

*The Birches Academy*  
*of Academics and Art*  
A Public Charter School

**CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION**

**Submitted by:**  
**The Founding Members of**  
**The Birches Academy of Academics & Art: A Public Charter School**

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### **a. Educational mission**

The mission of The Birches Academy is to provide a learning community that supports excellence in core academics and the arts while cultivating the individual qualities and strengths of each child. There are seven fundamental aspects of our mission.

#### **1. Provide a rigorous core academic program through integrated curriculum projects.**

The Birches Academy will provide rich curricula in reading, spelling, writing, mathematics, and science with a focus on skill development and application. There will be an emphasis on the use of projects which make connections between academic subject areas and the arts. The core curriculum program will receive no less than 60% of time available.

#### **2. Cultivate the individual qualities and strengths of each student.**

The Birches Academy will help students realize their intellectual and social potential by providing individually planned instruction founded on each child's individual qualities, strengths and innate curiosity according to an individualized plan. A Personal Learning Plan (PLP) will be created for each child taking into consideration the individual child.

#### **3. Train students to use artistic processes for academic learning.**

The Birches Academy will develop critical thinking skills in students regarding all of their work through increased ownership and an emphasis on process and arts in the classroom. Through various forms of artistic expression, students will be encouraged to express themselves creatively.

#### **4. Offer comprehensive multidisciplinary enrichment programs allowing new ways of thinking, behaving and learning.**

The Birches Academy will provide enrichment programs that may include visual arts, movement, dance, theater, music, and foreign language allowing students to explore new ways of thinking, behaving, and learning. This enrichment program will receive a minimum of 15% of time available.

#### **5. Support student achievement by creating an inclusive community that actively engages parents, teachers and students in the learning process.**

The Birches Academy will create a learning community that actively engages parents in significant and substantial ways both inside and outside the classroom so that they become learning partners with students and teachers.

#### **6. Promote character development and good citizenship.**

The Birches Academy will promote sound character development by helping students relate and communicate with others, develop leadership skills and understand their individual rights and those of others in a respectful environment. Students will participate in forming the policies and procedures that affect them. All students will be given the opportunity to become involved in student government and whole school meetings as well as conflict resolution. This program will receive at least 5% of time available.

## **7. Incorporate the use of technology.**

The Birches Academy will use technology and platforms as a teaching tool wherever possible. The goal will be to give them opportunities and exposure to applications used in higher education and real world scenarios.

### **b. Governance and organizational structure and plan**

The Board of Trustees will govern The Birches Academy with statutory responsibilities under RSA 194-B:5 for “general supervisory control and authority over operations of the charter school.”

The initial board will be made up of eleven (11) founding members, known as the Founding Board (See Appendix A for biographical information of the eleven founding members). The founding members will prepare the charter school application for approval, promote the mission of the school and select the first Board of Trustees. Thereafter, the board will be comprised of not less than five (5) nor more than twenty (20) members.

The Board of Trustees will consist of the Head of School, who may be a non-voting member, parents, community members, and business owners.

The first Board of Trustees will consist of a chair, vice chair, secretary, and treasurer and will establish governing policies. The Board of Trustees will exercise its authority to set policy and make decisions that serve the mission of the school and will have oversight and authority to render final decisions on matters pertaining to:

- Hiring of the Head of School
- Approval and oversight of annual budget and fund-raising programs
- Setting policy
- Appointment of one or more advisory members or committees
- Delineating educational priorities
- Overseeing the school’s growth plan
- Setting professional salaries and compensation program
- Reviewing and approving significant contracts, e.g., for facilities and benefit programs
- Matters for which the board serves as a hearing body for action or appeals
- Any other matters that are not administrative in nature and/or that are prescribed in statute or rule

Please see Appendix D for additional detail on the governance and organizational structure.

### **c. Methods by which trustees and their terms are determined**

The initial Board of Trustees will outline the board selection process and terms. In general, openings on the Board will be filled by recommendation, nomination and vote of a majority of the Board present and participating.

Please see Appendix E for a draft of the Bylaws.

**d. General description and proposed or potential location of facilities to be used**

It is the intent of the founding members that The Birches Academy be located in Salem, NH. However, depending on our real estate needs and in consideration of the school finances, other surrounding towns adjacent to Salem may be considered. Our aggressive site search will begin once our charter has been granted.

Our initial space requirements are determined to be approximately 8,500 square feet. This includes 4 classrooms, space for tutoring, art, music and the school's administrative staff. We estimate that our growth over the next several years will have us possibly reaching 17,000 square feet. Consideration for parking and traffic flow to accommodate drop off and pick up areas for cars as well as school buses will also be taken into account. Outdoor space would also be required.

**e. Maximum number, grade or age levels, and, as applicable, other information about pupils to be served**

The planned opening of The Birches Academy is September, 2012. We plan to open 1<sup>st</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade in multi aged classrooms which would be grades 1/2, 3/4, 5/6 and 7/8. This would be hiring four teachers and four classroom aides for our initial opening.

The first year we expect to have approximately 80 students. During the planning year we will formalize our expansion plan with the expectation that we will grow the school over the next seven years to approximately 180 students, kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. As we move past the approval phase, we may make modifications to our opening plan that are in the best interest of the students and the long term sustainability of the school.

The founding members cumulatively have 22 children and they will receive priority placement as a means of recognition of their sweat equity in establishing the school. The founding members have a vested interest in the school and have confidence in having their children attend. Additionally, this is a national response to the efforts of volunteers to create and support charter schools.

It is the intent of many of the founding members to enroll their children in The Birches Academy. However, there are several members that are part of our founding board for the purpose of providing school choice for the Southern New Hampshire community and may for their own personal reasons and in the best interest of their child, opt out of sending their child (ren). (See Admission Procedures, page 13).

**f & g. Curriculum & Instructional Goals**

The following gives an overview of curriculum objectives in core content areas. The curriculum will be based on known standards, including Common Core Standards and Core Knowledge Sequence, and have course objectives that are rigorous and challenge all students. The school will have an Accountability Committee which initially will formalize the methods of measuring our success and create an accountability plan. From that point, they will oversee the implementation to ensure the school is accomplishing its mission and fulfilling its charter and making year to year improvement in all subject areas.

Our curriculum will be designed to develop knowledge and skills in reading, spelling, writing, mathematics, history, geography and science. Foreign language, technology, health content and other enrichment programs will be woven into the core academic program. The arts will be emphasized through a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary arts program beyond core academic instructional time, as well as through integrated curriculum projects. Learning through experience will be emphasized as well as being student centered without abandoning standards. Additionally, there will be a focus on real world learning and problem resolution. The curriculum will weave together language arts, math and science where possible.

The Birches Academy will reach out to our surrounding area and create community learning partnerships in all subject areas wherever possible.

Please see Appendix F and Appendix G for our curriculum framework and outcomes.

### **Language Arts: Reading, Writing and Literature**

- Acquisition of fluent word reading and comprehension skills
- Acquisition of an extensive and advance vocabulary
- Acquisition of spelling, and creative and expository writing skills
- Acquisition of speaking skills: expression and deportment

Students will progress through a research-based reading program that emphasizes phonemic awareness and decoding skills in early, skill-building stages, while nurturing the reader's ability to comprehend and interpret prose and poetry of different syllables and phonemes, blending and decoding through unfamiliar multi-syllabic words, and recognition of irregularly spelled words.

Students will have regular and frequent lessons in the practice of writing Standard English. Using research-based proven programs, lessons will develop the mastery of the principles and applications of correct grammar usage, including parts of speech, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure and paragraph development. Students will have ample opportunity to practice and reinforce writing skills in composition and essays to develop writing style and creativity through prose and poetry.

### **Mathematics**

- Acquisition of fluency with math facts
- Acquisition of math reasoning and estimation skills
- Application of math skills to real life scenarios
- Acquisition of new concepts representing challenging international standards

Students will be challenged to progress in the mastery of new mathematical skills and concepts and the application of those concepts in real world scenarios. Math instruction will involve whole class and small group presentations addressing ability and strengths at all levels. It is anticipated that math would be conducted at the same time for all students within the school in order to allow students to be placed at their ideal working level.

### **Science**

- Acquisition of science concepts in a broad array of science areas
- Gain understanding of science in our lives and surroundings

The Science curriculum will have an emphasis on experimental learning and the scientific process. Students will be expected to think as scientists as they work. Scientific method and process skills will be the basis of hands on experiences in lab and field activities. Topics will be examined authentically, using real life practical applications, to encourage connection and understanding of our world, with increasing sophistication each year, or each grade level.

### **History/Cultural Studies/Geography**

- Gain understanding of the world in a geographical sense
- Gain understanding of cultures, civilizations, past and present

Our curriculum will guide students through world history from ancient cultures to current events. Students will explore topics in geography and history gaining an understanding of their diverse physical and cultural world. The curriculum will be supported by independent and cooperative projects requiring a variety of research skills. The program will foster critical thinking skills and problem solving introduced via the artistic process.

