



Empowering People. Building Futures.

NYSED COVID-19 PLAN FOR REOPENING SCHOOLS

August 6, 2020

School Name	Program Site Address	Program(s) provided at this site	Contact Person (Name, Title)	Contact Phone Number	Contact Email Address
Phyllis L. Susser School for Exceptional Children	71-64 168 th Street Flushing, NY 11365	853 (School Age Special Education) Children's Residential Project	Michael Claus, Principal	718-591-8100	michael.claus@birchfamilyservices.org
Washington Heights Education Center	554 Ft Washington Ave New York, NY 10033	4410 (Pre-school Special Education) Special Class/Special Class in an Integrated Setting 853 (School Age Special Education) UPK	Karen Hazel, Principal	212-740-5157	karen.hazel@birchfamilyservices.org
Springfield Gardens Education Center	145-02 Farmers Blvd. Springfield Gardens, NY 11434	4410 (Pre-school Special Education) Special Class/Special Class in an Integrated Setting 853 (School Age Special Education)	Deborah Costagliola, Principal	718-527-5220	deborah.costagliola@birchfamilyservices.org
Long Island City Early Childhood Center	10-24 49 th Avenue Long Island City, NY 11101	4410 (Pre-school Special Education) Special Class	Karen Kaja, Principal	718-786-1104	karen.kaja@birchfamilyservices.org
East Flatbush Early Childhood Center	475 East 57 th Street Brooklyn, NY 11203	4410 (Pre-school Special Education) Special Class	Judy Coan, Principal	718-451-5213	judy.coan@birchfamilyservices.org
Mill Basin Early Childhood Center	2075 East 68 th St Brooklyn, NY 11234	4410 (Pre-school Special Education) Special Class	Lori Vallejo, Principal	718-968-7866	lori.vallejo@birchfamilyservices.org
Riverdale Early Childhood Center	475 West 250 th St Riverdale, NY 10471	4410 (Pre-school Special Education) Special Class	Joyce Group, Principal	718-549-4753	joyce.group@birchfamilyservices.org
Pelham Bay Early Childhood Center	2885 St. Theresa Ave Bronx, NY 10461	4410 (Pre-school Special Education) Special Class	DeAnna Diamond, Principal	646-975-2700	Deanna.diamond@birchfamilyservices.org
Soundview Early Childhood Center	1880 Watson Ave Bronx, NY 1072	4410 (Pre-school Special Education) Special Class/Special Class in an Integrated Setting Early Learn/UPK	Maria Cordero, Curriculum Coordinator	718-828-9400	Maria.cordero@birchfamilyservices.org

BIRCH FAMILY SERVICES

NYSED COVID-19 PLAN FOR REOPENING SCHOOLS

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

The Birch Family Services (Birch) Plan is based on the latest information and requirements from the New York State Education Department (NYSED) Reopening Guidance, New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE), United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH), New York City Department of Health (NYCDOH), and Executive Order(s) regarding the prevention and management of COVID-19 in the workplace and in school settings. We will follow all guidance and requirements issued by these agencies and make revisions as necessary as new guidance is provided. Our paramount concern is ensuring the health and safety of all of our students, staff, and families as we reopen schools.

POLICY:

Birch Family Services will follow all applicable current and future regulatory requirements and city, state, and federal guidance to ensure that proper protocols are in place and implemented to manage and prevent the spread of COVID-19 in all Birch schools, including but not limited to those related to health and safety, facilities/physical plant, program operations, delivery of educational services, and social-emotional wellbeing. This policy and all associated protocols/procedures as recorded and maintained in this COVID-19 Manual applies to all Birch staff who work in any Birch education program/school.

**Our policies and protocols/procedures are consistent and comply with the latest NYSED, NYCDOE, CDC, NYSDOH, NYCDOH guidance. Protocols are subject to change and will be updated if/when guidance or requirements of the above regulatory agencies' changes*

Summary of Birch's COVID-19 Plan for Reopening Schools

Development of Plan

Birch's reopening plan was developed as a result of the engagement of school stakeholders (i.e. executive leadership, school administrators, staff, family members, advocacy groups; guidance from city and state health departments, NYSED, and NYCDOE. Meetings were held with various groups of stakeholders and family surveys were completed.

The following factors will be considered when determining resumption of in person instruction: ability to maintain appropriate social distance; PPE and cloth face mask availability; availability of safe transportation in consultation with NYCDOE and Office of Pupil Transportation (OPT); and local hospital capacity in consultation with NYCDOH.

Health and Safety

Birch will focus on preventative actions, requiring all Birch schools to perform health checks and screenings per DOH guidance, and recognize signs and symptoms of illness in students, staff and visitors. Birch schools will develop plans to manage and isolate ill individuals until they can be sent home, instruct students and staff in proper hand and respiratory hygiene, require wearing appropriate face masks/coverings and other PPEs as warranted, and develop cleaning and disinfection procedures for the school in accordance with CDC and DOH guidance.

Facilities

Birch schools will promote social distancing while maintaining existing safety requirements designed to protect students and staff. To accomplish this, Birch schools will modify the way space is utilized. All schools will implement revised cleaning and disinfection protocols to ensure that they are minimizing the spread of COVID-19 in the buildings. In addition, schools will continue to meet ventilation, water system, and fire safety requirements. Schools will continue to conduct mandatory fire and lockdown drills as required by SED and DOH. School administrators will conduct such drills in a manner that maintains social distancing at exits and gathering points outside the building, while still preparing students and staff to respond in emergencies.

