



Est. 2012



Homeschool Core Program

Three days per week: M, W & Th

TheBirchSchool.org

9 Vance Road, Rock Tavern, NY 12575

845-645-7772

Homeschoolers at Birch

The Core 3-day program for homeschoolers focuses on English, Science, Social Studies, History and Thinking Skills. Our program delivers a combination of traditional learning with integrative, hands-on activities that promote student engagement and understanding. Classes combine reading, discussion, presentations and video, with research, projects, group work, and problem-solving.



Feedback, Assessments, Tracking Student Progress



At The Birch School we are developing methods to increase feedback to students about their progress, using rubrics, mini-quizzes, self-assessments, teacher formative assessments, and visibly tracking student progress.

We use an online student information and learning management system to record achievement and completion of work, as well as to provide an online portal for students to access coursework, assignments and resources.

The Birch School Homeschool Core Program

Core Program Activities

- Community Circle
- English Language Writing and Literature
- Social Studies/History
- Science
- Critical Thinking & Problem-Solving
- Lunch and morning social snacktime

3 days per week Monday, Wednesday and Thursday

Trimester 1 -September 18th – December 15th

Trimester 2 – January 3rd – March 22nd

Trimester 3 – March 23rd – June 15th



Our homeschool program is designed to be flexible and fun. The Birch School mixed-age learning community is welcoming and friendly. Happy and healthy students are of primary importance to us and we work hard to achieve that experience for everyone. We want our students to *want* to come to school each day.

Birch offers lots of opportunities for collaboration and discovery in an environment of support and safety. Birch School teachers have extensive experience working with homeschoolers and are kind and accommodating with students and parents. We honor each student and understand that every child is an individual with unique strengths, needs and challenges.



The Elementary Program

The small class size of our program ensures students get the attention they deserve to achieve success. Kindness, communication, mutual respect and collaboration are nurtured and encouraged by staff and peers.

The program is differentiated to accommodate a range of skill levels with progress the goal. Ample time is built into the day for outdoor time and play with classmates. Using many hands-on tools and manipulatives such as interactive notebooks, Legos, building challenges, science tools, counting markers, and games the program strives to encourage children to enjoy the experience of learning.

The Middle School

The middle school program offers a balance of adult assistance with the needed growing independence and autonomy of tweens and early teens. A strong sense of community exists among our Middle School classmates, as they learn to take more responsibility for their own learning. In this classroom students are encouraged to learn to read for learning, express themselves clearly, communicate with others, and support their ideas and opinions with evidence. As these students move through the middle years they learn to manage their time and their learning experiences with more confidence

and success, preparing them for the High School years ahead.



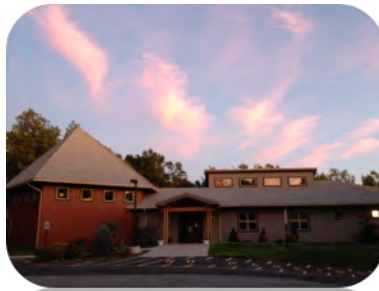
The High School

The High School program affords students a great deal of autonomy, and expects students to be generally self-motivated to engage with academic activities. Staff and teachers offer some help with organization and time management. As student move through the high school years the expectation is that they are learning to be critical thinkers, skilled at using details and making connections to support their thinking. High Schoolers are learning to be excellent communicators, in all of the methods utilized today: the written word, visual, and verbal expression.

Community Circle, the talking stick and conflict resolution

At The Birch School, we utilize a community circle to unify our students and staff and allow each student's voice to be heard. The talking stick, a tool we learned from native people, symbolizes the attention of the circle: whoever has the talking stick has the floor to speak. Sometimes the stick goes around the circle with students answering easy questions or speaking gratitude. Sometimes the talking stick allows students to voice concerns about school and their interactions and to point out problems and solutions to problems. Even the youngest and quietest members of the community can influence the decisions we make together, speaking with the authority of the talking stick.





English Language and Writing

We use the Readers/Writers Workshop model for our English Language Arts program. Within the workshop structure, teachers are able to address both the whole group's needs and also differentiate for the needs of individuals. Students participate in a short lesson by the teacher, and then read self-selected texts at their level. The teacher confers with each of the students, and then facilitates conversation among them about what they learned as readers and how they are problem solving to become even more proficient.