### **Enrichment Programs: Visual & Performing Arts, Foreign Language and Technology**

- Introduction to and practice of visual, performing and musical arts with progression toward mastery
- Acquisition of introductory, conversational foreign language and applicable cultures
- Students will use computers and other technologies as one resource for research and learn effective internet research practices along with exposure to applications used in higher education and real world scenarios.

### **Health & Fitness**

- Exposure to varied health and fitness topics

### **h. Achievement tests to be used to measure pupil academic and other goal achievement including, but not limited to, objective and age-appropriate measures of literacy and numeracy skills, including spelling, reading, expository writing, history, geography, science and mathematics**

Achievement will be determined in a number of ways and not limited to the following:

- Basic skills of literacy and numeracy will be assessed using a combination of New Hampshire state required standardized tests (NECAP) and a nationally norm-referenced achievement test such as the NWEA's MAP (Northwest Evaluation Association's Measurement of Academic Progress) or TerraNova.
- Progress Reports will document students' progress in subject and critical skills areas, and can be reviewed for year to year comparisons.
- Students will maintain portfolios of work. Portfolios will include work selected by students and teachers, and will document progress over time. The portfolio will provide an opportunity for the student to reflect on their learning and progress.
- A Personal Learning Plan will be created and updated. The Personal Learning Plan will acknowledge progress made, challenges faced, and develop a plan for how the school, family and student will work together.

- Parent/Teacher/Student conferences will provide an opportunity to review the student’s portfolio and to update the student’s Personal Learning Plan.

**Assessment Calendar**

September - October	New Hampshire State tests (NECAP) Other Nationally referenced test Portfolio/Personal Learning Plan initiated
Throughout year	On-going teacher assessments, collecting, selecting and reviewing work for portfolio
November	Parent/Teacher/Student Conference, Portfolio/Personal Learning Plan updated Student Progress Report
February	Portfolio/Personal Learning Plan updated Student Progress Report
April	Nationally referenced test
May	Parent/Teacher/Student Conference Portfolio/Personal Learning Plan updated New Hampshire State tests (NECAP) Science
June	Progress Report

**i. For schools offering high school grade levels, graduation requirements sufficient to ensure the that the school has provided an adequate education for it’s pupils**

Not applicable at this time.

**j. Staffing overview, including qualifications sought for professionals and paraprofessionals**

The Board of Trustees will comply with RSA 194-B: 14. Section IV which requires the teaching staff of a charter school to consist of a minimum of fifty percent of teachers with New Hampshire certification, or having at least three years teaching experience.

We will have a Head of School and one full time teacher and one full time teacher aide for each classroom. With a maximum of 24 students in each classroom, that would be a ratio of 12:1.

The Board of Trustees, along with the Head of School will identify other staff requirements such as administrative support, business manager, nurse, special education liaison and curriculum coordinator as needed, which may also be qualities found in other employees. Multiple positions may be fulfilled by one person. For example, a teacher may also be an EMT (Emergency Medial Technician) or the special education liaison may also be the curriculum coordinator.

- The Head of School will have the following qualifications and traits
  - Bachelor's Degree or higher (Masters Degree preferred)
  - Strong visionary and innovative leader
  - Leadership experience working in a K-8 school
  - Experience and/or interest in integrating the arts with academics
  - Excellent communication skills
  - Experience motivating and organizing a new team, able to work with a group
  - Proactive and collaborative approach with parents and families
  - Strong decision making and problem solving skills
  - Respect for the power of the arts in all areas of education
  - Experience and interest with student based assessment and student portfolios
  - Ability to organize volunteers to maximum effect
  - Dedication to literacy
  - Innovation in planning and scheduling
  - Ability and willingness to research grant programs and write funding applications.

Please see Appendix H for a sample Head of School job posting.

- Teachers will have the following qualifications and traits:
  - Bachelor's Degree or higher (Masters Degree preferred)
  - Be highly qualified or certified in the state of NH
  - Willing to work as part of team with other school members, the students and the parent community
  - Self-motivated and willing to wear multiple hats
  - Experience and/or interest with portfolio assessments
  - Adaptable and flexible with working with students individual qualities and strengths
  - Apply critical thinking concepts into a project based learning environment
- Teacher Aides will have the following qualifications and traits:
  - Be a high school graduate working toward becoming a classroom teacher
  - Supportive of children
  - Ethical role mode
- Special Education Liaison will have the following qualifications and traits:
  - Bachelor's Degree or higher (Masters Degree preferred)
  - Certified in Special Education
  - Willing to work as part of a team with school members, the students and other school districts
  - Adaptable and flexible with working with students individual qualities and strengths

**k. Personnel compensation plans, including provisions for leaves and other benefits, if any**

The charter school will comply with all federal, state and local laws and rules related to pre-employment screening, hiring, employment compensation and leave.

Our Head of School and full time teachers will be paid a salary and be offered health and other benefits, including participation in the New Hampshire State Retirement System or other retirement programs. The teacher aide and other personnel, whether full-time or part-time, will be paid on an hourly rate as employees or as independent professionals based on negotiated rates.

The Birches Academy will publish an annual calendar of holiday and vacations during which the school will officially be closed. It is expected that salaried employees will receive a maximum of three (3) days of paid personal leave per year. Personal leave days must be used during the school year in which they are accrued.

Full time salaried employees are expected to receive five (5) sick days per school year, to be used in the year in which they are accrued. Hourly employees are expected to receive two (2) sick days per year, to be used in the year in which they are accrued. For purposes of sick leave for hourly employees, one day will equal the number of hours in that employees regularly scheduled work day.

**l. Pupil transportation plan. Including reasonable provision from the charter school's own resources for transportation of pupils residing outside the district in which the charter school is physically located**

Charter school students will have access to transportation only if they reside in the district where the charter school is located. The charter school will comply with charter law provisions that govern student transportation under RSA 194-B:2, which states: Attendance at a chartered public school for the purposes of transportation shall not constitute assignment under the provisions of RSA 189:6 and RSA 189:8. Pupils who reside in the school district in which the chartered public school is located shall be provided transportation to that school by the district on the same terms and conditions as provided for in RSA 189:6 and RSA 189:8 and that transportation is provided to pupils attending other public schools within that district. However, any added costs for such transportation services shall be borne by the chartered public school.

Students from other school districts must coordinate their own transportation. The Birches Academy will make every effort to support families as they explore transportation options and facilitate ride sharing between families of students from outside the district through an online database or other means.

**m. Statement of assurances related to nondiscrimination according to relevant state and federal laws**

The Birches Academy will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, disability or marital status in the selection of students or staff or in the administration of its educational programs or in any other way as is prohibited by law.

The Board of Trustees will develop and adopt a policy and will have administrative procedures to address any concerns.

**n. Method of coordinating with a pupil's local education agency (LEA) responsible for matters pertaining to any required special education programs or services including method of compliance with all federal and state laws pertaining to educationally disabled pupils**

The Birches Academy will discuss the school with any parent and will accept applications from any parent or student. RSA 194-B:11, III, the local school district continues to be responsible for special education funding and decision-making for any child whose parents seek the child's attendance at a charter school. Placement at the school will require an LEA endorsement, from the IEP (individualized education plan) team or Superintendent of Schools. RSA 194-B:11, III, states that all options available to the parent and the local school district are retained.

**Coordinating with a pupils school district**

The Birches Academy will respect the LEA's responsibility under statute for handling special education decision-making, and have a charter school liaison that collaborates with the local education agency on individual student matters.

**Current school district special education responsibility**

ED 1104.01, effective 2008, sets forth the following sequence of the special education process:

1. Referral;
2. Evaluation;
3. Determination of eligibility;
4. Development of an IEP;
5. Placement;
6. Ongoing monitoring of the IEP; and
7. Annual review of the IEP.

**Charter school responsibility and method of coordinating**

The Head of School will be charged with determining the role of a special education liaison and, if needed, will employ or contract with an appropriate specialist to oversee proper handling of special education matters. The role may also be part of another school employee's job responsibility. The qualifications may include a bachelors degree or higher, certification in special education, willingness to work as part of a team with school members, the students and other school districts and being adaptable and flexible with working with students individual qualities and strengths.

The school responsibilities include:

1. Notifying districts about requests for admission for any student with an IEP.
2. Providing information about the school to the sending district, and, when possible, attend meetings for the purpose of district review of choice requests.

