according to visual memory abilities.)

Given previously generated spelling lists, students will maintain an expected accuracy on the words appearing on lists throughout the year. (Expectations are set up according to visual memory abilities.)

Students will maintain an expected standard of correctly spelled words per 100 on homework and in class compositions. Standards are individually set according to ability.

Writing Skills. Given oral and written presentations in all curriculum areas, students will develop simple outlines, emphasizing main idea and supporting details. **(R2.5)**

Given biographies of novel and curriculum-related oral and written material, students will develop paragraphs based on the following items:

- Main characters
- Setting
- Summary
- Descriptions
- Personal opinions. **(W2.1 & W2.2)**

Given examples of poetry with simple rhyming patterns, students will generate their own poems that have correct meter. **(W2.2)**

Given examples of biographical sketches, students will be able to generate a sketch of their own from material they have heard or read. **(W2.2)**

Given an hour of time and appropriate background material, students will be able to generate 250 words comfortably then use writing samples to edit it for a second draft. **(W2.4)**

Given main lesson presentations and independent readings, students will write reports on their independently chosen aspects of research in the history curriculum. (See social studies and science.) **(W2.5)**

Students will learn to write business and friendly letters. Following instruction, students will practice writing self-generated letters of both friendly and business genres. **(W2.2)**

Students will write stories from their own personal experience. **(W2.2)**

Grammar and Syntax. Given presentations, reviews and oral descriptions, students will demonstrate accuracy in editing samples using the following:

- Simple declarative, interrogative, exclamatory with punctuation
- Eight parts of speech and articles
- Active and passive voice

- Prepositional phrases
- Proper use of period
- Question mark
- Exclamation mark
- Commas
- Quotation marks
- Proper capitalization
- Colon, dash and semicolon.

(W2.3 & W2.4)

Reading Skills. Students will read at least one book per month (this depends on the child's capacities) per school year without teacher prompting, thereby increasing recreational reading. The number of required readings is set according to ability.

Students will demonstrate oral and written recall from fifth grade level and above reading material from research curriculum areas, biographies and recreational readings. The following areas of recall will be assessed:

- Main sequence of events (summary) **(R2.1 & R2.4)**
- Factual recall
- Difference between facts and opinions **(R2.7 & R2.9)**
- Setting, mood **(R2.8)**
- Main idea, supporting details, foreshadowing **(R2.8 & 2.10)**
- Description of characters. **(R2.2)**

Mathematics

Computation Skills. Given oral presentation, teacher-designed materials, worksheets, presentations and revision, students will demonstrate competency in the following areas:

- Addition of multi-digit whole number columns with carrying **(M3.2.3)**
- Addition of simple fractions with common denominators **(M3.2.3)**
- Addition of mixed numbers/fractions with unlike denominators
- Addition of decimals **(M3.2.3)**
- Addition using expanded notation
- Subtraction of multi-digit whole numbers using borrowing **(M3.2.3)**

- Subtraction of simple fractions with common denominators **(M3.2.3)**
- Subtraction of mixed numbers containing fractions with unlike denominators
- Subtraction of decimals **(M3.2.3)**
- All times tables are memorized out of sequential order **(M3.2.2)**
- Multiplication tables oral and written **(M3.2.2)**
- Multiplication of multi-digit whole numbers **(M3.2.4)**
- Multiplication of simple fractions with like denominators
- Multiplication of fractions with unlike denominators
- Expansion of fractions
- Comparison of fractions through multiplication processes
- Finding common denominators using multiplication
- Changing mixed numbers to improper fractions **(M1.2.4 & M3.2.5)**
- Multiplication of decimals, moving decimal points correctly
- Identification of reciprocals
- Division of simple fractions, using reciprocals
- Division of mixed numbers
- Reduction of fractions to lowest terms
- Division of decimals with decimal point in dividend **(M3.2.4)**
- Division of fractions with decimal in divisor and dividend.

Math Concepts. Given teacher presentation, written material and revision, students will be able to define and express the conceptual meaning using oral explanations, written and pictorial methods for the following:

- Four basic operations **(M3.2.2 & M3.2.3)**
- Whole numbers **(M1.2.4)**
- Fractions **(M1.2.4 & M3.2.5)**
- Mixed numbers **(M3.2.5)**
- Improper fractions **(M3.2.5)**
- Proper fractions **(M3.2.5)**
- Addition of fractions **(M3.2.4)**
- Subtraction of fractions **(M3.2.4)**
- Multiplication of fractions **(M3.2.4)**
- Ordering by value, decimals and fractions **(M1.2.1)**
- Division of fractions and why the second term is inverted.

Word Problems. Given oral presentations and standard and teacher designed worksheets, students will discern the proper operation in word problems up to and including the skill of division of fractions and decimals.

Given the above criteria, students will demonstrate the ability to order decimals and fractions by value.

Optionally students will demonstrate a preliminary understanding of percent through oral and written expression when given instruction and practice. Students will demonstrate the ability to convert fractions to decimals, decimals to fractions, fractions and decimals to percents and visa versa. **(M7.2.2, M7.2.3, M8.2.1, M8.2.2, M8.2.3, M9.2.1, M9.2.2, & M9.2.3)**

History (Social Science)

Given 20 to 45 minute stories, myths, legends and presentations of a factual nature taken from the ancient cultures of India, Persia, Mesopotamia, Babylonia, Chaldea, Assyria and Greece, students will demonstrate competencies in the following areas:

- Oral recall of the main sequence of the presentation after 24-hour interval
- Oral recall of the factual details of the presentation after 24-hour interval
- Oral recall, after a number of days, of factual details demonstrating simultaneous and sequential memory
- Collaborative written recall of main sequence of the presentation after a 24-hour interval
- Collaborative written recall of factual details of the presentation after a 24-hour interval
- Choral and individual recitation of poetry, prose and dramatizations taken from the curriculum
- Ability to follow oral and written directions related to the study of the above areas and to general classroom protocol
- Written dictations of varying lengths generated and spoken orally by the teacher from the above material. Individual goals regarding the number of words recalled are set
- Ability to draw, paint, sculpt or represent orally presented materials from curriculum areas.

The following stories are presented orally throughout the fifth grade -- The Ramayana, Stories of the Buddha, Zarathustra, Gilgamesh, Isis and Osiris, Prometheus, The Fall of Troy and Alexander the Great.

Science, Geography

Given oral presentations of teachers, guest speakers and fellow students; field trips; independent and group research and projects using maps and globes and artistic experiences, students will develop an understanding of the geography of North America (Latin America is optional). The following information will be covered:

- Bordering countries
- States, capitals
- Major mountains, rivers and bodies of water
- Seasonal changes
- Specific land forms e.g., glaciers, volcanoes
- Comparisons and contrasts of various climatic zones. **(SD, SD1, SD2, & SD3)**

Students will be able to make comparisons and determine contrasts of various vegetation e.g., Alaska and Texas, Florida and Maine). Students will express their understanding of the above experiences through the following means:

- Written work in main lesson books
- Drawings for main lesson books
- Oral reports
- Models
- Songs
- Poetry
- Biographies
- Map making.

(SA, SA1, SA2, & SA 3)

Botany

Given oral presentations, illustrations and drawings, the students are introduced to the major tenets of botany. Students will produce written work and illustrations of:

- Major categories of plants
- Terminology of plant growth and plant parts
- Cycle of plant germination and growth
- Geographical and climatologically regions of plant growth. **(SC, SC1, SC2, & SC3)**

GRADE FIVE ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

<i>Student Name:</i> GRADE FIVE SENSORY-MOTOR SKILLS	EMERGING SKILL	DEVELOPING SKILL	ACHIEVED SKILL	STRENGTH	FUTURE INSTRUCTION	NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Student exhibits grade appropriate skill in execution of visual-motor integration. This is demonstrated in form drawing, writing, crafts and other class activities.						
Student exhibits grade appropriate skills in execution of visual-spatial arrangements. This is shown in the student's overall organizational skills in crafts, painting, writing and other classroom visual art based activities.						
Student demonstrates grade appropriate skill in identification and drawing of geometrically based forms while exhibiting proper grip of instruments. While engaged in these activities, student maintains appropriate posture and attends well to task.						
Student displays grade appropriate visual memory skill and visual discrimination skill through copy work in form drawing, drawing and other activities wherein the student copies work from the blackboard or other displays generated by the teacher. (Is timely and accurate.)						
Student works with increasing focus and concentration in visual-motor based activities and does not distract or need inordinate amounts of help or redirection.						
Student demonstrates skill and enjoyment in craft and other handwork activities.						
Student demonstrates increased ability to execute isolated finger movements as in playing the recorder, or other musical instrument, knitting and other such activities.						
Student demonstrates an ability to listen to instructions, focus to task and remain on task for period of as much as forty-five minutes.						
Student demonstrates an ability to maintain quiet and appropriate posture during classroom activities, which require this. (Such as while listening to story or receiving directions.)						
Comments: 						

<i>Student Name:</i> GRADE FIVE SENSORY-MOTOR SKILLS (CONT'D)	EMERGING SKILL	DEVELOPING SKILL	ACHIEVED SKILL	STRENGTH	FUTURE INSTRUCTION	NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Student is able to participate fully in movement activities and after required and reasonable time is given to rehearsal, is able to execute these movements with ease. This is seen in circle time, games, handwork and other class activities. Movements include rocking and rhythmic activities, independent use of sides of the body or upper and lower body and ability to clearly discriminate between and appropriately use left and right sides of the body.						
Student is able to maintain appropriate physical boundaries throughout activities. Student uses proper pressure and tension in gross and fine motor activities.						
Student displays an ability to listen and follow-through on verbal directions. (Six or more sequenced directions.)						
Student appears to understand verbal and non-verbal communications. Student is aware of the messages in "tone" and "gesture" and facial expressions and responds appropriately.						
Student demonstrates increasing ability in use of working, sequential, short-term memory skills as seen in mental arithmetic, dictation, following directions and other general classroom activities.						
Student is able to do activities, such as folk dancing, playing musical instrument, and games classes as expected in this grade.						
Comments:						

<i>Student Name:</i> GRADE FIVE LANGUAGE ARTS SKILLS	EMERGING SKILL	DEVELOPING SKILL	ACHIEVED SKILL	STRENGTH	FUTURE INSTRUCTION	NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Listening and Speaking						
Student exhibits good listening, verbal memory and comprehension skills through participation in class lesson recall after a twenty-four hour period has elapsed.						
Student exhibits a full engagement in the verbally told story material, through free rendering and other artistic projects depicting the material and the student's relationship to it.						
Student uses vocabulary from the verbally told stories, thereby exhibiting an expanding word finding and vocabulary building skill. In addition, student will use appropriate grammar, word choice and phrasing while retelling story-based or verbally taught material.						
Student exhibits a growing ability to use short term, working and sequential memory skills as exhibited in story recall, attention to and follow-through on directions (both concrete, as in "get out your main lesson books" and abstract as in "place a circle in the upper right hand corner of the next page"). Student is timely with participation in classroom activities.						
Student displays an ability to acquire verbally memorized material and recite this material while participating in movements as seen in circle-time activities and class plays.						
Student demonstrates skills in sound discrimination, recognition of rhyming words, alliterative words meter and cadence and other word groupings as exhibited in recitation and class participation.						
Comments:						

<i>Student Name:</i> GRADE FIVE LANGUAGE ARTS SKILLS (CONT'D)	EMERGING SKILL	DEVELOPING SKILL	ACHIEVED SKILL	STRENGTH	FUTURE INSTRUCTION	NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Reading						
Student demonstrates reading for information skills: scanning visual information as charts and graphs to gain information, recall of data or events to predict outcomes or for purposeful references, collection of pertinent data, through inferential statements so as to extrapolate meaning and increase predictability of outcomes or usefulness of information for report writing.						
Student displays stable recall of words previously learned and these words provide information for contextual cues for comprehension of materials and accurate “guessing” and prediction skills in deciphering further linked reading material.						
Student recalls significant events or details from a reading assignment, thereby indicating good comprehension and recall skills. (Explanatory reading.)						
Student exhibits increasing ability to verbally synopsise reading material, thereby indicating good comprehension skills. (Fiction and non-fiction.)						
Student reads with inflection in sentence closures, commas, questions, etc. Fluency in oral reading is increasing.						
Student is self-selecting reading material and silently reads for an appropriate length of time.						
Comments: 						

<i>Student Name:</i> GRADE FIVE LANGUAGE ARTS SKILLS (CONT'D)	EMERGING SKILL	DEVELOPING SKILL	ACHIEVED SKILL	STRENGTH	FUTURE INSTRUCTION	NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Spelling						
Student exhibits growing ease with verbal dictations. Student is able to construct, orally dictated sentences with grade appropriate accuracy. These contain sight vocabulary as well as appropriate phonetically based spelling with word encoding tasks.						
Student exhibits ease in executing cursive writing using upper and lower case letters with appropriate consistency						
Student displays evenly formed skill in cursive handwriting using upper and lower case. Student is placing written materials within borders and is writing horizontally on an unlined page as in the main lesson book.						
Student exhibits a steady growth in using spelling rules as well as in memorizing sight words						
Student is aware of homographs and homophones and is learning to discriminate their usage.						
Student is capable of identifying misspelled words and is developing techniques for editing skills. Student refers to dictionary, peers or adults.						
Student demonstrates grade expectations in spelling sight words and participation in class-based spelling activities, including weekly spelling quizzes and exercises in syllabication.						
Student has a working knowledge of alphabetizing of words and hence, the ability to check spellings and definitions through dictionary usage.						
Comments: 						

<i>Student Name:</i> GRADE FIVE LANGUAGE ARTS SKILLS (CONT'D)	EMERGING SKILL	DEVELOPING SKILL	ACHIEVED SKILL	STRENGTH	FUTURE INSTRUCTION NEEDS	ASSESSMENT
Written Expression						
Student 's self constructed independent writing reflects skills in the following areas:						
Student displays grade appropriate sentence construction. (Sentence structure indicates usage of conjunctions and transitional phrases.)						
Student uses initial capital letter and final punctuation consistently. Student is emerging in ability to consistently use commas (for series), quotations, capitals for proper nouns, use of colons and use of semicolons.						
Student proofreads written material and thus, self-edits for spelling, punctuation and capitalization errors. Student re-writes material for final copy.						
Student is able to generate writing, which reflects, sequential organization, organized ideas, and complete thoughts with appropriate verbal syntactical structures. Student is expanding written expression through the use of declarative, interrogative, exclamatory and imperative sentences.						
Student generates at least 250 words using sequential paragraphs with organized structure (initial sentence, supporting material, closure and transition phrases or information).						
Student is able to self-edit in order to add details to support clarity and re-group sentences for clearer meaning or efficiency (uses active and passive voice appropriately).						
Student generates simple friendly letters, using appropriate openings and closures.						
Student is able to generate more formal, or business letters using appropriate formats.						
Student participates in individual and group story, poetry or other such creative writing projects. These activities are to encourage individual expression and enjoyment; editing and technical expertise is not the main objective.						
Student has a working knowledge of the parts of speech including nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, prepositional phrases, articles, conjunctions and interjections and uses these in oral responses, and written work.						
Comments: 						

<i>Student Name:</i> GRADE FIVE MATHEMATICS SKILLS	EMERGING SKILL	DEVELOPING SKILL	ACHIEVED SKILL	STRENGTH	FUTURE INSTRUCTION	NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Given significant review and practice, student exhibits working skills in areas introduced in the fourth grade mathematics rubric, including the following:						
Student exhibits mastery of the four basic processes of math, using multiple digit numbers. This mastery includes the ability to do long division using estimation and rounding of numbers.						
Student is able to work word problems involving measurements: time, linear, liquid, weight and money. Student has a working knowledge of linear measurements and finding area and perimeter of a given location.						
Student demonstrates a working understanding of the four math processes when using fractions and mixed numbers.						
Student is capable of reducing and expanding fractions thus understands and uses the "lowest common denominator" (factoring, expanding notation) in working problems.						
Student is able to listen to a complex (grade appropriate) word problem and mentally calculate the response to the question posed.						
Student independently uses pencil and paper to complete mathematical calculations with accuracy both in format and in finding answers (on a daily basis).						
Student is able to extrapolate pertinent data in word problems and use proper calculative skills to develop an answer (correct answer is not as important as correct process)						
Student participates, with understanding, in class group activities involving measurement of length, volume, time, weight, mass and capacity.						
Student understands and recognizes more complex number patterns and is able to work with prime numbers.						
Student can find averages when working with given information.						
Comments:						

<i>Student Name:</i> GRADE FIVE MATHEMATICS SKILLS (CONT'D)	EMERGING SKILL	DEVELOPING SKILL	ACHIEVED SKILL	STRENGTH	FUTURE INSTRUCTION	NEEDS ASSESSMENT
NEW PROCESSES Student shows emerging understanding and working use of:						
Place value of decimal numbers.						
Conversion of fractions to decimal numbers.						
Conversion of decimals to percentages and percentages to decimals.						
Use of decimals in the four basic processes.						
Ordering decimals, fractions, mixed numbers by value (greater and lesser.)						
Use of decimals in word problems.						
Use and conversion of mixed numbers.						
Comments:						