The Writing Workshop uses an analogous approach. We ask our students to write frequently, allowing them to become comfortable with the writing process and encouraging them to develop their style and voices. Students write about self-selected topics for extended periods of time, practicing their writing fluency while also setting goals and critiquing their own work. The constructive input of their peers, which teachers carefully nurture, helps the writers to decide which ideas might be worth exploring further into full blown "published pieces".

We supplement this with work in language mechanics, vocabulary and spelling.

High school students study Literature, including Shakespeare, as well as several classic books. We alternate between teacher and student choice of book.

Science

Our science program is aimed at developing critical thinkers, able to observe, analyze, record, and predict. We aim for a healthy mix of hands-on learning, combined with lessons and assigned reading. Labs and demonstrations, including the creation of lab reports, and science notebooks are part of the program. We will offer opportunities for project-based learning and interdisciplinary study where possible.

This year the upper level science topic will be Biology.

Middle School and Elementary School focus will be a survey of science, and will include student choice/preference as topics are chosen.





History and Social Studies

The school-wide theme for the first trimester is “Religions of the World”. Understanding the world’s many cultures requires understanding their religious beliefs. Religion informs the culture of every part of the world. We will survey the major religions’ structures, beliefs, requirements and philosophies, making comparisons and finding commonalities. Along the way we will deflate stereotypes and cultivate appreciation of others’ ideas and empathy for their feelings. The course will include visits from representatives of local religious groups, and will benefit from the Birch School’s residence at the Unitarian Universalist Meetinghouse, where the conversation among the variety of the world’s religions is encouraged.

Middle and High Schoolers will have time each week for current events, as well as civics and/or economics.

Second and third trimester student focus will turn to historical global trade as exemplified by the gold-salt trade in medieval west Africa and by the Silk Road in central Asia. Student work may include research projects and reports, timelines, posters, podcasts, videos, maps and presentations.

Elementary focus will be on the concept of trade, physical geography, and communities around the world. Migration and immigration will be considered. Character education, good citizenship and community life will also be explored in the elementary and middle school classrooms.

SCHEDULE

Our schedule rotates, and gives students two one-hour morning periods per subject, and one longer afternoon period (1.5 hours) Subjects will be approached in an interdisciplinary manner where possible, and some periods may be combined.

9:45 - 10:00	Arrival – Snack – Check-in	Social Free Time
10:00 – 10:55	Period 1	
11:00 – 11:50	Period 2	
11:50 – 12:50	LUNCH	
12:50 – 2:15	Period 3	
2:15- 2:30	Clean-up, Pack-up, Pick-up	

Typical Schedule:

	<u>Monday</u>	<u>Wednesday</u>	<u>Thursday</u>
Period 1	English	SS/History	Science
Period 2	SS/History	Science	English
LUNCH			
Period 3	Science	English	SS/History

TUITION

3 days per week Core Homeschool Days 9:45am – 2:30pm
 trimester 1- \$1750; trimester 2- \$1500; trimester 3- \$1500

Options for a longer day and daily Math.

Extended Day PM – Later pickup 2:25pm – 3:30pm

\$300 additional per trimester

(Last period 2:30 – 3:30 can be study hall, project time, club time, tutoring, social)

Extended Day AM/Morning Math 8:30am – 9:45am \$550
 additional per trimester (Inquire for more details).



Student Responsibilities:

- participate in Community Circle, chores, and group decision-making
- attend regularly, prioritize attendance
- complete schoolwork, come to class prepared, ask questions when unclear
- students must request missed work when absent, and are responsible for completing missed work on their own time
- discuss with teachers and parents their learning track, and what is working for them as well as what is not.
- “Treat others as you would like to be treated”.
- Agree to Birch School social media behavior policy, and moderate interactions with other students via social media.

Homework:

The work we ask students to complete outside of school is minimal. Often students are genuinely engaged with subject matter and do continue their learning outside of school. We ask all students to read a book of their choice for 20 – 30 minutes every day. We sometimes ask students to watch a video outside of class to prepare for the next lesson. Students enrolled in the Math Supplement will be required to complete work between classes to keep pace with the class. As we approach the end of the trimester often students use time outside of school for research and to work on projects they are preparing for the end of trimester Student Showcase.