Operations

Birch schools will modify operational systems related to ordering supplies and equipment, transportation, food service/nutrition, visitors, gatherings, school events, field trips, school safety drills, deliveries/pickups/mail, internet capabilities, enrollment and attendance, communication, notifications, professional development, budget/finance, staffing, and student teaching in order to adhere to COVID-19 health and safety requirements.

Education

Birch schools will continue to provide: a Free Appropriate Public Education consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of students with disabilities; meaningful parent/family engagement

regarding the provision of services to their child; collaboration with the Committee on Preschool Special Education/Committee on Special Education (CPSE/CSE); access to the necessary instructional and technological supports to meet the individual needs of students; and documentation of programs, services and communications with parents.

Birch schools will create a comprehensive plan for a hybrid/blended schedule that includes in-person and remote instruction. All plans will be clearly communicated to students, families and staff. In addition, schools may consider staggered schedules and/or alternate student and staff in person days in order to ensure social distancing practices and compliance with state and local health and safety guidelines. Birch will collaborate with all stakeholders when considering alternate schedules.

Schools will develop a system to collect and report daily teacher student engagement and attendance. While this requirement is straightforward in an in-person setting, a procedure will be developed to make daily contact with students in remote and/or hybrid/blended settings. Attendance data will be maintained. Schools will use a variety of creative methods to engage students and their families in both remote and in person learning.

Birch will continue to ensure educational equity, especially in the area of access to a device and internet. Birch schools will determine the level of access all students and staff have in their homes, and to the extent practicable, address the need to provide devices and internet access to students and staff who currently do not have sufficient access. Birch schools will also provide multiple ways for students to participate in learning and demonstrate their mastery of the learning standards in remote and/or hybrid instructional models. Birch will provide training on using technology and IT support for students, staff and families and provide professional development for staff on designing effective online/remote learning experiences.

Birch will continue to adhere to mandatory teaching and learning requirements including the following: providing clear opportunities for equitable instruction for all students; ensuring continuity of learning and provision of related services regardless of the instructional/delivery model used; providing standards-based instruction; ensuring substantive daily interaction between teachers, related service providers and students; and clearly communicating information about Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs) with parents/guardians.

Social-Emotional Health

As Birch administrators and staff adapt to environments with substantially less time spent interacting in-person, incorporating intentional and meaningful social emotional learning (SEL) throughout the day is critical to support the well-being and success of students, staff, and families. Birch schools will continue to prioritize the use of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) and social emotional well-being, especially given the impact of the pandemic on the school community, in order to create the mental, social, and emotional space for pre-academic and academic learning to occur.

COMMUNICATION/FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Birch Family Services, Inc (Birch) engaged with a wide array of school stakeholders and community members, such as executive leadership, school administrators, staff, parents and families, advocacy groups, and school district representatives in developing our plan throughout the planning process. We collaborated with these groups, incorporating and addressing their ideas and concerns. As a result of our engagement with these important contributors, we have created a viable, flexible plan for reopening Birch schools.

Birch has developed a Communication Plan for students, parents/families, staff and visitors that includes instructions, training, signage, and a means to provide individuals with information.

Birch's communication with stakeholders includes posting on Birch's website, email contacts, regular mail, virtual meeting opportunities, and in-person meetings with small numbers of people while utilizing proper social distancing/protective covering protocols. The plan incorporates the following:

- Birch's communication with all stakeholders will include the importance of health and safety and social-emotional well-being.
- Birch believes that communication and engagement is essential to ensure positive ongoing interactions with our families. Every attempt will be made to address issues and concerns that families bring to Birch's attention within the scope and function of our program. Birch's Parent Handbook lists contact names/numbers of Central Education administration and the school's administration and key staff for parents/guardians to contact with any concerns/feedback.
- Families are informed via Birch's Parent Handbook and parent orientation of the many modes of communication (i.e. mail, email, telephone, virtual or face-to-face meetings, communication notebooks, etc.) available to them in order to ask questions about instruction, technology, nutrition, or any other concerns. Communication with families will be provided in English as well as their preferred language or mode of communication.
- Birch will ensure that written plans will be made available to those with visual and/or hearing impairments in their mode of communication when requested.
- Staff's thoughts and concerns will be addressed in regular staff meetings throughout the year. Staff can also share their thoughts and concerns with their principal at any time.
- Communication with parents/guardians is a critical component. The schools' designated COVID-19 contact person/nurse will inform parents about symptom onset and the importance of staying home when sick. Student expectations and routines will be shared with parents. Expectations and procedures regarding parent visits, pick up, drop off, and signing students out of school early will be communicated via Birch's parent orientation and Parent Handbook. Principals will ensure that parents and families continue to be offered opportunities to learn how to support and facilitate their children's learning via ongoing parent training workshops.
- New parent orientation will be provided via remote meetings or in person, and materials will be sent through email or regular mail.