<i>Student Name:</i> GRADE FIVE SCIENCE SKILLS	EMERGING SKILL	DEVELOPING SKILL	ACHIEVED SKILL	STRENGTH	FUTURE INSTRUCTION	NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Social Sciences and Skills						
Student demonstrates a growing awareness of the group needs and is able to appropriately adjust self-needs to group needs. This is seen in such behaviors as waiting for his/her turn, helping others, listening and speaking as needed and in general, contributing to the on-going class ambience.						
Student understands individual and group-collaborative work and is able to participate in both. Student understands basic group processes, as evidenced in participation in class meetings.						
Student understands the concepts of and differences between “fairness” and “equality” in social life, class discipline and general interplay of social life.						
Student understands and exhibits socially inclusive behaviors and is included in social activities. (Uses supportive language asks for help etc.)						
Student demonstrates an ability to work collaboratively with his/her peers without constant adult intervention or guidance.						
Student has a working understanding of ancient cultures of India, Persia, Mesopotamia, Babylonia, Chaldea, Assyria and Greece as evidenced in main lesson books, oral and written presentations and group and individual artistic representations.						
Comments: 						

<i>Student Name:</i> GRADE FIVE SCIENCE SKILLS (CONT'D)	EMERGING SKILL	DEVELOPING SKILL	ACHIEVED SKILL	STRENGTH	FUTURE INSTRUCTION	NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Life Sciences and Skills						
Student had constructed maps of the North American continent and of historical Mesopotamia, Egypt and Greece.						
Student has a working understanding of North American continental geographical regions and the environmental impact of the geography upon the peoples who settled a region, as well as the environmental impact of the settlers upon the region.						
Student has a working knowledge of the geography and political boundaries of the main continental areas of the United States of America. Student knows the bordering countries, states, state capitals.						
Student has a working knowledge of the major climate zones of earth.						
Student has a working knowledge of major categories of plants, terminology of plant growth and the cycle of plant germination and growth.						
Student participated fully in gardening classes and has demonstrated an ability to work with basic plant cultivation.						
Student has a working knowledge of perennial and annual plants and the relationship of plants to climate zones.						
Student has imaginatively explored plant physiology, the cycle of breathing, the major parts of a plant etc. and compared these to human physiology and human cycles.						
Comments: 						

GRADE SEVEN CURRICULUM STANDARDS

Objectives: Unless otherwise specified, the criteria for the following objectives are that 80% of students will perform at 80% or better.

Language Arts

Reading. On a daily basis students will listen to and read aloud ballads, poems, legends and folktales from around the world, as well as reading assigned contemporary novels. Students will learn to appreciate the English language both in terms of artistic form and content and in terms of formal grammar skills. Student will present no less than six book reports. **(Alaska Performance Standards R3.2, R3.3, R3.4, & R3.6)**

Writing. Given a block of several weeks, students will focus daily on the emotions of wish, wonder and surprise in literature, learn to express these contrasting moods through choral recitation, dramatization, composition writing and poetry.

Given weekly classes in language skills, students will learn grammar and writing skills using formal letter writing, original compositions, ballads and essays to explore:

- Phrases and clauses as extensions of simple word modifiers
- Pronouns
- Declension
- Active and passive voice
- Parenthetical expressions
- The four elements of poetry.

Given continual assignments in writing, corrected spelling words will be written in individual spelling notebooks, and each student will be tested regularly on their own lists. Misspelled words will be written in notebooks. **(W3.1, W3.2, W3.3, & W3.4)**

Mathematics

Computation. Given regular classes in problem solving and weekly problem sheets, students will review and strengthen skills in all phases of basic arithmetic. **(M3.3.3, M3.3.4, M3.3.5, & M3.3.6)**

Business Math. Given descriptions of business situations, students will learn to work with formula to calculate percentage, interest, discount, commission, salaries, profit and loss, etc.

Given descriptions of banking procedures, students will learn and practice calculating mortgages, interest income, business loans (advantages, disadvantages), etc. (M7.3.2, M7.3.3.7, M8.3.1, M8.3.2, M8.3.3, M10.3.1, & M10.3.2)

Geometry. Given a series of geometrical drawings, using a straight edge and compass students will learn to bisect angles, construct perpendiculars, bisect line segments, construct parallel lines and regular polygons.

Given regular polygons, students will learn to calculate areas and perimeters.

Given basic platonic solids, students will learn to calculate surfaces and volumes.

(M5.3.1, M5.3.2, M5.3.4, & M5.3.7)

Algebra. Given practice in solving simple equations, students will evolve an introductory understanding of algebraic forms and set theory. (M4.3.2 & M4.3.5)

Sciences

Physics. Given daily experiments for a block of four weeks, students will learn to observe and record simple physical phenomena. They will describe materials used, procedure and observations of what occurred. They will also draw a diagram and/or schematic of the experiment. The following will be covered:

- Acoustics – vibrations, propagation of sound using various media, qualitative differences of sound, harmonics
- Light – color phenomenon in nature, color perspective, complementary colors, projecting shadows
- Magnetism and electricity – simple motor
- Six basic machines – lever, gear, pulley, inclined plane, wedge and screw.

(SA, SA1, SA2, SB2, & SB4)

Human Physiology. Given oral descriptions and drawings of the human anatomy, students will learn the basic functions of the human body. They will draw diagrams and will complete written descriptions, with emphasis on nutrition, health, hygiene, and reproduction. (SC & SC2)

Inorganic Chemistry. In a block of four weeks, students will describe and illustrate the materials, procedures, and observations used to learn about:

- Combustion
- Formation of crystals
- Properties of acids, bases and salts
- Electricity (see sixth-grade).

(SA, SB, SB1, SB2, SB3, & SB4)

History

Given historical biographical presentations, students will review material verbally, then construct their own essays and make illustrations concerning the Age of Discovery, the Renaissance and Reformation and Shakespearean England. This could include, but will not be limited to, the biographies of: Marco Polo, Vasco da Gama, Columbus, Magellan, Cortez, Sir Walter Raleigh, Galileo, Tycho Brahe, Kepler, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Catherine de Medici, Vittoria Colonna, Lorenzo de Medici, William Shakespeare, Martin Luther and Queen Elizabeth. Also presented are biographies of Chinese explorers and reformists.

Geography

Given biographical sketches of the great discoverers, time will be set aside to review the landscape, weather and resources of the world continents. Individual color-coded maps showing topography and land use will be drawn of major Continental land masses.

Given presentations on the geography of parts of the world as a whole, students will present research papers on their own, comparing and contrasting the landscapes, resources and cultural differences of the world continents.

GRADE SEVEN ASSESSMENT RUBRICS

<i>Student Name:</i> GRADE SEVEN SENSORY-MOTOR SKILLS	EMERGING SKILL	DEVELOPING SKILL	ACHIEVED SKILL	STRENGTH	FUTURE INSTRUCTION	NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Student exhibits grade appropriate skill in execution of visual-motor integration. This is demonstrated in form drawing, writing, crafts and other class activities.						
Student exhibits grade appropriate skills in execution of visual-spatial arrangements. This is shown in the student's overall organizational skills in crafts, painting, writing and other classroom visual art based activities.						
Student demonstrates grade appropriate skill in identification and drawing of geometrically based forms while exhibiting proper grip of instruments. While engaged in these activities, student maintains appropriate posture and attends well to task.						
Student displays grade appropriate visual memory skill and visual discrimination. (Is timely and accurate in board copy work and self-produced work, visual memory for spelling reflects long-term recall.)						
Student works with increasing focus and concentration in visual-motor based activities and does not distract or need inordinate amounts of help or redirection.						
Student demonstrates skill and enjoyment in craft and other handwork activities including woodwork.						
Student demonstrates increased ability to execute isolated finger movements as in playing the recorder, or other musical instrument, knitting and other such activities.						
Student demonstrates an ability to listen to instructions, focus to task and remain on task for period of as much as forty-five minutes.						
Student attends to the primary speaker and is able to recall facts of spoken material, content of a lecture, directions etc. (after a 24 hr. period) and use these in subsequent classroom activities.						
Student is able to participate fully in movement activities and after the required and reasonable time is given to rehearsal, is able to execute these movements with ease. This involves more complex movements as in playing a musical instrument or developing a specialized sports skill.						
Student is able to maintain appropriate physical boundaries throughout activities. Student uses proper pressure and tension in activities.						
Student displays an ability to listen and follow-through on verbal directions, (six or more sequenced directions).						
Comments: 						

<i>Student Name:</i> GRADE SEVEN SENSORY-MOTOR SKILLS (CONT'D)	EMERGING SKILL	DEVELOPING SKILL	ACHIEVED SKILL	STRENGTH	FUTURE INSTRUCTION	NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Student appears to understand verbal and non-verbal communications. Student is aware of the messages in "tone" and "gesture" and responds appropriately.						
Student demonstrates increasing ability in use of working, sequential, short-term memory skills as seen in mental arithmetic, dictation, following directions and other general classroom activities.						
Student exhibits grade appropriate skill in execution of visual-motor integration. This is demonstrated in form drawing, writing, crafts and other class activities.						
Comments: 						

<i>Student Name:</i> GRADE SEVEN LANGUAGE ARTS SKILLS	EMERGING SKILL	DEVELOPING SKILL	ACHIEVED SKILL	STRENGTH	FUTURE INSTRUCTION	NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Writing Mechanics and Spelling Skills						
Student exhibits growing ease with verbal dictations. Student is able to construct, orally dictated sentences with grade appropriate accuracy. These contain sight vocabulary as well as appropriate phonetically based spelling with word encoding tasks.						
Student is self-editing written material and is generating a finished draft of assigned written work. The following five skills exhibit this:						
Student exhibits a consistent ability in the use of spelling rules as well as in memorization of sight words						
Student is aware of homographs and homophones and is discriminates their usage.						
Student has a working knowledge of alphabetizing of words and hence, the ability to check spellings and definitions through dictionary usage.						
Student is capable of identifying misspelled words and is developing techniques for editing skills.						
Student refers to dictionary or spell-checking devices and independently corrects all first drafts.						
Comments:						

<i>Student Name:</i> GRADE SEVEN LANGUAGE ARTS SKILLS (CONT'D)	EMERGING SKILL	DEVELOPING SKILL	ACHIEVED SKILL	STRENGTH	FUTURE INSTRUCTION	NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Written Expression						
Student displays grade appropriate sentence construction. (Sentence structure indicates usage of descriptors, conjunctions and transitional phrases). Student generates sequential paragraphs using good structure (initial sentence, supporting material, closure and transition phrases or information).						
Student uses initial capital letter and final punctuation consistently. Student consistently uses commas (for series), quotations, and capitals for proper nouns, use of colons and is growing proficient in the use of colons and semicolons.						
Student has a working knowledge of the parts of speech including nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions,, prepositional phrases, articles, conjunctions and interjections and uses these in written work and sentence diagramming.						
Student uses active and passive voice, subordinate clauses and other more sophisticated writing techniques previously taught (see grade 6 rubrics).						
Student is able to generate writing, which reflects sequential organization, organized ideas and complete thoughts with appropriate verbal syntactical structure. Student is expanding written expression.						
Student's writing reflects an appropriate use of active and passive voices and parenthetical expressions.						
Comments:						

<i>Student Name:</i> GRADE SEVEN LANGUAGE ARTS SKILLS (CONT'D)	EMERGING SKILL	DEVELOPING SKILL	ACHIEVED SKILL	STRENGTH	FUTURE INSTRUCTION	NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Listening and Speaking						
Student exhibits good listening, verbal memory and comprehension skills through participation in class lesson recall after a twenty-four hour period has elapsed. Student recalls and uses factual content, thus building a general knowledge base, such as required in the application of concepts used in the science, math, and grammar blocks.						
Student exhibits a full engagement in the verbally told story material, through free rendering and other artistic projects depicting the material and the student's relationship to it.						
Student uses vocabulary from the verbally told material, thereby exhibiting an expanding word finding and vocabulary building skill.						
Student exhibits a growing ability to verbally express self-generated reports and/or other materials she/he has organized into a clear, concise and complete presentation.						
Student displays an ability to acquire verbally memorized material and recite this material while participating in such activities such as class presentations and plays.						
Student demonstrates skill in recitation of memorized passages, poems, verses etc. using clear diction, articulation fluency, and inflection and general over-all expression.						
Student is able to enter into discussion regarding the meaning of a phrase or passage in poetry, prose, expository writing or the like.						
Comments: 						

<i>Student Name:</i> GRADE SEVEN LANGUAGE ARTS SKILLS (CONT'D)	EMERGING SKILL	DEVELOPING SKILL	ACHIEVED SKILL	STRENGTH	FUTURE INSTRUCTION	NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Reading						
Student demonstrates reading for information skills: scanning visual information as charts and graphs to gain information, recall of data or events to predict outcomes or for purposeful references, collection of pertinent data, through inferential statements so as to extrapolate meaning and increase predictability of outcomes or usefulness of information for report writing.						
Student displays stable recall of words previously learned and these words provide information for contextual cues for comprehension of materials and accurate "guessing" and prediction skills in deciphering further related reading material.						
Student recalls significant events or details from a reading assignment, thereby indicating good comprehension and recall skills, (explanatory reading.) This is assessed in verbal recall sessions in class, quizzes and short reports in homework assignments.						
Student exhibits increasing ability to verbally synopsise reading material, thereby indicating good comprehension skills, (fiction and non-fiction.)						
Student reads with inflection in sentence closures, commas, questions, etc. Fluency in oral reading is increasing.						
Student reads with appreciation the following genres: ballads, poems, legends, formal old English dialogue, etc.)						
Student is self-selecting reading material and silently reads for a sustained length of time (one to two hours).						
Student displays an ability to read and comprehend various kinds of literature, instructional, explanatory, expository, fiction, non-fiction, poetry and prose.						
Comments: 						

<i>Student Name:</i> GRADE SEVEN MATHEMATICS SKILLS	EMERGING SKILL	DEVELOPING SKILL	ACHIEVED SKILL	STRENGTH	FUTURE INSTRUCTION	NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Given significant review and practice, student exhibits working skills in areas introduced in the sixth grade mathematics rubric, including the following:						
Student exhibits mastery of the four basic processes of math, using multiple digit numbers. This mastery includes the ability to do long division using estimation rounding of numbers.						
Student is able to work word problems involving measurements: time, linear, liquid, weight and money. Student has a working knowledge of linear measurements and finding area and perimeter of a given location.						
Student demonstrates a working understanding of the four math processes when using fractions and mixed numbers.						
Student is capable of reducing and expanding fractions thus understands and uses the "lowest common denominator" (factoring, expanding notation) in working problems.						
Student is able to listen to a complex (grade appropriate) word problems and mentally calculate the response to the question posed.						
Student independently uses pencil and paper to complete mathematical calculations with accuracy both in format and in finding answers (on a daily basis).						
Student is able to extrapolate pertinent data in word problems and use proper calculative skills to develop an answer (correct answer is not as important as correct process).						
Student participates, with understanding, in class group activities involving measurement of length, volume, time, weight, mass and capacity.						
Student understands and recognizes more complex number patterns and is able to work with prime numbers.						
Student can find averages when working with given information.						
Comments:						

<i>Student Name:</i> GRADE SEVEN MATHEMATICS SKILLS (CONT'D)	EMERGING SKILL	DEVELOPING SKILL	ACHIEVED SKILL	STRENGTH	FUTURE INSTRUCTION	NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Student shows understanding of and working use of:						
Place value of decimal numbers						
Conversion of fractions to decimal numbers						
Conversion of decimals to percentages and percentages to decimals.						
Use of decimals in the four basic processes.						
Ordering decimals, fractions, and mixed numbers by value (greater and lesser).						
Use of decimals in word problems.						
Comments: 						

<i>Student Name:</i> GRADE SEVEN MATHEMATICS SKILLS (CONT'D)	EMERGING SKILL	DEVELOPING SKILL	ACHIEVED SKILL	STRENGTH	FUTURE INSTRUCTION	NEEDS ASSESSMENT
NEW PROCESSES						
Student has a working knowledge in computing ratio, proportion.						
Student is applying the following concepts: Product of means is equal to product of extremes. Bookkeeping terminology, simple interest, selling price, margin, loss, profit, computing and compounding interest, dividends and principal on checking and savings accounts, reading bills and understanding the information thereon.						
Student is learning to use simple business math processes: calculations of percentages in overall expenses, commissions. Salaries, profit, loss, discount, etc.						
Student is growing in ability to use the following geometrical concepts and processes, evidenced in main lesson and homework assignments:						
Names and shapes and measurement of basic geometric polygons (perimeter square measure, volume, etc.						
Construction of various polygons using different methods and materials.						
Construction of platonic solids and calculation for surfaces and volumes.						
Construction of angles, bi-section of angles. Use of terminology regarding interior angles, quadrilaterals, etc.						
Construction with the compass, straight edge and protractor of polygons, angles perpendicular bi-sectors and parallel lines.						
Development of pi, pictorially and arithmetically.						
Computation and construction of area, circumference, radius, diameter, angles, arcs and chords of a circle.						
Student is growing in ability to use the following algebraic concepts and processes, evidenced in main lesson and homework assignments:						
The number line, real numbers, signed numbers and values, the magnitude of zero.						
Set theory, computational laws.						
Rules for addition, subtraction, and multiplication of signed numbers.						
Rules for multiplication and division, Inverse operations.						
Comments:						