Record-keeping and grades:

Parents are responsible for communicating with Birch School about their student’s progress during the trimester. We will provide parent access through login to our online Learning Management Platform (LMS). Using our LMS, Alma, parents can see the lessons that student engaged in as well as work completion, class participation, Attendance, and (where applicable) quiz and test grades. Parents are responsible for completing homeschool paperwork and record-keeping in accordance with NYS Mandatory Attendance Law. Assistance is available by the hour.

Shoe-Free - Tea - Water

We ask that students leave street shoes in the vestibule, and they wear slippers, crocs, or socks when inside the building. These can be left at school if preferred. Students should bring a lunch and a snack, as well as a Water Bottle that can be refilled. Hot tea is available for tea during the day, if you’d like bring a mug and teabags.

Computers, iPads, Cell-Phones and Devices.

If students bring cell phones they are required to leave them in the assigned pocket in the vestibule area. Sometimes phones are used during class, and if this true students will be asked to get their phones from the vestibule. Frequently school work requires writing or reading online, so computers are necessary. We have several computer stations that students share, however students are also encouraged to bring their own laptop computer to use for school-related purposes during school time. Computer use is not required for participation in classes, but when used properly and in moderation the tool delivers learning opportunities not available otherwise.

Field Trips

Periodically we will arrange for Field Trips that enhance and broaden our learning in a particular area. Several times per year we also take advantage of local live theater that is available to us. When Field Trips are arranged on a day that homeschoolers typically attend Birch they are invited to participate in the trip with the group, however transportation to and from the venue is not guaranteed and must be provided by the parent, and entry fees or ticket cost must be paid by the parent.

Students with Special Needs

Our teachers are designing a learning program for all of our students. Individual students are expected to progress at a pace similar to others in the learning community. Some student special needs can be accommodated, however we have discovered that there are limits to what works in this environment. If your student has individual needs or learning differences, or if you have had an Individual Education Plan (IEP) please make an appointment to meet with us to discuss your student’s needs and learning goals and together we can decide if the program is a good match.

Behavior Code of Conduct/Discipline

At Birch we expect students to willingly attend and participate in classroom activities. If students are not participating appropriately a conference with parents will be requested. If after a conference students continue to resist participating with material they may be asked to leave the program.

Applications: We have limited openings in each learning level and will accept students on an individual basis following submission of a completed application, parent and child interview and student visit. It is important to us as educators to ascertain that we have the proper skills and resources available to meet each individual student's needs. The Birch School retains the right to determine student compatibility and assess each student's level of preparation for the Birch program. Our goal is to maximize success and we will ensure that each student accepted is a mutually beneficial match.

SNOW DAYS:

We use Valley Central School District as a guide as to whether school is open or closed due to weather. However, our students travel from a distance to attend school causing us to close at times that other schools may remain open. In the case of excessive snow days work is available to students via the Learning Management System and students may be responsible for schoolwork in this case.

Payment:

Payments can be made in one or two equal payments as spelled out in the tuition worksheet completed at time of enrollment. Monthly payments can be arranged by enrolling in our tuition management program (\$45 fee annually). See The Birch School Registrar for more information.

Tuition is non-refundable, except in the case of moving or major medical issue. At least 2 weeks written notice is required for any changes to program or withdrawal for above reasons. No makeup days are available. We are not responsible for school closings due to weather, or other emergencies. Students who do not abide by the student code of conduct will be dismissed with no refund.

Financial Aid

At this time Financial Aid is available only to students who are planning to attend Birch full-time.

School Supplies/Notebooks/Curriculum

\$100 per trimester per student

We charge a materials fee that covers all necessary materials, paper, copies, notebooks, folders, art supplies, pencils, markers, craft and project materials. This also cover expenses for textbooks, online curriculum, and parent portal. Your student should not need any additional school supplies.

Student-Led Conference and Showcase

We complete each trimester with a Student Showcase celebrating and showcasing student work from the trimester. Parents, family members, sibling, are invited to this evening event. We also host parent conferences, led by students, allowing students to lead the discussion about their work from the trimester, what worked and what didn't and plans moving forward. Each student is assigned a 30 minute conference with teachers and parents. Homeschoolers who attend for the 3-day per week program will participate in Student-Led Conferences.