



BERKSHIRE WALDORF SCHOOL

Reopening Plans 2020 - 2021



Our Mission:

Berkshire Waldorf School cultivates students' academic, emotional and spiritual development through our unique curriculum. We provide students with the foundation to live up to their full human potential, creating lives of meaning and purpose that positively contribute to our world.



"A Conscious Learning Community"

This is who we are.



Faculty and
Staff



Families



Board of
Trustees

"The strengthened partnership between teachers and parents will allow the children to experience first hand the warmth and resilience of a conscious learning community."

-BWS Parent Survey Response



In reopening the school, we are committed to:

- Creating a place where children can grow and learn and be children; a safe and joyful place to restore their body, mind and soul
- A modern and relevant interpretation of the Waldorf core principles of child development
- An enthusiastic connection to the natural world and our beautiful 30-acre campus for expanded learning options
- The health and stability that rhythm, regularity and ritual give to the growing child
- Collaborating openly with parents and community across roles and classes to strengthen our work on behalf of the children

-The Council of Teachers

Reopening Plan Framework

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Our Approach



- Co-create a **shared vision** with our faculty, staff and board
- Respond to **health and safety** requirements
- **Proactively and creatively** design solutions
- Prioritize a **sense of connectedness** - to nature, to our families, and within ourselves
- Work with the **complexity** to yield enduring improvements, as well as meet immediate needs

Once Around the Sun Together

Seasons come and go
Watch and wait for life to grow
Some days bursting bright and full
Some days more a quiet lull
Wind blow, rain will fall
Sun will shine on one and all
Look with love out to my world
Do my best to heed the call
-Annie Bryant

New Beginnings

At long last, we gather
with new friends and old

Winter at BWS

We weather the cold and
quiet months in the warmth
of our community

Summer at BWS

We hold this space for
the possibility of
extending our time
together

Aug

Sep

Oct

Nov

Dec

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Autumn at BWS

As the leaves change, so do we. We
greatly expand our outdoor
offerings

Spring at BWS

As nature awakes in spring,
we too expect growth and
renewal from our journey



A Gentle Reopening

- **Orientation Week**, August 31- September 4, Back to campus for specially scheduled activities
- **First Week**, September 8 - 10, Three day week for students
- **Second Week**, September 14 - 17, Four day week for students

Fridays are reserved as days of reflection and planning for faculty to review the implementation of changes and adapt as necessary. Families will be invited to contribute to the review process.

2020-2021 School Year Calendar Subject to Change

2020-2021

School Year Calendar



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	Early Return Program
	School Resumes Modified Schedule
	Autumn Term
	Winter Term
	Spring Term
	Flexible Summer Term

	No Students
	No School
14.0	September
20.0	October
16.0	November
10.0	December
13.0	January
15.0	February
23	March
16	April
20	May
18	June
165.0	Total Days
165	Goal
14	Flexible Summer Term

- This calendar upholds a commitment to 165 school days
- It indicates the option to extend the year through July 16
- It extends Thanksgiving and Winter breaks to provide additional time for families to self-isolate and monitor viral symptoms before returning to the community
- Faculty and Staff are scheduled to work during extended breaks to design program adaptations for the winter

An Invitation to Families

"How can the school work with parents in this new and expanded learning context?"

-BWS Parent Survey

We will embrace and nurture our community so we may all rest in a sense of belonging - we are journeying together in uncharted territory.

New Opportunities to Connect:

- Share your thoughts at our **"active listening milestones"** staggered throughout the year
- Special **learning series** for families launching in August
- Join our creative efforts to **reimagine community festivals and events**
- Join **working groups** focused on enhancing our outdoor learning spaces
- Share your ideas for family involvement by emailing reopening2020@berkshirewaldorfschool.org

Promoting Health and Well-being

"I know there will be some changes, but I hope the teachers can normalize those changes and retain the core Waldorf spirit of creativity and independent thought in the education."