<i>Student Name:</i> GRADE SEVEN SCIENCE SKILLS	EMERGING SKILL	DEVELOPING SKILL	ACHIEVED SKILL	STRENGTH	FUTURE INSTRUCTION	NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Social Sciences and Social Conduct						
Student demonstrates a growing awareness of the group needs and is able to appropriately adjust self-needs to group needs. This is seen in such behaviors as waiting for his/her turn, helping others, listening and speaking as needed and in general, contributing to the on-going class ambience.						
Student understands individual and group-collaborative work and is able to participate in both. Student understands basic group processes, as evidenced in participation in class meetings.						
Student understands the concepts of and differences between “fairness” and “equality” in social life, class discipline and general interplay of social life.						
Student understands and exhibits socially inclusive behaviors and is included in social activities. (Uses supportive language asks for help etc.)						
Student demonstrates an ability to work collaboratively with his/her peers without constant adult intervention or guidance.						
Comments: 						

<i>Student Name:</i> GRADE SEVEN SCIENCE SKILLS (CONT'D)	EMERGING SKILL	DEVELOPING SKILL	ACHIEVED SKILL	STRENGTH	FUTURE INSTRUCTION	NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Geo-physical Science						
Student has a working understanding of World Geographical Regions, is able to identify and map the basic geo-political boundaries of continents and entities.						
Student has a working knowledge of routes of the voyages of the great discoverers who journeyed to various continents (Marco Polo, Vasco da Gama, Columbus, Magellan, etc.)						
Student has a working knowledge of the major climate zones of earth and seasonal changes and is able to compare and contrast various climates.						
Student has a working knowledge of the contrasts between continents insofar as: landscape, weather and resources.						
Comments: 						

<i>Student Name:</i> GRADE SEVEN SCIENCE SKILLS (CONT'D)	EMERGING SKILL	DEVELOPING SKILL	ACHIEVED SKILL	STRENGTH	FUTURE INSTRUCTION	NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Socio-Political Sciences						
Student has a basic working understanding of the Renaissance Period in Northern and Southern Europe and the major artists and scientists of that era.						
Student has a basic understanding of the geo-political and religious rulers of the Renaissance and the Reformation Period of European history.						
Student has a working knowledge of the development of Western civilization from the Middle Ages through the Reformation.						
Comments: 						

<i>Student Name:</i> GRADE SEVEN SCIENCE SKILLS (CONT'D)	EMERGING SKILL	DEVELOPING SKILL	ACHIEVED SKILL	STRENGTH	FUTURE INSTRUCTION	NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Physical Science						
Student has acquired a working knowledge of and vocabulary for basic acoustics. The following is evidenced in main lesson book work, class participation and quizzes: Natural sounds, pitch, overtones, harmonics, tone vs. noise, Doppler effect, chladni's sound figures, sound conductivity.						
Student has acquired a working knowledge of and vocabulary for basic understanding of magnetism. The following is evidenced in main lesson book work, class participation and quizzes: Simple motor function, six basic machines-lever, gear, pulley, inclined plane, wedge and screw.						
Student has acquired a working knowledge of and vocabulary for basic understanding of optics. The following is evidenced in main lesson book work, class participation and quizzes: Color phenomenon in nature, color perspective, complementary colors, and projecting shadows.						
Student has acquired a working knowledge of and vocabulary for basic understanding of inorganic chemistry. The following is evidenced in main lesson book work, class participation and quizzes: Combustion. Formation of crystals. Properties of acids, bases and salts. Electricity (see sixth grade).						
Student has acquired a working knowledge of and vocabulary for basic understanding of astronomy. The following is evidenced in main lesson book work, class participation and quizzes: Solar system and galaxy, from a heliocentric point of view.						
Student has acquired a working knowledge of and vocabulary for basic understanding of physiology of the bodily systems: respiratory, circulatory, gustatory, reproductive. The following is evidenced in main lesson book work, class participation and quizzes.						
Comments: 						

4. Program Achievement

- a) Is the school implementing a well-conceived plan to ensure equal and bias-free access for all students, for all facilities, courses, programs, activities, and services?
- b) Is the school systematically addressing the needs of students who do not perform at acceptable levels of proficiency in the statewide assessment program?
- c) Is the school systematically informing parents of their child's performance and progress?
- d) Did the charter school provide student assessment participation rates?
- e) Has the charter school made a comparison between their assessment scores and the district's assessment data?
- f) Has the charter school made a comparison between their assessment scores and the state's assessment data?
- g) Has the charter school shown disaggregated scores across all categories?
- h) Does the school provide professional development that is goal-based and driven, in large part, by the student assessment data?
- i) Is the school implementing a well-conceived plan to demonstrate progress over time?

4. Program Achievement

4(a) Is the school implementing a well-conceived plan to ensure equal and bias-free access for all students, for all facilities, courses, programs, activities, and services?

Creating a Diverse School Population

Birchtree Charter School student body will represent the diverse population of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough area.

Student recruitment will represent the diverse population of Matanuska-Susitna Borough. BCS will maintain an accurate accounting of the ethnic and racial balance of students enrolled in the school. We shall also keep on file documentation on the efforts the school made to achieve student racial and ethnic balance and the results it achieved in accordance with the commitment made in the application and the standards of charter legislation.

Once established, BCS plans to expand its recruitment efforts to reach all areas of Matanuska-Susitna Borough. Information about the school will be distributed via brochures in day care centers, local churches, military bases, optional school fairs and local Head Start facilities. We will also use public service announcements and the newspaper to share information about the school. Brochures will ultimately be printed in a number of languages.

Our outreach will include networking with school and community agencies.

Special Education Plans

Birchtree Charter School embraces a full inclusion model for special education. Whenever possible, the needs of each student will be met within the context of the classroom.

BCS recognizes the importance of providing educational opportunities to all students regardless of physical challenges or special needs. To that end, BCS pledges to work in cooperation with MSBSD. BCS will adhere to all laws effecting individuals with exceptional needs, including all provisions of PL 94-142 of the American Disabilities Act and the Individual with Disabilities Educational Act (IDEA), its amendments, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. All students will be given equal access to the school regardless of disabilities. BCS will not discriminate against any student based on his or her disabilities in accordance with Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

BCS is responsible for meeting the needs of disabled and special-needs students enrolled at the school, with oversight responsibility remaining with MSBSD. The special education personnel at BCS will be employees of BCS or MSBSD. The BCS administrator and/or other mandated IEP team members will attend staff development and/or training meetings sponsored by MSBSD as necessary to comply with IDEA regulations. Student discipline procedures for suspension and expulsion will be in compliance with discipline set forth in the IDEA and consistent with state and federal law.

Gifted and Talented Students

BCS will ensure that each individual student's needs are met and that all students will be challenged to achieve their potential. Inherent in the Whole Child Curriculum based on the Waldorf educational philosophy is the opportunity to stimulate each child's learning needs. Students who are identified as gifted, talented or high ability will be provided with enrichment activities within the classroom focusing on expanding their coursework, divergent thinking, analysis and logic providing them with the opportunity to lead and to be led. Every effort will be made to offer extra-curricular activities to meet these student's needs.

English Language Learners

BCS will be responsible for providing language rich, contextually based education for English Language Learners (ELL) while simultaneously meeting their needs for academic advancement and community and social awareness. The experiential, active nature of a Waldorf-inspired whole child education enables students to acquire language through authentic experiences, which are beneficial for students who are learning a new language.

English language learners will thrive within Birchtree's Waldorf-inspired curriculum.

Through the integration of literacy, sciences nature, music and art, the ELL student will gain English language skills while developing a sense of acceptance in the school culture. Art-centered, community-based learning experiences are valuable for ELLs because they allow students to feel more involved, confident, and productive in their learning environment. Given that respect and community are fostered, classrooms are uninhibited, open to language-learning, and support the ELL student. Students are able to perform more cognitively demanding tasks and the quality of written and spoken language improves when student-created images are used to enhance learning.

Finally, teacher looping is advantageous for ELL students as the teacher is able stay with the students for a period of years providing them with consistency in instruction. Teachers will be able to assess English acquisition and proficiency over time, a span of years, versus one year only. Teachers will provide educational activities that develop the English language, learners' speaking, reading, writing, and listening skills through both whole group and individual instruction, at the same time meeting the needs of the whole child.

Fiscal Responsibilities for Special Education Issues

BCS has elected to be a public school within MSBSD. Therefore, it will receive its equitable share of special education funding and/or services to support the educational needs of students with disabilities enrolled in BCS. BCS will be responsible for providing its own special education services and instruction to the students it serves. BCS may request specific services from the District on a fee basis (e.g. OT, PT, SLP services). BCS will hire a half time special education teacher, a full time teacher assistant, and a part time teacher assistant. BCS will follow MSBSD special education protocol and policy for:

- Identification
- Referral
- Assessment
- Development of IEP
- IEP review

Due process procedures

When, as a result of the IEP, it is agreed that the most appropriate placement in the least restrictive environment is not the charter school, the parent of the identified student must be in agreement with the decision. If the parent is in disagreement, that matter would have to be resolved through the due process procedures. BCS will participate with MSBSD in order to facilitate due process procedures whenever necessary

4(b)Is the school systematically addressing the needs of students who do not perform at acceptable levels of proficiency in the statewide assessment program?

Birchtree Charter School will use an individualized action plan to help improve the performance of low achieving students. We are especially committed to working with such students because we are committed to keeping all students together with their peers

of the same age group. The Waldorf based Whole Child Curriculum approach avoids retention or skipping a grade except in the rarest of circumstances.

In addition to the regular parent conferences, these are the steps we will take when a pupil is achieving poorly:

A faculty member will initiate a ‘child study’ that will be discussed as part of the regular weekly faculty meeting. The impressions of several teachers who know the child will be sought. Groups of pupils with a similar achievement pattern will be discussed together. The faculty then will come up with an individualized intervention plan for the pupil(s). This can involve receiving supplemental support services, tutoring, alternative instructional materials, or a remediation program. The school will make every effort to get expert and lay volunteers to help as appropriate. Parents will be informed of the team’s recommendations and kept apprised of intervention implementation. Their advice and insight regarding the issue will also be sought.

4(c) Is the school systematically informing parents of their child’s performance and progress?

A comprehensive assessment will be prepared and provided to parents at the end of each school year for each child. This will include an overview of the course work for the year, and a discussion of the child’s achievement, performance, and growth in each of the various curriculum blocks, the specialty subjects (languages, handwork, recorder, movement), as well as social skills and work habits. In addition, the parents will receive a quarterly summary of the student’s work in subject areas at the parent-teacher conferences. This will include a review of main lesson books and short summaries from language and handwork instructors. The children will also present their work at a child-lead, child-parent-teacher conference. Report cards, as such, will not be given. Parents may also request a conference with the teacher if needed.

Classroom Assessment:

The following types of assessment methods and tools will be utilized to inform parents of their child’s performance.

- **Gradalis Assessments:** Birchtree Parent Guild purchased Rubrics and Assessments developed by Bonnie River of Gradalis Educational Consulting Services. Waldorf teachers and administrators created these for Waldorf and Waldorf-inspired programs. The Assessments purchased contain a Teachers Manual, Student Testing booklet and Student scoring sheet and are formatted similar to the Briggance Tests and are meant to gain an overview of the student's skills. Each student will have these completed by his or her teacher for grades 2 to 5. Student testing booklets, Teacher Manuals and Student Scoring Sheets for grades 2 to 5 are available by request as each is over 30 pages and there is not space within the charter application to include.

- **Portfolios:** Comprehensive student portfolios will include samples such as main lesson books, practice papers, written work and reports, artwork etc.
- **Teacher Observation:** A record of teacher observations of each child will be maintained. These will include a record of individual growth and achievement in all three main areas of concern (intellectual, physical and emotional).
- **Oral Recitations:** Oral recitations, presentations, reports, performances, and demonstrations will occur regularly, by both individuals and groups.
- **Exhibitions:** An open house will be planned at least once a year, during which student work will be exhibited and samples of the class work will be demonstrated.
- **Assemblies:** School-wide assemblies will be planned monthly or bimonthly as a showcase of each grades' classroom work (recitations, songs, poems) starting at first grade. This will give parents, administrators and board members a glimpse of the students work throughout the year.
- **Grade Level Benchmark Skills:** Students will also demonstrated their overall progress toward graduation readiness through a series of standardized tests to be given per Matanuska-Susitna Borough School Districts testing schedule starting in third grade.

4(d) Did the charter school provide student assessment participation rates?

This question is not applicable because this is an application for a new charter school. However, BCS aims to have 100% of students participate in all assessments.

4(e) Has the charter school made a comparison between their assessment scores and the district's assessment data?

This question is not applicable because this is an application for a new charter school.

4(f) Has the charter school made a comparison between their assessment scores and the state's assessment data?

This question is not applicable because this is an application for a new charter school. However, a study of Waldorf graduates listed on the web site *Why Waldorf Works* (<http://www.whywaldorfworks.org/>) states that of the graduates surveyed, 94% attended college, 47% chose humanities or arts as majors, 42% chose science as a major, 89% are highly satisfied in their occupation choice, 91% are still active in lifelong education, and 90% highly value tolerance of other viewpoints.

4(g) Has the charter school shown disaggregated scores across all categories?

This question is not applicable because this is an application for a new charter school.

4(h) Does the school provide professional development that is goal-based and driven, in large part, by the student assessment data?

The BCS budget allocates \$45,000 for professional development. The BPG is looking to finding additional funding to help supplement additional teacher training. BCS teachers and administration are to participate in Waldorf training through various universities, programs, and conferences. As a staff we will begin book studies beginning in January of 2011. It is our intention to increase our shared body of knowledge thus increasing our ability to come to consensus and to fully align our procedures and policies with the vision and mission of the school. The proposed staff development plan follows:

Training Offered	June '10	July '10	Aug '10	Sept '10	Oct '10	Nov '10	Dec '10	Jan '11	Feb '11	Mar '11	Apr '11	May '11	June '11	July '11
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Waldorf Grade Level Methods	X	X	X	X									X	X
Waldorf Education and NCLB	X	X	X		X		X		X		X		X	X
Waldorf Education and A.S.S.	X	X	X	X		X		X		X		X		X
Creating the Waldorf Classroom	X	X	X				X				X			X

BCS administration and APC are committed to keeping teacher training a top priority and will continue to allocate available funds to help teachers pay for their professional development using the following priority scale:

- 4) training leading to full Waldorf certification
- 5) training to benefit the entire school population
- 6) training intended to benefit an individual class or individual teachers

When possible, the administration and APC will allocate funding for both school and teacher Waldorf mentors. Preferred mentors will have both private and public experience allowing them to bridge the gap between the two by bringing a deeper understanding of how Waldorf methods can be successful in the public sector.

BCS is looking to hire Donna Levesque as a teacher and mentor. Donna Levesque is both a certified and Waldorf-trained teacher with 25 years teaching experience. She currently mentors teachers at Aurora Waldorf School, a private Waldorf School (grades K-8), located in Anchorage, Alaska. Donna is more than qualified to do in-house training and lead Waldorf-inspired book studies. Her resume is available upon request. Donna is currently listed in the MSBSD as a certified teacher eligible for hire.

If BCS students are not meeting the assessment goals, the Governing Board of the APC, staff and BCS mentors will come together to devise a plan to either purchase additional materials for teachers or to hire additional mentors. It is our belief that as teachers continue to complete their Waldorf Teacher training, they will possess the skills needed to assure that all students will meet their assessment goals.

4(i) Is the school implementing a well-conceived plan to demonstrate progress over time?

The program philosophy of Birchtree charter is based on the Whole Child Curriculum, a child-centric curriculum that recognizes how much children change from year to year. For a specific description of the curriculum and how it progresses over time please refer to the Curriculum Standards & Assessment Rubrics in section 3(e). Our lesson plan places 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. It includes 14 learning strategies that attune what is taught, when it is taught, and how it is taught to the cognitive, psychosocial, and kinesthetic phases of child development. These strategies are discussed below.