3. Obtaining copies of parent rights provided to parents by districts and to assist parents who want choice to understand their own districts procedures.
4. Obtaining copies of any IEP that is in place, and assure that each teacher and service provider listed as having responsibility for implementing the IEP has a complete copy of this document and explanation as to what is required of the charter school.
5. Keeping name, address, phone, and email for the person(s) in each district who are responsible for special education students attending the charter school, and make contact, when needed.
6. Alerting the sending district of issues that rise to a level of concern of needing district attention.
7. Meeting with special education administrators or their designees to understand how districts would like certain procedures to take place, e.g., should the charter school schedule and call a required meeting or should the LEA.
8. Notifying the sending school district of concerns about a current IEP and requesting a review of the IEP when necessary.
9. Being available to the sending district to review the student's progress under the current IEP and to make recommendations.
10. Working with the sending district and articulate services or accommodations the students needs from the charter school's perspective, and to continue the dialogue about concerns until they are reviewed.

#### **o. Admission Procedures**

The Birches Academy will actively recruit a diverse population of students from the region who understand and value the school's mission and are committed to the school's instructional and operational philosophy. Enrollment will be open to any resident of the State of New Hampshire. Methods of enrollment shall not be designed, intended or used to discriminate or violate individual rights in any manner prohibited by law. The Board of Trustees will establish application procedures and policies pertaining to enrollment and the school lottery. However, it is intended that the procedures and provisions listed below would serve as the foundation.

#### **Procedures**

1. Informational meetings for prospective applicants will be regularly offered.
2. Application packets to parents or guardians will be made available on-line to those interested. Included will be information on the school's mission and instructional philosophy and any relevant forms. Parents will be asked to sign an agreement indicating their understanding of the schools mission and expectations. This includes the family volunteer request (see Philosophy of parent involvement, page 17).

3. Prospective students are invited to spend a day within the school community to obtain an experience of the school.
4. Application forms will be submitted to the Head of School.
5. The Head of School will notify prospective students with a status of the application and information about openings and the lottery if applicable.
6. In the event that there are more applicants than spaces in the school, enrollment will be determined by a lottery held on a pre-determined day and time. Remaining students will be placed on a waiting list by grade in order determined by the lottery. The Head of School will inform all applicants of the admission results.
7. Admitted students and their parents or guardians may have an individual entrance meeting with members of the committee to confirm interest and compatibility with the mission, goals and objectives of the school.

#### **Enrollment Provisions**

- There will be an automatic re-enrollment to its students. A letter of intent by a stated date preceding the lottery will be required.
- Siblings of children already enrolled at the school will receive preference.
- The Board of Trustees will reserve the right to give preference in enrollment to children of school faculty as part of the employee benefits package.
- If a student withdraws from the school during the school year, the first person on the waiting list for the applicable grade will be contacted for immediate enrollment. If that student is no longer interested in enrolling, the school will continue to contact students in waiting list order until a student is found to fill the opening.
- Children of the founding members of The Birches Academy will receive priority for placement as a means of recognition of their sweat equity in establishing the school. Founding members are outlined in Appendix A and are further defined as those who have volunteered 150 hours or more toward the upstart of the school between May 2011 and May 2012.

#### **p. Philosophy of pupil governance and discipline, and age-appropriate due process procedures to be used for disciplinary matters including suspension and expulsion**

The Birches Academy is committed to providing a respectful and safe environment for students and all members of the school community. The school will establish clear and fair expectations for behavior through written guidelines. These guidelines will be established by the Board of Trustees and published with an ending contract page signed by the school administrator, parent and child to be incorporated as part of each child's acceptance folder. These guidelines will be distributed to students and parents as part of the enrollment process. As teachers and parents working together, the expectation that each child refrains from behaviors that can waste valuable instruction time and cause distraction or concern to other students is paramount.

Our joint efforts will promote academic and social success within the team-oriented, community atmosphere at school and beyond. Disrespectful or continual disruptive behaviors will not be accepted. Interventions can include: verbal warning; student conferences; teaching successful behavior strategies; loss of privileges; restitution; makeup time; in school or home suspension; and under extreme circumstances, expulsion.

The Birches Academy will provide fair and age appropriate due process in administering student discipline and will comply with current suspension and expulsion provisions in RSA 193:13 (Suspension and Expulsion of Pupils) and RSA 194-B: 9, III.

**q. Method of administering fiscal accounts and reporting, including a provision requiring fiscal audits and reports to be performed by an independent certified public accountant**

The Birches Academy will follow New Hampshire public school accounting guidelines and will put in place internal accounting controls necessary to safeguard its assets. The Birches Academy will maintain accurate financial records in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) for non-profit corporations. An annual financial report will be provided with an audit by an independent, certified public accountant. The Board of Trustees will appoint a Treasurer to provide oversight necessary for monitoring financial status of the school. The Board of Trustees will also adopt policies for the financial management of the school, including policies on conflict of interest for Board members and faculty.

A general account will be set up for the administration of funds, and the Treasurer will be the only person with check writing authority. The Board will establish a maximum cap for check writing that would then require a Board vote to approve. In addition, a discretionary account will be set up. The Head of School, as well as the Treasurer will have check writing authority for this account. The Board of Trustees will establish a check writing maximum cap for discretionary expenditures. Except for emergency purchases cleared with the school's assigned coordinator, all expenditures and contracts will be handled through an encumbrance system of purchase orders for clear tracking of expenditures and status of account balances.

Each individual with check writing authority will be covered by a fidelity bond in accordance with guidelines of New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration. Accounting activities will consist primarily of the bi-weekly payroll paid to school personnel and the maintenance of an accounts payable system to track amounts due to vendors of the school. The Birches Academy shall comply with all requirements specified in the law pertaining to reporting requirements (RSA 194-B:5 & RSA 194-B:10). This list includes: annual report, annual financial audit and report, program audit, and participation during the annual school budget process.

The Birches Academy will produce an annual report, which will comply with the format established by the Department of Education. The Finance Committee will oversee selection of an independent auditor and the completion of an annual audit of the school's financial affairs. The audit will address accounting practices, and review the school's internal controls. The audit will be conducted in accordance with generally accepted

accounting principles applicable to the school. It is anticipated that the annual audit will be completed within six months of the close of the fiscal year. The Board of Trustees will review and respond to the audit report, if needed, and include the audit results in its annual report.

**r. Annual budget, including all sources of funding**

The included budget in Appendix B reflects estimated expenses and revenue for the planning year and the subsequent five (5) years. Our projected budget is based on maximum potential costs and will be adjusted with real time revenue and expenses to eliminate a budget deficit.

From the onset of our charter application approval it will be necessary to secure funding from beyond the resources of the start up grant and the per pupil allotment. The Birches Academy intends to establish a non profit foundation whose sole purpose is to fundraise and focus on the long term sustainability. We will need to establish aggressive fundraising initiatives that extend beyond the school community that would encompass non-cash donations as well. This will include researching grant opportunities, school fundraising events and engaging business and community leaders.

Other revenue sources will also be considered, such as community events that support our arts integrated mission; creative usage of space during non-school hours such as summer/after school programs; and philanthropic gifts.

There will also be contributions from the school community in forms other than monetary such as volunteer time in the classroom or within the school and expertise assistance, such as computer support or construction.

The Board of Trustees, under their umbrella of responsibilities, understands the priority and significance of additional revenue in order to maintain school sustainability.

**s. School calendar arrangement and the number and duration of days pupils are to be served pursuant to RSA 194-b:8, III**

The Birches Academy will follow a 180-day school year in accordance with the RSA 194-B: 8, III, and expects to follow the calendar of our host district in order to best coordinate transportation services. Any school-specific changes to the schedule will be monitored carefully to ensure that our students meet the required number of attendance hours.

**t. Provision for providing continuing evidence of adequate insurance coverage**

Pursuant to RSA 194-B:1, The Birches Academy will be a public school afforded the same protections as all other public schools under RSA 507(b), which provides for limited general liability for the charter school and its agents. The Board of Trustees will procure, and provide evidence of, adequate insurance coverage as required by the State, including but not limited to general liability for the school.

**u. Identity consultants to be used for various services, if known**

Through the application process, we have worked closely with the Seacoast Charter School who has provided a wealth of information to our founding group. The Seacoast Charter School has provided curriculum, budget and policy information and has committed to continuing working with us once our application is accepted. We have consulted with both William Wilmot the former Head of School, as well as Roberta Montione, the current Head of School.

We have consulted with Eileen Liponis, Executive Director at The NH Public Charter School Association.

We have worked with Matora Fiorey, Director of Surry Village Charter School and Sharon Koshar, Curriculum Coordinator of Surry Village Charter School.

Meryl Levin and other founding members of Mill Falls Charter School have also provided resource material.

We will reach out to consultants and resources as we solidify our curriculum, policies, and procedures.

Please see our community outreach plan in Appendix I.

