

Proposal for Lincoln School Committee: Birches School May 2012

Using the Criteria for Approval of a Private School by a School Committee from:

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/advisory/100207privateschool.html>

1) Population To Be Served

In the fall of 2012, we are enrolling Kindergarten to Third Grade students. For Kindergarten, students need to be 5 years old by September 30th to enroll. We are a non-profit, non-sectarian elementary, school seeking diversity in our student body. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, sexual orientation, national and ethnic origin, color, or gender. (Please see application below) We currently have students who are interested from Lincoln and surrounding communities.

Birches will be a small school, starting at 10-15 students. We require an application and assessment form filled out by a teacher. We will have an interview with the students, and their parents to assure students are kindergarten ready and that parents support the Birches philosophy of project based, interdisciplinary, mixed age group education as well as being committed to participating in the support of the school. We require a yearly up-to-date General Health Form and an immunization record. We will seek to accommodate any special needs in which our teachers have training. Birches is based on individualized learning, so each child will learn in large group, small group, and one-on-one settings. Especially in math and literacy, small group and individual instruction will be the norm. If we do not feel that we can give the student enough help, we will coordinate with the student's family and the student's public school system. Please see Student Services section for more on identification and service of students with special needs.

BIRCHES SCHOOL

NEW STUDENT APPLICATION FORM:

Child's Name

Home Address

Parent's Name

Home Address

Work or Cell Phone

E-mail

Sibling(s) Name(s) and Birthdate(s)

D.O.B. M F

Home Phone

Parent's Name

Home Address

Work or Cell Phone

E-mail

Has your child been enrolled in any prior elementary schools or preschools? Y N

If yes, please provide the following information:

Please attach a recent assessment or letter of recommendation from your child's teacher.

Name and location of prior school(s):

Parent Questionnaire

On a separate piece of paper please answer the following questions:

1. Describe your interest in Birches School and why you think it is a good fit for your child and family.
 2. Describe your child's personality and learning style.
 3. List your child's particular strengths, talents, challenges, and interests.
 4. Share any thoughts or concerns about your child that might further our understanding of him/her.
- All the information provided above is correct to the best of my knowledge.

Parent's Signature _____ Date _____

Birches does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, sexual orientation, national and ethnic origin, color, or gender.

Please return this application form with a non-refundable application fee of \$50 to
Director of Admission, Birches School PO Box 237 Lincoln MA.

Upon receipt of the application we will contact you to set up an interview for you and your child.

Thank you very much for your interest in Birches.

www.birchesschool.org

2) Physical Plant/Safety

Lincoln Nursery School currently occupies the space that Birches School will occupy starting in August 2012, 14 Bedford Road, Lincoln. There is a current Certificate of Occupancy which will remain valid for Birches as we fall under the same "Educational Use" category. We will have yearly building and safety inspections as required by law. The facility is currently fully up to code with fire and safety inspections for a population of children younger, and more numerous, than the population that will be in our school. Dan Walsh, the Lincoln Building Inspector, plans to inspect the building this week so we should have our certificate of occupancy by the May 31 School Committee Meeting. The space is fully compliant and free of both lead paint and asbestos. Safety and health inspection certificates are currently in place for Lincoln Nursery School. They will remain in effect for Birches and we will remain fully compliant with all future inspections. We have attached the current certificates of occupancy (Lincoln Town Inspection). The playground is currently certified under Lincoln Nursery School's Mass. Department of Early Education and Care license. We will not move into the building until the beginning of August and will have the playground inspected at that time as Lincoln Nursery School plans to move some of the existing structures.

3) Curriculum

Birches is a Kindergarten through 3rd Grade school dedicated to meeting the needs of 21st century learners by teaching them to think creatively, critically, and collaboratively as well as independently. Birches is a progressive, academically challenging school that embraces the natural beauty of Lincoln and offers artistic, scientific, and technological tools to inspire multidisciplinary, multi-month projects for students. It is through these inquiries that students learn to solve problems, develop critical thinking, make connections to the world around them and to each other and the larger community. We will use the state Curriculum Frameworks, Common Core State Standards and the Lincoln School Learning Expectations as a "floor" for our programming.

Literacy

We will be using the Progressive Phonics Program for teaching the basics of reading and writing. Here is a brief description, more information can be found at progressivephonics.com. In addition, students will practice "writing" letters using a variety of mediums from chalk to paint to blocks to noodles.

Students will also practice letter sounds and build familiarity through songs and rhyming games.

Basic Information about Progressive Phonics and Alphabetti Books:

Easy learning curve:

The rules/vocabulary are introduced at gradual pace with lots of repetition.

Easy to use:

The contrasting fonts (type styles) make it easy to see who is responsible for reading what. In this manner, the “teacher” knows exactly what to say and when to introduce which rules, and the student never gets overwhelmed by trying to read text that is too advanced.

Uses "guided oral reading" (reading aloud):

Guided oral reading is the most effective method in teaching children to read fluently. As a comparison, studies show that silent, independent reading does little to advance fluency.

Coordinated teaching of reading and handwriting:

When children write what they learn, they learn it better.

All-inclusive:

Many phonics programs quit after teaching long vowels and maybe a few silent letters. We include ALL varieties of vowels, ALL common silent letters, consonant AND vowel digraphs, plus important grammatical basics without which independent reading of English is impossible (punctuation, contractions, syllables, question words, plurals and possessives).

We teach the rules AND the rule-breakers:

Many common English words violate phonics rules (e.g. was, are, one, come, any, never, both, and many, many more), so it's important to know the rules and the rule-breakers.

Permits teacher-parent collaboration:

Because our materials are on the Internet, teachers can send children home with reading and writing assignments to be done on their home computers. (In the U.S., nearly 75% of all households have Internet access at home. Similar trends are taking place in other developed countries.)

Instant reading and writing

Most children learn the alphabet first, and then are taught to read and write.

Our Alphabetti method takes a different approach: we teach the alphabet one letter at a time, and then immediately immerse a child in the USE of that letter by having the child read and write words using the letter. And as a child learns more and more letters, he/she is able to read and write more and more words.

This system virtually eliminates the letter-sound confusions that many children experience after learning the alphabet.

Shape recognition

Another important feature of our Alphabetti system is SHAPE RECOGNITION.

Some children are confused by fonts. They try to memorize the various squiggles and bumps that are inherent in a font, and become lost when confronted with a different font.

Our Alphabetti books concentrate on the basic shape of a letter, independent of font characteristics. In this fashion, children don't become font-dependent when learning to read.

And by teaching the shapes, we can also teach the DIFFERENCES between letters that are easily confused: “d” versus “b,” “p” versus “g,” and so on. Our system also teaches children little tricks they can use to remember which confusing letter is which.