1. Community Learning and Teaching:

BCS will use the classic “class teacher” model in which one teacher “loops” together with his or her class from grade to grade. This structure of continuity helps create a gradual transition from home to the school community. BCS class teachers will make a commitment to remain with their class through Grade Five. Some master teachers stay with their class through 8th grade. The class teacher welcomes each child individually with a handshake and brief check-in at the beginning of each day and then teaches the academic “main lesson” which comprises the first two hours and usually some other lessons later in the day. He or she ends the pupil’s day with another handshake and check-in. This daily bonding and oversight ritual is the foundation of what is possible for individual students at BCS. The class teacher is not the only teacher the pupils see each day. Specialist teachers teach foreign languages, music, games and movement, handwork. Interesting guests will be integrated into the life of the school. Besides their parents or guardians, teachers are the most consistent relationships children have. BCS teachers will endeavor to work together as a group to support each other’s individual work. Because formal education takes place in a community setting, it is essential for teachers

to work collaboratively with each other and the parents out of an understanding of how they are shaping pupils' relationship to learning. This is a solemn public responsibility that requires mutual collegial support.

BCS will work outside the classroom to build our larger pupil/parent/teacher community through the use of regular seasonal festivals. These festivals provide an opportunity for the larger community to come together as a whole around a central seasonal theme. The centerpiece of these events is usually the presentation of student work be it music, drama or dance.

2. Focused concentration:

The structure of the school day at BCS is attuned to pupil's inherent biorhythms. The most intense and focused learning happens at the beginning of the day when the students are most receptive. Each day begins with a two-hour period known as the "main lesson". This teaching unit is integrated and cross-curricular and includes activities to awaken and focus attention. 40-45 minute subject lessons follow the main lesson. Academic subjects take priority in the morning. The afternoons are usually used for arts and crafts, outdoor activities, sport and practical work. Subjects such as music, movement, and foreign languages, which benefit from regular practice, are evenly spaced throughout the middle of the day whenever possible.

3. Thematic Learning:

Teachers present each subject in 'blocks' of time lasting several weeks. Teachers use the main lesson format to address a progressive range of competencies in mathematics, language arts, science, and humanities. Meaningful connections link subject areas and previous and future main-lessons – even main lessons years ahead or long in the past. The main lessons are part of a block scheduling system of themed learning that centers the schedule and organization of the day from 1st to 8th Grade. Within the requirements of the curriculum, class teachers choose the material, presentation, and activities to suit the needs of the specific class. They aim to make each lesson an interesting and artistic whole that has rhythm, structure and purpose. Main lesson activities and content meets pupils' cognitive, affective, and practical modes of learning.

4. A stimulating learning environment:

A regular change of activities stimulates student's interest. Like any living system, BCS will create a rhythmically structured school day, week, and year with a built-in pressure-release system that keeps everything lively. Teachers will balance concentration and relaxation, mental and practical work, movement, listening and participating, observing and doing. Each lesson will balance cognitive, emotional/social, and active learning. Teachers will plan activities to suit the attention span of a given class and pay attention to the rhythm of the week.

5. Deep learning:

A rhythmic approach to teaching enhances learning and memory. Information that is not immediately 'regurgitated' can be absorbed and later 'remembered' within a wider context that includes the pupil's own experiences. Teachers introduce new experiences

allowing time for pupils to assimilate previously taught material. Teachers distinguish between subjects that need regular practice (foreign languages, music, spelling etc.) and subjects focusing on new content. Topics are dropped following a period of concentration, say 3-4 weeks. This allows for information to settle, and time for data and information to become knowledge and eventually understanding.

6. The Whole Class Dynamic:

Teachers focus on the class as a dynamic whole. Teachers constantly work to shift and reintegrate smaller groups - such as ability groups for math and reading - back into the whole class. A class of mixed ability children is a model of community. Pupils learn from each other. The whole-class dynamic celebrates differences. Teachers avoid giving rewards for being first or best. Teachers are aware that rewards and prizes make pupils compete for prizes rather than working from inherent motivation. Teachers aim for a creative balance between cooperation and competition among pupils, aiming for them to be enlightened and inspired by each other as well as the teacher.

7. Teaching Through Narrative:

The use of narrative gives pupils a conceptual framework within which they can orientate themselves and understand their experiences. Younger pupils listen to stories told by a teacher in his/her own words, not read from a book. Teachers inspire pupils to identify with characters in stories and develop linguistic and listening skills. Teachers use story as a classroom management tool with younger pupils. Inspirational or thought-provoking stories take the place of moralizing or lecturing older pupils.

History is taught initially through narrative and stories from a wide range of sources: fairy and folk tale, legend, fable, parables, mythology, and literature and then moves on to recorded history and historical fact. Teachers share content in oral form, not through written textbooks, especially in the earlier grades. Teachers use biography to strengthen pupil identification with people who made a difference. Communicating, exchanging viewpoints, dialogue and debate are part of lessons. The groundwork for such abilities is laid down in the younger classes. Teachers cultivate the quality of listening and speaking in class.

8. The Use of Imagery:

The use of imaginative imagery “mental pictures” is an essential element of the Whole Child Curriculum. When presenting factual information Teachers will strive to present information with both a pictorial and emotional element. Teachers avoid abstract concepts throughout the primary years (ages 6- 12) and stress the pictorial element that grows with pupils’ changing understanding of the world. Teachers use imagery that evokes strong sensory impressions and stimulates the imagination wherever appropriate in speaking to the children up to the ages of 8 or 9. Teachers transition to more abstract intellectual processes after the age of 10 when the ability to think in abstract and causal terms begins to emerge. From 10 until puberty, teachers adopt metaphor, simile, and comparison to create mental images. In adolescence, teachers construct imagery from history and current events.

9. A “Living” Classroom:

Teachers use a wide variety of materials and resources including prepared worksheets, texts, vocabulary lists, maps, diagrams, and multimedia. Pupils are not taught by mass-produced textbooks but by live teachers. Teachers and pupils together develop the main lesson from a variety of sources. Pupils use blank journals to write and illustrate what they have learned and observed into their main lesson books. As a matter of course, books such as dictionaries, atlases and other reference material are an integral part of the classroom. Assignments and projects arising out of the lesson theme require that the pupils develop competence in a range of information-retrieval skills by the time they reach age 12.

10. Learning to Lead:

The personal behavior of adults and teachers at BCS will be an example to the pupils. In addition, pupils will learn about how to be a leader in different ways at different stages of their development:

- Kindergarten teachers will endeavor to be a model of kindness, strength, and daily rhythm to the pupils, knowing that children at this age imitate adult behavior on their path towards becoming their own individual.
- Class teachers of grades one to five will endeavor to set clear guidance and boundaries for the class as a whole, knowing that children at this age rely on guidance and boundaries to continue developing their individuality.
- Class teachers of grades six to eight will endeavor to be experts in their subjects knowing that at this age pupils want to be led by teachers they respect as experts to develop themselves into enthusiastic lifelong learners.

11. Respect, tolerance, and understanding:

Each individual class within the school will be a multicultural, mixed ability educational environment with equal chances for all. Each class, moving through the years together, will be a learning community for respect and understanding of different individual academic and social gifts and challenges as well as for varied social and cultural backgrounds. The class, which includes the parents as an inextricable part of the whole, will develop principles that will enable the class to carry and deal with the kind of crises that occur as part of normal development. Kindness, sharing, and the ability to listen to others will be actively encouraged.

Pupils are inspired to take pride in their work and to achieve the highest standards possible. Teachers will work to balance an atmosphere of positive competition and collaboration. Pupils will evaluate their fellow pupils’ achievements in an objective, though positive and constructive way. Teamwork and problem solving will be practiced and the school community as a whole will work to reflect these principles.

12. The Continuous Learning Community:

Birchtree Charter School is designed to function as a living system that balances initiative and accountability. All teachers, staff, and participants will be asked to make a commitment to develop him or herself along with the pupils. Our fundamental assumption is that there is always room for improvement. We will endeavor to make

planning, review, and ongoing educational research a creative, fruitful and effective process.

13. Living Systems Learning:

At BCS it is our intention to educate the whole child to see him or herself as living within the context of a whole environment. Developing the capacity to think ecologically is not just a matter of teaching about the importance of recycling or our reliance on fossil fuels. We intend to teach pupils to become aware of the inherent ecology of life and as something that is connected to everything we do. In the same way that each child must be taught as a whole human being, so the multidimensional, complex issue that is our world ecology must first be seen as a single unit with many interconnected parts. From there, specific aspects of ecology are woven into our curriculum, our building site, and our world view so that the child will fully understand the individual and collective relationship that every person has with the planet.

14. Community Service:

One of our goals at Birchtree Charter School is to educate children in such a way that they are able to envision and create a peaceful world as adults. Doing things for others contributes to a sense of self-sufficiency, self-esteem, and accomplishment, as well as strengthen qualities of self-discipline, perseverance, patience, and imagination. Community service is an intrinsic part of that goal. Bringing children into contact with those less fortunate than themselves and caring for the environment helps broaden their understanding of the realities of our society. It helps them develop compassion and empathy for others as well as a desire and will to help. A service project for a class also helps build a spirit of community within the class. Working together towards a common goal helps develop skills in cooperation and working together. This is one reason why service projects are important even in the early grades. The children learn to work together and to trust one another.

Program Goals and Measurements:

The following are a list of program goals that the BCS will use to measure their success over time:

1. **Academic Performance:** 80% of all students should be able to master 80% of rubrics listed in the Charter. There will be continuous practice and assessment throughout school year to determine the progress and status of students in the program.
2. **Attendance:** All students must be at school each day to reap the benefit of instruction and to participate in learning opportunities. We will strive to have a high yearly attendance rate of 90%.
3. **Enrollment:** We will aim for re-enrollment of current students at the rate of 90%.
4. **Parent and Family Participation:** Parents will be encouraged to volunteer 35 hours a year. We also hope that all families will participate in conferences, programs, celebrations and special projects. Logs will be kept of volunteer hours in the school office.

5. **Community Involvement:** We hope to forge long and lasting relationships within the community that will help us both serve the community and meet our goals for our students.
6. **Academic Excellence:** Birchtree Charter School will strive to deliver highly motivating, enriching curriculum, and will provide appropriate resources, through capable teachers and staff, materials, and other support as deemed necessary to achieve the greatest gain for the students. Classroom teachers and the Principal will keep records to show student growth and achievement. The APC Governing Board will review these records regularly, as will teachers, to determine effectiveness and ways to improve instruction.
7. **Parent Classes:** BCS will offer educational classes to the Mat-Su community throughout the school year to assist parents in creating a home-life that best serves the child. On-going education for parents increases the likelihood of success for students.

At Birchtree Charter School, a variety of assessment methods will be used to measure and guide progress towards achievement of the school's performance standards. When deciding what type of assessment to use, the school/teachers will consider WHY they are doing the assessment, WHAT they are assessing, and WHAT are the criteria for success.

Classroom Assessment:

The following types of assessment methods and tools will be utilized at BCS.

- **Gradalis Assessments:** Birchtree Parent Guild purchased Rubrics and Assessments developed by Bonnie River of Gradalis Educational Consulting Services. Waldorf teachers and administrators created these for Waldorf and Waldorf-inspired programs. The Assessments purchased contain a Teachers Manual, Student Testing booklet and Student scoring sheet and are formatted similar to the Briggance Tests and are meant to gain an overview of the student's skills. Each student will have these completed by his or her teacher for grades 2 to 5. Student testing booklets, Teacher Manuals and Student Scoring Sheets for grades 2 to 5 are available by request as each is over 30 pages and there is not space within the charter application to include.
- **Portfolios:** Comprehensive student portfolios will include samples such as main lesson books, practice papers, written work and reports, artwork etc.
- **Teacher Observation:** A record of teacher observations of each child will be maintained. These will include a record of individual growth and achievement in all three main areas of concern (intellectual, physical and emotional).
- **Oral Recitations:** Oral recitations, presentations, reports, performances, and demonstrations will occur regularly, by both individuals and groups.
- **Exhibitions:** An open house will be planned at least once a year, during which student work will be exhibited and samples of the class work will be demonstrated.
- **Completed student projects/artwork,** both individual and group, will be used in public exhibitions.

- Assemblies: School-wide assemblies will be planned monthly or bimonthly as a showcase of each grades' classroom work (recitations, songs, poems) starting at first grade. This will give parents, administrators and board members a glimpse of the students work throughout the year.
- Grade Level Benchmark Skills: Students will also demonstrated their overall progress toward graduation readiness through a series of standardized tests to be given per Matanuska-Susitna Borough School Districts testing schedule starting in third grade.

Standardized Tests:

While a true Waldorf program does not utilize standardized testing as a way to measure student progress, Birchtree Charter School is willing to participate in all federal and state-required assessments starting in the third grade. Our rationale for delaying standardized testing until third grade is two-fold:

First, students in Waldorf-inspired programs do not begin formal academics (e.g., reading instruction) until first grade. This approach to teaching reading, for example, is in alignment with brain studies that have demonstrated that "there is no absolute timetable for learning to read. Differences of three years are normal. Some children will be ready to read at 4 years; others, just as normal, will be ready at 7 or even 10 years. The child who reads at 7 might not be 'developmentally delayed' as many have diagnosed. In many countries, including Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and New Zealand (all with high literacy levels), formal reading instruction begins as late as age 7 or 8" (Jensen, 1998). Because of delayed formal reading instruction, traditional standardized tests would not be an accurate measure of academic progress for a first- or second-grader in a Waldorf-inspired program.

Secondly, by abstaining from standardized testing in the primary grades, Waldorf-inspired schools have more time to utilize alternative assessments such as portfolios, teacher observations, oral recitations, and exhibitions of completed student projects/artwork. Authentic assessments such as these "ensure greater retention of material and a more lively process, one that activates enthusiasm for learning rather than subject children to the undue stress" of high-stakes testing (Mitchell, Gerwin, Schuberth, Mancini, & Hofrichter, 2009).

References

Jensen, E. (1998). *Teaching with the brain in mind*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Mitchell, D., Gerwin, D., Schuberth, E., Mancini, M., & Hofrichter, H. (2009). *Assessment without High-Stakes Testing: Protecting Childhood and the Purpose of School*. Retrieved October 26, 2009 from http://www.whywaldorfworks.org/03_NewsEvents/documents/AlternativeAssessment.pdf

Participation in Testing

Birchtree Charter School will participate in all federal and state-required assessments at the grade level required starting in 3rd grade. These assessments currently include:

- Terra Nova
- Standards Based Assessment (SBA) – Math, Science, Reading, Writing
- National Assessment of Educational Progress (if required)

Waiver Request: Birchtree Charter requests to not participate in the MAP testing. It is our understanding that this is a computer-based test. As a Waldorf-inspired program, we will not introduce computers into our curriculum until the sixth grade. Therefore, we do not feel it is appropriate to require our students to take tests in an unfamiliar medium.

5. Admission Procedures

- (a) Does the school have admission procedure criteria?
- (b) Are eligible students specifically defined?
- (c) What are the provisions for accommodating additional students, if necessary?
- (d) Is there a lottery or other type of provision for random drawing for enrollment when applicants exceed the school's capacity?
- (e) Is there a provision for accommodating vacancies that may occur mid year?

5(a) Does the school have admission procedure criteria?

Admissions Criteria

Enrollment policies, access to curriculum, services and activities of the program are nondiscriminatory with regard to religion, language, physical handicap, or national origin of children and their parents.

Children of the originators of the school and those who have actively participated in its initiation and organization will have a priority for enrollment up to ten percent (10%) of final enrollment as allowed by federal law.

The application procedure and timelines for admission will be the same as that of other alternative programs in MSBSD.

Admissions Procedures

Admissions will be on a first come, first served basis. If the number of students applying for admission exceeds the openings available, entrance, except for the existing students of BCS and the understated preferences, shall be determined by lottery process. The following will be given preference for admission to the school:

- Siblings of students currently enrolled in the school.
- Students of Employees of the School.
- Students of Founding Families

Intent to return forms: All returning students to BCS should submit an intent-to-return form to their classroom teacher or the office no later than the first week of April.

Registration: Intent forms will be collected in the spring. Fall registration will take place the first full week of August.

Withdrawals: Students/families who need to withdrawal for an extended period of time from BCS, for medical reasons, family emergencies, or some other legitimate reason will have their positions held at the top of the waiting list and will be readmitted as soon as space become available.

Vacancies in the fall: In the case that there are still vacancies after placing students from the waiting list, open enrollment will be posted and intent forms will be collected during the first two weeks of August. Procedures would be followed as outlined for the spring enrollment and lottery.

Once Admitted

Upon acceptance to Birchtree Charter School, parents will be asked to read the parent handbook and agree to the terms that are identified in the handbook. Birchtree Charter School will request support of the following commitments, as well as other requirements:

- BCS will promote active support of the school through encouraging parents to volunteer their time and/or other resources.
- Parents will commit to providing a home environment that is conducive to learning. In particular, this will mean agreeing to limit children's exposure to electronic media influences such as television, movies, video games, etc.
- Parents must be willing to gain an understanding of the Whole Child Curriculum and the Waldorf Educational approach and support the education in the home.