**v. Philosophy of parent involvement and related plans and procedures**

A community will be created where we have “Parents as Learning Partners” which involves parents and/or guardians, students and teachers. The goal is 100% parental involvement in meaningful ways that support the school development, student learning and community education. Our diverse experiences and strengths will bring energy to build a strong school community. The Birches Academy will be a community that will lead by example. Our goals will be the following:

- Communicate the school’s philosophy and establish clear expectations of parent/guardian involvement; requesting 30 hours per family of school volunteering by adult family members per year
- Request information on any specialty skill that they might have that would benefit the school community
- Provide a variety of options for parents/guardians for meeting this involvement expectation
- Board of Trustees Parent Participation
- Develop school learning and educational opportunities for those in our school community and in our surroundings school district
- Create a Volunteer Force which will include Parent Ambassadors, Fundraising Coordination, Event Coordination, Administrative Coordination and Classroom Coordinators

**w. A plan to develop and disseminate information to assist parents and pupils with decision-making about their choice of school**

A public relations effort will be developed and implemented to recruit and inform potential students, and the community at large, of the opportunities The Birches Academy will provide. This will include brochures, informational meetings, informative website updates, and business community outreach.

**x. A global hold harmless clause**

The Birches Academy, its successors and assigns, covenants and agrees at all times to indemnify and hold harmless any school district which sends its students to the charter school, and their school board, officers, directors, agents, employees, all funding districts and sources and their successors and assigns, (the Indemnified Parties”) from any and all claims, demands, actions and causes of action, whether in law or in equity, and all damages, costs, losses, and expenses, including but not limited to reasonable attorneys’ fees and legal costs, for any action or inaction of the charter school, its board, officers, employees, agents, representatives, contractors, guests and invitees, or pupils. The school shall have no obligation to hold harmless the Indemnified Parties for any claims, damages, losses, or expenses resulting from the Indemnified Parties’ own acts or omissions.

**y. Severability provisions and statement of assurance**

If any provision of The Birches Academy Charter is determined to be unenforceable or invalid for any reason, the remainder of the charter agreement shall remain in effect unless otherwise terminated by one or both of the parties in accordance with the terms contained herein.

**z. Provision of dissolution**

In the event The Birches Academy should cease operations for whatever reason, including the non-renewal or the revocation of its Charter, the Board of Trustees shall consult with its attorney and the Department of Education to assure that contractual and financial obligations are met and that technical assistance is sought.

The planned sale and distribution of any assets shall assure first that any financial obligations of the school are met and then other remaining property will be offered to other charter schools, public schools or other charitable organizations.

**(aa). In the case of the conversion of a public school to a charter conversion school, provision for alternative arrangements for pupils who choose not to attend and teachers who choose not to teach at the charter school**

Not applicable.

**(bb). A plan for the education of the school's pupils after the charter school may cease operation**

In the event that The Birches Academy shall have cause to cease operation, the Head of School will work with the Board to develop a student transfer process and advise all parents/guardians, staff and faculty of the process to be followed. To complete each student's personal file, parents/guardians shall be asked to provide a statement of intent regarding their children's education, moving forward. The Birches Academy will obtain parent/guardian permission for release of information in order to notify the new schools of the impending transfers. The Birches Academy staff, faculty, and Board will make every effort to be available for consultation, sharing students' portfolios, individualized learning plans and other relevant materials with the receiving school. Each family will also receive notice by mail, in a timely fashion, advising them of the dissolution of the School and the plan for student transition. The Birches Academy will ensure that the receiving schools have appropriate information to facilitate the students' transitions.

**(cc). In addition to an application, each charter school applicant, in consultation with the local school board, shall prepare a proposed contract**

Not applicable.

**(dd). An outline of the proposed accountability plan which clarifies expectations for evaluating the school's program and which contains an acknowledgement that a full accountability plan shall be developed and ready to implement prior to the date of opening**

The Birches Academy will provide the New Hampshire State Department of Education with reports on our programs and progress annually. Utilizing a variety of assessment tools and data collected from our students, faculty/staff and parents/guardians, we will share information about our educational impact, parental involvement, outreach methodology and an overall analysis of our goals. In addition, our annual reports will inform the Department about our student enrollment, financial operations and governance.

This reporting will address the following questions:

- 1: Is the school making progress toward achieving our Mission?
- 2: Is the school responsibly using public funds?
- 3: Is the school promoting student attainment of expected knowledge and skills?
- 4: Is the school sustainable?

Our accountability plan will be fully developed prior to the date of opening



## **Appendix A: Founding Parent Biographies**

**Christie Storniolo** was raised in Windham, NH. She attended Pinkerton Academy and is a graduate of Merrimack College in North Andover, MA with a Bachelor of Science in Business Management. Upon graduation she obtained a position at Putnam Investments in Boston Massachusetts where she worked in management positions for 17 years, mainly in 401(k) administration where she received service awards for her outstanding service to her customers. She currently is co-owner of a family travel business along with working with her husband in his CPA firm, Olbricht Storniolo Group, in Hampstead, NH. Christie has participated in many fundraising events for her children in their elementary school over the years and ran several independently. She also has volunteered her time in the classroom. Additionally, she has been a member of the Growth Committee for the Seacoast Charter School to address the growing needs of the school and how to best utilize volunteer support. Her oldest daughter is a recent graduate of the Seacoast Charter School. Her two younger children will attend the Seacoast Charter School in the fall, 2011. Christie, her husband and three children reside in Atkinson, NH.

**Paula Patten** was born and lived in Lawrence, MA until her family moved to Methuen, MA when she was nine years old. She is a graduate of Methuen High School, Connecticut School of Broadcasting and Mount Ida College. She is currently a mother of 3 children and a small business owner. She has been involved heavily in her children's school volunteer groups since her oldest started at Merrimack Valley Montessori in 2004, where she held positions as lead room mother, yearbook lead and President of the Parent Volunteer Organization for 2 years. When her two oldest children moved on to the elementary school, she was voted in as PTA President. She now enters her third year in that position. In 2010, the Fisk Elementary School PTA was named one of 3 "PTAs of the Year" for all of NH. Prior to her volunteering, Paula enjoyed careers teaching dance classes for 15 years, traveling as a catalog buyer, manager of retail stores and as office manager for a start up software company. Paula, her husband Shawn who is Deputy Police Chief of Salem NH, and their 3 children currently live in Salem NH.

**Jessica Wachsmann** is a lifelong resident of New Hampshire and graduate of Trinity High School in Manchester, NH and Saint Anselm College in Goffstown, NH. She is a small business owner and a mother of three children living in Salem, NH. Prior to taking over the family-run travel agency, America Travel, she worked for Putnam Investments for ten years as a Team Leader in Retirement Plan Administration for Fortune 10 companies with assets over \$1 billion. At America Travel, she specializes in group travel and meeting planning and is responsible for all aspects of event planning, from travel arrangements to budgeting. Jessica and her husband, Adam, an engineer at BAE Systems in Nashua, have three children. Two of her children currently attend the Seacoast Charter School in Kingston, NH. This is Jessica's second yearlong term as the President of the Parent Volunteer Organization at the Merrimack Valley Montessori School. In that role, she oversees the fundraising for extracurricular activities, and works as a liaison with school management on the enhancement of school curriculum. NH Jessica is also on the board of Keelan's Crew, a non-profit organization established to help fund the fight against Duchene Muscular Dystrophy. Jessica is also a founding

parent of Mill Falls Charter School, the states first public Montessori School scheduled to open in September 2012.

**Bonnie Doyle** graduated with a BS in Electrical Engineering from Northeastern University. Prior to having children she had a career as a Semiconductor Sales Engineer, working with engineers at several New England based companies to incorporate her company's devices into their final designs, then worked with those customers and her company to ensure product supply for their manufacturing department. Bonnie has been a stay at home mom since 2002. Since then she has been President of PVO at Merrimack Montessori School in Salem where she facilitated monthly PVO meeting where she coordinated communication and goals between administrators and parents; organized the annual fundraiser, and volunteered on several committees. Since 2002 she has been a classroom parent at Haigh Elementary School. Starting in the 2008 school year, she has been working (on a volunteer basis) within the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms to tutor the students with the math and science curriculums. She also serves as a substitute teacher within the Salem School district.

**Jennifer Chisholm** is a lifelong resident of Salem, New Hampshire. After graduating from Salem High School she continued her education at The University of New Hampshire where she earned a Bachelor of Social Work and then a Master of Education degree. Committed to both community service and education, she spent a year doing full time volunteer work with AmeriCorps in the public schools in Colorado. Over the past 4 years Jennifer has volunteered as Coordinator for the Windham, NH Mothers of Preschoolers Group. In this role she managed a committee of volunteers and facilitated the bi monthly meetings of 30+ women and their 50+ children. Prior to her focus on family and volunteerism, Jennifer successfully taught in both an Elementary and a Middle School in Nashua, NH. Jennifer currently holds two NH Educator Certifications in Elementary Education (K-8) and English for Speakers of Other Languages. Jennifer's husband Gary is a graduate of The United States Military Academy at West Point after which he served as a Commissioned Officer for The United States Army. Currently, Jennifer and Gary reside in Salem, NH where they are raising their 4 sons.