- Messages about behaviors that prevent the spread of COVID-19 will be communicated to staff and families via postings on the Birch website and emails sent by the principal or designee. Staff will receive regular communication and guidance about safe practices in school settings by the school's COVID-19 contact person/nurse.
- School buildings will display environmental print promoting infection control strategies (i.e. cough/sneeze etiquette, proper handwashing, appropriate use of facemasks/face coverings, physical distancing, importance of staying home when sick, reporting symptoms of and exposure to COVID-19, etc.).
- Signs will be posted both inside and outside of the building in highly visible locations throughout the school (i.e. entrances, bathrooms, classrooms, offices) that promote every day protective measures and describe how to stop the spread of COVID-19.
- Communication with visitors will focus on providing instructions on health and safety protocols to follow when entering building.
- A weekly email will be sent to families with reminders on health and safety protocols related to COVID-19. These communications will be provided in English and the family's home language or preferred mode of communication.
- Birch's Training Department will provide education and training for all education staff on all components of this manual, including the following: responsibilities related to their positions in order to ensure the health and safety of the school community, recognizing the symptoms of COVID-19, how to prevent transmission, how to properly use PPE, proper sanitizing and disinfecting protocols, how to determine when to stay home from work, identifying signs that an individual is experiencing social emotional trauma, and strategies to provide support for social emotional well-being. Other trainings will be offered as identified needs are presented.
- Birch's Senior Communications Manager will ensure that the NYSED plan is posted on Birch's website.

Birch's communication with students will emphasize COVID-19 health and safety protocols. This will be accomplished by classroom staff incorporating health and safety rules into instruction by utilizing age-appropriate strategies to encourage, teach, and reinforce such skills. Birch will ensure that all students are taught or trained on how to follow new COVID-19 protocols safely and correctly. Education and training on preventative measures, hand hygiene, proper face covering, social distancing, and respiratory hygiene will be provided to students/families via orientation and will continue throughout the school year.

Birch will encourage all students, staff, and visitors through verbal and written communication to adhere to the latest guidance from the CDC and DOH regarding the use of PPE. Signage throughout Birch schools will represent proper use of face coverings, gloves, and where appropriate, face shields and gowns. Child-friendly signage will be utilized to encourage young students to wear face coverings. In addition, students will receive daily instruction on safe practices, including wearing face masks/coverings. Staff will receive training in use of PPE prior to the beginning of the school year.

Trainings will be reinforced by staff meetings and discussions prior to the opening of school. Visitors will be advised by the schools' health screeners at the entrance to the school buildings regarding the mandatory use of PPE and will be given written instructions.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The principal will serve as the COVID-19 Safety Coordinator, ensuring continuous compliance and implementation of Birch's COVID-19 Plan for schools to reopen. In the event that the principal is not available, a back-up staff will be designated. In addition, the Safety Coordinator will ensure that any phased-in reopening activities necessary to allow for operational issues are resolved before activities return to normal or "new normal" levels.

Birch will follow state and city guidance regarding the resumption of in-person learning. Birch will ensure that the following factors will be considered when determining resumption of in person instruction: (1) Ability to maintain appropriate social distancing; (2) PPE and face covering availability; (3) Availability of safe transportation; and (4) Local hospital capacity.

In order to ensure the health and safety of students, staff, and visitors once in person learning resumes, Birch has established protocols addressing the following: social distancing, use of PPE and face coverings, hand washing and respiratory etiquette, health screenings, recognizing signs of illness, managing illness, exhibiting symptoms/quarantine/isolation, confirmed cases of COVID-19, and accommodations as follows:

Social Distancing

Birch schools will promote social distancing while maintaining existing safety requirements designed to protect students, staff, and visitors. In order accomplish this, Birch schools will modify the way space is utilized. Wherever possible, there will be separate entrances and exits to ensure that the flow of people goes in one direction, and lobby floors will be marked with signs designating the direction of traffic. Additional social distancing guides and physical barriers that will be used include visual cues, such as floor and wall markings throughout the building, as well as other strategies (i.e. alternative cues that are meaningful for students to understand 6 feet spacing) will be utilized. For example, decals and arrows will be placed on floors and sidewalks, and signs will be placed on walls, to ensure that staff and children remain at least 6 feet apart in lines. Also, guides will be used for creating "one-way routes" in hallways and staircases. Physical barriers, such as sneeze guards, will be installed in areas such as lobbies, reception areas, health screening stations, nurse's office, and isolation room based upon the school's physical environment. In classrooms, desks, tables, and chairs will be arranged so that there is 6 feet of distance between students whenever possible. In addition, classroom furniture and/or other dividers will serve as barriers to ensure social distancing. Desks will be turned to face the same direction (rather than facing each other), or students will be seated on only one side of tables, spaced apart. Meeting rooms, multipurpose rooms, and other shared spaces will be occupied only by the number of people that can accommodate 6 feet of distance between them. Tables and chairs will be arranged with the required space modifications.

Birch will limit the number of individuals in the building on any given day in order to promote social distancing. Student capacity will be limited to 50%, and Birch will adhere to NYSDOH, NYCDOH, and

NYSED square footage requirements per person. Visitors will be limited to the following: emergency situations and outside regulatory officials. Evaluations, screenings, and tours will be done remotely whenever possible. However, if these activities need to occur on site, they will be conducted in discrete, designated locations. The health screener or designee will limit the number of individuals in the entrance area to ensure that social distancing can occur. Bussing will be conducted so that there is 6 feet of distance for each student taken off the bus as feasible. The principal will ensure that student drop off and pick up by parents/approved escorts will be conducted in such a way as to maintain 6 feet of social distancing.