During the admissions process, parents will be asked to become familiar with these obligations through written material and/or informational meetings. Families may be asked to take a tour of the school, fill out an application, and, after the child is enrolled in the school, schedule a family interview. Prior to the interview, any existing school record or IEP for the child(ren) must be provided for confidential review by the BCS staff. During the interview, the family commitments listed above will be discussed. A family is expected to complete this process and also actively demonstrate their level of commitment to the school and its philosophy.

5(b) Are eligible students specifically defined?

Birchtree Charter School student body will represent the diverse population of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough area. All students living within the Matanuska-Susitna Borough are eligible.

The minimum age of the children entering the school will be:

Kindergarten: Age 5 by September 1st.

First Grade: Age 6 by September 1st.

Enrollment policies, access to curriculum, services and activities of the program are nondiscriminatory with regard to religion, language, physical handicap, or national origin of children and their parents.

Children of the originators of the school and those who have actively participated in its initiation and organization will have a priority for enrollment up to ten percent (10%) of final enrollment as allowed by federal law.

Students will be placed in classes heterogeneously following the Mat-Su School District's Enrollment Policy, including giving attention to pupil/teacher ratio guidelines in place at the time of the lottery, to gender balance, and to student behavior patterns.

5(c) What are the provisions for accommodating additional students, if necessary?

Birchtree Charter School's proposed PTR is 24. We propose to begin our charter with two Kindergartens (am and pm), two 1st grade classes, two 2nd grade classes, one 3rd and one 4th, one combined 5/6 class, and one combined 7/8 class, serving 180 students. The full time equivalent number of students will be 160. We recognize that not all classes will start with 24 students; however, space is available if more students would like to enroll at BCS. With a PTR of 24, we will be able to accommodate up to 216 full time equivalent students.

Birchtree projected Enrollment

Birchtree Charter School will have a teacher/student ratio of 1:24. We will have two ½ day Kindergarten classes, two 1st grade classes, two 2nd grade classes, one 3rd grade class, one 4th grade class, one combined 5th/6th grade class and one combined 7th/8th grade class.

Our projected enrollment is as follows:

Kindergarten	24 full time students
1 st grade	36 full time students
2 nd grade	36 full time students
3 rd grade	16 full time students
4 th grade	16 full time students
5 th /6 th grade	16 full time students
7 th /8 th grade	16 full time students

This is equal to 160 full time students. With a teacher/student ratio of 1:24, we will be able to accommodate 216 full time students.

Birchtree believes 60% of their students will be children who are currently home-schooling. 15% will be children who are currently enrolled in the MSBSD, 20% will be new to the school district (either as kindergarteners or transfers from other districts), and 5% from unknown sources.

5(d) Is there a lottery or other type of provision for random drawing for enrollment when applicants exceed the school's capacity?

The application procedure and timelines for admission will be the same as that of other alternative programs in MSBSD. If the number of students applying for admission exceeds the openings available, entrance, except for the existing students of BCS and the

stated preferences (siblings of students currently enrolled in the school and students of employees of the school), shall be determined by lottery process.

If there is more interest in attendance than what is filled by the children of BCS employees and the siblings of students currently in the program, we will hold a lottery (a random drawing) with the names from intent forms (turned in by April 15th) on the first Wednesday following April 15th at 7pm in the school foyer (once the school opens). An effort will be made to maintain a balance of boys and girls. Parents may attend the lottery, but are not obligated to do so. The results will be witnessed, and parents will be notified of the results. *BCS commits to making the lottery and enrollment procedures and practices clear and transparent to parents, staff and community.*

Intent forms will be available no later than the last week of March from BCS Main Office (once the school opens) and may be downloaded from the BCS Web Site. These intent forms should be completed and returned as soon as possible but no later than April 15th. It is important to receive all intent forms from interested parties on or before April 15th, so that should the need arise, those names will be included in the lottery. They will be dated and the time recorded according to when they are received.

5(e) Is there a provision for accommodating vacancies that may occur mid year?

As openings occur mid year, families on the waiting list will be contacted regarding the vacancy. They have 48 hours to accept the available opening. If they decline the offer, their name is removed from the waiting list and they must resubmit an intent form the following spring and participate in the stated admission procedures, including a possible lottery and interview.

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTION

(a) Is there a provision in place for students who do not wish to attend the charter school, even though it's the only option?

6(a) Is there a provision in place for students who do not wish to attend the charter school, even though it's the only option?

This does not apply to Birchtree Charter School because it is a charter school offering school choice to the community. Students who do not choose to attend Birchtree Charter School may attend their local neighborhood school (Pioneer Peak Elementary or Cottonwood Elementary), or another optional program or charter school.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES

- (a) Is there an administrative policy that follows charter school law?
- (b) Does the school present evidence that there is a full and abiding understanding of the obligations of the administration in providing for the control and supervision of the charter school?
- (c) Is there compelling evidence that the school's leadership is strong?
- (d) Is there compelling evidence that the school has handled organizational challenges effectively and competently?
- (e) Are the mechanisms in place;(e.g. an advisory grievance committee) to respond to, and, where indicated, resolve complaints?

7(a) Is there an administrative policy that follows charter school law?

Administrative Policies

BCS will comply with Alaska State Statutes applicable to charter schools and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District Charter School policy. The Bylaws of Birchtree Charter School Academic Policy Committee adhere to applicable laws, policies and regulations of the District, Borough and State. The MSBSD Board policy related to charter schools can be found in Appendix III.

7(b) Does the school present evidence that there is a full and abiding understanding of the obligations of the administration in providing for the control and supervision of the charter school?

Administrator

The Birchtree APC Board will interview and select a type B school Principal/Administrator as outlined in AS 14.03.255. The principal serves at the pleasure of the Governing Board, and will be expected to work cooperatively with the Board and Birchtree employees to serve the Birchtree community and to ensure that the terms of the Contract are being met.

The Principal/Administrator will facilitate the day to day operations of the School, keep financial records of the school, interview (with participation for the Board), hire, supervise and evaluate certified and non-certified staff members, and support School discipline policies. He/She will attend District-wide Principal meetings when possible, and will advise the staff and Board of District policies and procedures. Further duties and responsibilities of the Charter School Principal/Administrator are outlined in the Bylaws, Article VI, Sections 1-2.

7(c) Is there compelling evidence that the school's leadership is strong?

Strong Leadership

A charter school is a school of choice. It also requires a great deal of organization and good management to function properly. We feel that the leadership at Birchtree is comprised of strong, capable, dedicated individuals who share a common vision and a long-term goal of working diligently for the school to succeed. Every effort will be made to hire the most highly skilled, industrious, and enthusiastic employees who will demonstrate the leadership necessary for success.

The Governing Board of the APC and the Birchtree Parent Guild are presently made up of very committed, hard working parents, teachers and community members with a wide array of skills and backgrounds. The APC Board members and BPG members have already dedicated hundreds of hours to doing the research, footwork, writing, reviewing, and the myriad of tasks needed to develop this proposal for a Waldorf-inspired Charter School.

7(d) Is there compelling evidence that the school has handled organizational challenges effectively and competently?

Organizational Challenges and Analysis of Strengths and Weaknesses

Developing a charter school from the ground up is not unlike starting a new business. Every eventuality must be considered and provided for within its structure. Undoubtedly there will be challenges. These may be in the form of facilities, materials, people, budget, record keeping, schedules, communications, etc. We anticipate that there will be many rough edges to smooth out. With great staff, parents, students, and community support and resources, as well as support from our District and the State, we are sure that all these challenges are surmountable.

Analysis of Strengths and Weaknesses

The decision to start Birchtree charter school is not something that has been entered into lightly by the parents involved in this endeavor. As parents we are SURE that this is the correct option for our children and families, as well as a viable option for other members in the Matanuska Valley. Some of our rationale that helped us decide to embark on this journey include:

Strengths

- There is no Whole Child curriculum available in the Valley.
- Many parents are choosing to home-school as they do not feel the traditional school curriculum is engaging or meeting their child's needs.
- Many parents feel isolated in their choice to home-school and have stated they would love to have this option and community available to them in the Valley.
- Families from Anchorage have stated that they would consider moving to the Valley if they knew this education choice was available.

- Mat-Su Valley residents have moved from the Valley to Anchorage to take advantage of this option provided in Anchorage.
- The community the school leads to will enable parent education in Waldorf-inspired methods. Mainstream research currently shows the value of whole child education and academics starting in 1st grade when the child is 6 years old.
- Birchtree will be the only ½ day kindergarten in the Valley.

Challenges

- We may not be able to offer the same sports/exploratory programs as an established middle school. (However, this might also prove to be an exciting opportunity for students and their families as we seek creative alternatives)
- Parents must provide transportation for their children to attend the school.
- School lunches will not be provided. Students will need to bring sack lunches daily.
- Waldorf-Trained Certified teachers are hard to find. We realize professional development for our teachers is a top priority. We also realize this is an added expense. It is our goal to be able to fund some of the training using grants obtained by the BPG.
- We realize we will have to “prove” ourselves for a period of time to be recognized as a credible educational institution.
- We realize that to obtain the 150 students required of Charter Schools may prove to be difficult. However, we feel that we will be able to meet this goal as many people are talking about Birchtree and are excited about this possibility in the Valley.
- Parent volunteers are a must to help the school succeed. We realize that there may be times volunteer rates will drop, but we are confident that all parents want the best for their children and will provide the support they can to help the school succeed.

There is no doubt that it would be “easier” for parents today to be a part of the neighborhood school. Our goal and belief is that the education our children receive in a Waldorf-Inspired Charter School will help our children in the future become productive members of society, who will continue in their education and eventually serve humanity.

7(e) Are the mechanisms in place;(e.g. an advisory grievance committee) to respond to, and, where indicated, resolve complaints?

Conflict resolution

We are prepared to meet unforeseen challenges and issues. The BCS Principal/Administrator will have responsibility to assist in this area. BCS APC Governing Board will form a committee to additionally help in this endeavor. The Conflict Resolution Procedures of BCS follow this section.

Grievance procedures will operate in accordance with other District complaint/grievance policies

Grievance procedures for Birchtree employees can be found in the negotiated agreements between the MSBSD and the Matanuska–Susitna Education Association (MSEA), the Classified Employees Association (CEA) and the Matanuska-Susitna Principals Association.

**NEGOTIATED AGREEMENT BETWEEN MATANUSKA-SUSITNA EDUCATION ASSOCIATION AND MSEA
MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH
SCHOOL DISTRICT
JULY 1, 2008 - JUNE 30, 2010**

**ARTICLE II
PERSONAL GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**

SECTION 1 Definitions

- A.** A “grievance” is a claim based upon an event or condition which affects the conditions or circumstances under which a teacher works caused by misinterpretation or inequitable application of the terms of this agreement. Alleged Violations of board policy or of the code of ethics are excluded from the grievance procedure.
- B.** The “aggrieved” party is a teacher, group of teachers, or the Association. The Association agrees to keep to a minimum the number of grievances filed on behalf of the association.
- C.** A “party of interest” is a person or persons who might be required to take action, or against whom action might be taken, to resolve a problem.

SECTION 2 Purpose

The primary purpose of the procedure set forth in this section is to secure, at the lowest level possible, equitable solutions to the problems of the parties. The written grievance shall include the specific facts necessary to allow the parties to resolve the grievance at the lowest possible level.

SECTION 3 Structure

- A.** The unit administrator shall be the level one administrative representative for grievances arising with his/her staff.
- B.** At all levels of a grievance after it has been formally presented, a representative of the Association shall accompany the teacher to any meeting, hearing, appeal, or other proceeding required to process a grievance. Nothing herein set forth shall be considered as abrogating any teacher’s right to handle his/her disputes individually.
- C.** If the remedy sought by a grievant is not within the authority of a unit administrator, the grievance may be presented at level two and within the time limits required under 4.B

of this article.

SECTION 4 Procedure

A. Informal Level

A teacher having a grievance may discuss the matter informally with his/her unit administrator. Early involvement of the Association representative is encouraged.

B. Level One

A teacher with a grievance shall present the grievance to the unit administrator and the Association in writing within twenty (20) days following knowledge of the act or condition that is the basis of the complaint. The written grievance shall outline the nature of the grievance and the circumstances from which it arose, the remedy or correction the District or Association is requesting, and specifically how the section(s) of this Agreement have allegedly been violated. The unit administrator shall make his/her decision known in writing within five (5) days.

C. Level Two

In the event the grievance is not resolved at level one within five (5) days, the grievance shall be forwarded in writing to the Superintendent within five (5) days. Within twelve (12) days after the Superintendent receives the written grievance, the Superintendent or his/her designee shall conduct a hearing with the aggrieved to consider the problem and to arrive at an equitable solution to the grievance within five (5) days of the hearing. Regardless of the purpose or reason that a level two grievance is filed on behalf of either an individual or the Association, a hearing will be conducted by the Superintendent or his/her designee within the prescribed timelines.

D. Level Three

1. Within twenty days of receipt of the level two decision, the Association may request the American Arbitration Association to submit a roster of persons qualified to function as an arbitrator in the dispute in question.
2. If the parties are unable to determine a mutually satisfactory arbitrator from the submitted list, they will request the American Arbitration Association to submit a second roster of names.
3. If the parties are unable to determine a mutually satisfactory arbitrator from the second list, then the American Arbitration Association may be requested to designate an arbitrator.
4. The arbitrator shall limit himself/herself to the issue submitted to him/her and shall consider nothing else. He/she can add nothing to, nor subtract anything from the Agreement between the parties or any policy of the School Board. The decision of the arbitrator shall be final and binding upon both parties. The fees and expenses of the arbitrator shall be shared equally by the parties.

E. Additional Provisions

1. During the pendency of any proceedings and until a final determination has been reached, all proceeding shall be confidential and any preliminary disposition will not be

made public without the agreement of all parties.

2. There shall be no reprisals of any kind by administrative personnel taken against any party of interest or his/her Association representative or any participant in the procedure set forth herein by reason of such participation.

3. Time limits specified by the Agreement may only be extended by written mutual agreement. In the event the grievance is filed after the last day of school, it may be resolved with mutual consent in the new school year in September under the terms of this Agreement. If the grievance is filed immediately prior to Christmas vacation and/or spring vacation (as indicated on the approved school calendar); then the time limits may be extended by mutual written agreement.

4. All documents, communications, and records dealing with the processing of a grievance shall be filed separately from the personnel file of the participants.

5. Decisions rendered at all levels of the grievance procedure will be in writing setting forth the decisions and the reasons therefore and will be transmitted promptly to the Association.

6. The cost of consultants incurred during the processing of a grievance shall be borne by the party requesting the service. The reasonable cost of a substitute for an aggrieved teacher shall be shared by the District and the Association.

7. If the grievant or Association violates any of the established time limits, the grievance shall not proceed to arbitration. If the District violates the established time limits, the grievance shall be automatically forwarded to the next level.

8. The remedy available to any teacher for any grievance will be pursuant to the grievance procedure, provided, however, that if the teacher elects to pursue any legal or statutory remedy for any grievance, such elections will bar further or subsequent proceeding for relief under the provisions of this Agreement.

9. Whenever possible, the parties agree to exchange witness lists at least two weeks prior to the date of the arbitration along with any requests concerning procedural issues. Procedural issues not resolved through mutual agreement prior to the arbitration shall be forwarded to the arbitrator.

NEGOTIATED AGREEMENT Between BOARD OF EDUCATION MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT And CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION

July 1, 2008 – June 30, 2009

ARTICLE XI

Grievance Procedure

A. Purpose and Definition

1. Purpose

The primary purpose of this procedure is to secure at the lowest possible level, equitable solutions to the problems of both parties.

2. Who May Grieve

A grievance may be brought by an employee, a group of employees, or the Association on behalf of employees. The Association may file a grievance on its own behalf only for alleged violations of Article I, II, and VIII.

3. Definition

A "grievance" is a claim by an employee based upon an event or condition which affects the conditions or circumstances under which an employee works caused by misinterpretation or inequitable application of the terms of this Agreement and amendments thereof.

4. Time Limits

In any case where the grievant violates the time limits established; the grievance shall be dropped. In any case where the District violates the time limits established the grievance shall be advanced to the next step. Time limits may be altered or extended by mutual agreement.

B. Grievance Process

An employee should make an attempt to resolve his/her complaint with the immediate supervisor on an informal basis either personally or with the assistance of the CEA representative before entering the formal grievance process.

1. Immediate Supervisor– Level I

- a. The Association shall present the grievance in writing to the grievant's Immediate Supervisor within fifteen working days of the alleged incident or within fifteen working days of when the alleged incident becomes known to the employee. The written grievance shall outline the nature of the grievance and the circumstances from which it arose, the remedy or correction the District is asked to make and the section of this Agreement or established policy that is alleged to have been violated. Within five working days after the grievance is received, the Immediate Supervisor shall meet with grievant and his/her representative to hear the grievance and render his/her decision in writing within five (5) days with copies to the association and grievant.
- b. The Immediate Supervisor will be defined as the person having the overall decision making responsibility for a department; i.e., Director of Operations and Maintenance, Director of Student Support Services, etc. The Associate or Assistant Superintendent may be designated as a level two hearing officer by the Superintendent, and shall not be considered as an Immediate Supervisor. Grievances not resolved by a school principal on an informal basis will be filed formally at level two.