(And for those of you who want to know how we divided up the different alphabet shapes, read this article.)

Uppercase and lowercase taught separately

Another feature of the Alphabetti system is teaching lowercase and uppercase separately. First we teach the lowercase letters, then we teach the uppercase letters.

This has two advantages:

- Easier learning curve: less things to memorize before starting to read and write.
 - Easier memorization: we teach uppercase letters by shape and by their relation to the lowercase letters, along with little tricks to help a child remember what is what. We also teach HOW the uppercase letters are used, which gives context to the lessons.
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Alternate letter forms taught

We also teach the alternate forms of lowercase letters "a," "g" and "q." This way, children are able to read books and work materials without font limitations (different fonts use different forms of these letters).

Foundational Math:

Knowing that a solid understanding of the 5 foundational strands of math:

1. Patterns, Relations and Algebra,
2. Number sense and operations,
3. Geometry,
4. Data, Statistics and Probability,
5. Measurement,

is crucial to students ability to excel in math we will focus on these areas both through our math curriculum and by weaving these strands into our interdisciplinary work. For our math curriculum we will be using the TERC Investigations Program.

In order to illustrate some of the ways in which we will incorporate the Curriculum Frameworks and Common Core Learning Standards we have included a sample of one of our thematic blocks of study below.

Water Curriculum and Common Core Learning Standards Connections

Water experiences powerfully captivate children and are a gateway to a wide variety of learning experiences. We will spend a two-month block exploring a stream that flows near Birches. We practice education in an emergent way: following the children's interests, asking questions, and providing information and materials for their deeper understanding. The stream will invite exploration of water and its connections to the Common Core and Curriculum Framework or Big Idea (from the Lincoln Learning Expectations). The passions of the students will help direct the flow of the projects and explorations.

The Common Core, Framework and Big Idea connections listed below are intended to be a sample of those that will be created. As our work evolves over two months, the connections will grow, develop, and deepen.

Science Connections exploring the stream area:

- Using our senses to experience the stream and the areas around us
 - K - We learn about our world through our senses.
- Investigating the variety of habitats in and around the stream
 - 1st – Habitats are places that provide optimum space, food, water and oxygen as well as suitable temperature and light.
- Explore what plants and animals live in or near the stream and which of their basic needs are met by proximity to the stream
 - 2nd – All living things go through life processes that involve growing, living, reproducing and dying. All living things have basic abilities to accomplish this.
- Develop an understanding of what adaptations a plant or animal would need to live in or near a

stream through creating creatures that could survive in one of these habitats

- 3rd grade – The entire earth can be considered a giant food web made up of smaller food webs that are suited to particular environments.

ELA and Literacy Connections exploring streams:

- By using a combination of informational texts and literature to expand students' understanding of and connection with the stream, we will meet or exceed the standards in these areas, K – 3
- All students will work in groups to develop plans and strategies for the experiences above. Groups will form rules and expectations around participation. Groups will work together to make sure that everyone is learning and participating.
 - K – 3 Comprehension and Collaboration, Speaking and Listening Standards; students will participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade level topics and texts.

Informational Texts:

What Lives in Rivers and Streams? by Oona Gaarder-Juntti

Life in a River (Ecosystems in Action) by Valerie Rapp

Pond and River (Eyewitness Guides) by Steve Parker

Rivers, Streams, and Estuaries by Greg Roza

Informational / Literature:

Magic School Bus Series

River Otter at Autumn Lane - Smithsonian Backyard Book by Laura Gates Galvin

Box Turtle at Silver Pond Lane - Smithsonian Backyard Book by Susan Korman

Literature:

Big Little Otter by Lillian Hoban

My River, Houghton Mifflin Invitations to Literature, corporate author

The Little Stream by Barry Ellsworth

Samantha Loses the Box Turtle by Daisy Griffin

Streams to the River, River to the Sea by Scott O'Dell (historical)

Math Connections:

- Our transect studies will provide many opportunities to include math concepts in our work. Exploration of the stream area and surrounding habitats will include a variety of *measurements* including temperature, speed of water flow, plant growth, numbers of plants and animal species, length, mass, perimeters, circumference, and time. Careful analysis of the plants will reveal recognizable *patterns* such as alternate or opposing leaves and tree growth rings. Students will organize information gathered into charts and graphs so that it can be shared with others and can inform discussion. Students will develop *number sense and practice addition, subtraction, multiplication and division* during data collection, for example, how many plants are there in our plot? How many animals? How big are the plants and how does this change over time? How do we measure all these things? What is the best tool for each piece of information?
 - K – 3: **Measurement:** Some attributes of things are measurable. Students will learn to use the tools and units of measurement appropriate to a situation; to find measurements of various attributes such as length, area, perimeter, volume, mass, angle measure, time and temperature; and to make and use estimates of measurements.

- **K-3: Number Sense and Numeration:** Students will learn what numbers mean, how they may be represented and will identify relationships between numbers.
- **K - 3: Data, Statistics and Probability:** Students will learn to collect, organize and display relevant data to answer questions that can be addressed with data; use appropriate statistical methods and predictions that are based in data, develop and evaluate inferences and predictions that are based in data, and apply basic concepts of probability. Organizing information into charts and graphs can help illustrate a situation, and help people answer questions and draw conclusions.
- **K - 3: Operations and Computations:** Students will understand the meaning of operations and how they relate to each other, compute fluently and make reasonable estimates.
- **K - 3: Patterns, Relations and Algebra:** Students will understand how patterns, relations and functions are interrelated, represent and analyze mathematical situations using algebraic symbols; use mathematical models to understand quantitative relationships; and analyze change in various context.

Social Studies

- Exploration of the stream area will include investigations of the surrounding fields and stone walls. The students will learn how to draw maps (at first rudimentary and then later to scale), they will analyze the direction of the stream and the impact on the environment around them, they will wonder at the stone walls and reasons for such constructions, they will learn their way around the field, streams and surrounding habitat and how to walk back to school, and they will imagine what it would have been like to be living in this exact spot in different times in Lincoln's history. Would the stream have looked different? Would the fields? What about the stone walls and the buildings? What uses has this area had for people over the years? Why?
 - **K – 3: Geography** is the study of our planet and how we interact with it. A map represents landforms, bodies of water, and places where people live and travel. Our region of New England has been shaped by certain physical characteristics: climate, natural resources and land and water forms.

Technology:

- The culmination of the 2-month study will be a presentation from each group of students or from individual students. These presentations may be power point presentations, photo journaling, essays, poetry, posters or a combination to illustrate the learning, knowledge, and skills gained. Students will be involved in creating the rubric for the evaluation of their projects.
 - **K – 3:** Students will learn the basic operations of a computer and how to use presentation software to create multimedia presentations.

