



**Reopening Plan**  
**2021 - 2022**

Revised: March 15, 2022

# Introduction

As we look to the 2021-2022 school year, we continue our commitment to a safe and meaningful opening of school that aligns with CDC, state and local health guidelines and recommendations. **The Birches Academy of Academics and Art (*The Birches*) will open for full-time in-person learning for all students on September 1, 2021.** From our experience this year, we recognize that in-person learning is the best way to provide services to our students to meet their educational needs as well as for staff and student mental health needs. If Federal or State agencies mandate that we limit our students due to a resurgence of the pandemic or a change in information, we will move to either hybrid instruction or to a fully remote instructional model. We will employ the least restrictive model practical for the shortest period of time practical. During the 19/20 school year we were able to pivot to a remote model one week prior to the Governor's order, and this allowed us to provide continuity of services as we provided materials and technology to families who needed them. We will repeat this, if necessary, in the 21/22 school year. While the Birches does not have a food program, we cooperated with the Salem School District to make our Salem students aware of the offerings through them. We also hired a nurse during the 20/21 year who we will be retaining. We also enhanced the Social Emotional Learning(SEL) aspects of our school programs through advisory, teacher training, summer programs and individual interventions where appropriate; this will also continue for the 21/22 school year.

This document outlines our plan for full in-person learning for the 2021-2022 school year. This plan will be revised in August of 2021, and will be reviewed every month thereafter to ensure we are continuing to deliver the best practices/services for our school community. This opening plan was developed in part to satisfy federal COVID-19 related grant requirements, and also to communicate with The Birches community the expectations for the 2021-22 school year.

The plan was developed from input by The Birches staff, school administration, teachers, Governing Board and parents. The plan is posted on the Birches website with an optional survey for comments and suggestions. The survey is open to anyone in our community to take, and it was distributed to families via our Student Information System as a school-wide announcement. Our website and school board meetings are open to the public as well.

Our top priority is the safety of everyone in our school buildings. We will continue to collaborate with the NH Department of Health and Human Services in regard to contact tracing, isolation and quarantine as needed. We have found that over the past year some of our new procedures have served us well, and we will keep some of them in place as they have assisted us in becoming more efficient, focused and safe.

## **Screenings**

Families and staff will not be asked to report daily screenings; however, both students and staff will be asked to stay home if they have COVID-19 symptoms. It is the responsibility of the family to ensure that students are well when they come to school. Staff and students who have symptoms should also contact their primary care physician for further instructions. If a student develops any COVID-19 symptoms at school and does not have a note on file with an alternate diagnosis, they will be sent home.

## **Bus Transportation**

We will follow the procedures set forth by SAU 57 and the federal government, for both daily school transportation and field trips.

## **Parents/Visitors/Volunteers**

Visitors will be allowed into The Birches following protocols; all visitors must sign in upon entering and indicate that they have no signs or symptoms of COVID-19. They must bring a mask with them and follow current masking protocols.

## **Lunches**

Lunch will either be served in the cafeteria or in the classroom with every effort being made to maximize spacing between students.

# **Specials/Extracurriculars**

Recess is scheduled for students in grades K-8. Our physical education classes will take place in the building or outside as appropriate. Band and Chorus will resume as normal and may require social distancing as well as instrument shields for additional mitigation. Extracurricular activities will be returning in full. All other activities will follow school protocols.

# **Social Emotional Learning**

We will continue to focus on fostering students' social and emotional growth.

# **Classrooms**

Our intent is to return to a more traditional classroom environment. However, there may be a reduction of classroom furniture if necessary to accommodate spacing out students. Students will have assigned seating in all classrooms so they are consistently sitting next to and near the same people; the same seating arrangements will apply when the class moves to different classroom areas such as for Art and Music. Middle school students will also be seated near the same peers when they move between classrooms for instruction in their different subjects.

Students will be participating in small group instruction (ie reading, Science experiments) as well potentially sitting close together as a class (ie Forest Forum and classroom meetings).

Teachers will take attendance for each class every day.

# Facility Precautions

Enhanced cleaning will occur in hallways and bathrooms throughout the day. Night time cleaning will be completed using normal cleaning practices along with spray disinfectant. Our HVAC system filters will be replaced more frequently to help promote clean air. Additionally, we have added HEPA filters to each of our classrooms and offices. HEPA filters and increased airflow through air conditioning units will continue. We would adapt our policies going forward if there were changes made in guidance issued by the CDC or DHHS.

The school nurse will continue to conduct contact tracing for students testing positive for and exposed to COVID-19. The nurse will also continue to follow up with families whose children exhibit symptoms of COVID-19. We have generated policies which follow CDC and DHHS recommendations for isolating and quarantining. The nurse will also continue to attend DHHS calls and meetings and liaise with State Agencies.

## Non-COVID-19 Health Precautions

Our staff participated in epilepsy response training and CPR training this year in order to better enable us to deal with non-COVID-19 health emergencies. We will continue to offer training to staff that enable them to assist students with disabilities in our school.

## Vaccinations

We worked with the Salem School District to provide an opportunity for all of our teachers who were interested to get vaccinated. We also worked with Salem School District to offer a similar opportunity for our Salem students. The Birches will follow the State of New Hampshire guidance on vaccinations.

# **Masks - SEE ADDENDUM**

## **Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette**

The Birches will have signs reminding students and staff of healthy practices such as coughing/sneezing into your elbow, frequently sanitizing/washing hands for at least 20 seconds, and staying home when sick. Students and staff will sanitize hands (wash hands or use hand sanitizer) upon arrival at school, when changing location, and before and after eating.

## **Remote Learning Option**

The Birches will not offer a remote learning option. Should a child need to be absent for an extended period of time due to quarantine or another reason, arrangements may be made on a case by case basis to deliver educational materials and instruction utilizing either a remote, correspondence, or another appropriate model that is developed in partnership between the school and the child's family.

The Birches will continue to utilize NH Division of Public Health Services for guidance on re-opening protocols, screening, travel, self-quarantine and self-isolation for staff and students, and any other related practices. Our procedures will continue to be updated based on the ever-evolving CDC and NH DPHS guidance; input from educators, students, families, and community partners; and learnings from our own implementation and that of others.

Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19-19)  
SCHOOL & CHILDCARE TOOLKIT 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR( 2021, August 11)  
Retrieved from <https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/COVID-1919/documents/school-childcare-toolkit-2021-2022.pdf>

# ADDENDUM March 15, 2022

As of February 21, 2022, the Birches Academy is a **mask-optional** facility.

We will continue to follow the [state recommendations](#) for masking for close household members regardless of vaccination status.

## **Masks will not be required unless:**

- A student or staff returns to school and has not reached the end of the 10th day post-positive test
- NH DHHS guidance requires

## **Rules to return to school after a positive test**

Students and staff are allowed to return to school on day 6 after testing positive for COVID-19 if they have *no symptoms*. The individual will be required to wear a mask at all times through the end of the 10th day after their positive test.

We will cooperate with NH DHHS guidance in the event of an increase of cases in the school.