2. Superintendent – Level II

- a. In the event that the grievance is not resolved at Level One, the Association may submit a written statement of the grievance to the Superintendent within ten working days after a written response at level one. Within five working days of receiving the grievance, the Superintendent or his/her designee shall meet with the grievant and representative of the Association. The Superintendent shall make his/her decision known in writing within five working days of the meeting.

3. Mediation – Level III

- b. If the Association is not satisfied with the level two decision, then the parties may submit the issue to mediation within ten working days of receipt of the Level two decision. The parties shall request a list of nine qualified mediators from the American Arbitration Association (AAA) upon ratification of this agreement, and the list shall be used to select the mediator for individual disputes. The parties

shall alternately strike a name from the list until one remains. The first strike shall be determined by the flip of a coin. The parties shall equally share the costs of mediation.

- c. The mediation procedure is entirely informal in nature. The relevant facts should be elicited in a narrative fashion to the extent possible, rather than through examination and cross-examination of witnesses. The rules of evidence will not apply and no record of the proceedings will be made. All persons involved in the events giving rise to the grievance should be encouraged to participate fully in the proceedings, both stating their views and by asking questions of the other participants at the mediation hearing. The primary effort of the mediation should be to assist the parties in settling the grievance in a mutually satisfactory fashion. In attempting to achieve settlement, the mediator is free to use all of the techniques customarily associated with mediation, including private conferences with only one party. If settlement is not possible, the mediator should provide the parties with an immediate opinion based upon the collective bargaining agreement as to how the grievance would be decided if it went to arbitration. That opinion shall be advisory and delivered orally. The advisory opinion could be used for further settlement discussions or for withdrawal or granting of the grievance. If the grievance is not settled, granted, or withdrawn, the parties are free to arbitrate. If they do, the mediator could not serve as arbitrator, and nothing said or done by the parties or the mediator for the first time during mediation could be used against a party during arbitration.

4. Arbitration – Level IV

- a. If not resolved at level two or mediation, the parties may submit the issue to arbitration within ten working days of receipt of level two decision or mediation. The parties shall request a list of qualified arbitrators from the American Arbitration Association (AAA). If the parties are unable to determine a mutually satisfactory arbitrator from the submitted list, they will request the American Arbitration Association to submit a second list. If the parties are unable to determine a mutually satisfactory arbitrator from the second list, then the American Arbitration Association shall designate an arbitrator.
- b. The arbitrator shall limit himself to the issue submitted to him and shall consider nothing else. He can add nothing to, nor subtract anything from the Agreement between the parties or any policy of the School Board. The decision of the arbitrator shall be final and binding upon both parties. The fees and expenses of the arbitrator shall be shared equally by the parties.

NEGOTIATED AGREEMENT between the MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT and MAT-SU PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION July 1, 2008– June 30, 2011

ARTICLE III
GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

SECTION 1. Purposes

The purpose of this grievance procedure is to provide a framework within which principals can work toward solving problems at the lowest possible administrative level. In any dispute AAA rules apply. All grievance proceedings with the District shall be confidential unless mutually agreed upon. At any point in the grievance process, a grievance may be moved to a different level upon mutual consent of the Association and the District.

At all levels of a grievance, after it has been formally presented, a representative of the Association or a person of the principal's choice may accompany the principal to any meeting, hearing, appeal, or other proceeding required to process a grievance. In the event of a disagreement between the grievant and the Association at any level, the grievant may proceed at his/her own expense without the aid of the Association, as long as the resolution sought is not inconsistent with the Agreement. No other employee organization shall have the right to represent a principal(s) in any grievance proceeding. Nothing in the Agreement shall limit any principal's right to handle his/her disputes individually. The Association agrees to process all grievances without loss of time in school by any principal, unless both parties agree to other arrangements.

SECTION 2. Definitions

A. A grievance is defined as any dispute involving the interpretation, application, or alleged violation of a provision of this Agreement or the rights of the Association as per this agreement.

B. A grievant is a principal or principals having a grievance.

SECTION 3. Procedures

A. Time Limit

If the grievant or Association violates any of the established time limits, the grievance shall not proceed to arbitration. If the District violates the established time limits, the grievance shall automatically be forwarded to the next level. The time limits specified may be reduced or extended by written mutual agreement. The Association or an individual grievant shall not be required to process a grievance beyond the contractually established work year. All such time shall be excluded from the time limit computations and a written agreement extending such timelines shall be executed by the parties prior to the end of the contractual work year.

B. Transcripts

Any record or document relating to the grievance or proceedings shall not be included in the personnel file of the grievant.

C. Witnesses

The District and the grievant shall have the right to call and present witnesses. Two weeks in advance of arbitration each party shall make available to all other parties the name of all witnesses the party intends to call. The named individuals shall be released as necessary witnesses without loss of pay if the hearing is scheduled during school time.

D. Confidentiality

During the pendency of any proceeding and until a final decision has been reached all grievance proceedings shall be confidential.

E. No reprisals shall be invoked against any principal for processing a grievance or participating in a grievance proceeding.

SECTION 4. Grievance levels

A. Informal Meeting-Level I

A principal having a grievance shall discuss the matter informally with his/her supervisor within ten days of the date that the principal reasonably knew, was informed of, or became aware, of the act(s) or condition(s), action(s) or non-occurrence of such act(s) or action(s) which is (are) the basis for the grievance.

B. Informal Mediation

If a grievant has filed a grievance against another member of the bargaining unit and the grievant is not satisfied with the disposition of his/her grievance as a result of the informal meeting then the two parties will participate in an informal mediation before proceeding to the next level of the grievance procedure. A written request for mediation must be submitted to the District within (10) days of the informal meeting. Mediation should begin within (10) days of receipt of the request. The parties will jointly select the mediator and the location where mediation will be held.

C. Superintendent's Hearing-Level II

If the grievant is not satisfied with the disposition of his/her grievance as a result of the informal meeting with the supervisor or informal mediation, then he/she must submit a written grievance to the Superintendent within ten (10) days of the informal meeting or informal mediation if held. The written grievance shall outline the nature of the grievance and the circumstances from which it arose, the remedy or correction the grievant is requesting, and specifically how the section(s) of this Agreement, has been violated. Within five (5) days after receipt of the written grievance, the Superintendent will meet with the grievant in an attempt to resolve the grievance. The Superintendent shall issue his/her decision within five (5) days of the meeting. If the grievant's immediate supervisor is the Superintendent, then the grievant will submit the grievance in writing to the Superintendent with a request for a Board Hearing on the matter.

D. Arbitration-Level III

1. Within twenty days of receipt of the level two decision, the Association may request the American Arbitration Association to submit a roster of persons qualified to function as an arbitrator in the dispute in question.
 2. If the parties are unable to determine a mutually satisfactory arbitrator from the submitted list, they will request the American Arbitration Association to submit a second roster of names.
 3. If the parties are unable to determine a mutually satisfactory arbitrator from the second list, then the American Arbitration Association may be requested to designate an arbitrator.
 4. The arbitrator shall limit himself/herself to the issue submitted to him/her and shall consider nothing else. He/she can add nothing to, nor subtract anything from the Agreement between the parties. The decision of the arbitrator shall be final and binding upon both parties.
- The fees and expenses of the arbitrator shall be shared equally by the parties.

**Conflict Resolution Procedures
Non-Employee**

**Birchtree Charter School
Conflict Resolution Form**

Please try to resolve all conflicts directly and at the lowest level through informal means utilizing peaceful discussion, whenever possible. Should the conflict remain unresolved, please fill out this form and turn it in to the appropriate person:

- Conflict with teacher – turn this form in with the Principal
- Conflict with Principal – turn this form in to the APC Governing Board
- Conflict with a member of the staff – turn this form in to the Principal
- Conflict with another parent on a school issue – turn this form in to the Principal

Name: Address: Phone Number: Email Address:
--

1. Who or what is your complaint against?
 Person/Persons involved? _____
 Position: _____

2. Has this been discussed with him/her? Yes/ No (if no, please explain)

Dates Discussed _____

3. Has the complaint been discussed with the Principal or Supervisor? Yes / No

Dates Discussed: _____

<p>Description of Complaint: Please include all important information such as location, names, dates, who was present, and to whom it was reported. Please use additional paper if more space is required.</p>
--

WHAT REMEDY OR ACTION DO YOU SUGGEST?

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Conflict Resolution Procedures

It is a fundamental constitutional right to have the freedom of expression, including criticism of public agencies and their employees. Public employees are also entitled to various rights including the right to the protection of due process of law. In order to satisfy these conflicting rights, the following procedures are established by Birchtree Charter School for processing complaints against employees or employees' practices of the school district.

Most complaints can be resolved by informal discussions between the complainant and the employee or the employee's Principal/Supervisor. This formal complaint process is reserved for complaints that are not resolved after the informal process has been attempted and must be filed by May 1st of the current school year. For extenuating circumstances, the deadline may be extended. Even when this formal complaint procedure is initiated, efforts may occur at any point to accomplish satisfactory informal resolution. In no case is there to be retaliation from either party.

Directions for processing complaints against employees, policies, practices, and procedures at Birchtree Charter School:

1. First, (always try to resolve at the lowest level) a person lodging a complaint against a district employee or employee practices should meet with the person with whom you have a conflict in an attempt to reach a solution.
2. Second, if you feel you have not reached a solution, you may want to informally meet with the principal to discuss the problem in an attempt to reach a solution.
3. Any person who still feels dissatisfied with the result of such a meeting may wish to complete a Conflict resolution Form.
4. Turn the form into the office. A letter of receipt stating who will be working with you to resolve this complaint and their contact numbers will be sent to you.
5. A copy of the complaint form will be provided to the employee against whom the charge is made with a request that the employee respond in writing to the appropriate administrator within ten (10) working days of receipt of the complaint. The employee shall cooperate in resolving the complaint.
6. If the complaint is not resolved at the lowest level, the appropriate next level will review the complaint and related material, interview parties, and submit findings back to the complainant.
7. The Principal, APC President or designee will notify the person filing the complaint and the employee in writing of the final determination. A final decision will be issued in a timely manner, not to exceed 45 working days, after the filing of the formal complaint. **It is to be understood numerous opportunities have existed to resolve the conflict and that the decision is final.**
8. If the person filing the complaint is not satisfied with the results, an appeal may be made to the Birchtree APC Governing Board.
9. Employees impacted by use of the Conflict Resolution Form may choose to exercise rights given to them by law or by employment agreement. Both the

employees and the complaining party may have representation of their choice throughout the process.

10. At any point after the complaint process is initiated, if the person filing the complaint indicated a desire to pursue formal litigation, or does in fact file suit, the district's Conflict Resolution process will be terminated. The Birchtree APC Governing Board will then turn the matter over to counsel.

Possible Outcomes

The following information is listed neither to encourage nor discourage the filing of a complaint. Rather, it is intended to inform you of the possible outcomes of a formal complaint proceeding:

- I understand that Birchtree Charter School Advisory Board President or Principal may request additional information from me regarding this matter, and I agree that I will provide such information as is available to me. I also understand that as the complainant, I may also be required to testify and be subject to cross-examination.
- I understand that while my requested resolution of this matter will be carefully considered, the responsibility for selecting action taken may ultimately be more or less severe than the remedy I have proposed.
- If the complaint is directed toward actions of an employee, I understand that Birchtree Charter School will give a copy of this complaint to the individual(s) about whom I have complained. The person will be given the opportunity to respond to this complaint.
- I understand that I may request to withdraw this complaint at any time. However, in the event that the BCS views the matters raised in this complaint as being sufficiently serious, BCS may pursue this matter despite my desire not to proceed. I also understand that if any judicial proceeding arises from the matters that I have raised in this complaint, both the person I have complained about and I would be entitled to all the rights and protections available in such judicial proceedings.
- It is understood that a complaint should be of a serious nature. Numerous frivolous complaints from the same party may be considered void.

8. FUNDING ALLOCATION.....

- a) Is a charter school budget summary in place that designates the funding allocation from the local school board in addition to a summary of the charter school budget?
- b) Is the school district going to implement indirect costs? If so, what services are provided to the charter school for this indirect fee?
- c) Will the charter school be eligible for the additional local revenue over the 4-mills required in the foundation program?
- d) **Has the charter school met the requirement to achieve a positive or zero ending fund balance?**

8a) Is a charter school budget summary in place that designates the funding allocation from the local school board in addition to a summary of the charter school budget?

Budget Summary

1. Revenue

a. Allocation from District

Funding for Birchtree will be based on the per pupil proportionate share of funding received by the School district for students attending Birchtree.

b. Grants, Gifts, Donations, Special Revenue Funds

Birchtree may also receive revenues from grants, and from special revenue funds (beyond the per-pupil allocation) approved by the School district. Grants and special revenue funds received by Birchtree from MSBSD will pass directly into the operating fund and will be used as specified in grant requirements. After incorporation, Birchtree will retain all other revenues received from donations, gifts and applicable grants (those that are not required to be funneled through the District), to be used as requested by the donor/grantor consistent with District policy and the law. All donations, gifts and grants will be utilized to help accomplish the mission and goals of Birchtree Charter School.

c. Fees

Charter schools may not charge tuition to students who reside within the District.

d. Planning/Implementation Grants

BPG received a \$5000.00 grant from a private donor to aid in the establishment of BPG becoming a 501(3) c non-profit and establishing a local Waldorf-Inspired Charter school in the Mat-Su Valley. Funds have been used in the process of becoming a 501(3) c, to hire a grant writer to create a funding report and to purchase Rubrics and Assessments currently being used by Winterberry Charter School, a Waldorf-Inspired Charter located in Anchorage, Alaska. Upon approval of this application, Birchtree will apply

for State/Federal Planning Grant funds (if/when available), and other grants to aid in start-up costs.

2. Budget

A proposed budget for FY 2010-2011, based on 160 enrolled students, follows this section. The budget is based on a per pupil allocation of \$5,596. The District will adjust the funding to reflect the actual student count of FSICS, and the actual per student allocation determined for FY 2010-2011.

Other costs that have been estimated and which may require adjustment include:

- a. **Salaries and Benefits:** Salaries for the teachers and staff members are estimated based on current salary and benefit schedules and on expected levels of experience. These numbers will be adjusted as teachers and other staff members are hired.
- b. **Facilities:** The cost for leasing a building has been estimated, based on current figures for two existing Charter Schools. The actual cost will be adjusted when a building and lease are procured. The projected cost for leasing a building is presumed to be a high estimate, and well within the parameters of what Birchtree might expect to pay for a 9,000 – 12,000 square foot building at \$12.25-\$1.50 per square foot. After approval of this proposal by the District and the State, Birchtree will follow the channels outlined in the Mat-Su Borough Code to procure a building.
- c. **Energy Costs:** These costs are estimated based on projected budgets for three existing local Charter Schools with similar student enrollment and projected facility size. These numbers will be adjusted after a building has been procured and utility records can be attained.
- d. **Instructional materials:** The actual cost of instructional materials will depend on what curricula/programs/materials are chosen for the school and individual classrooms by the APC. The actual amount budgeted will also depend on what, if any, other monies can be procured through grants from the state and other entities.

Birchtree projected enrollment

Birchtree Charter School will have a teacher/student ratio of 1:24. We will have two ½ day Kindergarten classes, two 1st grade classes, two 2nd grade classes, one 3rd grade class, one 4th grade class, one combined 5th/6th grade class and one combined 7th/8th grade class.

Our projected enrollment is as follows:

Kindergarten	24 full time students
1 st grade	36 full time students

2nd grade 36 full time students
 3rd grade 16 full time students
 4th grade 16 full time students
 5th/6th grade 16 full time students
 7th/8th grade 16 full time students

This is equal to 160 full time students. With a teacher/student ratio of 1:24, we will be able to accommodate 216 full time students.