Art and Music

- Art and music will be woven throughout our curriculum. The intertwining of these disciplines with the core academic areas enriches all experiences. Painting, sketching, drawing, sculpting, and clay work will all be part of our days. The school owns a collection of instruments from around the globe. The students will explore their origins and use. We will bring in music specialists to teach the students how to play the instruments as well as more about other aspects of music. We will also take advantage of Lincoln's rich resources, such as the deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum to further enrich our students' academic experiences.

4) Educational Materials

Outside, we will learn a great deal from the conservation land and community garden to which Birches School is adjacent. Inside, our classrooms will be rich in materials such as various art and office supplies, maps, microscopes, prisms. We are also excited to offer our students a collection of instruments from around the world and a collection of international dolls in native dress. We have begun to create a school library and will have computers for research and learning extensions. We plan to integrate cameras and photography into our documentation and curriculum. Teachers will bring in materials as needed for the projects, explorations and interests of the children. We will walk to and use the Lincoln Library, deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, the trail system in Lincoln and the Historic District in town as resources. We also hope to build a relationship with the Lincoln Public Schools in which students can share their thoughts and learning experiences - perhaps initially around gardening. We will use the materials for both Progressive Phonics and TERC Investigations.

5) School Staff

Birches teachers are capable, knowledgeable, trained in MA curriculum frameworks and the core standards, and are dedicated to meeting the needs of their students. Our Lead Teacher, Kate Harney will have her M.ED. from Lesley University at the end of May is a candidate for Initial Licensure in Elementary education. Please see attached bios. The student-teacher ratio is 10-1. Teachers will be observed by a member of the board of directors at least once a month to ensure that they are continuing to teach to the high standards expected at Birches. In hiring teachers, Birches does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, housing status, family status, color or gender. All teachers and parent volunteers will be CORI checked by Becca Fasciano, Head of Birches School, who is currently working on becoming a certified CORI administrator.

Here is our job description for teachers:

The Birches School Lead/Co Teacher

The Lead Teacher is responsible for the social, emotional, and academic growth of all students in a classroom of 12-17 kindergarten through third grade students in a growing school.

The Lead Teacher reports to the Head of School and the Board of Directors.

Role and Responsibilities

- Plan and create a rigorous and engaging curriculum for a K-3 classroom that facilitates experiential, project-based, and interdisciplinary learning with strong connections to nature.
- Implement instruction in reading, writing, math, science, social studies, and technology content areas.
- Recognize the interests of children in the class and use these interests to inform the direction of the curriculum.
- Create a warm, safe, caring and joyful classroom environment that is welcoming to all students.
- Foster each child's love of learning, academic development, and socio-emotional growth.
- Challenge each child to think critically while fostering creativity, flexibility, empathy, curiosity, and resilience.
- Support and encourage children when they encounter obstacles to learning and tailor teaching techniques to help them surmount those obstacles.
- Assess children's academic and socio-emotional progress on an ongoing basis. Complete two written progress reports each year and additional documentation as needed.

- Communicate with parents throughout the year regarding children and their progress.
- Conduct two parent teacher conferences each year for each student.
- Communicate with Head of School about children's academic and social progress.
- Execute effective classroom management strategies.
- Lead outdoor explorations and play time several times each day in all types of weather.
- Enthusiastically collaborate with other teachers.
- Attend and actively participate in regular staff meetings.
- Oversee and manage classroom budget.
- Organize and maintain classroom in an attractive way that is conducive to learning.
- Foster a strong sense of social responsibility in children that begins with our immediate learning community and extends to the broader world.
- Collaborate effectively with Head of School, Co Teachers, Board of Directors, learning specialists, parents, and other community members.
- Ensure the safety of all children at all times they are in the teacher's care.
- Maintain a current understanding of best practices in teaching each subject area.

Qualifications:

- Massachusetts Elementary Certified or equivalent
- CPR and First Aid
- Demonstrated understanding of and commitment to Progressive Education
- Some evening and weekend time commitments
- Passion for nature-based education
- Experience incorporating multi-sensory teaching techniques.
- Strong commitment to building a student-centered learning community.
- Excellent written and oral communication skills
- Demonstrated outstanding classroom performance including ability to use respectful authority to guide students.
- Enthusiastic about creating new curriculum and guiding children through project-based learning.
- Effective time management and organizational skills.
- A record of collaborating effectively with school administration, teachers, and parents.
- Proficiency with using technology for communication and to enhance student learning.
- Willingness and ability to learn new technologies quickly.
- Warm, caring, and nurturing demeanor.
- Strong understanding of the developmental needs of 5-8 year olds.
- Commitment to developing professionally as an educator.
- Willingness to receive and implement feedback.
- Exceptional critical thinking skills including the ability to ask probing questions that provoke children to a deeper understanding of information.
- Excellent judgment in keeping children safe in the classroom setting and in various outdoor settings.
- Able to and enthusiastic about teaching children outdoors in temperatures between 15 degrees and 90 degrees.

Kate Harney

Kate Harney joins us as our full time co-teacher at Birches School. She has her Masters in Elementary Education from Lesley University and spent the past year as part of an internship program with Buckingham Browne & Nichols Lower School in Cambridge, MA.

At BB+N she worked with 2nd and 4th graders, and is eager to build on this experience while also incorporating her love of the outdoors and her passion for hands-on learning in the classroom. Kate enjoys working with kids of all ages and is excited about the potential that a multi-age, experiential classroom provides for student learning and teacher creativity.

Kate's extended family lives in the Boston area, and Kate spent many school vacations playing in Pierce Park, Lincoln near her grandfather's home. She graduated cum laude from Dartmouth College with a major in Sociology and was a member of the varsity rowing team. Kate also coached the Cambridge Ringe and Latin high school crew team for two seasons. In her spare time, Kate is a passionate cook and an avid knitter. She enjoys yoga and regularly bikes around Cambridge and Lincoln for work and fun. Kate is thrilled to be on the Birches team and can't wait to begin working with her students and their families.

Becca Fasciano

Becca Fasciano brings to Birches a love of children and nature as well as a passion for helping children develop a life-long love of learning. Her experiences exploring water and land systems while boating and hiking with mixed age groups have shaped her nature-based educational philosophy. She has a B.A. in Psychology from Bates College and an M.S. in Environmental Science and Middle School Science Education from Antioch New England.

Becca spent many summers as a camper and then a counselor at Chimney Corners Camp, a YMCA Camp in western Massachusetts. She was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Niger, West Africa. She has worked for a variety of environmental education organizations including Becket Chimney Corners Outdoor Center, Clearwater, Horizons for Youth, and Massachusetts Audubon Society. As the MAS Education Coordinator in Attleboro, Becca was responsible for developing programming, teaching learners of all ages, and overseeing staff recruitment and training. She worked with area school districts to integrate nature and outdoor curricula across subject areas. Becca has spent much of the past twelve years in leadership roles for the Lincoln PTA and Lincoln Nursery School while raising her four children. She is an avid gardener who loves to kayak and hike with her family.

