



**Empowering People. Building Futures.**

**NYSED COVID-19 PLAN FOR REOPENING SCHOOLS**

**REVISED JUNE 24, 2021**

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 <sup>th</sup> Street Flushing, NY 11365	853 (School Age Special Education)  Children's Residential Project	Michael Claus, Principal	718-591-8100	<a href="mailto:michael.claus@birchfamilyservices.org">michael.claus@birchfamilyservices.org</a>
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	<a href="mailto:karen.hazel@birchfamilyservices.org">karen.hazel@birchfamilyservices.org</a>
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	<a href="mailto:deborah.costagliola@birchfamilyservices.org">deborah.costagliola@birchfamilyservices.org</a>
Long Island City Early Childhood Center	10-24 49 <sup>th</sup> Avenue Long Island City, NY 11101	4410 (Pre-school Special Education)  Special Class	Karen Kaja, Principal	718-786-1104	<a href="mailto:karen.kaja@birchfamilyservices.org">karen.kaja@birchfamilyservices.org</a>
East Flatbush Early Childhood Center	475 East 57 <sup>th</sup> Street Brooklyn, NY 11203	4410 (Pre-school Special Education)  Special Class	Judy Coan, Principal	718-451-5213	<a href="mailto:judy.coan@birchfamilyservices.org">judy.coan@birchfamilyservices.org</a>
Mill Basin Early Childhood Center	2075 East 68 <sup>th</sup> St Brooklyn, NY 11234	4410 (Pre-school Special Education)  Special Class	Lori Vallejo, Principal	718-968-7866	<a href="mailto:lori.vallejo@birchfamilyservices.org">lori.vallejo@birchfamilyservices.org</a>
Riverdale Early Childhood Center	475 West 250 <sup>th</sup> St Riverdale, NY 10471	4410 (Pre-school Special Education)  Special Class	Joyce Group, Principal	718-549-4753	<a href="mailto:joyce.group@birchfamilyservices.org">joyce.group@birchfamilyservices.org</a>
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	<a href="mailto:Deanna.diamond@birchfamilyservices.org">Deanna.diamond@birchfamilyservices.org</a>
Soundview Early Childhood Center	1880 Watson Ave Bronx, NY 10472	4410 (Pre-school Special Education)  Special Class/Special Class in an Integrated Setting  Early Learn/UPK	Maria Cordero, Curriculum Coordinator	718-828-9400	<a href="mailto:Maria.Cordero@birchfamilyservices.org">Maria.Cordero@birchfamilyservices.org</a>

## **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 balance all guidance and requirements issued by these agencies and make revisions as necessary as new guidance is provided in determining our school policies. 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 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. We balance all guidance and requirements issued by these agencies and make revisions as necessary as new guidance is provided in determining our school policies.*

## **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 were 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 have created a comprehensive plan for a hybrid/blended schedule that includes in-person and remote instruction. In addition, Birch is planning to phase in full time in-person instruction with a remote only option available to those families who request it across our sites while ensuring compliance with social distancing and other state and city health and safety guidelines. All plans will be clearly communicated to students, families and staff. Birch will collaborate with all stakeholders when considering alternate schedules.

Schools have developed a system to collect and report daily teacher student engagement and attendance. While this requirement is straightforward in an in-person setting, a procedure has been 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, use of hand washing rather than hand sanitizer when hands are visibly soiled, 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 monthly 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 plan, 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 current 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 continue to receive training in use of PPE, including refresher training prior to the beginning of the school year. Trainings will be reinforced by staff meetings and discussions on an

ongoing basis. 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, 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 follow the social distancing requirements as indicated by NYSDOH/NYCDOH. Please note that social distancing requirements vary among Birch schools depending upon what programs are housed in the building: Birch school buildings with preschool programs only (stand-alone preschools) are subject to NYSDOH's *Interim Guidance for Child Care, Day Camp, and Overnight Camp Programs During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (June 7, 2021)*; Birch school buildings that have both school age children and preschool children in the building, or only school age children in the building are subject to NYSDOH's *Interim Guidance for In-Person Instruction at Pre-K to Grade 12 Schools During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (June 7, 2021)*.

