



SCHOOL PROFILE 2024-2025

About Birch Wathen Lenox

The Birch Wathen Lenox School is an independent, non-profit, nonsectarian, college preparatory school on Manhattan's Upper East Side with roots going back more than 100 years. The school was created by the merger, in 1991, of The Birch Wathen School, which was founded in 1921, and The Lenox School, founded in 1916.

BWL's Reimagining: A Classic Yet Innovative Curriculum

For the past two years, BWL has been on an exciting transformational journey. The school's rigorous college preparatory curriculum has been energized by innovative programs in entrepreneurship, science research, environmental science, constructive dialogue and robotics. Beginning in 2025, students may pursue an academic concentration by taking a series of courses in one discipline and engaging in related experiential learning.

BWL has established partnerships with leading educational institutions to equip our students with life skills that fuel their health, happiness and future success. These collaborations support our passionate and dedicated faculty in engaging with our students in a challenging and enriching environment that inspires lifelong learning. When our seniors graduate from BWL, they are prepared for success as college students and citizens of the world.

Key Facts

- We enroll 350 students in kindergarten through 12th grade, with 34% identifying as students of color, 35% receiving need-based financial aid and 20% coming from outside Manhattan. There are 60 students in the Class of 2025.
- BWL does not rank its students nor provide a GPA. The school's grading scale is based on letter grades, A to F, pluses and minuses. The highest grade a student can receive is an A.
- All courses follow a rigorous college preparatory curriculum. Advanced coursework in English, History, or World Languages is typically available starting in 11th grade.
- Honors, Advanced, and AP courses are high-rigor classes that require faculty approval to enroll. The academic requirements of these courses are more demanding in both the amount and difficulty of the work.
- Students are required to take a minimum of six courses each semester, including five core academic courses. They may also select electives from non-academic disciplines
- BWL is proud of its rich music, theater and visual arts programs. Many students participate in audition-based performance ensembles that require a high level of musicianship. These courses are designated as advanced. Our advanced studio art offerings enable the artistically inclined an opportunity to develop their talents and display their work in NYC galleries.



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Curriculum

The BWL curriculum fosters our students' development as critical thinkers, expressive creators, effective communicators, engaged learners and compassionate citizens. **The chart below shows our graduation requirements and most advanced courses in each subject.**

| SUBJECT | GRADUATION REQUIREMENT | MOST ADVANCED COURSES |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| English | 4 years | AP English Literature, Honors Poetry & Creative Portfolio |
| History/Social Sciences | 3 years | AP US History, Advanced Seminar: Democracy & Dissent AP Psychology*, AP Macroeconomics*, AP Microeconomics* |
| Mathematics | 3 years | AP Calculus AB, AP Calculus BC, AP Statistics |
| Science | 3 years | Advanced Research Seminar, AP Biology, AP Physics 2 |
| World Languages | 3 years of a single language: French, Spanish, Japanese, Chinese | AP Spanish Language & Culture, AP Japanese Language & Culture, Advanced French 5, Advanced Chinese 5 |
| Technology | Recommended | AP Computer Science, Post-AP Computer Science |
| The Arts | 1 year of Music 2 years of Art | Music: Advanced A Cappella, Advanced Orchestra and Advanced Rock Band are audition-based groups requiring a high level of musicianship Art: Advanced Studio Art: Portfolio, Advanced Photography: Portfolio Theater: Advanced Audition: Portfolio; Advanced Theater Project: Performance and Crew |
| Physical Education | 4 years, including one semester of health education | |

* Courses with an asterisk are delivered by the Constellation Learning Consortium, a collective of independent schools that provides 11th and 12th grade students from member schools with the opportunity to learn in a collaborative and flexible online setting with other motivated students from around the country.

Class of 2025 Grades

Below is the grade distribution for members of the Class of 2025 in BWL's academic courses.

| A | A- | B+ | B | B- | C+ | C | C- | D |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|------|------|------|------|
| 43% | 16% | 10% | 12% | 8% | .04% | .03% | .02% | .01% |

4 students had all grades A

5 students had all grades A- and above

4 students had all grades B+ and above

8 students had all grades B and above

8 students had all grades B- and above

Signature Programs

Our signature programs offer students unique opportunities to explore their academic interests outside the traditional curriculum through highly personalized experiences.

Advanced Seminar: Democracy & Dissent

As an integral part of BWL's Constructive Dialogue Initiative, this course delves into the heart of the First Amendment – freedom of speech – through a meticulous examination of key Supreme Court decisions. Throughout the semester, students unravel the intricacies of legal opinions by studying and discussing landmark cases and relevant law review articles, shedding light on the nuanced evolution of legal doctrines.

Engineering: Robotics (BWL's Birchbots)

Students work toward and participate in robotics competitions throughout the year. During the fall term, students prepare for upcoming competitions through a series of training sessions that focus on aspects of robot design and construction. They brainstorm, design, construct and test their one-of-a-kind robot during "build season." The year culminates with participation in the annual FIRST NYC regional competition in the spring.