Another way Birch will ensure social distancing is by establishing classroom cohorts of students and staff, and by limiting the mixing of cohorts. The use of shared spaces will be minimized. Whenever possible, team meetings should occur within that team's classroom. Students should eat lunch in their classrooms and not use the lunchroom. For multi-person bathrooms, individuals should use every other sink and stall when there are multiple people in the bathroom. Staff accompanying students to bathrooms will ensure that students do this. Transitions that require use of space other than the classrooms will be minimized. Utilization of shared learning spaces, such as the gym and playground, will be minimized. Schedules will be arranged so that these spaces can be cleaned and disinfected between use. Physical activities will primarily occur in the classroom, but may occur in shared spaces, while adhering to social distancing guidelines.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Birch will ensure that appropriate PPE and face coverings will be utilized by staff, visitors, and students, whenever feasible. Staff will minimally receive initial training prior to reopening schools and annual training in the appropriate use of PPE. Birch will provide staff with appropriate face masks/face coverings and PPEs, depending upon the specific need of the staff at the point of entry into the building by the site designated health screener. Additional PPE will be available on site for staff as needed. All staff will be required to wear masks/face coverings. Gloves are to be worn when there is a possibility of exposure to bodily fluids, potentially soiled surfaces/items, cleaning/disinfecting and during mealtimes (food handling gloves should be used during this time.) Additional PPE (i.e., gowns, shields) will be worn when providing care to anyone suspected of being potentially infected with the COVID 19 virus. Health screeners will wear face shields in addition to face masks. An N95 mask will be worn by the nurse or designee when administering nebulizer treatments. The site COVID-19 contact person/nurse will determine any other situations that warrant staff wearing additional PPE.

Birch has established a plan for obtaining and maintaining adequate supplies of face coverings/masks for school staff, students who forget their masks, and PPE for use by school health professionals. Schools maintain a 30-day (monthly) inventory of supplies/PPE material. Supplies will be monitored weekly and inventories will be maintained. All supplies/materials are purchased by the site designated staff person monthly, or as needed in order to maintain a 30-day supply.

Masks/Face Coverings

All persons on school grounds will be required to wear facemasks/face coverings with the following considerations: All staff and adult visitors will be required to wear a mask at all times, unless medical documentation is provided to the contrary. Masks/face coverings will be worn by students and all children accessing the site, except for those students where it is medically contraindicated. Our younger students and intellectually/developmentally disabled population will require assistance and training to wear

masks/face coverings, and some students because of mental health conditions, behavioral challenges, or other sensory sensitivities will not be able to wear masks/face coverings. Masks/face coverings will not be worn by children under 2 years of age. Masks/face coverings will not be worn by anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious. Masks/face coverings will not be worn by anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the face covering without assistance. Ensuring proper face mask/covering size and fit and providing children with frequent reminders and education on the importance and proper wear of face masks/coverings may help address these issues.

Hand Washing and Respiratory Etiquette

Birch has developed protocols for hand washing and respiratory etiquette in order to minimize the spread of COVID-19. Schools and offices will display environmental print promoting infection control strategies (i.e. cough/sneeze etiquette, proper handwashing, appropriate use of facemasks/face coverings, physical distancing, importance of staying home when sick, reporting symptoms of and exposure to COVID-19, etc.). Signs will be posted both inside and outside of the building in highly visible locations throughout the school (i.e. entrances, bathrooms, classrooms, offices) that promote every day protective measures and describe how to stop the spread.

Staff, students and visitors will be instructed to wash their hands regularly with soap and water for a minimum of 20 seconds. Staff will be trained on such prior to reopening. Students will be instructed to wash/sanitize their hands by their teaching staff. Visitors will be instructed to wash/sanitize their hands by the designated health screener. Birch will follow and include the CDC proper handwashing guidelines in training as follows: (1) Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap; (2) Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails; (3) Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end twice; (4) Rinse your hands well under clean, running water; and (5) Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

Handwashing (soap and running warm water) and Hand Sanitizing (sanitizing wipes or hand sanitizers: an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol for areas where handwashing facilities may not be available or practical) are to be used throughout the school day to assist in minimizing the transmission of disease. Staff, students, and visitors are required to wash or sanitize their hands throughout the day minimally at the following times: upon entering the school building; upon entering any classroom/office /workspace; upon leaving any classroom/office space/workplace; prior to and following the use of the bathroom; prior to and following meals; immediately following contact with bodily fluids (e.g., sneezing/coughing/ blowing nose) of self or others; and before departing the last program activity.

Birch will also require respiratory etiquette. Staff, students, and visitors will be instructed to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues. Staff will be trained prior to reopening. Students will be instructed to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue by their teaching staff. Visitors will be instructed on respiratory etiquette by the health screener upon entry into the building. Used tissues will be immediately discarded in the trash and hands will be washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Health Screenings

In order to minimize the spread of COVID-19 in the schools, health screenings will be conducted for all individuals (staff, students, and visitors) at the point of entry into the buildings. The health screening includes the following: temperature scan, assessment of any visible symptoms, and a health screening questionnaire (for all adults). The site designated health screener will document the following for all students, staff, and visitors: (1) A yes/no will be recorded as to whether temperature is greater than 100 F; (2) A yes/no will be recorded for any visible/reported symptoms; (3) A yes/no will be recorded as to whether or not staff, visitors, or students being dropped off by caregivers pass the health screening questionnaire; (4) For visitors, the contact information (i.e. phone number, email, mailing address) will be recorded; (5) The health screener will initial the log after completing each screening; and (6) Separate logs using HIPAA/FERPA compliant documentation to protect privacy and confidentiality will be maintained for students, staff, and visitors by the site COVID-19 contact person and kept in the nurse's office. For students who travel to school by school bus, classroom staff will administer the health screening questionnaire remotely on a weekly basis. For students who are dropped off at school, the health screener will administer the questionnaire at the point of entry.

