

WELCOME TO BIRCHWOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL!!

HELPFUL INFORMATION PACKET

**PRINCIPAL: DEBRA BERNDT
897 BIRCHWOOD LANE
NISKAYUNA, NY 12309**

344-2910



Visiting Birchwood

We love having family members visit and volunteer at Birchwood. For the safety of our students, all visitors need to check in at the office upon entering school. We ask that you enter through the main office where you will be asked to sign in and take a visitor's sticker. Please also remember to check out before you leave.

In order to keep interruptions to the classrooms at a minimum, we ask that you leave snacks, lunches, lunch money, birthday treats, instruments, or other items forgotten at home in the office. We promise to deliver them in a timely manner.

Absences/Tardy

The school doors open at 7:45 AM each morning. Announcements begin at 7:55 AM. If your child arrives after 7:55 AM, they will be marked "tardy". The number of absences and times tardy will be documented three times a year for you, on the November and March report cards and again on the final report card in June.

When a child has reached an excessive number of days on which they have been tardy or absent, a form letter is sent home. The purpose of the letter is to keep parents aware and informed.

Call-Back Procedures

If your child is going to miss school, please call the school at **344-2910, ext. 10704, Mrs. Henniger's office**. Please leave a message stating your child's homeroom teacher, the date and time and the reason for the absence.

In the continued effort to enhance Birchwood's child safety program, a voluntary "call -back" procedure is currently in use. The purpose of this program is to inform parents in the event their child does not arrive at school. If a student is not in school and Mrs. Henniger has not received a phone call, the parents will be notified.

Call Back Guidelines: **1.** Between 3 PM the day before and 8 AM the morning of the absence, call the answering machine in the nurse's office. **2.** Identify yourself by name and relationship to child. **3.** Give date and time of call. **4.** Give child's name, grade and teacher's name. State whether the child will be absent and why, or whether the child will be late to school and the expected time of their arrival.

Drop Off and Pick Up Procedures

Students should not be dropped off in the morning prior to 7:30 AM. Students arrive from buses about 7:45 AM. If you wish to pick your child up in the afternoon, please do so at 2:10 PM. Earlier pick ups disrupt the educational program in your child's classroom. Please refrain from doing so unless an emergency or appointment makes it necessary.

When dropping off and picking up your children, please park in the side parking lots. It is important that our bus zone stay free of cars for the safety of our students. When the buses are loading and unloading, it is illegal for cars to drive by. If you are dropping your child off in the morning and continuing on, please use the parent loop. An adult will be present at the crosswalk.

Change in Dismissal Plans/Appointments

We recognize the need for dismissal plans to change. We also understand that doctors' appointments are sometimes scheduled during school hours. We ask that if you need to pick your child up for an appointment, that you send in a note the morning of the appointment so that we can have your child prepared for early dismissal.

Likewise, if the need arises for your child to ride a different bus or be dropped off at a different location, a note will be needed. We are unable to allow children to be dropped off at alternate locations unless we have permission. **Please be sure that you send a note with your child at these times.** Calls at the end of the day will be allowed in emergency situations only. **Please attempt to plan ahead whenever possible.**

Transportation

1. School Bus Rules: The District Transportation Office (**370-0160**) has established a set of rules in order to provide efficient bus service and effective bus safety. Parents are requested to review the rules found in the Citizenship Handbook sent home in September.

2. Bus Passes: A bus pass must be sent in when a child is to ride a bus other than the usual one, or is to get off at a different stop.

Each child has been assigned bus passes to begin the school year. To assure that your child boards the appropriate bus and arrives at his/her appointed destination, we request that you complete the bus pass information in its entirety. If you do not know the bus route number, please call the parents at your child's destination. We cannot process a pass without this information. Please keep bus passes in a secured area. When you have used your passes, please come to the main office for more.

3. Students who go to Daycare after School: When your child is not going to daycare either because they are sick or they are visiting a friend, **please remember to call the daycare and let them know so they don't worry when your child doesn't arrive with the Birchwood students.**

4. Walking/Biking Policy

The opportunity to walk or bike to Birchwood is a decision parents need to make with their child. Factors such as age, route to school and bicycling ability are but a few things to consider. If you will be allowing your child to walk/ride, please complete the permission form that will be sent home during the first week of school. Without a permission form, students will not be allowed to either walk or ride their bikes to school.

There are a number of conditions that both walkers and bikers must meet. First is that proper safety rules must be followed, including following the instructions of the crossing guard. Secondly, bikers must wear helmets. Lastly, if a student arrives to school after 7:55 AM, they will not be allowed to walk or ride their bike. We also encourage students to walk or ride with other students whenever possible. Any violation of the three conditions will result in the loss of these privileges. Safety of our child is first and foremost and that necessitates strict adherence to these guideline.

Weather Related Closings and Late Starts

If severe weather conditions necessitate the closing of school or cause a delay in the opening, please tune to local television and radio stations prior to sending your child to the bus stop.