**Bonnie LaBossiere** grew up in Wilmington, MA and graduated from Wilmington High School. She went on to the University of Massachusetts at Lowell and graduated with a Bachelors degree in Clinical Laboratory Science. She later went to Middlesex Community College and earned an Associates degree in Dental Hygiene. She worked in the laboratory researching the efficacy of cholesterol lowering medications. Much of the research she conducted was used in a published article. She has been in the dental field for over 20 years and is currently employed, part-time, as a registered dental hygienist at a family practice in Haverhill, MA. Through the scope of her career she has been responsible for front desk, assisting and hygiene, including scheduling, billing, organizing and ordering. Bonnie has volunteered both in the children's school and outside of it. She has been room mother and actively involved in the Fisk PTA. A cancer survivor herself, she has captained many Relay for Life teams in Massachusetts. Bonnie and her husband Bob, who is the DPW superintendent for the town of Middleton, MA, reside in Salem, NH, with their two children.

**Christine Miele** grew up in Shrewsbury, MA and attended the University of New Hampshire, graduating with a Bachelor degree from the Whittemore School of Business. She works for Winn Companies as a computer software trainer, responsible for training new employees, troubleshooting software problems, and creating PowerPoint presentations. Christine has been heavily involved in her children's schools, specifically the Merrimack Valley Montessori School and Soule School as Lead Yearbook Coordinator, Room Mother, and co-chair of several school events. In 2012, Christine will be co-treasurer at the Soule School. Christine, her husband Christopher, a lifelong resident of Salem and owner of M&M Electrical Supply in Nashua, and their 2 children currently live in Salem.

**Holly Ruocco DC** grew up in Windham, NH.. She is a graduate of Pinkerton Academy in Derry, NH. She attended Palmer College of Chiropractic, where she received her Bachelors Degree in Biology and her Doctorate in Chiropractic. She was the recipient of a number of awards for clinic excellence and modular assistant in Palmers Outreach clinics. She returned to New Hampshire 13 years after practicing in Phoenix, AZ to practice Chiropractic in her home state. She currently owns and operates Chiropractic First in Salem, NH. She had one of the largest practices in NH for many years before she decided to start a family of her own. In addition to practicing Chiropractic, she opened Advanced Allergy Centers in October of 2008 and was the first to bring a breakthrough technology to the New England area. She currently is the only office in New England to offer two of the top technologies in this field. There are now three allergy offices located in Salem, Bedford and Newington, NH specializing in Neurological Stress Reduction Therapy. She has provided not only excellent care for the families of this community but has been a long time supporter of the Lions Club and The Greater Salem Chamber of Commerce. She has been the top sponsor of the Relay for Life for 3 years. She also works directly with local groups like Salem Animal Rescue League, Animal Rescue League of NH, the Lazarus House in Lawrence, MA and St. Joseph's Food banks. Dr. Ruocco has been married to Craig Charest, an East Kingston Police Officer for 9 years. They have a daughter named Sarah who is 7 years old. Sarah attended Merrimack Valley Montessori School for 3 years and is currently enrolled in Salem Christian School in Salem, NH.

**Ruth Templeton** was born in Albany New York. She graduated from the State University of Potsdam with dual majors in Elementary Education and Psychology. She received her Master's in Education at the University of Colorado at Denver in Special Education for Mild to Moderate Disabilities. Ruth has a strong background in literacy and is familiar with reading programs such as Reading Recovery and the Wilson Language Program. She is currently working towards completing her certification in the Wilson. Ruth works for Easter Seals in Salem, New Hampshire. She was hired to start a preschool program for children who are receiving Early Intervention Services. The program that she developed, First Steps Preschool, is a one of a kind preschool program in New Hampshire. It was designed to offer early preschool experience to the children eight weeks before they turn three to help prepare them for the transition to a preschool setting. The preschool is a multi-disciplinary program that incorporates language and motor skills into the daily routine. The program has been so successful that it doubled in

size by popular demand. Ruth enjoys volunteer work including working in the classrooms of the Atkinson Academy, where all three of her children attended and at the Seacoast Charter School. She has run two girls scout troops over the past six years and has taught Sunday school for the past eight years. Ruth has volunteered on many fund raising and school events to support the schools where her children attend. She and her husband reside in Atkinson with their three children.

**Jennifer Wilson** was born in Boston, Massachusetts. At the age of 12, Jennifer's family moved to Pelham, New Hampshire where she finished her education in the Pelham school district, graduating from Pelham High School. During her high school career she was active in student government, peer outreach, and on the volleyball team. Jennifer continued her education at Plymouth State College and graduated with a bachelor degree in social work with a dual minor in sociology and child development. While in college Jennifer volunteered at the town's soup kitchen, area group home, and at a nursing home. In addition, Jennifer was very active in residential life. For three years, Jennifer was a residential assistance and was responsible for maintaining order on the floor as well as planning various social, educational, and cultural events. After graduating from college, Jennifer became employed for New Hampshire's Division for Children, Youth, and Families. For the next seven years, Jennifer worked as a Child Protective Service Worker out of the Salem District Office as an assessment worker. Jennifer's responsibilities included assessing abuse and neglect of children pursuant to RSA-169C and worked closely with the area Family Courts, law enforcement agencies, as well as various social service agencies. Jennifer left the Division in 2001 to raise her family. However for the past 10 years has been employed as a contract worker for the Division for Children, Youth, and Families as an adoptive histories report writer. Jennifer currently resides in Salem, New Hampshire with her husband and four children. Her oldest child is entering Woodbury Middle School as a sixth grader. Her second child and third child are entering the second and fifth grade at Walter Haigh Elementary School. Her children are very active in the community and participate in dance, hockey, soccer, and baseball. Jennifer is an active member of the Walter Haigh PTA and was an executive board member for three years.

**Dianne Wright** grew up in North Andover, MA and has a Bachelor's Degree of Science in Business Management from Merrimack College. She worked for twenty years in the Integrated Circuit Industry with various responsibilities in Customer Service, Inside and Outside sales, production management, and finally Worldwide Global Sales Operation project lead in Recruiting and Financial management. She left the industry 12 years ago to raise her four children. Currently they are 18 year old twin boys and two girls, age 16 and 9. Since that time, she has held various positions with the PTA from Treasurer, Vice President and President of the Mary A. Fisk Elementary School, to Vice president of the Woodbury Junior High PTA. She continues to volunteer at the Elementary School as well as at Salem High School. Previously she held the position of Vice President of Fundraising for the Field of Dreams in Salem, NH. Currently she is serving her third term as a member of the Selectman appointed Recreation Advisory Committee. She is also a founding board member of the Friends of Salem, NH Recreation; an entity created to raise funds for the various recreational facilities in Salem. She was on the Board of

Director's for the Salem Youth Basketball Organization as Director of Coaching and is currently a Recreation Head Basketball Coach. She lives in Salem, NH with her husband, Larry, who is director of Business Applications Architecture in the Information Technology Department at Boston University.

# Appendix C

June 27, 2011

Bill Wilmot  
Head of School  
13 Church St.  
Kingston, NH 03848



To Whom It May Concern:

Seacoast Charter School has worked very closely with The Birches Academy of Academics & Art, A Charter School in the development of their curriculum and charter school. We have allowed them as a part of this partnership to use any intellectual property of the Seacoast Charter School in their charter application or subsequent operation. This remains the property of Seacoast Charter School for subsequent distribution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Wilmot". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Bill Wilmot  
Head of School  
Seacoast Charter School

## **Appendix D : Government and Organizational Structure**

### **Committees**

#### **Board Development & Governance Committee**

The Board Development & Governance Committee will be responsible for researching and identifying potential board members. The committee will also develop working definitions of the roles of the Board, review the proposed make up of the board, as well as put forth ideas for changes. The committee will develop draft bylaws, and establish meeting note formats. The committee will also research and propose board education plans during the development year and arrange board training.

*Ongoing beyond the development year:* The committee will review the structure, practices and procedures of the board of trustees. It will conduct a periodic review of the board's bylaws, recruit and nominate new trustees, and provide orientation for new trustees and ongoing development opportunities for existing trustees.

*Membership:* Founding members until the board members are established and then board members only.

#### **Curriculum Development and Assessment Committee**

The Curriculum Development & Assessment Committee will research curriculum options in all core subject areas including music, arts and other enrichment programs. This research would be presented to the board of trustee's. The group will also research and suggest on-going assessments testing.

*Ongoing beyond the development year:* This committee will roll into and become the Accountability Committee. The committee will work with the Head of School to assess how well the school is accomplishing its mission and fulfilling the charter. The Head of School and the committee will create and manage the state accountability plan and review and oversee its implementation. The committee will review student work, make classroom visits, and review the longitudinal growth of the student body over time. This work will not include evaluation of either individual students or teachers.