- Social Distancing Guidelines for Stand-Alone Preschools are as follows:
  - **No social distancing required between students within the same cohort/classroom**
  - **6 feet distance required between fixed cohorts/classrooms of students** (for example, students pulled for group related service sessions from different classrooms must be 6 feet apart; it is best to schedule group related services with students from the same classroom)
  - **No social distancing required between students and staff**
  - **Staff are required 6 feet apart from other staff** at all times unless safety or the core activity requires a shorter distance (e.g. jointly caring for a student or responding to the needs of a student).
  - Discourage indoor activities/gym that involve less than six feet distance between individuals when face coverings cannot be worn/tolerated based on the nature of the activity.
  - **SECC ONLY:** Classroom staff should place students at least six feet apart and head-to-toe for the duration of rest, when feasible.



- Social Distancing Guidelines for Buildings with School Age Children are as follows:
  - **Students are required to be 3 feet from other students in classroom setting**
  - **Staff are required to be 6 feet apart from other staff** at all times unless safety or the core activity requires a shorter distance (e.g. jointly caring for a student or responding to the needs of a student).
  - **Staff are required to be 6 feet from students** (unless providing essential classroom instruction, medical care, or student comfort/support)
  - **Exceptions to 3 feet where 6 feet is required:**
    - Six feet is always the required distancing **between adults** (teachers, staff, visitors) and between students and adults.
    - Six feet of distance is required **when eating meals or snacks, or drinking, or other times masks must be removed when indoors**. This may mean that meals cannot be eaten in classrooms that have been converted to three feet of physical distance during instruction time.
    - Individuals **participating in activities that require projecting the voice** (e.g., singing) or **playing a wind instrument** must be six feet apart and there must be six feet of distance between the performers and the audience during performances and concerts, or **aerobic activity** resulting in heavy breathing (e.g., participating in gym classes).
    - **Six feet of physical distance must be maintained in common areas and outside of classrooms** (e.g. lobbies, auditoriums, gymnasiums, cafeterias, and hallways), where possible.

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 appropriate spacing of 3 feet/6 feet) 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 when outside of the classroom. Also, guides will be used for creating “one-way routes” in hallways and staircases. Physical barriers, such as sneeze guards, will be utilized 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 where social distancing is still required between students, desks, tables, and chairs will be arranged so that there is appropriate distance between students whenever possible. In addition, classroom furniture and/or other dividers will serve as barriers to ensure social distancing where required. 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 when possible. 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 ensure appropriate property specific/building capacity, including the phasing and quantity of students, faculty, and staff allowed to return in-person, considering factors such as ability to maintain

appropriate physical distance, personal protective equipment (PPE) availability, local medical capacity, and availability of safe transportation, and will adhere to NYSDOH, NYCDOH, and NYSED square footage requirements per person. Birch will prohibit non-essential visitors who are not vaccinated on site except for emergencies and outside regulatory officials, but may allow individuals on site for programming while following social distancing and COVID-19 guidance requirements; Vendors providing essential services to children are considered essential visitors and will be allowed on site. Birch will require student interns be fully vaccinated. 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 and consistent with social distancing requirements. 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 keeping these cohorts static as possible, as well as by limiting the mixing of cohorts. Birch will maintain a staffing plan that does not require staff to “float” between different classrooms or stable groups of students, unless such rotation is necessary to safely supervise or instruct the students. The use of shared spaces will be minimized. Whenever possible, team meetings should occur within that team’s classroom or virtually. 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 can occur in the classroom, but may also occur in shared spaces, while adhering to social distancing guidelines.

Birch will also ensure appropriate social distancing by reducing density where appropriate. Birch will consider and assess additional and/or alternate indoor space(s) that may be repurposed for instruction or other required purposes in support of in-person instruction within the school facility, school grounds, as well as outdoor space(s) where health and safety conditions (e.g., allergies, asthma) allow for such potential usage.