6) Administration

Birches has a robust advisory board that meets regularly to help define curriculum, vision, special activities, and continuing education. Birches is governed by a Board of Directors, the members of which are: Cecily Wardell, Alexis Jette Borggaard and Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis. While the Board of Directors is ultimately responsible for managing Birches, we have an extremely capable Head of School, Becca Fasciano. Ms. Fasciano's job is to facilitate the goals and objectives set forth by the Board of Directors and the Advisory Board and to manage the day-to-day business of running a school. Birches employs a

bookkeeper to help with the financial accounting. The Head of School and Board of Directors will work together to maintain all records and verify pertinent information. Bios of our Advisory Board and Board of Directors follow.

The Advisory Board

Erika Christakis, M.Ed., M.P.H.,

Erika Christakis has spent her professional life focused on the developmental needs of students across the lifespan. A passionate advocate of progressive education, Erika is currently a senior administrator at Harvard College, where she co-directs a 400+ residential and academic student community. She also helps to shape health and wellness policies on the executive committee of Harvard's Office of Alcohol and Other Drug Services. A former early childhood teacher, public health educator, preschool director, and parent of three teenagers, she has a unique perspective on the developmental needs of young people. Erika received her A.B. in anthropology from Harvard College and has master's degrees in Public Health (Johns Hopkins University), Communication (University of Pennsylvania) and Early Childhood Education (Lesley University). She began her career as a public health advocate for vulnerable families but soon became committed to working at the intersection of health and education. Erika has been a Lead Teacher and Director at cooperative preschools in the Boston area, and is a Massachusetts-licensed teacher (pre-K through 2nd grade). She also holds Director certification from the Department of Early Education and Care and serves as a trustee of the Cambridge School of Weston, one of the country's oldest independent progressive secondary schools. Erika is a monthly columnist for Time.com and her commentary on the developmental needs of children and young adults has also been featured on Nightline, CNN.com, Channel 5's Chronicle, The Harvard Crimson, and the Paris daily newspaper La Liberation.

Kathleen Dorkin, M.Ed.

Kathleen Moreno Dorkin graduated from Radcliffe College with a major in math, then from The Curtis Institute of Music with a major in harp. She subsequently performed and taught harp in both the Philadelphia and Boston areas for many years. She has a Masters of Music from New England Conservatory, was a Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute, and then earned an M.Ed. from Harvard Graduate School of Education. She taught as a math specialist at the Lower School of Buckingham Browne and Nichols in Cambridge, MA. for 10 years, spanning the grades from first through sixth. She then moved to BB&N Middle School, teaching pre-Algebra and Algebra there for twelve years, during ten of which she was Head of the Department. She has served on the Board of Trustees at BB&N as well as on the evaluation committee for NEASC. She recently retired from classroom teaching to teach harp, piano, and tutor math to students of all ages.

Kris Scopinich, M.Ed.

Kris Scopinich is the Education Manager at Mass Audubon's Drumlin Farm Wildlife Sanctuary. Working with a team of educators and naturalists, she oversees all on and off-site educational programs for schools, children, families, adults, and general visitors at the sanctuary and off-site in local communities, as well as the Drumlin Farm Day Camp and the Drumlin Farm Community Preschool—a nationally recognized nature and farm-based preschool. Kris teaches science education courses for elementary and middle school teachers and works with school administrators and teachers to develop community-based field science opportunities for students. She and her staff work with over 800 schools throughout the state and partner with several school districts developing curriculum that addresses science education through inquiry-based learning and place-based field studies. Ms. Scopinich is a current member of the Secretaries' Advisory Group on Environmental Education and a

past president of the New England Environmental Education Alliance, board member of the Farm Based Education Association, and member of Massachusetts Environmental Education Society and North American Association of Environmental Education. Kris has a Masters of Education in Administration, Planning, and Social Policy from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Joanne Szamreta, Ph.D.

Joanne Szamreta arrived at Lesley University having worked as a preschool and kindergarten teacher, an education supervisor and a program director of two different early intervention programs for very young children with special needs and their families. With these experiences and more recent experience conducting research, consulting with schools, publishing and presenting at conferences, Dr. Szamreta integrates this knowledge and experience into her education and psychology courses. With a focus on hands-on activities, field visits and discussions as the center pieces of her teaching, Dr. Szamreta facilitates students' creating their own knowledge and integrating important theories with practice. In addition, Dr. Szamreta works with a variety of different state agencies on public policy issues and initiatives affecting young children and their families as well as higher education programs.

Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis, Ph.D.

Dr. Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis is professor (emeriti) of Japanese art history at Boston University and associate in research at the Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies at Harvard. She received her undergraduate and graduate degrees from Harvard and is the author and editor of many publications, including *Japanese Mandalas: Representations of Sacred Geography* and *Along the Silk Road*. Dr. ten Grotenhuis was a founding member of the Board of Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Project and remains active on that Board today. A mother and grandmother, Dr. ten Grotenhuis has been writing for children in recent years. She has published in *Calliope*, the world history magazine for children, and was the consulting editor and an author for two issues, *Music Travels the Silk Road* (2007) and *A Grand Society of Merchants: Sailing with the Dutch East India Company* (2010).

Board of Directors:

Cecily Wardell, President

Cecily Wardell graduated from Harvard College, majoring in East Asian Languages and Civilizations while also completing pre-medical training. She speaks both Japanese and French. She taught elementary school science and math at Dexter Southfield School before her marriage in 2004. Now a mother to a five-year-old boy and a one-year-old girl, Cecily is thrilled to be continuing to devote herself to elementary school education.

Alexis Jette Borggaard, Treasurer, Vice President

Alexis Jette Borggaard graduated from Wellesley College majoring in Economics and Spanish. After working for two management consulting firms, she returned to the Culinary Institute of America where she completed their two-year culinary program. An lifelong avid hiker, Alexis completed the 2,168 mile Appalachian Trail in 2001. Now a mother to two boys, ages six and two, she is also involved in various roles in the Lincoln community: Lincoln PTA, and First Parish in Lincoln Deacon, and in the past Lincoln Nursery School. She is also an accredited volunteer Counselor with Nursing Mothers' Council.

7) Records

We have reviewed FERPA and will comply with the regulations laid out in the Act. Parents will have access to student records accordingly. Birches will maintain a large locked filing cabinet in the school

office with files for each student enrolled. These files will contain, but will not be limited to, records of: attendance, health, discipline, assessment reports, copies of portfolio materials, and additional documentation of the student's achievements at school. Parents will have access to records as outlined in FERPA.