-BWS Parent Survey Response

- The health and well-being of the growing child is core to the Waldorf curriculum
- A Waldorf Education builds a foundational sense of well-being, emotional safety and mental peace
- Our expanded outdoor learning program capitalizes on the freedom of the open air and the healing that comes from connecting with nature
- We empower children by helping them maneuver and adhere to guidelines with creativity and with compassion for differing individual needs
- We sustain health through the joy of connectedness

Health and Safety Guidance

Sources:

Initial Fall Reopening Guidance June 25, 2020. Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)

Additional Guidance on Reopening and Fall Reopening Frequently Asked Questions July 10, 2020. Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner, Massachusetts DESE

The BWS Medical Advisory Panel

- We are adapting a set of Health and Safety Protocols for our community from the preliminary safety guidelines for reopening schools provided by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)
- Comprehensive Health and Safety protocols for school reopening have not yet been released
- A combination of masks or face-coverings, physical distancing, handwashing and symptom monitoring is presently the strongest defense against the spread of Covid-19
- We are planning a dedicated town hall to address health and safety measures when more information is available
- Our Medical Advisory Panel will assist in the determination of our school's specific protocols and provide community education as needed

Program

"I think our family needs to know more about what the school days will look like moving forward and if it will be a place that is still conducive to receiving a full Waldorf education. They would love to come back!"

-BWS Parent Survey Response

DESE Scenarios

The State of Massachusetts asks schools to design plans for the following 3 scenarios

In Person Learning

Remote Learning

Hybrid

Berkshire Waldorf School Scenarios

As an independent Waldorf school, we are creatively adapting each scenario for continuity of our mission and philosophy

Learning on Campus

Beyond the Classroom:
Safe at Home

Learning in Between



Learning on Campus: Nature Based Learning and the Classroom

Written by the BWS
Faculty Working Group
for Learning on Campus

"I would like to see the school talk to the children about how to strengthen immunity rather than focusing solely on safety."

- Berkshire Waldorf School embraces this unique time through the lens of **possibility**: as an opportunity to reimagine, reinvigorate, and utilize our 30-acre campus of distinct natural resources to deepen the nature connections in our curriculum and the children's learning experience.
- When indoors, we have established the capacity to take necessary precautions, such as spaced tables and desks, safe movement patterns, cleanliness routines, and if needed, dividing into learning cohorts.

Nature Based Learning

We are building upon our existing outdoor programming with enthusiasm and purpose. We have identified new and existing outdoor classroom spaces to engage in dynamic and restorative learning opportunities.

Through **nature based learning** we cultivate:

Empathy We encourage presence and active listening. We practice storytelling and ritual.

Exploration We utilize the canvas of nature as classroom and appreciate the gifts of the landscape. We believe time in the natural world facilitates outward and inward discovery.

Social Action/Global Citizenship We cultivate the capacity to be change makers; through the lens of purposeful service-oriented work, community partnerships and service (middle grades). We address the pressing issues of our times such as climate change and empower our students to be lasting stewards.

Natural Resource Mapping

- **Woodland outdoor classrooms have been identified and will be set up as “base camps.”** Opportunities for curriculum and community engagement will be offered as these spaces are realized. Simple shelters, seating, work stations, and other learning features will be created for multi-purpose use throughout all grades and subjects.
- **Natural resources around the campus have been mapped.** These unique natural features include an established biodynamic garden with a greenhouse, dye garden, culinary and medicinal garden, Earth loom, pollinator garden, orchard, and animals in residence. Other natural resources include Maple Grove Woods and Pond, the Green River, Birdsong Meadows and established trails including Wise Old Owl trail system.

This work is ongoing and a great opportunity for families to offer help and support along the journey.

Classroom Learning

We, the teachers, are dedicated to becoming stronger versions of ourselves, building upon our foundation and looking to the future with deep commitment to build capacities that meet the needs of our time. We are committed to holding a vision for a holistic Waldorf education, inclusive of all the special elements that serve our students' development.

We are dedicated to utilizing our outdoor classroom space to the fullest extent this year. Early Childhood classes will benefit greatly from the wisdom of our farm and forest program, launched last year. In the grades, main lessons, skills classes and subject classes will be held outdoors whenever possible.