Proposed Budget

FY2010 Executive Budget Summary

Operating Budget

Projected Enrollment		Projected 160.00
Projected ADM-enrollment adjusted for school size		228.90
Projected ADM Times District Cost Factor	1.040	238.06
Projected ADM Times SPED/Voc Ed/Bilingual Factor	1.200	285.67
HB 273 Basic Need per Student + Quality Schools	\$5,596	\$5,596
Total Projected Revenue for FY		\$1598,609
Less Indirect due to District	5.00%	\$(79,930)
Net Projected Revenue for FY		\$1,518,679

Expenses:

Position + Benefits	Projected Cost	Totals
Kindergarten	76025.00	
1st grade	76025.00	
1st grade	76025.00	
2nd grade	76025.00	
2nd grade	76025.00	
3rd grade	76025.00	
4th grade	76025.00	
5th/6th grade	76025.00	
7th/8th grade	76025.00	
		\$684,225.00
movement/foreign language	76025.00	
		\$760,250.00

Certified subs	15000.00	\$775,250.00
Administrator	98178.00	\$873,428.00
Special Ed teacher	46816.00	\$920,244.00
Tutor/Teacher Assistant	51673.00	
Tutor/Teacher Assistant	14272.00	
Admin Secretary	51673.00	
Custodian	17587.00	\$1,055,449.00

Location and Supplies

Communications	8,000.00	
Rentals+Utilities	333,000.00	
Insurance	10,000.00	
Supplies	33,000.00	
Textbooks	24,699.00	
Equipment	9,531.00	\$1,473,679.00

Professional Development	45,000.00	\$1,518,679.00
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8(b) Is the school district going to implement indirect costs? If so, what services are provided to the charter school for this indirect fee.

Indirect Costs and District Services

It is understood that a standard percentage of the per pupil operating revenue retained by the district is for routine services, accounts payable, insurance, and other services. In the event that extraordinary services in these areas are required of the district, the parties agree to make an equitable adjustment to fairly allocate the additional costs involved. Birchtree will use the normal procedures established by the District for its accounting, purchasing and business functions.

Other Services

The District will provide appropriate assistance to Birchtree in the areas of finance, budget insurance, administrative and instructional in-services and workshops to help ensure the most economical and sensible decision making process in the utilization of Birchtree’s budget funds.

8(c) Will the charter school be eligible for the additional local revenue over the 4-mills required in the foundation program?

MSBSD does not allow local revenues for Charter Schools.

8(d) Has the charter school met the requirement to achieve a positive or zero ending fund balance.

Budget templates available in Appendix II.

9. FISCAL SOLVENCY

- a) Has the charter school, over the course of the initial charter, implemented a well-conceived financial plan to ensure the fiscal solvency of the charter school?
- b) Do the audit reports to date indicate that the school has met its obligation to ensure the fiscal integrity of the school's financial operation?
- c) Has the school achieved efficiencies in its operation?

9(a) Has the charter school, over the course of the initial charter, implemented a well-conceived financial plan to ensure the fiscal solvency of the charter school.

BCS budget has been created knowing we may hire qualified teachers who receive a higher grade of pay, understanding that facilities are not easily procured in the Mat-Su Valley and renovations must be factored into the lease agreements, and knowing we must hire a Special Education teacher to meet the needs of all of our students.

BCS Academic Policy Committee understands that all contracts must have district and/or school board approval. We realize keeping all financial receipts and data, and the preparation and working of the budget is a top priority for the school and the MSBSD.

9(b) Do the audit reports to date indicate that the school has met its obligation to ensure the fiscal integrity of the school's financial operation?

This data is not available as BCS is not in operation yet. As stated above, BCS understands they must keep all financial receipts and data and operate the school within their budget.

9(c) Has the school achieved efficiencies in its operation?

BCS is not in operation yet.

10. FACILITY PLANS

(a) Does the school present a clear and detailed plan for maintaining the present site or, if indicated, acquiring a suitable and adequate education facility?

10(a) Does the school present a clear and detailed plan for maintaining the present site or, if indicated, acquiring a suitable and adequate education facility?

Following is our plan for acquiring a suitable and adequate education facility. This is a two-fold plan.

1. Lori Berrigan is currently working with private investors interested in purchasing and refurbishing a property in the Mat -Su Borough to meet the needs of Birchtree Charter School. Once the Charter has been approved, these investors are willing to work with the Borough to build or refurbish a building to meet all MSBSD safety and space requirements as well as BCS budget commitments. We are able to move forward with this step upon approval of the Charter. Properties #1, #3 and #4 listed below are suitable for this purpose.

2. In the event that our investors are unable to move speedily enough, we have located a facility, Property #2 listed below, which is available for lease and will house the school during it's initial years. The school can move at a later date to a more ideal facility which would include the outdoor space needed for full expression of Birchtree Charter School programs.

Please note pictures and details of each property's physical plant follows this text.

Property #1: 2252 N. Love Drive

1) Location - This property is located 2 miles outside of Palmer just off the Palmer-Wasilla Hwy. It is suitable to draw students from all areas of the Mat-Su Valley.

2) Space – This facility is 4,100 s.f. formerly used as a bed and breakfast. The property includes 15 acres and a barn. This is sufficient outdoor space for parking, for portable classrooms, if needed, and for all BCS outdoor activities.

3) Budget - Lori Berrigan is currently working with private investors interested in purchasing and refurbishing a property in the Mat-Su Borough to meet the needs of BCS. Once the Charter has been approved, these investors are willing to work with the Borough to build or refurbish a building to meet all MSBSD safety and space requirements as well as BCS budget commitments. We are able to move forward with this step upon approval of the Charter. BCS has allocated sufficient funds in its budget to cover lease of this property.

4) Facility requirements met – i) Sprinkler system: A sprinkler system can be added to this facility. **ii) Water quality:** It has a private well which can be tested and filter system installed if necessary. **iii) Handicap accessible:** This facility is currently handicap accessible.

Property #2: 268 E. Fireweed Ave.

- 1) **Location** – This facility formerly housed Headstart located in central Palmer. This location is adequate to draw students from most of the Mat-Su valley.
- 2) **Space** – This building has 14,000s.f. available on a 1.1 acre lot. Since it housed a headstart program, it has adequate indoor space for Birchtree student needs.
- 3) **Budget** - Birchtree Charter School has allocated sufficient funds in its budget to cover lease of this property.
- 4) **Facility requirements met** – **i) Sprinkler system:** Building owner has offered to install a sprinkler system with a lease of sufficient duration. **ii) Water quality:** It utilizes city water supply. **iii) Handicap accessible:** This facility is currently handicap accessible.

Property #3: 1651 E. 49th State St.

- 1) **Location** – Next to recycling center and car wash on the Palmer-Wasilla Hwy, it is adequate to draw students from most of the Mat-Su valley.
- 2) **Space** – This is 7.96 acres of raw land that can be broken into a smaller parcel if necessary. It has natural gas, electricity and telephone on site. We have spoken to builders about construction of portables per MSBSD drawings specifications. Lori Berrigan is currently working with private investors interested in building a property in the Mat-Su Borough to meet the needs of Birchtree Charter School. Once the Charter has been approved, these investors are willing to work with the Borough to build a building to meet all MSBSD safety and space requirements as well as BCS budget commitments. We are unable to move forward with this step without an approved Charter.
- 3) **Budget** - Birchtree Charter School has allocated sufficient funds in its budget to cover lease of this completed property.
- 4) **Facility requirements met** – This facility would be built to MSBSD requirements including sprinkler, water quality and handicap access.

Property #4: 7101 E. Palmer-Wasilla Hwy.

- 1) **Location** – 5 miles outside Wasilla towards Palmer on the Palmer-Wasilla Hwy across from the AT&T Sports Center. This is the ideal location for drawing students from the entire Mat-Su valley.
- 2) **Space** – The building has 10,345 s.f. which is more than adequate for all Birchtree Charter School needs. It is a truly multi-purpose building with an office, shop, warehouse and living quarters. It has 14.1 acres of land which will house parking lot and all our outdoor needs including possible community accessible cross country ski trails, gardens and school barnyard. The warehouse portion has sufficient space for indoor movement as well. This is the perfect building for hosting parental and teacher workshops that create desperately needed real and practical support for children and families in the community at large.
- 3) **Budget** - Birchtree Charter School has allocated sufficient funds in its budget to cover lease of this property.
- 4) **Facility requirements met** – Our private investor will refurbish the facility to meet all MSBSD standards and specifications including sprinkler system, water filtration and handicap accessibility.

11. TEACHER TO STUDENT RATIO

- a) Is there a plan which adequately addresses teacher-to-student ratio?
- b) Is the plan reasonably based on projected enrollment figures?

11(a) Is there a plan which adequately addresses teacher-to-student ratio?

Birchtree Charter School's proposed PTR is 24.

We propose to begin our charter with two Kindergartens (am and pm), two 1st grade classes, two 2nd grade classes, one 3rd and one 4th, one combined 5/6 class, and one combined 7/8 class serving 188 students. The full time equivalent number of students will be 160. We recognize that not all classes will start with 24 students; however, space is available if more students would like to enroll at BCS. With a PTR of 24, we will be able to accommodate up to 216 full time equivalent students.

11(b) Is the plan reasonably based on projected enrollment figures?

At this time we feel we will be able to meet our projected plan of 160 students. Everyday one of our board members is contacted with questions about Birchtree and an excitement that it will be possibility for school year 2010-2011. We currently have over 50 families on our information list with almost 100 children of various ages and grades. We are confident we can meet our projected enrollment.

Birchtree projected Enrollment

Birchtree Charter School will have a teacher/student ratio of 1:24. We will have two ½ day Kindergarten classes, two 1st grade classes, two 2nd grade classes, one 3rd grade class, one 4th grade class, one combined 5th/6th grade class and one combined 7th/8th grade class.

Our projected enrollment is as follows:

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3 rd grade	16 full time students
4 th grade	16 full time students
5 th /6 th grade	16 full time students
7 th /8 th grade	16 full time students

This is equal to 160 full time students. With a teacher/student ratio of 1:24, we will be able to accommodate 216 full time students.

Birchtree believes 60% of their children will be children who are currently home-schooling. 15% will be children who are currently enrolled in the MSBSD, 20% will be new to the school district (either as kindergarteners or transfers from other districts), and 5% from un-known sources.

12. ENROLLMENT

(a) Has the student enrollment been stable?

(b) Has the school's enrollment been at a maximum?

12(a). Has the student enrollment been stable?

This is unknown at this time as the school has yet to open.

12b. Has the school's enrollment been at a maximum?

We are projecting a minimum of 160 students. We will be able to accommodate 216 students with a PTR of 24.

13. TEACHING METHOD/CURRICULUM

- (a) Does the school have a plan that addresses explicit teaching methods that will benefit an age group, grade level, or specific type of student?
- (b) Does the school have a systematic plan in place to monitor curriculum implementation and curriculum quality?
- (c) **Has the school undertaken curriculum review and revision?**
- (d) Is there evidence to support effective intervention with students who are “at risk?”
- (e) Is the school addressing the needs of students with educational disabilities?
- (f) Where applicable, does the school address the needs of students with limited English proficiency?

13(a) Does the school have a plan that addresses explicit teaching methods that will benefit an age group, grade level, or specific type of student?

Whole Child Curriculum

The Whole Child Curriculum based on the Waldorf educational approach at Birchtree Charter School is child-centric. It includes 14 learning strategies that attune what is taught, when it is taught, and how it is taught to the cognitive, psycho-social, and kinesthetic phases of child development:

1. Community Learning and Teaching:

BCS will use the classic “*class teacher*” model in which one teacher “loops” together with his or her class from grade to grade. This structure of continuity helps create a gradual transition from home to the school community. BCS class teachers will make a commitment to remain with their class through Grade Five. Some master teachers stay with their class through 8th grade. The class teacher welcomes each child individually with a handshake and brief check-in at the beginning of each day and then teaches the academic “main lesson” which comprises the first two hours and usually some other lessons later in the day. He or she ends the pupil’s day with another handshake and check-in. This daily bonding and oversight ritual is the foundation of what is possible for individual students at BCS. The class teacher is not the only teacher the pupils see each day. Specialist teachers teach foreign languages, music, games and movement, handwork. Interesting guests will be integrated into the life of the school. Besides their parents or guardians, teachers are the most consistent relationships children have. BCS teachers will endeavor to work together as a group to support each other’s individual work. Because formal education takes place in a community setting, it is essential for teachers to work collaboratively with each other and the parents out of an understanding of how they are shaping pupils’ relationship to learning. This is a solemn public responsibility that requires mutual collegial support.

BCS will work outside the classroom to build our larger pupil/parent/teacher community through the use of regular seasonal festivals. These festivals provide an opportunity for the larger community to come together as a whole around a central seasonal theme. The

centerpiece of these events is usually the presentation of student work be it music, drama or dance.

2. Focused concentration:

The structure of the school day at BCS is attuned to pupil's inherent biorhythms. The most intense and focused learning happens at the beginning of the day when the students are most receptive. Each day begins with a two-hour period known as the "*main lesson*". This teaching unit is integrated and cross-curricular and includes activities to awaken and focus attention. 40-45 minute subject lessons follow the main lesson. Academic subjects take priority in the morning. The afternoons are usually used for arts and crafts, outdoor activities, sport and practical work. Subjects such as music, movement, and foreign languages, which benefit from regular practice, are evenly spaced throughout the middle of the day whenever possible.

3. Thematic Learning:

Teachers present each subject in 'blocks' of time lasting several weeks. Teachers use the main lesson format to address a progressive range of competencies in mathematics, language arts, science, and humanities. Meaningful connections link subject areas and previous and future main-lessons – even main lessons years ahead or long in the past. The main lessons are part of a *block scheduling* system of themed learning that centers the schedule and organization of the day from 1st to 8th Grade. Within the requirements of the curriculum, class teachers choose the material, presentation, and activities to suit the needs of the specific class. They aim to make each lesson an interesting and artistic whole that has rhythm, structure and purpose. Main lesson activities and content meets pupils' cognitive, affective, and practical modes of learning.

4. A stimulating learning environment:

A regular change of activities stimulates student's interest. Like any living system, BCS will create a rhythmically structured school day, week, and year with a built-in pressure-release system that keeps everything lively. Teachers will balance concentration and relaxation, mental and practical work, movement, listening and participating, observing and doing. Each lesson will balance cognitive, emotional/social, and active learning. Teachers will plan activities to suit the attention span of a given class and pay attention to the rhythm of the week.

5. Deep learning:

A rhythmic approach to teaching enhances learning and memory. Information that is not immediately 'regurgitated' can be absorbed and later 'remembered' within a wider context that includes the pupil's own experiences. Teachers introduce new experiences allowing time for pupils to assimilate previously taught material. Teachers distinguish between subjects that need regular practice (foreign languages, music, spelling etc.) and subjects focusing on new content. Topics are dropped following a period of concentration, say 3-4 weeks. This allows for information to settle, and time for data and information to become knowledge and eventually understanding.

6. The Whole Class Dynamic:

Teachers focus on the class as a dynamic whole. Teachers constantly work to shift and reintegrate smaller groups - such as ability groups for math and reading - back into the whole class. A class of mixed ability children is a model of community. Pupils learn from each other. The whole-class dynamic celebrates differences. Teachers avoid giving rewards for being first or best. Teachers are aware that rewards and prizes make pupils compete for prizes rather than working from inherent motivation. Teachers aim for a creative balance between cooperation and competition among pupils, aiming for them to be enlightened and inspired by each other as well as the teacher.

7. Teaching Through Narrative:

The use of narrative gives pupils a conceptual framework within which they can orientate themselves and understand their experiences. Younger pupils listen to stories told by a teacher in his/her own words, not read from a book. Teachers inspire pupils to identify with characters in stories and develop linguistic and listening skills. Teachers use story as a classroom management tool with younger pupils. Inspirational or thought-provoking stories take the place of moralizing or lecturing older pupils.

History is taught initially through narrative and stories from a wide range of sources: fairy and folk tale, legend, fable, parables, mythology, and literature and then moves on to recorded history and historical fact. Teachers share content in oral form, not through written textbooks, especially in the earlier grades. Teachers use biography to strengthen pupil identification with people who made a difference. Communicating, exchanging viewpoints, dialogue and debate are part of lessons. The groundwork for such abilities is laid down in the younger classes. Teachers cultivate the quality of listening and speaking in class.

8. The Use of Imagery:

The use of imaginative imagery “mental pictures” is an essential element of the Whole Child Curriculum. When presenting factual information Teachers will strive to present information with both a pictorial and emotional element. Teachers avoid abstract concepts throughout the primary years (ages 6- 12) and stress the pictorial element which grows with pupils’ changing understanding of the world. Teachers use imagery that evokes strong sensory impressions and stimulates the imagination wherever appropriate in speaking to the children up to the ages of 8 or 9. Teachers transition to more abstract intellectual processes after the age of 10 when the ability to think in abstract and causal terms begins to emerge. From 10 until puberty, teachers adopt metaphor, simile, and comparison to create mental images. In adolescence, teachers construct imagery from history and current events.

9. A “Living” Classroom:

Teachers use a wide variety of materials and resources including prepared worksheets, texts, vocabulary lists, maps, diagrams, and multimedia. Pupils are not taught by mass-produced textbooks but by live teachers. Teachers and pupils together develop the main lesson from a variety of sources. Pupils use blank journals to write and illustrate what they have learned and observed into their main lesson books. As a matter of course, books such as dictionaries, atlases and other reference material are an integral part of the

classroom. Assignments and projects arising out of the lesson theme require that the pupils develop competence in a range of information-retrieval skills by the time they reach age 12.

