



Birchtree Charter School

Overview for Prospective Parents



History of Birchtree

- Waldorf-inspired instruction at Twindly Bridge Charter School in 2005-2006
- Home-school co-op 2006-2007
- Began working on charter application in fall 2008
- Approval by MSBSD School Board in November 2009
- Approval by Alaska State Board of Education in March 2010
- Anticipated enrollment of 160 students; enrollment of 220 last year. Current enrollment of 285. Projected enrollment next year of 300

Birchtree Mission

- To nurture and promote the development of healthy, responsible, and creative human beings
- The Birchtree Learning Plans includes:
 - that the personal behavior of adults and teachers at BCS will be an example to the pupils.
 - that each class will be a learning community for respect, tolerance, and understanding.
 - that BCS 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.

History of Waldorf Education

- 1919 in Stuttgart, Germany
- 900 Waldorf schools in 50 countries
- United States
 - 147 private Waldorf schools
 - 100 private early childhood programs
 - 44 public charter schools

Overview of Waldorf Education

- Whole child approach
 - Head, heart, hands (thinking, feeling, willing)
- Developmental view of child
 - Early childhood (0 – 7 years old) emphasis on physical development and building of will
 - Primary to middle school (7 – 14) emphasis on emotional development and building empathy
 - High school / post secondary (14 – 21) emphasis on intellectual development and building critical thinking

Overview of Waldorf Education

- Social curriculum that emphasizes responsibility, compassion, creativity, imagination, respect for nature
- Emphasis on rhythms and routine
 - Daily
 - Weekly
 - Monthly
 - Yearly

Unique Aspects

- Play-based kindergarten
- Students in grades 1 – 5 have same teacher
- Students in grades 6 – 8 have same teacher
- Main lesson structure
- Arts / Practical work
- Music integration and instruction
- Foreign language
- Limited use of textbooks
- Very limited use of technology

Kindergarten Curriculum

- Ability to listen and follow directions through meaningful movement and activity
- Literacy and vocabulary through classic stories
- Numeracy through creative play
- Social skills emphasized: polite speech, manners, respectful interactions
- Stewardship through reverence for nature, use of natural materials, caring for classroom
- Practical skills enhance fine motor development through crafting toys
- Rhythms help students celebrate seasonal festivals and settle into daily, weekly schedules

Rounding out the Curriculum

- Kindergarten
 - painting, drawing, singing, beeswax modeling, cooking and baking enrich the weekly work in early childhood classrooms
- Grades 1 – 8
 - Beginning in 1st, study of mental arithmetic, foreign languages, choral singing, wood flute/recorder, handwork, painting, drawing, sculpting, speech and drama, form drawing
 - Beginning in 4th, violin; In 6th, orchestra
 - In 4th or 5th through 8th, hand tools for woodworking

Governance Structure

- Birchtree Academic Policy Committee (APC)
 - 7 member governing board
- Birchtree Parent Guild (BPG)
 - 9 member non-profit board
 - Parent Partnership Coordinator
- Administration: Principal & Assistant Principal
- Teaching staff: 20 teachers
- Support staff: 2 kindergarten aides; 2 special education assistants; 5 recess monitors;

Teaching Staff

- Kindergarten: Miss Celena and Miss Kim
- 1st grade: Ms. Foster and new hire
- 2nd grade: Ms. Sharrer and Mrs. Johndro
- 3rd grade: Mrs. Folsom and Mrs. Tran
- 4th grade: Ms. Levesque and Mrs. Hill
- 5th grade: Mrs. Sloan-Basner
- 6th grade: Mrs. Phillips
- 7th grade: Mr. Bowen
- 8th grade: Mr. Klauder
- Special education: Mrs. Mahoney and Mr. Luce
- Counselor: Mrs. Houser
- Music: Mrs. Keenan
- Movement: Mr. Dryden
- German: Mrs. Rogers

Exciting Developments

- Playscape design & construction
- Waldorf certificates for teachers
- Moving upstairs
- Consideration of lunch program

Enrollment

| <u>Grade</u> | <u># of classrooms</u> | <u># of places</u> |
|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| K | 2 | 40 |
| 1 st | 2 | 40 |
| 2 nd | 2 | 40 |
| 3 rd | 2 | 44 |
| 4 th | 2 | 48 |
| 5 th | 1 | 24 |
| 6 th | 1 | 24 |
| 7 th | 1 | 24 |
| 8 th | 1 | 24 |
| Total Possible | | 308 |

Requests for Parents

- Understanding of and commitment to a Waldorf-inspired program
- Limit technology and media influence
 - Video games
 - Movies
 - Television
 - Advertising
- Parent volunteer commitment of 36 hours a year
- Transportation
- Healthy lunch and snack each day
- Student supply contribution / \$100 a year

Next Steps

- Friday, April 6, 2012 at 8:30 a.m.: School Tour & Pastries for Parents
- Wednesday, April 11, 2012 at 1:00p.m.: Kindergarten Parents Meeting
- Friday, April 13, 2012: Intent to Enroll forms due
- Wednesday, April 18, 2012 at 7:00 p.m.: Lottery