### ***Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)***

Birch will ensure that appropriate PPE and face coverings will be utilized by staff, visitors, and students, whenever feasible. Staff received initial training prior to reopening schools and will receive 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 may 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 will maintain an adequate 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 an adequate supply.

### ***Masks/Face Coverings***

All persons on school grounds will be required to wear facemasks/face coverings, preferably with at least two layers of material (e.g. 2 ply) 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. Teaching staff must work with students at all times to wear masks. If students cannot wear masks due to medical reasons, this must be documented in their file and they must be given an alternative (i.e. face mask). If students cannot wear masks because they cannot tolerate wearing masks, this must be documented in their file, including all efforts to teach them to wear masks and provide alternates (i.e. face shields). In addition, staff will model appropriate mask-wearing for students. 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. In addition, signs will be posted next to hand sanitizing dispensers indicating that visibly soiled hand should be washed with soap and water.

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. Parents/guardians can inform the school that they do not want their child to use alcohol-based hand sanitizers by sending a written notice to the school. Schools must provide accommodations for students who cannot use hand sanitizer, to allow for their use of handwashing stations.

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) either at the point of entry into the buildings or electronically prior to arrival. 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 as well as the purpose of the visit; (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 or maintained electronically. For students who travel to school by school bus, designated 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 who arrive by school bus, the adult picking them up will be given the same instructions. For individuals completing the electronic health screening questionnaire, they will receive an immediate electronic notification to remain home if they fail the screening.

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. On an ongoing basis, 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.

Staff are expected to visibly observe students throughout the day for potential signs of COVID-19. 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, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, bluish lips or face, and severe abdominal pain (in children).

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 will be 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 COVID-19 or symptoms of COVID-19** must isolate/quarantine and then meet the following conditions prior to returning to school/work:

- If an individual has **symptoms of COVID-19**, but does not have a confirmed case of COVID-19, they must stay home for 10 days from symptom onset and have resolution of symptoms, including being fever free without fever reducing medication for 72 hours (3 days) (NYSDOH and NYSED). If a PCR COVID-19 test was done and the results were negative, then the individual has to be fever free for 24 hours without fever reducing medication (NYSDOH and NYSED).
  - **Individuals (staff and students)** must either remain home for 10 days and have symptom resolution or have a negative PCR COVID-19 test result and symptom resolution before the 10 days in order to return to school before the 10 days. *Medical clearance (documentation from a health care provider evaluation) including a negative PCR test result is required to return to school/work **before 10 days**. Medical clearance (documentation from a health care provider evaluation) is required to **return after 10 days**. Although a negative test result is not required after 10 days, NYCDOH and Birch encourage staff and students to get tested and will provide them with resources for assessment and testing.*
  - **Students and staff with household members who have symptoms of illness** - If member of a student's/staff's household has symptoms, the student/staff must stay home for duration of quarantine period of household member (i.e. 10 days from date of symptom onset of household member).
  - NYCDOH recommends that individuals, while home with symptoms, take their temperature twice daily and monitor for other symptoms. Individuals should contact

their health care provider to let them know of their positive test result or symptoms. Individuals should go to a hospital or call 911 if they have trouble breathing or another medical emergency.

- 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 72 hours (3 days) (NYSDOH and NYSED), even if 10 days have elapsed. Medical clearance (documentation from a health care provider evaluation) or release from isolation will be required to return to school/work.
  - NYCDOH recommends that individuals, while at home, take their temperature twice daily and monitor for other symptoms. Individuals should contact their health care provider to let them know of their positive test result or symptoms. Individuals should go to a hospital or call 911 if they have trouble breathing or another medical emergency.
  - According to NYCDOH, an individual's health care provider may recommend a longer period of isolation due to underlying health conditions or based on the course of their illness. Also, Birch may require an individual to stay out of work/school for a different period of time based on NYS requirements.
  - **Exception** – According to NYCDOH, if an individual was confirmed with COVID-19 (positive diagnostic test) in the past 90 days, the individual does not need to isolate again if they remain without symptoms but have another positive COVID-19 test. However, if the individual develops symptoms again after recovering from COVID-19, within the 90-day period, the individual will be required to follow quarantine guidelines for “an individual presenting with symptoms of COVID-19” and should contact their health care provider. It is possible to get COVID-19 again. If any individual tests positive again, after the 90-day period, regardless of whether they are symptomatic or asymptomatic, they are required to follow guidelines for “an individual who tests positive for COVID-19.”
- **Exception** – if an individual has a **chronic condition** (i.e. asthma, allergies, etc.), *the first time an individual presents with COVID-19 like symptoms, they must go to the doctor, get a negative PCR test result, and documentation of the chronic condition and how it presents.* If the same symptoms present again, the individual may remain in school/at work if they feel well enough. However, if a new symptom presents, they must follow the protocol for presenting with COVID-19 like symptoms.