10. Learning to Lead:

The personal behavior of adults and teachers at BCS will be an example to the pupils. In addition, pupils will learn about how to be a leader in different ways at different stages of their development:

- Kindergarten teachers will endeavor to be a model of kindness, strength, and daily rhythm to the pupils, knowing that children at this age *imitate adult behavior* on their path towards becoming their own individual.
- Class teachers of grades one to five will endeavor to set clear guidance and boundaries for the class as a whole, knowing that children at this age *rely on guidance and boundaries* to continue developing their individuality.
- Class teachers of grades six to eight will endeavor to be experts in their subjects knowing that at this age pupils *want to be led by teachers they respect as experts* to develop themselves into enthusiastic lifelong learners.

11. Respect, tolerance, and understanding:

Each individual class within the school will be a multicultural, mixed ability educational environment with equal chances for all. Each class, moving through the years together, will be a learning community for respect and understanding of different individual academic and social gifts and challenges as well as for varied social and cultural backgrounds. The class – which includes the parents as an inextricable part of the whole – will develop principles that will enable the class to carry and deal with the kind of crises that occur as part of normal development. Kindness, sharing and the ability to listen to others will be actively encouraged.

Pupils are inspired to take pride in their work and to achieve the highest standards they are personally capable of. Teachers will work to balance an atmosphere of positive competition and collaboration. Pupils will evaluate their fellow pupils' achievements in an objective, though positive and constructive way. Team work and problem solving will be practiced and the school community as a whole will work to reflect these principles.

12. The Continuous Learning Community:

Birchtree Charter School is designed to function as a living system that balances initiative and accountability. All teachers, staff, and participants will be asked to make a commitment to develop him or herself along with the pupils. Our fundamental assumption is that there is always room for improvement. We will endeavor to make planning, review, and ongoing educational research a creative, fruitful and effective process.

13. Living Systems Learning:

At BCS it is our intention to educate the whole child to see him or herself as living within the context of a whole environment. Developing the capacity to think ecologically is not just a matter of teaching about the importance of recycling or our reliance on fossil fuels.

We intend to teach pupils to become aware of the inherent ecology of life and as something that is connected to everything we do, from a baby's exhale to the ozone, from a lit match to an exploding volcano. In the same way that each child must be taught as a whole human being, so the multidimensional, complex issue that is our world ecology must first be seen as a single unit with many interconnected parts. From there, specific aspects of ecology are woven into our curriculum, our building site and our world view so that the child will fully understand the individual and collective relationship that child and every other person has with the planet.

14. Community Service:

One of our goals at Birchtree Charter School is to educate children in such a way that they are able to envision and create a peaceful world as adults. Doing things for others contributes to a sense of self-sufficiency, self-esteem, and accomplishment, as well as strengthen qualities of self-discipline, perseverance, patience, and imagination. Community service is an intrinsic part of that goal. Bringing children into contact with those less fortunate than themselves and caring for the environment helps broaden their understanding of the realities of our society. It helps them develop compassion and empathy for others as well as a desire and will to help. A service project for a class also helps build a spirit of community within the class. Working together towards a common goal helps develop skills in cooperation and working together. This is one reason why service projects are important even in the early grades. The children learn to work together and to trust one another.

13(b) Does the school have a systematic plan in place to monitor curriculum implementation and curriculum quality?

Birchtree Charter School will use an individualized action plan to help improve the performance of low achieving students. We are especially committed to working with such students because we are committed to keeping all students together with their peers of the same age group. The Waldorf based Whole Child Curriculum approach avoids retention or skipping a grade except in the rarest of circumstances.

In addition to the regular parent conferences, these are the steps we will take when a pupil is achieving poorly:

A faculty member will initiate a 'child study' that will be discussed as part of the regular weekly faculty meeting. The impressions of several teachers who know the child will be sought. Groups of pupils with a similar achievement pattern will be discussed together. The faculty then will come up with an individualized intervention plan for the pupil(s). This can involve receiving supplemental support services, tutoring, alternative instructional materials, or a remediation program. The school will make every effort to get expert and lay volunteers to help as appropriate. Parents will be informed of the team's recommendations and kept apprised of intervention implementation. Their advice and insight regarding the issue will also be sought.

BCS staff and the Governing Board of the APC will monitor curriculum implementation and curriculum quality

Curriculum Alignment to Measurable Outcomes and Assessments

The foundations of Birchtree's learning plan rests on the following beliefs about assessment:

- 100% of all students will participate in all assessment techniques.
 - Assessment is an ongoing process that helps identify, at various stages in the learning process, what a student knows, understands, and can do.
 - Assessment is a collaborative process.
 - Assessment should be a process that encourages, challenges and motivates students to higher levels of learning and awareness.
 - Multiple types of evidence must be used to better understand each learner's strengths and needs, and to plan for support and enrichment.
- Students should be given authentic opportunities to display their accomplishments and demonstrate their learning.

Types of Assessment

At Birchtree Charter School, a variety of assessment methods will be used to measure and guide progress towards achievement of the school's performance standards. When deciding what type of assessment to use, the school/teachers will consider WHY they are doing the assessment, WHAT they are assessing, and WHAT are the criteria for success.

Standardized Tests: While a true Waldorf program does not utilize standardized testing as a way to measure student progress, Birchtree Charter School is willing to participate in all federal and state- required assessments starting in the third grade. Our rationale for delaying standardized testing until third grade is two-fold:

First, students in Waldorf-inspired programs do not begin formal academics (e.g., reading instruction) until first grade. This approach to teaching reading, for example, is in alignment with brain studies that have demonstrated that "there is no absolute timetable for learning to read. Differences of three years are normal. Some children will be ready to read at 4 years; others, just as normal, will be ready at 7 or even 10 years. The child who reads at 7 might not be 'developmentally delayed' as many have diagnosed. In many countries, including Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and New Zealand (all with high literacy levels), formal reading instruction begins as late as age 7 or 8" (Jensen, 1998). Because of delayed formal reading instruction, traditional standardized tests would not be an accurate measure of academic progress for a first- or second-grader in a Waldorf-inspired program.

Secondly, by abstaining from standardized testing in the primary grades, Waldorf-inspired schools have more time to utilize alternative assessments such as portfolios, teacher observations, oral recitations, and exhibitions of completed student projects/artwork. Authentic assessments such as these "ensure greater retention of material and a more lively process, one that activates enthusiasm for learning rather than

subject children to the undue stress" of high-stakes testing (Mitchell, Gerwin, Schuberth, Mancini, & Hofrichter, 2009).

References

Jensen, E. (1998). *Teaching with the brain in mind*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Mitchell, D., Gerwin, D., Schuberth, E., Mancini, M., & Hofrichter, H. (2009). *Assessment without High-Stakes Testing: Protecting Childhood and the Purpose of School*. Retrieved October 26, 2009 from http://www.whywaldorfworks.org/03_NewsEvents/documents/AlternativeAssessment.pdf

Participation in Testing

Birchtree Charter School will participate in all federal and state-required assessments at the grade level required starting in 3rd grade. These assessments currently include:

- Terra Nova
- Standards Based Assessment (SBA) – Math, Science, Reading, Writing
- National Assessment of Educational Progress (if required)

Waiver Request: Birchtree Charter requests to not participate in the MAP testing. It is our understanding that this a computer-based test. As a Waldorf-inspired program, we will not introduce computers into our curriculum until the sixth grade. Therefore, we do not feel it is appropriate to require our students to take tests in an unfamiliar medium.

Classroom Assessment: The following types of assessment methods and tools will be utilized at BCS.

- Gradalis Assessments: Birchtree Parent Guild purchased Rubrics and Assessments developed by Bonnie River of Gradalis Educational Consulting Services. Waldorf teachers and administrators created these for Waldorf and Waldorf-inspired programs. The Assessments purchased contain a Teachers Manual, Student Testing booklet and Student scoring sheet and are formatted similar to the Briggance Tests and are meant to gain an overview of the student's skills. Each student will have these completed by his or her teacher for grades 2 to 5.
- Portfolios: Comprehensive student portfolios will include samples such as main lesson books, practice papers, written work and reports, artwork etc.
- Teacher Observation: A record of teacher observations of each child will be maintained. These will include a record of individual growth and achievement in all three main areas of concern (intellectual, physical and emotional).
- Oral Recitations: Oral recitations, presentations, reports, performances, and demonstrations will occur regularly, by both individuals and groups.

- Exhibitions: An open house will be planned at least once a year, during which student work will be exhibited and samples of the class work will be demonstrated.
- Completed student projects/artwork, both individual and group, will be used in public exhibitions.
- Assemblies: School-wide assemblies will be planned monthly or bimonthly as a showcase of each grades' classroom work (recitations, songs, poems) starting at first grade. This will give parents, administrators and board members a glimpse of the students work throughout the year.

Grades 2 Assessment, developed by Bonnie River and *Gradalis Education & Consulting Services*, is available in Appendix I.

13(c) Has the school undertaken curriculum review and revision?

Not available as the school has yet to open.

13(d) Is there evidence to support effective intervention with students who are “at risk”?

Birchtree Charter School will use an individualized action plan to help improve the performance of low achieving students. We are especially committed to working with such students because we are committed to keeping all students together with their peers of the same age group. The Waldorf based Whole Child Curriculum approach avoids retention or skipping a grade except in the rarest of circumstances.

In addition to the regular parent conferences, these are the steps we will take when a pupil is achieving poorly:

A faculty member will initiate a ‘child study’ that will be discussed as part of the regular weekly faculty meeting. The impressions of several teachers who know the child will be sought. Groups of pupils with a similar achievement pattern will be discussed together. The faculty then will come up with an individualized intervention plan for the pupil(s). This can involve receiving supplemental support services, tutoring, alternative instructional materials, or a remediation program. The school will make every effort to get expert and lay volunteers to help as appropriate. Parents will be informed of the team’s recommendations and kept apprised of intervention implementation. Their advice and insight regarding the issue will also be sought.

13(e) Is the school addressing the needs of students with educational disabilities?

Special Education Plans

Birchtree Charter School embraces a full inclusion model for special education. Whenever possible, the needs of each student will be met within the context of the classroom.

BCS recognizes the importance of providing educational opportunities to all students regardless of physical challenges or special needs. To that end, BCS pledges to work in cooperation with MSBSD. BCS will adhere to all laws effecting individuals with exceptional needs, including all provisions of PL 94-142 of the American Disabilities Act and the Individual with Disabilities Educational Act (IDEA), its amendments, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. All students will be given equal access to the school regardless of disabilities. BCS will not discriminate against any student based on his or her disabilities in accordance with Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

BCS is responsible for meeting the needs of disabled and special-needs students enrolled at the school, with oversight responsibility remaining with MSBSD. The special education personnel at BCS will be employees of BCS or MSBSD. The BCS administrator and/or other mandated IEP team members will attend staff development and/or training meetings sponsored by MSBSD as necessary to comply with IDEA regulations. The charter school will engage MSBSD in the IEP and placement of students who are identified as requiring an education program that is off-site, such as a non-public placement. Student discipline procedures for suspension and expulsion will be in compliance with discipline set forth in the IDEA and consistent with state and federal law.

Gifted and Talented Students

BCS will ensure that each individual student's needs are met and that all students will be challenged to achieve their potential. Inherent in the Whole Child Curriculum based on the Waldorf educational philosophy is the opportunity to stimulate each child's learning needs. Students who are identified as gifted, talented or high ability will be provided with enrichment activities within the classroom focusing on expanding their coursework, divergent thinking, analysis and logic providing them with the opportunity to lead and to be led. Every effort will be made to offer extra-curricular activities to meet these student's needs.

Fiscal Responsibilities for Special Education Issues

BCS has elected to be a public school within MSBSD. Therefore, it will receive its equitable share of special education funding and/or services to support the educational needs of students with disabilities enrolled in BCS. BCS will be responsible for providing its own special education services and instruction to the students it serves. BCS may request specific services from the District on a fee basis (e.g. OT, PT, SLP services) and such services will be granted subject to availability. BCS will hire a half time special education teacher, a full time teacher assistant, and a part time teacher assistant. BCS will follow MSBSD special education protocol and policy for:

- Identification
- Referral
- Assessment
- Development of IEP
- IEP review

Due process procedures

When, as a result of the IEP, it is agreed that the most appropriate placement in the least restrictive environment is not the charter school, the parent of the identified student must be in agreement with the decision. If the parent is in disagreement, that matter would have to be resolved through the due process procedures. BCS will participate with MSBSD in order to facilitate due process procedures whenever necessary

13(f) Where applicable, does the school address the needs of students with limited English proficiency?

English Language Learners

BCS an will be responsible for providing language rich, contextually based education for English Language Learners (ELL) while simultaneously meeting their needs for academic advancement and community and social awareness. The experiential, active nature of a Waldorf-inspired whole child education enables students to acquire language through authentic experiences which is most beneficial for students who are learning a new language.

English language learners will thrive within Birchtree's Waldorf-inspired curriculum. Through the integration of literacy, sciences nature, music and art, the ELL student will gain English language skills while developing a sense of acceptance in the school culture. Art-centered, community-based learning experiences are valuable for ELLs because they allow students to feel more involved, confident, and productive in their learning environment. Given that respect and community are fostered, classrooms are uninhibited, open to language-learning, and support the ELL student. Students are able to perform more cognitively demanding tasks and the quality of written and spoken language improves when student-created images are used to enhance learning.

Finally, teacher looping is advantageous for ELL students as the teacher is able stay with the students for a period of years providing them with consistency in instruction. Teachers will be able to assess English acquisition and proficiency over time, a span of years, versus one year only. Teachers will provide educational activities that develop the English language, learners' speaking, reading, writing, and listening skills through both whole group and individual instruction, at the same time meeting the needs of the whole child.

14. COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

(a) Where applicable, does a collective bargaining contract exist that alludes to contract exemptions that are agreed to by both the school district and bargaining unit?

(b) If no contract exemptions are agreed to, are the employees of the charter school subject to all provisions of the collective bargaining agreements enforced in the school district?

14(a) Where applicable, does a collective bargaining contract exist that alludes to contract exemption that are agreed to by both the school district and bargaining unit?

Birchtree Charter School administrators, teachers and staff will follow the collective bargaining agreements held between MSBSD and their individual unions and/or organizations. No exemptions are requested from the collective bargaining contract.

14(b) If no contract exemptions are agreed to, are the employees of the charter school subject to all provisions of the collective bargaining agreements enforced in the school district?

Employees of Birchtree Charter School are subject to all provisions of the school district's collective bargaining agreements.

<p>15. CONTRACT TERMINATION</p>
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<p>(a) Is there a charter school contract termination clause currently in effect?</p>

15(a) Is there a charter school contract termination clause currently in effect?

Termination Clause

Birchtree Charter School agrees to comply with all applicable state, federal and local laws and regulations, and will comply with all School District policies, regulations and procedures to the Charter School's operations.

- A. Termination by the District: Birchtree Charter School recognizes the authority and responsibility of the local and State Board of Education to review the results of BCS. The School Board may terminate this agreement and revoke the Charter for the following reasons:
 - 1. If the Board determines the BCS failed to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management.
 - 2. If the Board determines that BCS failed to make reasonable progress toward achievement of the performance standards identified in this application.
 - 3. If the Board determines that BCS violated any provision of the law in which BCS was not specifically exempted.
 - 4. If BCS otherwise breaches any other terms or conditions of the agreement.

- B. Charter School Termination Rights: This agreement may be terminated by the Charter School prior to its term in the following situations:
 - 1. As a result of a failure to reach an adequate enrollment.
 - 2. With the approval of the District.

Termination Notice and Procedures

- A. Each party shall give the other at least thirty (30) days advanced written notice of the termination of this agreement, for any of the reasons described above.

- B. Notwithstanding the foregoing, unless unusual and compelling circumstances warrant termination in the middle of a school year, both parties agree to provide written notification to the other party by February 1, of the intent to terminate the contract at fiscal year-end, and the reasons therefore.

- C. A charter school's contract may be terminated by the district school board for the school's failure to meet educational achievement goals or fiscal management standards, or for other good cause. During the charter school's annual review with the School Board, each party's compliance with the provisions of the contract will be reviewed. If any allegations of noncompliance with the charter school contract are presented either during the annual review or at any other time, then the School Board, through the Superintendent or designee, shall investigate these allegations. Prior to terminating the charter school contract, the School Board and the charter school Academic Policy Committee shall attempt to remedy any violations of the contract. The school board shall provide written notice to the charter school Academic Policy Committee of its intent to terminate the contract and the reasons therefore.
- D. Upon notice of the intent to terminate the contract, the school district shall provide Birchtree no less than thirty (30) days to remedy the breach of contract.
- E. If the Breach is not remedied in a satisfactory manner within the designated time period, the District may terminate the contract. If the Charter School remedies the breach of contract, the District may elect to rescind its notice of intent to terminate the contract.

Disposition of the Charter School Assets

Should the Charter School contract be terminated all unused funds and/or assets shall remain with the School District. Dissemination of funds and/or assets will be determined by the Superintendent or designee.