*Membership:* Founding members, board members, faculty & parents

#### **Development and Outreach Committee**

The Development & Outreach Committee will research and establish fundraising goals and other areas of revenue, including grants. The committee will research and develop relationships with all potential funding sources to broaden the base of financial support for the school. Also includes, but is not limited to, the organization and implementation of any fundraising events. The committee will be charged with promoting, encouraging and supporting awareness of the school and its programs. The committee will also develop and oversee the strategic marketing goals.

*Ongoing beyond the development year:* The objectives remain the same.

*Membership:* Founding members, board members, parents

### **Finance Committee**

The Finance Committee will work closely with all other groups addressing issues related to the school's finances. The committee will establish the budget and as the project continues will ensure the school has a balanced budget. The committee will establish procedures and accounting methods.

*Ongoing beyond the development year:* The committee will provide oversight of all financial aspects of the school. These include, but are not limited to: Overseeing the development of the budget in conjunction with the Head of School and Business Manager; ensuring accurate tracking/monitoring/accountability for funds; ensuring adequate financial controls; oversight of the financial audit; signing payroll, manifests and other financial documents as necessary.

*Membership:* Founding members until the board members are established and then board members only.

### **Personnel Committee: Staff Recruitment, Benefits, Professional Development**

The Personnel Committee will develop job descriptions for the Head of School, teachers, teacher aides, and support staff and facilitate recruitment. Additional responsibilities include drafting organizational structures, benefits, employee handbook, and professional development.

*Ongoing beyond the development year:* The Personnel Committee will oversee personnel management of the school. They will develop policies relating to staffing and personnel. They will develop and review a performance management system for evaluating and developing teachers and staff. The committee will conduct annual reviews of the Head of School in accordance with the performance management system. The committee will work with the Finance Committee to set goals for salary levels commensurate with state reported averages.

*Membership:* Founding members until the board members are established and then board members only.

### **Facilities Committee**

The Facilities Committee will be responsible for detailing all of the site requirements, including fire and safety and working with the realtor to locate possibilities. The responsibilities will also include determining the rent and possible fit up plans. Additionally, the committee would need to research utility contracts, insurance needs, transportation plans, and disaster preparedness.

*Ongoing beyond the development year:* The Facilities Committee will work closely with the Head of School to oversee the operation and maintenance of the school facility. This includes, but is not limited to, serving as the liaison between the school and landlord

where applicable; developing and implementing plans for long term or permanent facility.

*Membership:* Founding members, board members, parents

**Operations Committee: School Policy, Application Process & Information Management**

The Operations Committee will research and develop the policies and procedures which will govern the operation of the school. This includes the admissions process, the lottery process, student/parent handbook, transportation sharing, and the terms and mechanisms for tracking parent involvement. In addition, this committee will oversee internal school policies such as special education process and student discipline.

*Ongoing beyond the development year:* The Operations Committee will disband and the responsibilities will role into the Head of School's job function.

## **Appendix F: Curriculum Framework**

### **Charter Application, section f: Curriculum that meets or exceeds state standards**

Curriculum will be aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). In addition, The Core Knowledge Sequence and NH Curriculum Frameworks will serve as framework guides. The CCSS, NH Framework and Core Knowledge Sequence will allow innovation in implementation while ensuring that students are on target with the goals and standards that the state expects. The Birches Academy curriculum will meet or exceed the state standards.

The Core Knowledge Sequence will provide age and grade appropriate curriculum content by which the CCSS can be addressed. The Core Knowledge Foundation believes that knowledge builds knowledge and that there is a specific core of knowledge that all school children should acquire and apply. The implementation of the Core Knowledge Sequence has shown evidence of excellence and equity in education. The Core Knowledge Foundation claims that, “Core Knowledge provides a core curriculum that is coherent, cumulative, and content-specific in order to help children establish strong foundations of knowledge.” The Core Knowledge Sequence will provide The Birches Academy with core content, subject by subject, as a curriculum guide. Resources and instruction that promote best practices and the attainment of world class knowledge and skills will be used.

Arts will be integrated and this inclusive approach will naturally embed the processes of critical thinking, creative solutions and goal attainment. Research has shown that when school curricula are integrated through the arts, students gain not only academically, but also improve their self-concepts and self-confidence. Creativity and the artistic process will be modeled and emphasized. Arts will include:

- Visual Arts: drawing, painting, sculpture modeling, and exposure to varied and quality supplies.
- Performance Art: dance and drama will be woven into curricular areas. Students may have opportunities to learn, practice and perform dance and theatrical presentations including original works.
- Music: learning rhythm, keeping time, reading music and exposure to and instruction in musical instruments and opportunities for performance.

The Birches Academy highly values principles such as those of *Next Generation Learning*. Students will be engaged in cross curricular projects that provide real life, student centered learning experiences and the opportunity for authentic performance based assessment. As we are able, learning will incorporate community members and professionals to create learning studio experiences. Multi aged classrooms will promote both self directed learning and cooperative learning. Teachers will serve as a facilitator who scaffolds learning experiences and provides support while the students engage and take ownership of their learning. Ultimately, The Birches Academy students will be building a strong foundation for life, work and citizenship in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

A broad description of the curriculum subject areas can be found below. Please note that throughout the planning period we will continue to fully develop the curriculum. We will do so with the expertise of curriculum specialists, consultants from successful charter school models and with the knowledge and experience of the future Head of School.

### **Language Arts: Reading, Writing and Oral Language**

The Language Arts curriculum will include a combination of direct instruction, individual work, and cooperative group work and will be demonstrated across all subject areas.

#### **Reading**

- Grades 1-4: Students will be exposed to a balanced reading curriculum that includes exposure to whole literature as well as direct instruction in phonics. Programs such as *Wilson Language Program*, including *Foundations* will be part of each classrooms curriculum. Accelerated reading programs as well as extra support will be provided as needed. Students will read for fluency and understanding and learn through balanced instruction. Based on need and appropriateness, students will experience a variety of grouping to best meet their skill level. Students will be taught through vocabulary rich instruction. As skills develop, students will be engaged in literature circle groups.
- Grades 5-8: All students will continue to work on fluency and comprehension as well as study skills and building vocabulary. Students will read for fluency and understanding through balanced instruction. They will gather and process information through reading a wide variety of sources and materials. Based on assessment, students will receive varied instruction styles. Students will engage deeply and collaboratively to discuss and critique a variety of literature via Literature Circles and multi-disciplinary projects.

#### **Writing**

- Grades 1-4: Students will be exposed to developmentally appropriate programs, such as *Handwriting Without Tears* to provide strong writing instruction at an early stage. Programs and resources will be used to teach grammar and mechanics. An organized writing program, such as *The Six Traits of Writing*, will be implemented to teach writing across the curriculum.
- Grades 5-8: Students will continue to work on writing skills, including proofreading, note taking, using graphic organizers, publishing and journaling, among other skills. Writing will be incorporated across the curriculum to include vocabulary, grammar and the mechanics of language.

#### **Oral Language**

- Students in all grades will develop skills to present across all curriculum areas. Students will work in groups, and individually, to share and discuss topics. Students will have the opportunity to express themselves artistically through drama and performance. Presentation opportunities will be a common part of classroom

experience. In addition, there will be opportunity and expectation that students share and present within learning studios, Town Meetings and assemblies.

### **Mathematics**

The Math curriculum will align with CCSS as well as NCTM Standards and recommendations. Skills and concepts include: numeration, operations & computation, patterns, use of data, measurement, functions, algebra, and geometry. Math instruction will involve the use of proven, research based math programs. Ongoing assessment will allow students to proceed as they demonstrate competency.

- Grades 1-4: The students will be exposed to innovative resources that provide variety. The program will include manipulative and real world problem solving to make mathematics meaningful to the students. *Investigations in Numbers, Data & Space* or *envision Math* are the type of hands-on, problem solving based and child centered approach that may guide Math instruction.
- Grades 5-8: The students will build on the concrete skills and foundation established. Students will engage as mathematical thinkers able to apply math concepts and utilize problem solving strategies across the curriculum. A problem solving child centered approach such as *Connected Math Program* may be used.

### **Social Studies**

The Core Knowledge Sequence will guide the Social Studies content. Student interest and curiosity will also act as a guide. When possible, real world experiences, guest speakers and primary sources will be used. Creative resources will be sought to supplement as needed. There will be emphasis on depth of learning and cross curricular projects. Examples of topics covered will include but not be limited to: Civilization, Geography, Egypt, the Americas, Ancient Civilizations, US History, Exploration, Native Americans, Westward Expansion, Economics, Government, US Constitution, Civil War and current US and world events. Topic presentation will be cyclical.