The filing cabinet will be locked at all times and only the teachers and the Head of School will have keys. One responsibility of the Head of School will be to provide any requests of students or former students for assessment reports in a timely manner in accordance with G.L. c. 71, § 34A. The Head of School is also prepared to efficiently transfer transcripts of all students and former students to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and/or other schools should it cease operation, in accordance with G.L. c. 71, § 34G.

8) Student Services

For Children already on an IEP or Receiving Service when enrolled at Birches:

The Head of School and/or the Co - Lead Teacher will attend annual IEP meetings, where appropriate, and discuss monthly - or as often as mutually agreed upon, the child's progress and needs with the parents and service providers, to make sure the student continues to make progress.

Policy For Children Needing Referral Services:

If the staff feels an assessment for additional services would benefit a child, the school uses the following procedures for referring parents to the appropriate social, mental health, educational and/or medical services for their child.

Step 1: If any staff member is concerned about a child's development or behavior - and feels that further evaluation should be done - the staff member reports it to the Head of School who reviews the concern and consults with the students home school district.

Step 2: If the Head of School and home school district agree with the staff member, the teacher and Head of School document the concerns and review the child's records.

Step 3: The Head of School schedules a referral meeting with the child's parents to notify them of the school's concern. The Head of School prepares a list of possible referral resources, since the head of school maintains a list of current referral resources in each community for the children in need of social, mental health, educational or medical services. this list includes the contact person for Student Services for each child's home town.

Step 4: At the referral meeting, the Head of School provides parents with a written statement including the reason for recommending a referral for additional services, a brief summary of the school's observations related to the referral and any efforts the school may have made to accommodate the child's needs.

In making the referral, the Head of School also offers assistance to the child's parents and connects them with the home school district where appropriate. The Head of school encourages the parents to call (or to write to) the referral agency to request an evaluation of the child. If the parents need extra support, the school may - with written parental consent - contact the referral agency for them.

Step 5 : As follow up to the referral, the Head of School sends a written notice to the Student Services Director (in the town that the child resides) that the school is serving a child with a disability. If the evaluation determines that the child doesn't need services from this agency - or is ineligible to receive

services - the school reviews the child's progress in school every three months to determine if another referral is necessary. The Head of School and teacher maintain a written record of any referrals, including the parent conference and results. A referral checklist is kept in the child's record. If the evaluation determines that services are needed the Head of School and teacher will meet with the parents and referring professional to determine the school's ability to meet the needs of the student.

The student's progress will be reviewed every three months in this scenario as well.

When a student is ready to transition out of Birches, the Head of School will provide guidance, counseling, and support to ease the transition. A Birches student will be on level, if not ahead, of his/her average student peer so we anticipate that his/her transition, will be smooth. By using the Massachusetts Frameworks and Common Core as well as emphasizing social skills we will help ease transitions for children.

Birches will have a health professional consultant Trish O'Hagan, Massachusetts RN license # RN188201, expires 6/14/2014, a registered emergency room nurse who has substituted in the LPS and works at an overnight camp during the summer - as one of their nurses, who will verify our health care procedures and will be used as a resource whenever needed.

Our staff is trained in CPR and First Aid. If a child has a minor injury, we will administer band-aids or cold packs as needed from the fully stocked first-aid kit in the school office. If further medical assistance is required, we will notify the parents and call 911 immediately.

We require that a student with a communicable disease stay home from school so as not to pass it on to other students. The student must remain at home until he/she has been without fever, vomiting and/or diarrhea for 24 hours. Any child who is placed on antibiotics for a communicable disease must remain at home until he/she has completed 24 hours of antibiotic therapy. According to Massachusetts regulations, any students or staff who are not immunized or are without a history of chickenpox, must not attend school from the 10th through the 21st day after their last exposure.

We follow state laws regarding dispensing of medicine. As such, the student's physician and parents must both submit written authorization for the student to self-medicate. The parents must also meet with the Head of School and with our nurse to determine that self-medication is safe and appropriate. The medication must be transported to the school office by an adult. In keeping with Massachusetts laws, OTC (over the counter) medications are treated the same way as prescription medications.

Smoking will not be tolerated in/on school property.

Birches is a tree nut and peanut- free school and all official activities will be tree nut and peanut-free to accommodate students with tree nut and peanut allergies. Lincoln Nursery School is also tree nut and peanut- free so the space is fully clean and safe for tree nut and peanut allergy sufferers. Other allergies are also taken very seriously at Birches and all necessary accommodations will be made by the Head of School, the Board of Directors, and the teachers to ensure all children with allergies can safely enjoy all aspects of the Birches curriculum.

In accordance with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, Birches students will have time outside everyday for free play. As we have a nature-based educational program, some part of each day will be spent outside in structured learning. It is through this emphasis on nature, and by extension wellness, that the Birches student will become well-rounded, both in mind and body.

At Birches, we expect that all members of our school community will treat each other with civility and respect. One of the first priorities for the students and staff is to create a social contact that will set the

stage for positive classroom climate, inclusion, acceptance and tolerance. This contract will be created by the end of the first two weeks of school. We will use some pieces of the Responsive Classroom including Morning Meeting and Closing Circle. Respectful interactions between all members of our community, parents, students and staff, is crucially important to our program. Parents will also sign a contract that outlines their commitment to the philosophy of our school and their promise to participate in meaningful ways in the program. From the first day of school at Birches, students will learn that as members of our community they have a right to be treated with civility and respect. Our curriculum emphasizes respect for both differences and similarities, and teachers are clear in their expectations for student behavior. Birches views the parent-staff-teacher relationship as a triad of support for the student. When standards of conduct are the same at home and at school, bullying and other inappropriate behaviors are less likely to occur and more likely to be favorably resolved. When necessary, parents will be notified and reminded to reinforce at home, the standards of conduct expected at school.

It is the policy of the School to provide and maintain a learning environment that is free of bullying and any other verbal or physical misconduct that disrupts the learning environment or makes it unsafe. In accordance with the 2010 Massachusetts law against bullying, Birches has a comprehensive approach to address bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation. Birches will not tolerate any form of bullying or cyber-bullying, nor will we tolerate retaliation against any person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying. Bullying and cyber-bullying are prohibited on school grounds. All forms of bullying are also prohibited off school grounds if the bullying creates a hostile environment at school for a targeted student; infringes on the rights of a targeted student at school; or materially and substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of the school. Education of parents, students and staff about what bullying is and how to prevent it will be an important component of our programming.

It is important to bear in mind that stricter standards of behavior may apply under Birches policies in order that we may prevent inappropriate verbal and physical conduct before a student has been subject to bullying as it is defined under the law. For example, although the law defines bullying as "repeated use" of certain expressions, acts, and/or gestures, Birches reserves the right to apply disciplinary measures and other corrective action in the case of a single expression, act or gesture, if Birches determines that it is of sufficient severity to warrant disciplinary measures or other remedial action or that the repetition of that expression, act, or gesture might reasonably result in bullying as defined under the law.