Staff and students who have been **exposed to someone who tests positive for COVID-19** must quarantine and then meet the following conditions prior to returning to school/work:

- If an individual has had **close or proximate contact with a person with COVID-19** for a prolonged period of time they must quarantine for 10 days regardless of a negative diagnostic or antibody test; diagnostic testing for COVID-19 should be done 5-7 days after exposure or later. According to NYS requirements, if an individual is in quarantine because they are a close contact of someone with COVID-19, they cannot end quarantine early with a negative test result. According to the CDC, regardless of a potential shortened quarantine period, the

incubation period for COVID-19 is 14 days, which means that an individual must continue to monitor themselves for symptoms for the full 14 days.

- ⊖ If the individual **doesn't develop symptoms during the 10-day quarantine period**, they may return to work/school.
- If the individual **develops symptoms during the 10-day quarantine period**, they must complete 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 72 hours (3 days), even if 10 days have elapsed (NYSDOH and NYSED). *Medical clearance (documentation from a health care provider evaluation) will be required to return to school/work.*
- If the **exposure to a person with a positive COVID-19 test result is a member of the individual's household**, then the individual will have to quarantine for 10 days starting from the last day of contact with that household member or for at least 20 days if the individual continues to have ongoing contact with the household member (i.e. 10 day quarantine period begins 10 days after the household member has tested positive or additional days if the household member is still symptomatic beyond 10 days).
- **Exception** – According to NYCDOH as per CDC guidelines, individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 90 days and recovered do not have to quarantine or get tested again as long as they do not develop new symptoms.
- **Exception** – Per NYCDOH, according to NYSDOH as per CDC, asymptomatic individuals who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 do not need to quarantine during the first 3 months after full vaccination, if the following criteria are met:
  - Are fully vaccinated, which means 2 weeks following receipt of second dose in a 2-dose series (i.e. Moderna, Pfizer), or 2 weeks following receipt of one dose in a single dose series (i.e. Johnson & Johnson), AND
  - Have remained asymptomatic since last COVID-19 exposure
- NYCDOH recommends that individuals, while at home, take their temperature twice daily and monitor for other symptoms. Individuals should contact their health care provider if they develop symptoms or if they are older or have a health condition that puts them at increased risk for severe COVID-19. The individual should go to a hospital or call 911 if they have trouble breathing or another medical emergency.

**If an individual has been exposed to someone with COVID-19**, NYCDOH and Birch are encouraging the individual to obtain assessment and testing from a health care provider.

**If a member of the household shows symptoms of illness**, we are encouraging the household member to obtain assessment and testing from a health care provider to ensure that the student/staff member has not been exposed to a person with COVID-19.

As a **contact of a contact**, an individual generally does not need to quarantine unless the quarantined person develops symptoms of COVID-19 or tests positive for COVID-19. The individual should monitor closely for symptoms and avoid close contact with the person who is quarantining, as it is possible they have COVID-19 and do not know it.

CRP students and staff working in both the school and residence are also subject to OPWDD guidelines.



Under certain circumstances the quarantine period may be extended beyond 10 days in consultation with NYCDOH. Birch may require an individual to stay out of work/school for a different period of time based on NYS requirements.