When indoors, we have calculated and configured options for safe spacing while learning. This includes physical design of space and working in smaller cohorts at various times. We have considered how to maintain community and the full social experience through these adaptive solutions.

Learning Beyond the Classroom: Safe at Home

"A living Waldorf classroom cannot be replicated remotely, you need to approach the remote portions totally differently. Don't try to replicate the class -- think outside the box."

-BWS Parent Survey Response

- Learning beyond the classroom refers to the educational experience we will provide in the event of a mandated closure.
- Learning beyond the classroom will be designed with various family needs in mind.
- Written curriculum materials will be available for families, enabling a screen-free experience if preferred.
- We will utilize technology to connect our community across the full school. We will formally address this accommodation in future conversations about curriculum and program.

If your family has a specific need to learn safely at home at various points in the year, please reach out to us about individual accommodations.

reopening2020@berkshirewaldorfschool.org

Learning Beyond the Classroom: Safe at Home

What we know about learning beyond the classroom:

- Perspectives and preferences within the community vary widely on implementing this scenario well
- Our Learning Beyond the Classroom plan is being carefully, comprehensively, and collaboratively designed for 2020-2021
- Our plan is attentive to the developmental stages of children in increments of two years, ie EC, 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8
- We are attentive to families' needs for options, from quantity to mode of delivery. We will continue to include families in the design process
- We are committed to a collaborative process that integrates classroom teachers with subject teachers to deliver a thoughtful, holistic, and balanced program
- We believe that Learning Beyond the Classroom is most effective in limited blocks or terms. In the event of an extended stay at home order, we will provide programming in shortened terms and engage a summer term, if necessary

Learning in Between (Hybrid)

"I think this could help the school ultimately grow and change some of the more rigid aspects of the curriculum and approaches. More joy -- less rigidity."

-BWS Parent Survey Response

- It is possible that during the year we may need to move to a learning scenario that lies somewhere between being on campus full time and being home full time
- This would facilitate smaller student cohorts to gather on campus safely in turns
- Our highest priority is being together, so we are hopeful for the opportunity to creatively blend learning on campus with learning safely at home

We will share more about this and all learning scenarios at a future town hall dedicated to curriculum and program



Enrollment

We are committed to offering each student who is currently part of our community a space in their class for the 2020-2021 school year. We want to work with each family to make continuation possible.

If you have not already submitted your enrollment agreement, the final date is **Wednesday, July 22.**

Submitting your enrollment agreement at this time, enables us to begin the next stage of work with more variables determined, including finalizing faculty hiring decisions and complete program planning.

Additionally, while returning families are given priority, we are excited to welcome new families to our community where there is space. After July 22nd, we will open classroom spaces to new and relocating families.

"None of us really know what we will be comfortable with as each week passes, but knowing that the school takes this so seriously is a help, and knowing that it's a dialogue is huge."

- BWS Parent Survey Response

Tuition Support



Tuition Relief due to COVID-19 Related Campus Closures

We recognize that modifications to our schedule may not be sufficient to offset periods of at-home learning, and that especially for our younger students, the social/emotional aspect of Waldorf education is at its strongest when delivered in person.

Thus, the Board has authorized a tuition refund/credit plan for the 2020-21 school year for families that request it, if conditions for a refund/credit are met. The refund/credit, payable at the end of the academic year, would be for any 4-week consecutive period of at-home learning, and would be in the following amounts, with a 17-week maximum refund:

50% of tuition in Early Childhood

25% of tuition in Grades 1 - 3

10% of tuition in Grades 4 - 8

Emergency Tuition Support

For families who have been adversely affected by the COVID-19 crisis, BWS has formed a special COVID-19 Hardship Committee who will meet with families individually to review their situation. Please contact the Business Office to request an application for this temporary emergency financial aid.

Questions/Contact

businessoffice@berkshirewaldorfschool.org

With deepest gratitude to all who have worked, and continue to work, to bring this plan together...

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And of course...

*Thank you,
Berkshire Waldorf Families!
We can't wait to see you.*