If inappropriate behavior does occur, it is to be reported to a teacher and the Head of School immediately. The Head of School will then determine what necessary steps are to be taken. In some instances, a reminder about the standard of conduct and extensive discussions with the student or students involved may be appropriate. In other cases, an impartial investigation consisting of, but not limited to, interviews of all students, teachers and staff with knowledge of the occurrence may need to be conducted by the Head of School. Strategies such as increased adult supervision may be necessary to ensure a safe and comfortable learning environment. The Head of School will take necessary disciplinary action to ensure a safe living environment. In all of these cases, the parents will be notified and asked to be part of the process to ensure the inappropriate actions and/or bullying do not continue. In the most serious cases of repeated offences and failure of other measures to succeed, a student may be asked to leave Birches permanently. In appropriate circumstances, such as when a crime may have been committed or a child may have been subject to abuse or neglect of the type that is reportable under Section 51A of the Massachusetts laws, law enforcement or another appropriate government agency may be notified.

9) Financial Support

Birches is incorporated as The Birches School, Inc, in the State of Massachusetts. Copies of the articles of incorporation are attached. Birches will also be a tax-exempt organization, backdated to January 17, 2012. Birches has a bank account at Cambridge Trust in Lincoln and will remain financially solvent through tuition. Birches is also fundraising to build an endowment. Birches is break-even financially at 10 students. We expect to have at least 10 students in the fall, but in case the school runs into financial troubles or does not enroll as many students as expected, Cecily Wardell will make up the balance to ensure that Birches remains on stable financial footing, up to \$50,000 the first year, \$30,000 for the second year and \$20,000 for the third year. We have been very conservative in our financial planning. The attached spread sheet shows our finances based on 5 students this year., a part time Head of School and Lead Teacher. When we have 8 students we will be in a position to hire a literacy or math specialist, part time as well. We do not yet have a quote for Insurance since we just signed the agreement for the space last week. We are working with Zurich Insurance Company, which insures Lincoln Nursery School so they are familiar with the space we will be using. Please see attached financial spreadsheet.

10) Student Learning Time

Birches will follow the Lincoln Public School calendar. Just like Lincoln Public School, we will have 180 school days per year. We will also have at least 900 hours per year of structured learning time. Birches is a one-room schoolhouse, so transition time will be minimal. We plan to start our days at 8:30 instead of 8 am. This slightly later start time will also allow families with children at other schools and at Birches to drop off at both places with greater ease. Students will spend a minimum of 5 hours a week on literacy skills and a minimum of 40 to 60 minutes a day on foundational math skills, as outlined in the TERC curriculum.

A typical Birches day will look like this:

8:30am-8:45am: arrive at school

8:45am-9:00am: play outside as a school community

9:00am-9:15 am: Morning Meeting with presentations, news, updates, and plans for the day and week

9:15am-10:15am: Bloc 1: small group teaching, learning or experiencing block (see curriculum for more details) This will be math time for some, literacy for others.

10:15am-11:30am: Bloc 2: different small group teaching, learning or experiencing block in a different physical space, again, this may be math time for some and literacy for others.

11:30am: lunch inside or picnic outside depending on weather

12noon-1:00pm: nature walk or other outdoor exploration (we go outside in almost all weather--very warm clothes in the winter are a must!)

1:00pm-2:15pm: Bloc 3: small group teaching, learning or experiencing block, often building on the outdoor experiences

2:15pm-2:45pm: reading with older/younger partner (each younger child is paired with an older child and each reads to the other or tells the other a story if he or she is not yet reading)

2:45pm-3:00pm: final clean up, preparation for tomorrow's activities, Closing Circle

3:00pm: end of school day

In case of snow or other town emergency, we will close when the Lincoln Public School is closed.

However we will caution parents to use their own best judgment and if they cannot safely drive their children to school due to weather or another emergency, they should keep their children home.

In accordance with 603 CMR 28.03(3)(c), if a student is expected to, or must remain at home or in the hospital for medical reasons for more than 14 days, Birches will accommodate them and provide educational services at home or in the hospital for the duration of their time at home or in the hospital.

11) Student Performance Assessment

At Birches, assessment will take place in a variety of forms and include both formative and summative assessments. Progressive Phonics and TERC Investigations have built in formative (daily/weekly) Assessments and Summative Assessments (end of unit evaluations). Students will also be using portfolios and journaling on a daily or weekly basis to track their own progress and to help staff in their assessments. Frequent student - teacher conferences will facilitate this process and help students learn to set their own goals and take ownership of their learning. Students and teachers will work together to create personalized, evaluation rubrics that are meaningful and challenge students to grow, stretch and take risks as learners. At the end of each thematic block of study, teachers and students will evaluate the students' projects as well as their progress in mathematics, literacy, socialization and personal work habits in a detailed assessment to be shared with the student and the parents. Parent-teacher conferences will also occur three times per year. Throughout the year, the teacher will be able to track and assess consistent progress in each student using his or her portfolio and other assessment to assure that he/she is meeting or exceeding the Curriculum Frameworks and Common Core Standards.

12) Contact Information:

Becca Fasciano
Head of School
781.259.2929
becca@birchesschool.org

Board of Directors:
Cecily Wardell
617.359.9620
cecily@birchesschool.org

Alexis Jette
781.259.0632

	Fiscal 2012	Fiscal 2013	
Revenue and income			
Program and Tuition (assuming 5 students)	60,000	108,000	
Direct Public Grants	-	-	
Direct Public Support (fund raising)	20,000	25,000	
Direct Benefactor Support	50,000	30,000	
Income Adjustments (Financial Aid)	-	-	
Total Revenue and Income	130,000	163,000	13662
Expenses			
Workshops	-	-	
Facilities and Equipment	3,000	2,000	
Supplies	4,000	6,000	
Fundraising (events costs)	2,000	3,000	
Promotional and Marketing	1,000	1,000	
Meetings, Travel, and Training	1,000	1,000	
Payroll (includes Lead Teacher and Head, will add)	73,500	73,500	
Insurance			
Space Usage Fee - Rent	12,600	13,662	
Cleaning	6,000	6,000	
Board of Directors			
Total Expenses	103,100	106,162	
Total Income Minus Expense	26,900	56,838	
Capital Planning (Endowment)			
Net Income	26,900	56,838	



William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the
Commonwealth

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Secretary of the Commonwealth
State House, Boston, Massachusetts 02133

February 8, 2012

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I hereby certify that according to the records of this office

THE BIRCHES SCHOOL, CORPORATION

is a domestic corporation organized on **January 17, 2012 (Chapter 180)**.