- Consistent with NYSDOH, NYC DOHMH and NYC Test & Trace Corps have updated their definition of a “close contact” for schools and childcare programs. A close contact is now defined as someone who was within 6 feet of someone who tested positive for COVID-19 for a cumulative total of at least 10 minutes over a 24-hour period, starting from two days before symptoms begin (or, for individuals without symptoms, two days prior to the positive test result) until the time the patient is isolated. In most cases, all people living with someone who has COVID-19 are close contacts. Close contacts may also include home health aides, coworkers, classmates, or friends or families you have spent time with.

According to CDC and NYCDOH recommendations as per NYSDOH guidelines from April 10, 2021, the following travel quarantine requirements apply to all individuals (staff, students, and visitors) entering Birch schools:

- **Domestic travel – defined as travel lasting 24 hours or longer to states or US territories other than contiguous states (i.e. Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Vermont)**
  - All unvaccinated domestic travelers who have not recovered from COVID-19 in the past three months must either quarantine for 7 days if they have a negative PCR test on days 3-5 after arrival in New York or quarantine for 10 days.
  - **Fully vaccinated** – defined as being 2 or more weeks following receipt of second dose in a 2-dose series (i.e. Moderna, Pfizer), or 2 weeks following receipt of one dose in a single dose series (i.e. Johnson & Johnson) of the vaccine approved by the FDA or authorized by the FDA for emergency use.
  - **Recently recovered** – defined as recently recovered from laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 by meeting the criteria for discontinuation of isolation AND within the 3-month period between date of arrival in New York and date of the laboratory confirmed test AND asymptomatic after travel or new exposure
- **International Travel**
  - All unvaccinated international travelers who have not recovered from COVID-19 in the past three months must either quarantine for 7 days if they have a negative PCR test on days 3-5 after arrival in New York or quarantine for 10 days.
  - **Fully vaccinated** – defined as being 2 or more weeks following receipt of second dose in a 2-dose series (i.e. Moderna, Pfizer), or 2 weeks following receipt of one dose in a single dose series (i.e. Johnson & Johnson) of the vaccine approved by the FDA or authorized by the FDA for emergency use.
  - **Recently recovered** – defined as recently recovered from laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 by meeting the criteria for discontinuation of isolation AND within the 3-month period between date of arrival in New York and date of the laboratory confirmed test AND asymptomatic after travel or new exposure
  - The CDC and NYSDOH recommend that asymptomatic fully vaccinated and recently recovered individuals get tested on days 3-5 after returning to New York

- **Irrespective of quarantine or vaccination status, all travelers should:**
  - Monitor symptoms daily from day of arrival in New York through day 14;
    - According to the CDC, regardless of a potential shortened quarantine period, the incubation period for COVID-19 is 14 days, which means that an individual must continue to monitor themselves for symptoms for the full 14 days. *\*The potential for spread is lessened after day 10 following exposure.*
  - Continue strict adherence to all recommended non-pharmaceutical interventions, including hand hygiene and the use of face coverings, through Day 14 (even if fully vaccinated); and
  - Immediately self-isolate if any symptoms develop and contact the local public health authority or their health care provider to report this change in clinical status and determine if they should seek testing.
- All individuals (staff and students) must inform Birch of their travel plans prior to travelling
  - Staff must inform their principal/supervisor
  - Families must inform the principal/school nurse
- Non-essential (non-work related) travel is strongly discouraged.
- Birch will follow all guidelines regarding travel to a jurisdiction that is restricted by the US or NYS
- Under certain circumstances the quarantine period may be extended beyond 10 days in consultation with NYCDOH. Birch may require an individual to stay out of work/school for a different period of time based on NYS requirements.

### ***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, and collaborate with the local health authorities for each positive case. In the event of one or more confirmed cases in a classroom, that classroom will be closed for all students and staff for 10 days, or the remainder of the 10 days following the day the last positive individual was in the class, and instruction will change from in-person learning to remote only unless guidance from NYCDOH is different. If multiple classrooms and staff connected to those classrooms have to quarantine, the school may need to be closed for in-person instruction should coverage become an issue. In the event of three or more separate confirmed cases in building (i.e. multiple classrooms, offices, etc.) within a 10 day period, the school will be closed for all students and staff for 10 days or the remainder of 10 days following the last day the last positive individual was in building. Instruction and all other operations of that school will change from in person to remote only unless guidance from NYCDOH is different. The school may also be closed for 10 days, or the remainder of 10 days following the last day a positive individual who has contact with multiple classrooms/individuals throughout building (i.e. admin, nurse, maintenance, etc.) is last in building. Under certain circumstances the quarantine period may be extended beyond 10 days in consultation with NYCDOH.