If any individual screens positive for COVID-19 exposure or symptoms during the health screening, he/she will be immediately sent home with instructions to contact their health care provider for assessment and testing. For students escorted by an adult who screen positive, the student must also be sent home immediately. For students who arrive by school bus, the adult picking them up will be given the same instructions.

Upon screening, the designated health screener will instruct visitors on any protocols that must be followed (i.e. wearing a mask/face covering at all times, frequent hand washing, maintaining social distance of 6 feet, leaving the building immediately if they develop any symptoms, reporting a positive COVID-19 test result, etc.) prior to entering the school building.

Signs of Illness

Birch's reopening plan has a written protocol developed in collaboration with the school's health professionals and relevant staff to instruct staff to observe for signs of illness in students and staff and requires symptomatic persons to be sent to the school nurse or other designated personnel. Birch will train all staff on signs and symptoms of COVID-19, how COVID-19 may manifest itself in children (MIS-C), symptoms that require emergency attention, and what to do if such symptoms are observed.

Staff will be trained to observe for the following symptoms associated with COVID-19:

Fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea.

Staff will also be trained to observe for the following symptoms associated with Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C), a manifestation of COVID-19 in children:

Fever, abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, neck pain, rash, bloodshot eyes, and feeling extra tired.

Moreover, staff will be trained to observe for additional signs of any type of illness include:

Flushed cheeks, rapid or difficulty breathing, fatigue and/or irritability, and frequent use of the bathroom.

If staff observe any of the above symptoms, they will immediately inform the nurse and bring the student to the isolation room. Parents will be contacted to pick up their child and contact their medical provider for assessment and testing.

Staff will be trained to observe for emergency warning signs related to COVID-19 which include the following:

Trouble breathing, pain in the chest that does not go away, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, bluish lips or face, and severe abdominal pain.

If staff observe any of the above emergency symptoms, they will immediately inform the nurse, principal, and call 911 for an ambulance. Parents will be notified immediately.

Parents will be informed to observe for the above listed symptoms associated with COVID-19, MIS-C, and additional signs of any illness. They will be advised via a Birch parent orientation and a Birch Parent Handbook to not put their child on the bus if the child shows symptoms of illness or has a fever. If parents observe any of the above symptoms, they should contact their health care provider for assessment and testing.

Parents will also be informed to observe for emergency warning signs related to COVID-19 as listed above, and to immediately call 911 for an ambulance.

Managing Illness

Students, families, and staff will be educated about when they should stay home and when they can return to school/work via staff trainings and written communication to families prior to school reopening and ongoing throughout the school year. Staff will immediately inform the principal and nurse if they develop COVID-19 like symptoms during the school day, and they will be expected to leave the building and follow up with their health care provider.

Staff will immediately inform the principal and nurse if a student develops COVID-19 like symptoms during the school day, and follow guidance from the nurse or designee. Students who exhibit symptoms during the course of the day will be moved to an isolation room with staff supervision, and sent home as soon as possible. For staff and visitors, they will be asked to leave the building immediately, but if unable to do so, will be moved to the isolation room until they are able to leave. The isolation room may be used for more than one person if there is enough space to separate them by at least six feet.

Exhibiting Symptoms/Quarantine/Isolation

Upon families or staff notifying the school nurse/COVID-19 contact person that they have been exposed to or tested positive for COVID-19, the school designee will instruct the family or staff to follow CDC guidance for caring for oneself and others and to contact their health care provider for assessment and testing. They will also be instructed by the school designee that medical clearance is required to return to school/work.

Staff and students with confirmed or presumed positive COVID-19 must quarantine and then meet the following conditions prior to returning to school/work:

- If an individual tests positive for COVID-19, regardless of whether the individual is symptomatic or asymptomatic, the individual may return to work/school upon completing at least 10 days of isolation from the onset of symptoms or 10 days of isolation after the first positive test if they remain asymptomatic. The individual must be symptom-free, including fever free without the use of fever reducing medications for at least three days, even if 10 days have elapsed. Medical clearance will be required to return to school/work. The medical clearance must include documentation of negative COVID-19 testing, symptom resolution, and release from isolation.
- If an individual has had close or proximate contact with a person with COVID-19 for a prolonged period of time AND is experiencing COVID-19 related symptoms, the individual may return to work/school upon completing at least 10 days of isolation from the onset of symptoms. The individual must be symptom-free, including fever free without the use of fever reducing medications for at least three days, even if 10 days have elapsed. Medical clearance will be required to return to school/work. The medical clearance must include documentation of negative COVID-19 testing, symptom resolution, and release from isolation.
 - The New York State Department of Health considers a close contact to be someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 10 minutes starting from 48 hours before illness onset until the time the person was isolated. The local health department should be contacted if the extent of contact between an individual and a person suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 is unclear.