I further certify that there are no proceedings presently pending under the Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 180 section 26 A, for revocation of the charter of said corporation; that the State Secretary has not received notice of dissolution of the corporation pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 180, Section 11, 11A, or 11B; that said corporation has filed all annual reports, and paid all fees with respect to such reports, and so far as appears of record said corporation has legal existence and is in good standing with this office.



In testimony of which,

I have hereunto affixed the

Great Seal of the Commonwealth

on the date first above written.

William Francis Galvin

Secretary of the Commonwealth

rocessed By jbm

* This is not a tax clearance. Certificates certifying that all taxes due and payable by the corporation have been paid or provided for are issued by the Department of Revenue.



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Education Laws and Regulations

Advisory on Approval of Massachusetts Private Schools Pursuant to Mass. Gen. Laws c. 76, § 1

To: School Committee Chairpersons, Superintendents of Schools, and Other Interested Parties

From: Jeffrey M. Nellhaus
Acting Commissioner of Education

Date: October 2, 2007

School committees and superintendents of schools periodically ask about their responsibilities in approving private schools in their community. This memorandum, which updates and replaces an advisory that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education published in 1982, provides guidance to local school officials on this issue.

In order to educate students of compulsory school age (6-16) in Massachusetts, a private school, including a school with a religious affiliation, must obtain the approval of the school committee of the city or town in which the school is located. The Massachusetts compulsory school attendance law, General Laws c. 76, § 1, sets the standard by which school committees must evaluate private schools. The pertinent section provides as follows:

For the purposes of this section, school committees shall approve a private school when satisfied that the instruction in all the studies required by law equals in thoroughness and efficiency, and in the progress made therein, that in the public schools in the same town; but shall not withhold such approval on account of religious teaching

A private school located in a town is required to seek approval from the school committee of that town, whether or not children from the town attend the school. A school committee's approval under G.L. c. 76, § 1, means that Massachusetts children attending the private school may do so without violation of the compulsory attendance law. School committee approval is neither an evaluation of program quality nor an endorsement of any particular school. The decision to enroll a child in, or to withdraw a child from, a particular private school is one that parents must make.

Standards for Approval of Private Schools

In order to assist private schools in its district, the school committee should have a written statement of policy and procedures by which it considers and acts upon private school applications for approval. Following are some suggested elements for such a policy. A policy should address:

- the standard for private school approval under G.L. c. 76, § 1 ("equals in thoroughness and efficiency, and in the progress made therein, that in the public schools in the same town.");
- the procedures for school committee approval (application process, timetable, requested documentation, site visits, procedures for periodic review of approval status, etc.);
- other agency approvals that may be required (health, safety, building and fire inspections, etc.);
- the records and materials the school is required to maintain; and
- the criteria for measuring the "thoroughness and efficiency" of private school instruction in such areas as the program of studies and curriculum, student performance assessment procedures, the length of school day and school year, staff distribution and qualifications, textbooks and materials, maintenance of student records, and compliance with applicable federal and state laws.

These guidelines are suggested rather than mandatory; they are intended to assist school committees in developing a private school review process that is open and reasonable. Because G.L. c. 76, § 1, does not specify the manner in which a school committee conducts its review process, school committees are afforded wide discretion in developing their own policies. The only requirement is that a school committee apply its policies and procedures consistently to all private schools located within its jurisdiction.

A sample of factors that a school committee may wish to consider in evaluating the "thoroughness and efficiency" of the instruction offered by a private school is attached. The sample criteria are not mandatory, and the school committee may adopt or amend them in any reasonable way.

Approval of Private Special Education Schools

In addition to the school committee's approval responsibility, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has responsibility under G.L. c. 71B, § 10, to approve private schools that serve Massachusetts students with disabilities at public expense. That responsibility is further defined in the Massachusetts Special Education Regulations (603 CMR 28.00) and the Regulations on Program and Safety Standards for Approved Public or Private Day and Residential Special Education School Programs (603 C.M.R. 18.00) adopted by the Board of Education. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education conducts an extensive review of private schools that apply for such approval, including their curriculum, physical facilities, personnel, and administration. Approval by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education authorizes the private special education school to enroll students with disabilities at public expense.

Neither the school committee nor the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education may delegate to the other its own statutory function for approving private schools. By regulation, the Department may not approve a private school to serve publicly funded students with disabilities under G.L. c. 71B, §10, unless the private school has received approval by the local school committee pursuant to G.L. c. 76, § 1. Notwithstanding the distinction between the two approval functions, the Department recognizes that the programs offered by some private special education schools are so specialized that it is difficult for the local school committee to assess the equivalency of the programs to those offered in the public schools. Therefore, with respect to private special education schools, the school committee has a choice. The school committee may choose to perform its own evaluation of the school in accordance with G.L. c. 76, § 1, and reasonable standards set by the school committee; or the school committee may designate a public school representative, preferably a special educator, to participate in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's site visit review of the private school program and grant or deny local approval to the school based on the information obtained from the joint site visit. This allows the school committee to retain its independent statutory approval function while utilizing the special education expertise of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in evaluating the private school program. A school committee wishing to participate in the Department's site visit review of a private school should contact the Department's Program Quality Assurance Services unit ("PQA") at: (781) 338-3700, or consult the [POA website](#).

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

- 1. does the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education or any other state agency have responsibility for approving private schools for purposes of the compulsory school attendance law?**

No. The responsibility to consider and act upon private school applications for approval rests solely with local school committees under G.L. c. 76, § 1. The New England Association of Schools and Colleges has a program for accrediting private schools. Obtaining such accreditation, however, is voluntary and does not substitute for the approval of the local school committee required by state law.

- 2. If a school committee does not approve a private school, may the private school still operate as a school for Massachusetts students of compulsory school age?**

No; at least not for regular attendance purposes. G.L. c. 76, § 1, the Massachusetts compulsory school attendance law, requires private schools to obtain the prior approval of the local school committee. Thus, attendance by a Massachusetts student between the ages of 6 and 16 at a private school operating without such approval would not fulfill the requirements of the Massachusetts compulsory school attendance law, and the student would be considered truant.

- 3. does a private education program providing only after-school services (e.g., academic tutoring or language immersion) require approval by the school committee under G. L. c. 76, § 1?**

No. School committee approval is needed for compulsory attendance purposes and, therefore, is required only for regular day school programs. School committee approval under G.L. c. 76, § 1 is not required for privately operated programs that provide educational or tutoring services to students after school.

- 4. May a private school appeal a school committee's decision not to approve a private school to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education?**

No. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education does not have jurisdiction over local private school approvals. Under G.L. c. 76, § 1, private schools are approved by the school committee of the town in which the private school is located. A private school that disputes a school committee's or superintendent's decision may ask the school committee to review the matter. If the private school has a legal claim regarding the approval process or standards, it may have some judicial recourse.