Birch will also close schools as mandated by New York State.

Birch may also need to close a classroom(s)/school(s) if it is determined that staffing/coverage cannot be maintained due to COVID-19 related issues.

### ***Reporting to NYSDOH***

Per NYSDOH requirements, Birch will comply with the requirement for all PreK-12 schools to complete the COVID-19 Report Card for each operational day.

### ***Vaccinations***

Per NYSDOH, all P-12 teachers and staff have been eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine since January 11, 2021. Consistent with the CDC and NYSDOH/NYCDOH, Birch encourages all eligible individuals to get vaccinated. Per NYSDOH guidelines (5/19/21), Birch is required to collect COVID-19 vaccination status for all staff and students, including documentation of vaccines/dates should the DOH or OCFS request to review such information.

### ***Snow Days/Emergency Building Closures***

NYSED Pilot Snow Day program has been extended through the 2021-22 school year. The pilot enables schools to pivot to remote instruction on what would otherwise be a day of school closure due to weather and non-weather emergencies, including but not limited to snow, floods, tornadoes, and building fires.

### ***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.
- If cleaning and disinfection products or the act of cleaning and disinfecting causes safety hazards or degrades the material or electronics, Birch will ensure hand hygiene stations between use and/or supply disposable gloves and/or limitations on the number of staff using such material or electronics.
- 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 will be limited and should be cleaned by staff between use or individuals must practice hand hygiene before and after use. Staff may also place shared objects 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 should be sanitized by staff between student use.
- Limit use of shared toys that cannot be cleaned and sanitized (e.g. soft toys, dress-up clothes, puppets)

### ***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. In some of our schools, gymnasiums have been repurposed to create additional learning space and/or office space. The revised floor plans for those spaces are attached to this plan.

## **VENTILATION AND FILTRATION**

Birch will ensure that indoor air quality is improved by increasing outdoor air delivery to the building (ventilation) and removing particulates/viral particles from the air (air filtration) to the greatest extent possible.

## **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 be appropriately spaced apart during meals consistent with social distancing requirements for the building.

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. No shared food/beverages will be allowed for anyone (students, staff, visitors).

## **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 received the following trainings prior to the schools reopening for in person instruction and will receive refresher training at least annually: 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**

Birch is planning to phase in full time in-person instruction with a remote only option available to those families who request it across our sites while ensuring compliance with social distancing and other state and city health and safety guidelines. Birch will collaborate with all stakeholders when considering alternate schedules.

During the Summer of 2021, some Birch schools will continue to offer a hybrid/blended option and a remote only option, while some Birch schools will offer full-time in-person or remote only options. Decisions about school schedules will be made on a school-by-school basis based upon the school's ability to continue to maintain health and safety measures (i.e. physical classroom size/social distancing), coverage, and parent feedback.

For schools continuing to offer a hybrid/blended option, students will continue to receive traditional, face-to-face classroom instruction in school, at least 2x weekly on two consecutive days (M/T or W/Th), with additional in-person days offered based on a school-by-school/class-by-class basis along with our ability to continue to maintain health and safety measures (i.e. physical classroom size/social distancing) Per NYCDOE, parents may opt out of in person instruction and choose remote learning full time for their child.

- Parents have been consulted and asked to indicate their preference for a hybrid/blended or remote only option, or a full time in-person or remote only option, depending on the schedule their child’s school is following.
  - All parental requests for a hybrid/blended model or full time in-person option will be accommodated assuming their child’s school is offering that option.
  - 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 or full-time in person option will be granted, 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.
- 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.