Upon notification of the staff regarding any of the above, the nurse or designee will confirm the earliest return date in consultation with Birch's Human Resources Department.

Confirmed Cases of COVID-19

In the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the school, the school's COVID-19 contact person will notify the NYSDOH, NYCDOH, NYCDOE, and NYC Test and Trace Corps. The principal will ensure follow up on all regulatory requirements regarding closure, cleaning/disinfecting, contact tracing, amendment of any school configurations in order to increase social distancing, and communication with other local officials. Birch will follow guidance from NYSDOH and NYCDOH regarding containment, closure, contact tracing, and reopening. In the event of one or more confirmed cases in a classroom, that classroom will be closed for all students and staff, and instruction will change from in-person to remote learning only until guidance to reopen is provided by NYCDOH. In the event of more than one confirmed case within a school (i.e. multiple classrooms, offices, etc.), that school will be closed for all students and staff. Instruction and all other operations of that school will change from in person to remote only until guidance to reopen is provided by NYCDOH.

Accommodations

Birch will provide accommodations to students and staff who are at high risk when an accommodation can be reasonably made and is programmatically and financially feasible.

Staff who believe that they are at an increased risk for COVID-19 illness, or indicate that they cannot wear a mask/face covering due to medical reasons, will be referred to Birch's Human Resources Department in order to determine appropriate accommodations if applicable.

With regard to students, if parents/guardians believe that their child is at an increased risk for COVID-19 illness, they have the option to opt out of in-person instruction and receive full time remote instruction. For students who cannot wear a mask/face covering due to medical or developmental/behavioral challenges, they should inform the principal prior to the beginning of the school year.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

School buildings, including furniture and objects/materials, and ventilation and water systems within the buildings will be cleaned/disinfected per CDC and DOH guidelines to minimize the spread of COVID-19.

The following Birch protocols for cleaning and disinfecting schools align with CDC and DOH guidance.

For general cleaning and sanitizing, the principal will ensure that the schedule for daily, rigorous, routine cleaning and disinfection will be followed and the designated staff will document cleaning activities on Birch's established forms.

- The principal will ensure that cleaning and disinfection products will be used as per CDC and DOH requirements.
- The principal will designate staff to securely store cleaning products so that they are out of reach of students in compliance with CDC and DOH requirements.
- Cleaning and disinfection products will meet EPA disinfection criteria.
- Disposable gloves will be worn by staff when cleaning and disinfecting surfaces. Staff must discard gloves after each cleaning and wash their hands immediately after gloves are removed.
- Staff must clean dirty surfaces using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- Diluted household bleach solutions (ONLY TO BE USED WHEN STUDENTS ARE IN NOT IN THE BUILDING), alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, and EPA-registered household disinfectants will be used by staff for disinfection.
- For soft (porous) surfaces such as carpeted floor, staff will remove visible contamination if present and clean with appropriate cleaners indicated for use on these surfaces.
- Frequently touched surfaces must be disinfected regularly throughout the day by staff who the principal has designated and documented on Birch's established forms.
- Where applicable, staff must use disposable gloves when handling dirty laundry from an ill person and then discard after each use. Staff must clean hands immediately after gloves are removed.
- Upon staff identifying an individual who presents symptoms of COVID-19 or who has been diagnosed with COVID-19:
 - The principal will ensure that designated staff will close off areas used by a sick person and do not use these areas until after cleaning and disinfecting.
 - The principal will ensure that there is a wait of at least 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting. If 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible.

- The principal will ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaning and disinfection products, including storing products securely away from children.

Whenever surfaces become contaminated with blood, stool or bodily fluids, staff must immediately clean and disinfect the surface.

- Staff must wear PPE when cleaning potentially infectious material.
- Heavily soiled surfaces will be cleaned prior to the use of disinfectants using water and soap or detergent to reduce soil and remove germs.
- Diluted household bleach solutions (ONLY TO BE USED WHEN STUDENTS ARE NOT IN THE BUILDING), alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, and EPA-registered household disinfectants will be used for disinfection.
- Staff will dispose of contaminated items in biohazard waste baskets (red baskets)

Cleaning and disinfection will be done after each cohort’s use of shared objects and spaces, including between class changes (if applicable), between groups in shared spaces (when utilized), after use of therapy or gym equipment, and after each school day.

- Staff will immediately remove contaminated materials if the staff person is unable to sanitize at the time of exposure. Sanitizing of these materials must occur shortly thereafter.

Material, equipment, and toy sanitizing will occur as follows.

- Shared objects between students in the same classroom must be cleaned by staff between use or placed in a bin that is clearly labeled for disinfection and removed from student access until they are disinfected.
- Sharing of supplies and equipment will be limited and sanitized by staff between student use.
- Students will be provided with their own material kits to minimize sharing of materials.

Safety Drills

School safety drills will be conducted according to the existing regulatory requirements with the following modifications:

- Evacuation/Fire Drills will be modified as follows:
 - To ensure social distancing, a “staggered schedule” where classrooms evacuate separately rather than all at once on the day of the drill will be utilized.
 - Staff and students will use markers/decals on hallway floors and outside the building to walk/stand 6 feet apart, wherever feasible.
 - Students will continue wearing masks, whenever feasible.
- Lockdown Drills will be modified as follows:
 - Drills will be conducted in the classroom, without hiding/sheltering, with instructions/modeling for students regarding how to shelter or hide in the classroom.