### **Science**

The Core Knowledge Sequence will guide the Science content. When possible, Science instruction will involve direct experience with the natural world. Individual interests will be explored with depth of learning, hands on experiments and projects as key elements. To supplement the natural environment a variety of resources may be used. For instance, *SEPUP LAB-AIDS Applied Science Experiment Kits* or similar kits may be used as needed. Science topics may include but not be limited to: Life Sciences, Nature, Insects, Human Body, Electricity, Magnets, Chemistry, Geology, Oceans, Astronomy, Energy, Carbon footprint and our impact on the Earth. Topic presentation will be cyclical.

### **Art**

Art will take many forms including, but not limited to visual art, performance art, and music. Students will attend art and music classes multiple times per week. In addition, Art will be integrated into all subject areas. The exposure to the arts will encourage the growth of imagination, expression and individuality. The artistic process involves critical

thinking, evaluation, discussion, assessment, creativity and continued improvement to meet a goal. We will seek partnerships and guidance from local college and university art programs and projects such as *Systematic Arts Integration for Learning (SAIL)*.

### **Technology**

Technology will be incorporated throughout the curriculum. We will provide opportunities to develop skills and awareness in a wide range of traditional and contemporary technologies. We will promote an appreciation for the interdependency of technology and other disciplines. We will increase understanding of the relationships between technology, individuals, and society. We will work to align with the goals outlined in the NH Technology/Engineering Education Curriculum Guide. We will plan using such guides as *Project Lead The Way*, *Engineering byDesign* and *Engineering is Elementary*. Ultimately, individualized learning plans and student portfolios will be created, stored, accessed, updated and reviewed electronically.

### **Character development, good citizenship, community & critical skill building-**

The Birches Academy is committed to developing individuals who are prepared to succeed as citizens of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It is intended that teachers will receive training in *Responsive Classroom* philosophy and techniques. Character education and citizenship resources will be sought to incorporate some explicit instruction within *Responsive Classroom* meetings. Authentic opportunities for character education will be targeted, utilized and recognized. The school will have clear expectations of respect and productivity along with logical consequences. Classroom meetings will be used to build classroom communities and as a way to teach oral and listening skills, support, cooperation and reflection. Partnerships such as reading buddies and learning studio experiences will aid in character development and community building. Regularly scheduled whole school gatherings will provide opportunities for critical skill building in the areas of character development, collaboration and leadership. Students will have opportunities for team building, student government, service projects, community outreach and partnerships. The Birches Academy will instill the importance of teamwork, negotiation, critical thinking, and effective communication among other critical life skills. Consideration will be given to training teachers in the area of critical skills in order to naturally and fluently incorporate these necessary skills into everyday learning experiences.

### **Enrichment programs**

It is a goal of The Birches Academy to offer enrichment opportunities such as Physical Education, Health and Foreign Language. Students will learn about and from local businesses, work alongside local professionals to learn and solve problems, and hear from guest experts. We will offer extracurricular clubs such as chess, debate, team building or foreign language. We will offer a variety of other enrichment programs as we are able.

## **Appendix G: Curriculum Outcomes**

### **Charter Application section g: Academic and other learning goals and objectives**

The Birches Academy will provide a rigorous core academic program. Students will be given the opportunity to learn and demonstrate understanding of knowledge and skills essential to successful 21<sup>st</sup> Century learners. Students will emerge as critical thinkers. They will be creative, analytical, and motivated problem solvers. They will understand their potential, value the potential of others, take initiative and persevere. The Birches Academy student will be prepared as a life long learner to succeed in higher education, the workforce, or wherever their drive and potential takes them.

Below is a general description of subject based curriculum outcomes. During the planning period the founders will consult with experienced professionals and the future head of school in order to create comprehensive outcomes and assessment tools.

The following will guide the formation of outcomes, goals and objectives:

- All students will meet or exceed the average performance of the NH students on state required assessments.
- All students will be reading at or beyond grade level by grade 3 (based on NH assessment tools).
- Student performance data will show students are progressing at a minimum of one years growth, annually, in core subject knowledge and skills .
- Student portfolios, projects, presentations, learning plans, and standards based report cards will show consistent, yearly progress in the areas of social and critical skills.

#### **Language Arts/Literacy outcomes:**

- Students will read fluently, with understanding from a variety of genres and sources.
- Students will write effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences.
- Students will work cooperatively exhibiting such skills as listening, viewing, and critiquing.
- Students will use reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing to: Gather and organize information; communicate effectively; and succeed across the curriculum areas and in everyday settings.

#### **Mathematics outcomes:**

- Students will develop and demonstrate essential skills and principles of numbers and operations.
- Students will demonstrate an understanding and use of measurement, money, fractions, and decimals.
- Students will demonstrate concrete and applicable understanding of key concepts, principles of geometry and algebra.
- Students will evaluate and solve real life problems.
- Students will develop strong mathematical problem solving and reasoning abilities.
- Students will effectively express mathematical concepts and mathematical processes both verbally and in writing.

**Social Studies outcomes:**

- Students will demonstrate an understanding of grade appropriate topics.
- Students will demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the history of their community, New Hampshire, the United States, Western civilization, and the world, including the contributions of famous women and men, ordinary citizens, and groups of people.
- Students will explain and analyze a variety of current local and world events.
- Students will develop and present an Individual Learning Project.
- Students will demonstrate an awareness of, and concern for, the ways that the world's people, resources, and environments are interrelated and interdependent.

**Science outcomes:**

- Students will demonstrate an understanding of grade appropriate topics.
- Students will use problem-solving strategies to investigate and understand the natural world.
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of key concepts and principles central to the biological, physical, and earth sciences, while recognizing the interrelationship of all the sciences.
- Students will develop and present an Individual Learning Project.
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of current local and world impact as it relates to Science and the environment/Earth.
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of their impact and their place as it relates to the world.

**Art outcomes:**

- Students will create, perform, and respond with understanding to a variety of art forms.
- Students will analyze and evaluate works of art from structural, historical and cultural perspectives in a variety of art disciplines.
- Students will read and notate music.
- Students will identify musical instruments and perform on pitch, in rhythm and with appropriate dynamics.

**Technology outcomes:**

- Students will demonstrate appropriate use, management and understanding of technology equipment, materials and processes.
- Students will demonstrate proficiency in word processing, research, information management, communication, databases, spreadsheets, graphing, and presentations.
- Students will demonstrate technology skills needed to find, use and communicate information effectively in a technological world.
- Students will demonstrate understanding of technological effects on individuals, society and the natural world.

**Character development, good citizenship & community building outcomes:**

- Students will apply *Responsive Classroom* techniques to everyday experiences throughout the school environment.
- Students will observe, present, and respond analytically to Town Meetings and other similar learning experiences.
- Students will fulfill a variety of roles within cooperative groups and will demonstrate critical teamwork skills.
- Students will create works exhibiting their own curiosity and creativity.
- Students will analyze and respond appropriately to peers' work and/or performance.

**Enrichment program outcomes:**

- Students will express understanding about types of food, healthy eating, healthy lifestyles and benefits of exercise.
- Students will acquire basic foreign language skills.
- Students will engage in interesting, skill developing activities such as, but not limited to Chess Club, Debate Club, team building, and Student Government.

## Appendix I: Community Outreach

Once approved, The Birches Academy of Academics and Art will hold four to six community outreach events in Salem, NH and the surrounding communities. At these events we will be introducing families to the charter school model as well as the innovative approach that The Birches Academy will offer.

We will be reaching out to the following organizations in order to make sure that we are reaching as many families in Southern New Hampshire, as well as creating as diverse a population as possible.

A Safe Place (women's shelter)	Mental Health Center of Greater Manchester
Catholic Charities 45 Stiles Rd. Salem, NH 03079	1228 Elm St. Suite 200 Manchester, NH
Child and Family Services 464 Chestnut St. Manchester, NH 03105	RMB Counseling 130 Main St. Suite 203C Salem, NH 030379
CLM 41 Birch St. Derry, NH 03038	Rockingham County Community Action Program 287 Lawrence Rd. Salem, NH 03079
Easter Seals Early Intervention 15 Ermer Rd. Unit 102 Salem, NH 03019	Salem Head Start 171 Zion Hill Rd. Salem, NH 03079
Family Mediation & Juvenile Services of So. Rockingham County 16 Academy Ave. Atkinson, NH 03811	Salem Success by 6 171 Zion Hill Rd. Salem, NH 03079
Family Strength 503 Beech St. Manchester, NH 03104	The Upper Room 36 Tsienneto Dr. Derry, NH 03038
Partners in Family Wellness 15 Ermer Rd. Salem, NH 03079	Salem Boys and Girls Club 3 Geremonty Dr. Salem, NH 030379
Manchester Community Health 145 Hollis St. Manchester, NH	Derry Boys and Girls Club 40 East Derry Rd. E. Derry, NH 03041

## **Appendix J: Letters of Support**



# Salem Police Department

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Paul T. Donovan  
Chief of Police

August 17, 2011

Mrs. Paula Patten  
The Birches Academy of Academics & Art  
215 South Broadway #318  
Salem, NH 03078

Dear Mrs. Patten,

Thank you for providing me with information regarding the effort to bring a Charter School, The Birches Academy of Academics & Arts, to Salem. Charter Schools have been successfully established in a great many progressive communities across the nation. They provide an alternative to Public schools for students who respond better academically to alternative and advanced instruction methods.