The District has two alternatives, one hour or two hour delays. School would open at 8:55 with a one hour delay and 9:55 for a two hour delay. A rule of thumb would be that if your child is normally picked up at 7:30 it would be 8:30 for the one hour delay and 9:30 for the two hour delay. Closings are also posted on the Niskayuna School District web site.

Snack/Lunch

In every grade there is time for snack. Please remember to pack your child a snack each day. Water bottles are also encouraged, especially in the warm months.

Kindergarteners through fifth graders have a lunch and recess period. Children can buy lunch or bring one from home. To prepay for lunches, send in a check made payable to "Birchwood Cafeteria". Put the check in an envelope labeled "lunch money" with your child's name on it. You can also prepay for lunches. Directions are on the District web-site. Every child is assigned a code and they simply key in their code to pay for lunch. If they forget their code, the cafeteria workers will look it up for them. Cash is also accepted for individual lunch purchases.

Children can also buy "snack/dessert" at lunch. The cafeteria carries a line of snacks that are available to purchase after all lunches are sold. Students need to eat their lunch before a snack can be bought. Snacks can **only be purchases with cash.**

Only one grade level eats at a time in the cafeteria. We strive to make this time as enjoyable as possible. For this reason, kids are allowed to sit where they choose, some of the time. At times the lunch teachers will ask students to sit in their homerooms.

Students are asked to raise their hand when they want to leave the cafeteria to use the restroom, buy snacks or when they want to throw out their garbage. This helps keep the amount of movement in the cafeteria manageable.

Make a Date To Have Lunch With Your Child. Please call Mr. Van Nostrand at 344-2910 ext. 10705 before 9:00 AM if you want to order an adult lunch.

Birthdays

Birthdays are announced during the morning announcements by our 4th grade students. Your child can bring in a special snack to share with the class on his/her birthday. Please check with your classroom teacher in case there are allergies or other food restrictions.

Playground Rules

At Birchwood, we go out as long as the weather cooperates. We value the opportunity for the kids to get fresh air and physical activity during their recess break. Please remember to dress your children for the weather. When it's cold they must have hats, mittens and winter coats. If you have a second pair of snow pants and boots available, your child can leave them at school during winter months. It is always a **good idea to label all clothes** with your child's name. Students are allowed in the snow when snow pants/boots are worn.

During the first week of school, students are reminded of the rules for the playground. These rules are discussed with students by teachers, and teaching assistants. They are also posted in each classroom. The rules are listed below.

Please use the equipment in a way that is safe to you and others!!

Remember to:

- sit and only go DOWN the slides
- use the swings for swinging. Please don't jump off of them
- stay in the tunnels, not on top of the tunnels
- climb on the areas that are for climbing, not the outside of the ramps

Balls and sports equipment should stay on the field and blacktop areas only.

Lacrosse balls, softballs, and baseballs are not to be used at recess time.

Teaching assistants frequently remind students of the rules during recess. A loss of play time may result if a student is consistently not following the rules and/or being unsafe.

Miscellaneous Items

Lost and Found: Please mark all clothing that is likely to be removed at school (coats, hats, mittens, sweaters, etc.) Lunch boxes, purses, etc should include school identification as well as your child's name. Articles found in and around the school are placed on a table near the nurse's office. Things left on buses can be retrieved from the driver or at the Bus Garage.

Duplicate Mailings: We provide duplicate mailings to those families who live in separate houses. It is important to us that both parents remain informed of their child's educational program. If this is necessary for you, please visit the main office.

After School Child Care, "Kid's Time" at Birchwood: Kids' Time is an after school program managed by the JCC. **Please contact the JCC at 377-8803 for more information.**

ASEP: ASEP is our After School Enrichment Program. Two different sessions run during the school year, one in the fall and one in the spring. ASEP classes run from 2:15 – 3:15. The fee for ASEP classes varies depending on the class for which your child enrolls. ASEP catalogs come home with students before each session. The catalog has descriptions of all classes, days of the week the classes are offered and registration information fees.

Thursday Packets: Our Parent Teacher Organization is quite active in our community. They provide an **on-line** Thursday Packet which includes a variety of information for families.

PTO

We are very fortunate to have a wonderful PTO. They sponsor **Birchwood's Annual Welcome back BBQ!!!!** It will be the September 20th, 2013 from 5-7 here at the school. BBQ sign up forms are available on-line thru the PTO.

It is expected that for all evening events, parents are present to supervise their children.

The PTO will have a great deal of information available at the Back to School Nights. There will be an opportunity to sign up to volunteer at PTO events, to provide treats for classroom parties, as well as to sign up to be a member of the PTO and to also receive a Birchwood School Directory.

Important Phone Numbers

Birchwood School: 344-2910 Fax # 344-5610

Birchwood Website can be accessed thought the District's website @ www.niskyschools.org

Transportation: 370-0169