Advanced Science Research Seminar*

Students in grades 10 or 11 may apply to participate in a multi-year independent research project culminating in presentations and science competitions. The program takes students through research fundamentals, methodology and question development, original research execution and the oral and written presentation of research findings. Students master techniques for analyzing and presenting complex scientific studies.

Entrepreneurship Program & Lab*

A select cohort of 9th and 10th graders participate in a three- or four-year program in which they identify a business or service need, build a product or create a service to satisfy that need and develop a business plan to bring it to life. Students draft business plans, work in teams in a business "incubator" and present their ideas to panels of professional entrepreneurs.

Unique Alliances

- Through our partnership with [The Constructive Dialogue Institute](#), we are training student prefects and faculty in pedagogical approaches that favor deep investigation of ideas and teaches BWL students how to think, not what to think.
- Our collaboration with [The Social Institute](#) equips students to navigate their social worlds, online and offline, and strengthen school culture. This year, we have implemented a policy requiring students to leave their cell phones in a phone locker during the school day.
- This year, fifteen students in grades 9 through 11 will be selected as members of a Teen Advisory Board that will collaborate with research scientists at the **University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**. BWL students will work with UNC scientists to identify research questions, engage in data collection, interpret findings, and create actionable plans to address these findings.
- Our partnership with **Weill Cornell Medicine** provides internship and science research opportunities that supplement our new curriculum offerings. Our students also engage in experiential learning at the **Central Park Conservancy** and through the **Billion Oyster Project**, a nonprofit organization with the goal of restoring one billion oysters to New York Harbor by 2035.



Through our curriculum, programming and community, BWL is committed to its school pillars:

- Classic yet innovative curriculum
- Commitment to exploration
- Focus on building lifelong relationships
- Embracing constructive dialogue

* The first cohorts of the Advanced Science Research Seminar and the Entrepreneurship Program & Lab will graduate in 2026.



Student Leadership

Student Prefects

After a rigorous application process, sixteen 11th and 12th grade prefects are selected to mentor 9th grade and new students, facilitating small group discussions, resolving conflicts and setting a positive example for other students.

BWL Student Council

A Student Council President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer are chosen in school-wide elections, and Grade Representatives are elected by their peer classmates.

Editorial Leadership

Talented writers are selected for roles as editors of our publications, The Clarion newspaper and Range Lifestyle Magazine.

Sexuality and Gender Equality Club

SAGE is dedicated to raising awareness and promoting inclusivity through advocacy and school-wide events. Dedicated and engaged students take on leadership roles.

Peer Tutoring Program

Peer tutors are strong academic students selected to provide one-to-one tutoring to their younger classmates. They work on raising academic performance, instilling confidence, and improving study skills.

Awards and Honors

Top-performing students receive academic department awards at the end of junior year. Additional awards are given to seniors at graduation.

Interschool Sports

Varsity sports include soccer, cross country, basketball, squash, swim, tennis and track and field for both boys and girls; volleyball for girls. As students at an urban school with no playing fields, our athletes travel up to 1.5 hours for games and practices.

College Destinations for the Classes of 2020-2024

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| American University | Dickinson College | McGill University | Syracuse University |
| American University of Paris | Drexel University | University of Miami | University of Texas at Austin |
| University of Arizona | Duke University | Michigan State University | The George Washington University |
| Bard College | Elon University | University of Michigan | The New School |
| Boston College | Emerson College | Middlebury College | University of Tokyo |
| Boston University | Emory University | New York University | Tufts University |
| Brandeis University | Fashion Institute of Technology | Northeastern University | Tulane University |
| Brown University | Fordham University | Oberlin College | Union College |
| Bucknell University | Franklin and Marshall College | Penn State University | SUNY Buffalo |
| University of California at Davis | Georgetown University | Pratt Institute | University of St. Andrews |
| Carnegie Mellon University | Harvey Mudd College | Quinnipiac University | Vassar College |
| Case Western Reserve University | Haverford College | University of Richmond | University of Vermont |
| Chapman University | Hobart William Smith Colleges | Rochester Institute of Technology | University of Virginia |
| College of Charleston | College of the Holy Cross | University of Rochester | Wake Forest University |
| Clark University | Indiana University at Bloomington | Santa Clara University | Washington University in St. Louis |
| Colby College | Johns Hopkins University | Sarah Lawrence College | Wesleyan University |
| Colgate University | Kenyon College | Skidmore College | Williams College |
| University of Colorado at Boulder | Lehigh University | University of South Carolina | University of Wisconsin, Madison |
| Columbia University | Loyola University, Maryland | University of Southern California | Worcester Polytechnic Institute |
| University of Delaware | University of Maine | Southern Methodist University | |
| University of Denver | Marist College | Spelman College | |



The Birch Wathen Lenox School is accredited by the New York State Board of Regents and the New York State Association of Independent Schools. We are members of the National Association of Independent Schools, and the National and State Association of College Admission Counselors. We comply with the NACAC Statement of Principles of Good Practice.