Reviewing your Mission Statement, I noted that the Birches Academy will focus on delivering a strong academic curriculum that will be student-centered in order to stretch and enhance the learning experience of each student. The Birches Academy will also work in an innovative manner to increase individual expression and create an atmosphere allowing for exploration and investigation of new ideas.

Also, the fact that citizenship - locally, nationally, and globally will be stressed can provide students with the type of advantage that they will need in our society. The world has become a smaller place, and a global outlook is required to be successful in business. Learning to be a good citizen is a benefit to the student as well. Our society needs community-oriented citizens if we are to continue to be able to provide assistance to all of our citizens in a multitude of areas. Many corporations have included efforts toward community, corporate involvement, and philanthropy as a part of their corporate strategy.

The attention to the latest technology is of premier importance in our culture today. Technology is a huge part of the global economy and global society. By focusing educational efforts in this area, The Birches Academy will be preparing students for entry into the global market and global society. This is the future and our children need to be prepared to operate with skill and excellence in this area. The best corporations are learning-centered and The Birches Academy will develop learning skills that will benefit the students for their entire lifetime.

I wish you much success in your efforts to bring this valuable resource to Salem. The Birches Academy brings a resource to Salem that many communities only wish they could have. I look forward to the grand opening of The Birches Academy of Academics & Art in 2012.

Sincerely,

Paul T. Donovan  
Chief of Police  
Salem, NH



# PELHAM POLICE DEPARTMENT

14 VILLAGE GREEN  
PELHAM, NEW HAMPSHIRE 03076  
Telephone (603) 635-2411 Fax (603) 635-6959

Chief of Police  
JOSEPH A. ROARK

September 9, 2011

New Hampshire Department of Education  
101 Pleasant Street  
Concord, NH 03301-3860

Dear Sirs,

My name is Joseph Roark and I am the Chief of Police of the Town of Pelham New Hampshire. As you may know, Pelham is located in the South Central Region of New Hampshire and directly borders the town of Salem, NH.

I was recently approached by a group of citizens who are working towards creating a new charter school in our region to be called The Birches Charter School of Academics and Art. The citizens explained to me their vision for the school and its curriculum. After being informed about the proposed school, I must say I was amazed by the thoroughness and thoughtfulness of the founding parents in designing a contemporary and enlightening educational opportunity.

As a civic leader, husband of a school teacher, and parent of school aged children, it excites me that a charter school may be available as an academic choice for the parents and children of my community. As the world around us evolves faster than ever, it is important that children be placed in learning environments that best suit their individual strengths and interests so that they may then have the greatest chance to succeed in a global environment.

I adamantly believe The Birches Charter School of Academics and Art will be a valuable educational choice for the citizens of Salem and its surrounding communities should it be approved by your agency. Please strongly consider this outstanding opportunity to provide an exceptional learning environment to the citizens of Southern New Hampshire. Please know that should The Birches Charter School of Academics and Art be approved, you will be immediately strengthening the academic opportunities to the citizens of my community and moreover be building a stronger educational foundation for New Hampshire in the future.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Joseph A. Roark'.

Joseph A. Roark  
Chief of Police  
Pelham Police Department

NH Dept. of Education  
101 Pleasant St.  
Concord, N.H. 03301

To Whom It May Concern: As a resident of Salem, NH for the past 44 years and a strong believer in Charter Schools and their records of superior achievements in the education of our children, I am writing to endorse a new group called The Birchers Charter School of Academics and Arts in their efforts to bring such a school to our community.

I wholeheartedly endorse this proposed school and will do everything possible on my part as their State Representative to bring this proposal to fruition.

Sincerely, Rep. Bob Elliott, Finance , Vice-Chairman, Div. II.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bob Elliott". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name.

12/27/11

To whom it may concern,

I would like to offer my support in the development of the charter school Birches Academy. Birches Academy's philosophy and teaching style would offer students who require a more specialized program to succeed in academics and social development.

As a person who is affiliated with the public school, I have seen many students struggle and "get lost in the shuffle" either socially or academically. The Birches Academy will provide these types of students with a smaller setting and a more project based learning which most importantly will provide them with the self confidence that they need to develop skills and become a productive adult.

Sincerely,

*Sharon Bridson L/COTA*

Sharon Bridson L/COTA

January 3, 2012

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Christine Saba and I am an Atkinson resident, realtor and mother. As parents and small business owners, my husband and I were approached with the vision to establish The Birches Charter School of Academics and Art. My husband Glenn is a developer and local business owner. We believe that this charter school will have endless benefits for our community in southern New Hampshire. Charter schools have proven an incredible asset to school districts nationwide. When prospective buyers approach our region, school systems are always a top concern. The information we have received from our close friend and board member Ruth Templeton has motivated us to reach out and work to establish The Birches Charter School of Academics and Art.

We have been blessed with a child who has largely overcome his disabilities, adapting to a mainstream classroom. However, we believe that a charter school would provide an environment in which his strengths could be nourished and his weaknesses overcome. With advantageous teacher-student ratios and a more individualized curriculum, our nine year old would prosper. Charter schools provide the unique opportunity for children to explore their specific talents and interests in setting which allows more one-on-one interaction. The Birches Charter School of Academics and Art is the next step for southern New Hampshire's education system. We should take this opportunity to provide our children with improved learning tools and our community with an exceptional academic environment.

As southern New Hampshire residents, we believe that The Birches Charter School of Academics and Art has a strong, impactful vision that will enhance our state and our community. Please consider this vision as one that can transform our children's future. The Birches Charter School of Academics and Art's potential is endless. Please give the children of southern New Hampshire the opportunity to attend this modern academic institution.

Regards,  
Christine and Glenn Saba  
8 Brushwood Drive  
Atkinson, NH



January 4, 2012

New Hampshire Department of Education  
101 Pleasant Street  
Concord, NH 03301-3860

To whom it may concern,

My name is Tammy Dudal and I work for Region 10 Community Supports and Services, Inc. I have worked for Region 10 for the past 8 years. I work with families who have children that are birth to age 3 who may need Early Supports & Services. I work in 11 Southern New Hampshire towns including Salem, NH.

I was approached by Ruth Templeton who is an employee of our contractor, Easter Seals of Salem regarding the creation of a new charter school in Salem. Ruth explained the vision for the school and the curriculum. This school would be a great asset to our community.

I am also a parent of three children at Timberlane Regional School District. One of my children is in the special education program at Timberlane High School. It is exciting for parents to have an academic choice for all types of children in our community. I am very familiar with the importance of a child being placed in the right place to assist in that child's strengths. It is such a wonderful opportunity for our children.

I support the hard work and dedication that the parents have made to support the opening of The Birches Charter School of Academics and Art. This school would be such a positive strength to our community. I am also a true believer of having choices for our children to help them succeed in an environment that best suits their needs. We hope that you will also consider such a positive opportunity for children in Southern New Hampshire.

If you should need any further information or have questions, please contact me at Region 10 ext. 326. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tammy A. Dudal".

Tammy Dudal, Early Supports & Services Coordinator

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**DONNA BOGDAN CORDOVA, PT**  
*Pediatric Physical Therapist*

January 7, 2012

NH Department of Education  
101 Pleasant St  
Concord, NH 03301

To Whom It May Concern:

As a pediatric physical therapist, I work closely with school administrators and personnel across Southern New Hampshire. I also listen to parents describe goodness of fit when choosing schools and programs for their children. My own two children attended our local elementary school, whose staff embraced the concept of multiple learning styles and recruited parent volunteers to help with small group lessons. I've noticed as the students advance in grades, there is more of a uniform approach to teaching, with less regard to Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. Some students remain active, engaged learners, while others lose interest or become frustrated with the teaching style. I believe the decline in NECAP scores between 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade may, in part be due to this difference in teaching style.

I have known Ruth Templeton as a passionate educator at Easter Seals, Salem, and also as a mother of children attending the same school as my own. I believe the group proposing The Birches Charter School of Academics and Art understands that children learn differently, and has provided a wonderful choice for students in this region whose passions lie in the arts. Their passion is equally matched by a thorough understanding of developmental learning, resulting in a thoughtful and well organized charter proposal. It is my hope that you approve this charter, to allow students a choice of educational environments that best match their learning style.

Sincerely,



Donna Bogdan Cordova, PT

13 Emery Drive  
Atkinson, NH  
03811-2157

PHONE (603)362-6344  
Cell (603) 770-7366  
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