5. Must private schools meet the 900/990 hours and 180 school days minimum standards of the Board of Education's regulations on Student Learning Time as a requirement for approval?

The Student Learning Time regulations, as such, do not apply to private schools. The stated purpose of the regulations is "to ensure that every public school in the Commonwealth provides its students with the structured learning time needed to enable the student to achieve competency in 'core subjects' and 'other subjects.'" 603 C.M.R. 27.01(2). Therefore, while the school committee may consider the total student learning time and length of the school year at a private school in determining whether the school's program meets the statutory standard of "thoroughness and efficiency," these factors are not required for approval.

NOTE: Private special education schools that are approved by the Department to provide services to publicly funded students with disabilities are subject to state regulations on minimum school hours and school days. In addition, unapproved private special education schools in which publicly funded students are placed pursuant to 603 CMR 28.06(3)(e) because an appropriate approved school cannot be identified must adhere to state regulations on minimum school hours and school days for those particular students.

6. Once a school is approved, is the approval subject to renewal or periodic review?

Although not required by statute, school committees are encouraged to adopt a private school approval policy that incorporates a periodic review of previously approved schools. School committees may also adopt a policy under which approval is valid until substantial changes are made in the private school's program, at which point the private school must seek re-approval.

7. To what extent may a school committee be liable for damages incurred by a private school student, by virtue of its approval of a private school?

The approval function that G.L. c. 76, § 1, imposes upon school committees is fairly limited. Thus, as long as a school committee acts reasonably and in good faith in carrying out its statutory approval function, its potential liability is minimal. It would be advisable to make clear in school committee policy and procedures, deliberations and votes on private school approval, as well as in correspondence with interested parties about a particular private school, just how limited the school committee's responsibility is under G.L. c. 76, § 1.

8. Are any of the state mandates applicable to public schools made applicable to private schools by the phrase, "when satisfied that the instruction in all the studies required by law equals in thoroughness and efficiency, and in the progress made therein, that in the public schools in the same town?"

Various state laws set forth the subjects that public schools teach. See, for example, G.L. c. 71, §§ 1, 2 and 3; G.L. c. 69, § 1D. Generally, the "thoroughness and efficiency" language in G.L. c. 76, § 1, should not be interpreted as extending particular public school mandates regarding instruction and curriculum to private schools.

9. May a private school seek approval if its students are not residents of the town in which the school is located?

A private school located in a town is required to seek approval from the school committee of that town, irrespective of whether children from the town attend the school.

10. Should a private school provide notification to the school committee prior to closing?

Yes. The private school should provide notice in a timely manner to the school committee from which it received approval pursuant to G.L. c. 76, § 1. In addition, once it has ceased operation, G.L. c. 71, § 34G requires the owner or administrator of the school to transfer transcripts of all students and former students to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, except for students who are transferring to another public or private educational institution. In that case, the private school must transfer the student's records to the school that the student will be attending.

11. Should a school committee notify the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education when it approves or disapproves a private school?

Yes. Although the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education does not review, monitor, or investigate school committee decisions regarding private school approval, it does require school committees to report such information to the Department. The attached link contains the form upon which school committees are requested to report the approval status of private schools within their jurisdiction: www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/diradmin/new_private.doc. The form requires the school committee to confirm that it has approved the private school, the date which the private school commenced operation, and other basic information, such as the school's street and e-mail addresses. The Department must collect and track this information for purposes of the various

federal grant funds that it distributes to private schools.

In addition, the school committee should timely notify the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education if it has decided not to re-approve, or has revoked approval of, a private school, or if the school has closed. It is important for the Department to receive this information promptly, especially if the private school at issue has a special education program that the Department has approved for placement of publicly-funded students with disabilities.

The Department will refer inquiries regarding the approval status of a particular private school to the superintendent of the district in which that school is located.

12. May a school committee delegate its authority to approve or disapprove a private school to the superintendent or another school administrator?

No. Under G.L. c. 76, § 1, only the school committee has the authority to approve or disapprove a private school. However, the school committee may designate the superintendent or another school administrator to visit the private school, review relevant documentation and make a recommendation on approval to the school committee. The school committee may then vote to approve or disapprove the private school based on the superintendent's recommendation.

Sample Criteria for Approval of a Private School by a School Committee

1) Population To Be Served

Admissions criteria; documentation of school's enrollment

2) Physical Plant/Safety

A. The school shows evidence of current:

- i) Certificate of Occupancy
- ii) Fire inspection
- iii) Safety inspection
- iv) Elevator inspection, if applicable
- v) Compliance with lead paint poisoning prevention (for children under 6 years old)
- vi) Compliance with other applicable federal and state health and safety standards (e.g., PCB, asbestos inspections, handicap accessibility)
- vii) Copies of valid safety and health inspection certificates

B. The site, plant, and equipment adequately support the program and are operated to ensure the safety and health of the students.

3) Curriculum

The curriculum offered is "equivalent" to that offered in the local school system generally and, specifically, in terms of the following instructional areas:

- i) mathematics
- ii) science and technology
- iii) history and social science
- iv) English
- v) foreign languages
- vi) the arts
- vii) physical education

4) Educational Materials

Textbooks and individual instructional materials, including computers and other technology, are adequate.

5) School Staff

The instruction provided is "thorough and efficient" based on:

- i) teacher qualifications
- ii) adequate student/teacher ratio
- iii) regular evaluation of staff
- iv) the school principal reviews criminal offender record information (CORI) of current and prospective employees and volunteers, as required by law

6) Administration

The school has a clearly defined organization that facilitates its objectives.

7) Records

- A. The school maintains an adequate system of student records (e.g., attendance, health, discipline, progress reports).
- B. The student records are kept in a secure and organized manner that is consistent with federal and state student record laws to the extent applicable.
- C. The school maintains and timely provides transcripts in response to requests of students and former students in accordance with G.L. c. 71, § 34A.
- D. The school is prepared efficiently to transfer transcripts of all students and former students to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and/or other schools should it cease operation, in accordance with G.L. c. 71, § 34G.

8) Student Services

The school provides adequate pupil personnel services for all students (e.g., health care procedures, guidance and counseling programs, discipline policy).

9) Financial Support

- A. The school provides evidence of financial solvency and resources to sustain the educational program.
- B. The school presents documentation of its legal status. These may include copies of the articles of incorporation and the certification of tax exempt status.

10) Student Learning Time

The school provides adequate student learning time (length of school year and school day) and hours of instruction in each subject.

11) Student Performance Assessment

The school periodically evaluates students' skills, competencies, and knowledge and documents their progress.

last updated: October 3, 2007