- All required drills will be conducted on multiple days, if using a blended/hybrid model, so that each group of cohorts (students and staff) receives instruction in emergency procedures and participates in drills while they are in attendance in person.

FACILITIES

Birch's reopening plan does not include changes or additions to facilities, new construction, renovations, alterations or major repairs in excess of \$100,000. The plan does not include new facilities.

CHILD NUTRITION

Birch's schools are not School Food Authorities (SFA).

Birch provides meals that are in compliance with Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) guidelines to all students. These meals meet the USDA nutritional standards. Birch has a contract with a food vendor for the provision of meals for all sites except the Phyllis L Susser School for Exceptional Children and Soundview Early Childhood Center. The principal will ensure that parents receive menus and participate in discussions about the food program and their children's nutritional needs. Parents will be advised of all food/nutrition protocols via a Birch parent orientation and a Birch Parent Handbook. Communication with parents will be in their preferred language and mode of communication.

Food distribution may need to be altered and the principal will need to determine a safe place for food distribution while maintaining proper physical distance. Food will not be able to be heated in microwaves; breakfast and lunch will need to be cold food only. Students will bring their own meals as feasible, or staff will serve individually plated meals in classrooms instead of in a communal dining hall or cafeteria; students will eat all meals in their at their assigned individual learning stations, which will be six feet apart, and which will not be shared with another student on the same day. Each individual learning station will be disinfected at the end of each day by classroom staff.

Staff will ensure the safety of students with food allergies. Classroom staff are informed by the nurse about students with food allergies; staff are trained to recognize signs of allergic reactions. As per Birch's policies there are Epi-pen auto-injectors at each school. In addition, Birch does not allow any type of nut products in the schools.

All handwashing protocols must be followed by staff and students prior to and after handling and eating food. Staff must wash their hands after removing their gloves or after directly handling used food service items. Disposable food service items (e.g., utensils, plates) must be used by staff, where feasible. When necessary, non-disposable food service items must be handled with gloves and washed with dish soap and hot water or in a dishwasher by staff. Classroom staff will instruct students not to share any food or beverages with anyone prior to meals and will provide oversight during meals to prevent the sharing of any food or beverages to prevent transmission of COVID-19. If food is offered at any event, principals will ensure that they have pre-packaged boxes or bags for each attendee instead of a buffet or family-style meal/snack.

TRANSPORTATION

Birch does not use its own transportation. Transportation is provided by the NYCDOE/OPT, and Birch schools will follow the guidance provided by NYCDOE/OPT. The principal will inform their bus company providers that bus drivers and matrons will not be allowed to enter the building/use the bathroom facilities during this time.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Birch schools will continue to prioritize the use of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) and social emotional well-being, especially given the impact of the pandemic on the school community, in order to create the mental, social, and emotional space for pre-academic and academic learning to occur.

Birch is actively committed to support individuals with resources, referrals and trauma informed approaches to enhance emotional health, via conversation with mental health staff/principal on the telephone/virtual meeting, email, or regular mail.

Staff will receive the following trainings prior to the schools reopening for in person instruction: training on what signs to look for to determine if self, colleagues, students, or families are experiencing PTSD, and what to do if concerns are identified (i.e. referral to principal, modify student expectations, referral to external resources, etc.); training/refresher for PBIS/CPI team on how to prevent/reduce/address acting-out behaviors triggered by the pandemic, change in daily routine, etc.; and training on trauma-infused approaches.

Birch will provide supports for developing coping and resilience skills for students and staff. The principal and site based PBIS team will ensure that specific types of social-emotional supports are emphasized during this time in addition to the general Education-wide PBIS supports that are already in place. Supports for students to be emphasized during this time include: activities about how to identify feelings; opportunities to express feelings via open play (doll houses, people figures, medical figures, etc.), student-directed art, etc.; and literacy based activities that focus on social-emotional themes. Supports for staff to be emphasized during this time include: ongoing mindfulness/wellness training and support for staff; and designated office hours when school psychologists are available for individual support; this is in addition to the ongoing support that psychologists typically are expected to provide to the school community

SCHOOL SCHEDULES

The plan for Birch's school schedule for implementation at the beginning of the 2020-21 school year is as follows.

Students will receive traditional, face-to-face classroom instruction in school, either 2x weekly on two consecutive days (M/T or W/Th), or one week of 4 days in school and one week of 4 days remote, with Fridays remote for all, until such is designated as no longer warranted by federal, state and local

regulatory agencies. This is a suggested schedule for cohorts, and other possibilities may be considered by Birch's Central Education department in consultation with stakeholders. Per NYCDOE, parents may opt out of in person instruction and choose remote learning full time for their child.

- Parents will be consulted prior to the beginning of the school year and asked to indicate their preference for a hybrid/blended or "remote learning only option."
 - All parental requests for a hybrid/blended model will be accommodated.
 - All parental requests for a "remote learning only option" will be accommodated.
 - Parents may request to change the learning option at any point during the school year.
 - All requests for "remote only" learning options will be granted immediately.
 - Requests for opting into a hybrid/blended in person option will be granted on a quarterly basis or sooner, given a review of cohort availability and administrative approval.
- In the event of a partial or full school closure, all instruction and related services will return to remote learning only until guidance is given by NYSDOH and NYCDOH to resume in person instruction.