- Sites must request devices from the NYCDOE on the families' behalf.
- 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 phasing in full-time in person learning from a hybrid/blended schedule that includes in-person and remote instruction while ensuring social distancing practices and compliance with state and local health and safety guidelines. All plans will be clearly communicated to students, families and staff. 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.

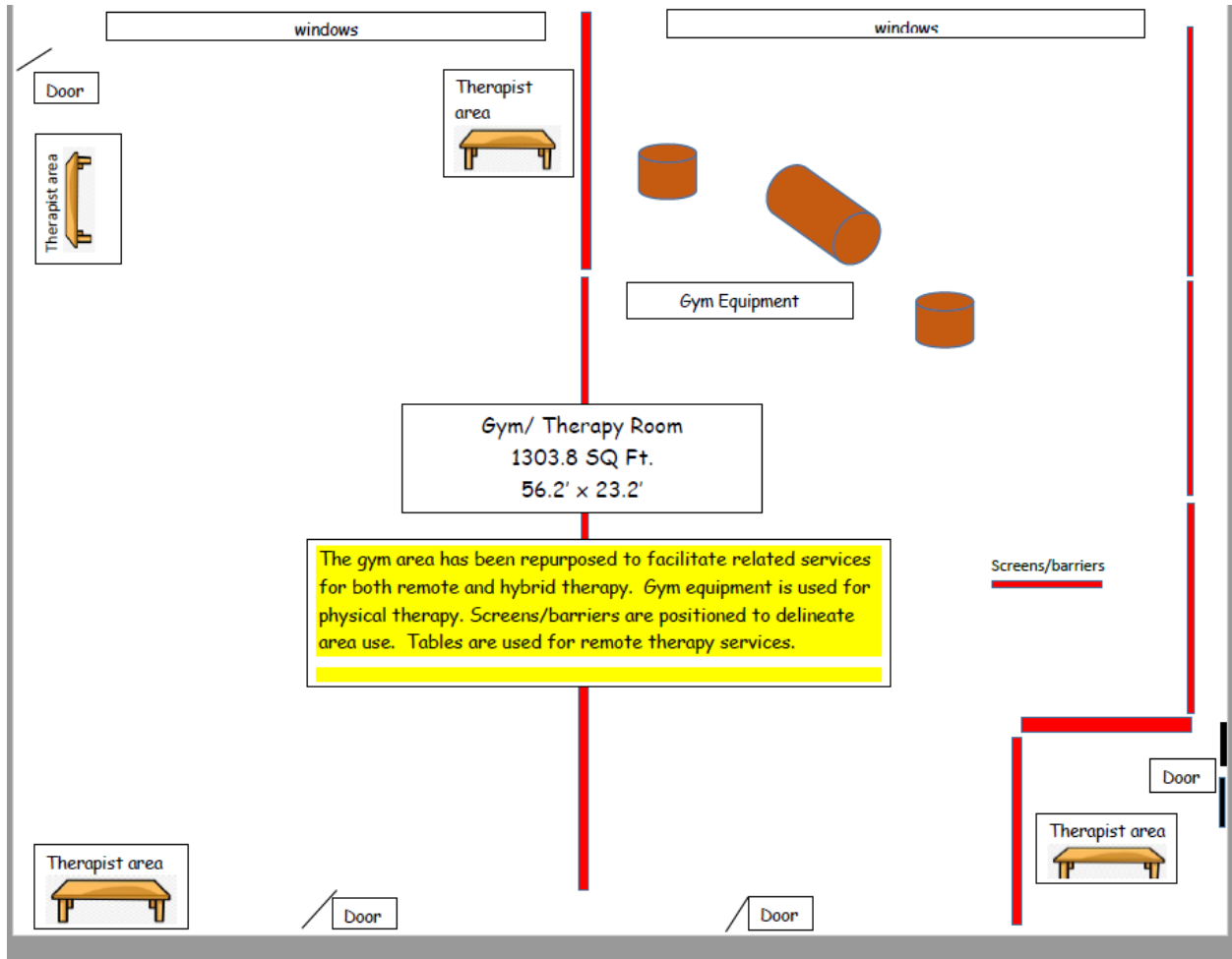
The principal will have on-going communication and collaboration with the Committee on Preschool Special Education/Committee on Special Education (CPSE/CSE) and will reach out regularly to address any issues with remote, in-person learning, or changes in learning modalities in the event of intermittent 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 current NYSED guidance regarding hiring. All recruitment efforts will be extensively documented.

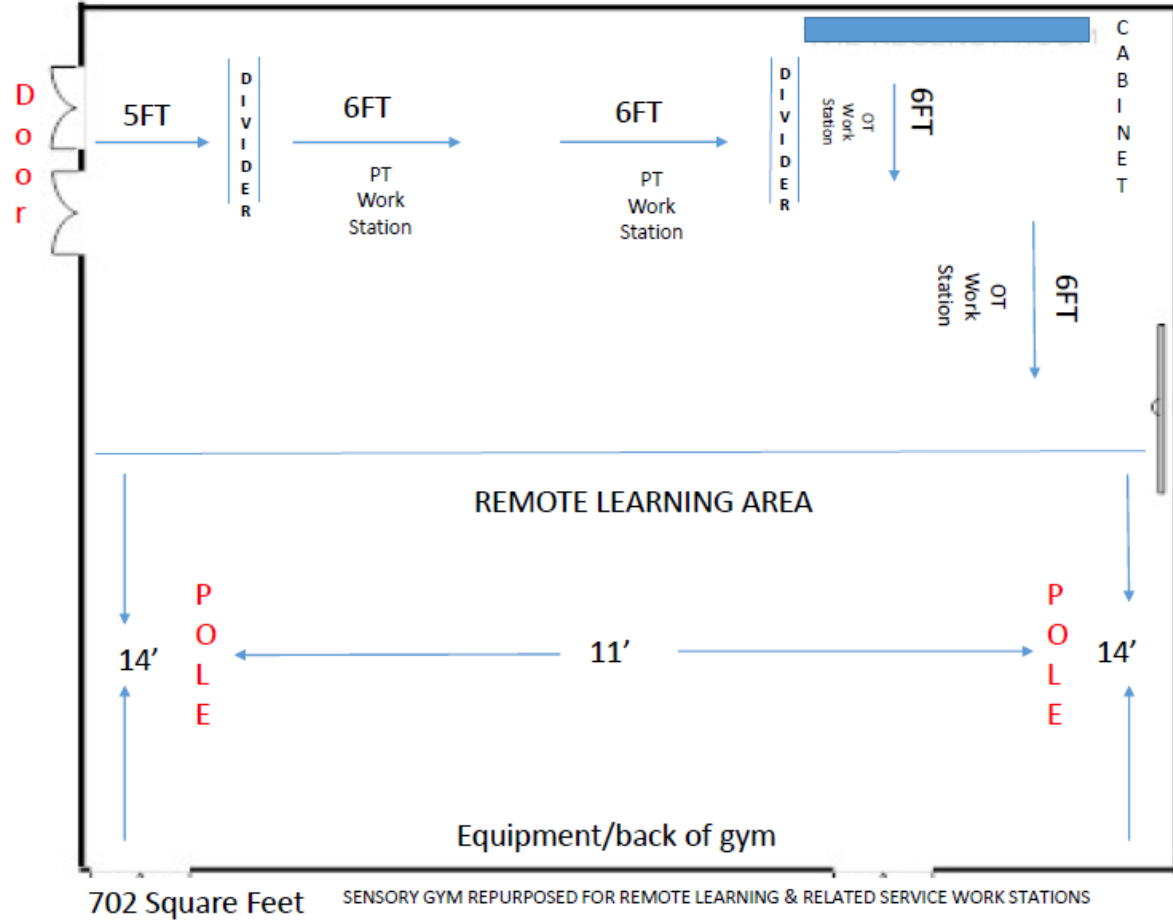
RECC

\*Gym repurposed to facilitate related services for both remote and hybrid therapy.



EFECC

\*Sensory gym repurposed for remote learning and related service workstations.



**MBECC**

\*Gym repurposed for remote learning and resource preparation