ATTENDANCE AND CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

Attendance requirements and the mechanism for collecting and reporting daily student engagement or attendance while in a remote or hybrid schedule will be as follows.

- Chronic student absenteeism will be addressed through family meetings and collaboration with CPSE/CSE administrators.
- Birch's Education Department will follow guidance from the NYCDOE regarding attendance requirements, first attend dates, and attendance documentation.
- Classroom staff will record daily student attendance for both in-person and remote learning on an attendance sheet designed to capture remote and in-person learning.
 - For remote learning, a rubric will be used to indicate the type of contact that occurred.
- The principal and site administration will monitor attendance and involvement of students who are at risk as we move from remote to a possible combination of remote and in person in the fall of 2020.
- Related service providers will document related service sessions and attendance in Easy Trac.
- Teachers and mental health staff will document remote learning instruction and parent/family contacts.

TECHNOLOGY AND CONNECTIVITY

The level of access to devices and high-speed internet for all students and teachers for remote teaching and learning will be assessed, monitored, and addressed when necessary.

- Site administration will ensure that families are surveyed to determine student needs with regard to technology prior to the first day of school.
- Birch will provide training on using technology and IT support for students, staff, and families and provide professional development for staff on designing effective online/remote learning experiences.
- The principal and site administration will determine if there are students or staff who do not have the required access through surveys. The principal will address staff needs with regard to accessing devices and internet for working remotely. They will continue to assess staffs' skills and any additional need for training. Birch's Training Department will provide assistance to staff who have difficulties with the use of technology.

The principal in consultation with the NYCDOE, will ensure that students and families have access to technology needed for learning, and ensure that students and families have an understanding of how to utilize virtual platforms.

- Site administration will ensure that families will be provided with information regarding how to obtain devices from the NYCDOE.
- NYCDOE Device Request Form:
<https://coronavirus.schools.nyc/RemoteLearningDevices>
- Birch schools will also provide multiple ways for students to participate in learning and demonstrate their mastery of the learning standards in remote and/or hybrid instructional models. Birch will provide training on using technology and IT support for students, staff and families and provide professional development for staff on designing effective online/remote learning experiences.
 - If the student does not have access to technology, alternative strategies will be used to ensure student participation, such as written packets being sent home, and families participating in workshops in the school building that will provide them with strategies to help them engage their children in instruction.

TEACHING AND LEARNING/SPECIAL EDUCATION

All students with disabilities will continue to have available to them a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) that emphasizes special education and related services as per each student's IEP. Each classroom team will review each student's IEP, and individualize and customize the curriculum to meet the student's needs. The principal will ensure that staff will make learning accessible for students and personalize learning pathways for each student, as well as ensure meaningful parent/family engagement regarding the provisions of services to their child.

Birch schools will create a comprehensive plan for a hybrid/blended schedule that includes in-person and remote instruction. All plans will be clearly communicated to students, families and staff. In addition, schools may consider staggered schedules and/or alternate student and staff in person days in order to ensure social distancing practices and compliance with state and local health and safety guidelines. Birch will collaborate with all stakeholders when considering alternate schedules.

The principal and site administration will ensure continuity of learning by continuing to engage students with instruction that is aligned to the Common Core and NYS Learning Standards. Instruction addresses IEP goals and is inclusive of all learning styles. The principal and school administration will ensure that all students have equitable learning opportunities through the following:

- Resources that are provided to support student development and the well-being of families.
- Family and community meetings that are held during the year in order to obtain feedback and to provide resources that will benefit students/families.
- In consultation with NYCDOE, that students/families have access to technology that is needed for remote learning and understanding of how to utilize virtual platforms.
- Instruction that is aligned to the Common Core and NYS Learning Standards and that instruction addresses IEP goals and is inclusive of all learning styles.
- Regular and substantive interaction that is provided regardless of the delivery method (i.e. in person, remote, and/or hybrid/blended).
- Instruction that is culturally inclusive and incorporates the linguistic diversity of students and families.
- Access to the necessary accommodations, modifications, supplementary aids and services and technology (including assistive technology) to meet their unique disability related needs.
- Routine scheduled times to obtain feedback, support, and guidance from teachers.

Birch schools will continue to provide a Free Appropriate Public Education consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of students with disabilities. Principals will ensure meaningful parent/family engagement regarding the provision of services to their child, collaboration with the Committee on Preschool Special Education/Committee on Special Education (CPSE/CSE), access to the necessary instructional and technological supports to meet the individual needs of students and documentation of programs, services and communications with parents.

The principal will have on-going communication and collaboration with the Committee on Preschool Special Education/Committee on Special Education (CPSE/CSE) and will reach out regularly to address any issues with remote, in-person learning, or changes in learning modalities in the event of intermittent or extended school closures.

CERTIFICATION, INCIDENTAL TEACHING, AND SUBSTITUTE TEACHING

Birch's Human Resources Department (HR) makes every effort to fill vacancies with qualified, certified replacements. Typically, there is a need to fill positions at the beginning of the school year. If there is a need to fill positions, Birch's HR Department will undertake robust recruitment outreach to identify and process qualified staff. In the event that qualified replacements are not recruited, Birch will adhere to the NYSED guidance regarding hiring substitutes for the 2020/2021 school year. All recruitment efforts will be extensively documented.