



Back to School Family Orientation 2022-23 Meeting Notes

Hello, Berkshire Waldorf School Community!

Thank you so much to everyone who joined our 2022-23 school year orientation on Wednesday, September 21. To recap, here are notes, plus contact info to learn more.

For those who weren't able to join the in-person meeting, please read these notes carefully to bring yourself current with your community. Things start happening fast from here!

Remember, we'll have our Community Cafe every Wednesday morning at 8:30, to gather and connect, so drop in for some community time whenever you can. All parents and caregivers are warmly invited.

Welcome to our Year of Renewal!

*The BWS Leadership Team
Renee, Christianna and Kendra*

We remember that we are gathering and learning on the sacred and unceded homeland of the Muh-he-con-ne-ok, the People of the Waters That are Never Still, now known as the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of the Mohican Nation.

2022-23 BWS Year of Renewal

- **50th anniversary in 2021** - During the 2021-22 school year - which we dubbed our "gathering year," as we started to come back together in person, BWS celebrated our school's 50th Anniversary. Our school was founded in 1971 by pioneering teachers from the Rudolf Steiner School in Manhattan. (See Parent Handbook for the whole story.)
- **Threefold Leadership Team** - BWS is a nonprofit, and for the school's 50th anniversary in 2021, our Board of Trustees initiated a governance change to keep up with our school's growth. After months of deep collaboration, our school has created a threefold leadership team with collaborative responsibility for the three overlapping realms of the school.



BWS Leadership Team L-R Renee Far, Christianna Riley, Kendra Smallwood

Renee Far - Community Lead

- Community Lead & Enrollment Director
- School's liaison with BWS community of families & wider Berkshires community, Board of Trustees
- Making connections, listening, learning, collaboratively building bridges
- Welcomes feedback from parents, works with Parent Association
- Collaborates with Pedagogical and Operations Lead, to integrate all facets of school

Christianna Riley - Pedagogical Lead

- School's liaison with BWS teachers, students and caregivers, Board of Trustees
- Part of the Council of Teachers, the core group of teachers guiding the school's pedagogy
- Leads teacher recruitment and development
- Making connections, listening, learning, collaboratively building bridges
- Collaborates with Operations and Community Lead, to integrate all facets of school

Kendra Smallwood - Operations Lead



- Directs finances, facilities, human resources, buildings and grounds
- Leads Development efforts for the school
- Liaises with Board of Trustees
- Making connections, listening, learning, collaboratively building bridges
- Collaborates with Pedagogical and Community Lead to integrate all facets of school life

In this inaugural year of collaborative school leadership, the Leadership Team will be closely examining every function of the school in light of efficiency and our Waldorf values, including creating new charters for all school committees, and reviewing and renewing policies and procedures.

- We look forward to offering you an update on this work in January 2023.

In the meantime, all members of the Leadership Team welcome your feedback, questions and comments. Email them at leadership@berkshirewaldorfschool.org

- **Reaccreditation** - BWS is accredited by
 - AISNE - Assoc. of Independent Schools in New England
 - AWSNA - Assoc. of Waldorf Schools of North America
 - WECAN - Waldorf Early Childhood Assoc. Of North America
- Starting last school year and continuing through 2023, we are undertaking our dual re-accreditation for AWSNA and AISNE. This is a massive, all-school effort, through which faculty and administrators look self-reflectively at every nook and cranny of our school, a process that is informing our governance transition and policies and procedures. It feels like a lot, but it's symbiotic - at the end of this we'll have a small novel!
- **DEI Audit** - To support all our families, this spring BWS began working with Waldorf consultants Alma Partners to make sure everyone in our community is seen, heard and their needs are being met. Alma Partners is helping us examine our curriculum, festivals, environment and messaging through a complete DEI Audit, which continues this Fall.

We may ask for your help in the midst of these transitions and initiatives. Thank you for your partnership.

The following Trustees, Subject Teachers and members of the Administration were also present and introduced themselves:

- **Sarah Gottlieb-Cross** - Board member, BWS alumna and parent of a Fourth Grade student.



- **Holly Henderson-Fisher** - Board member, BWS parent of an Eighth Grader, Sixth Grader and Third Grader.
- **Andrea Patel** - Grade School Librarian. Mrs. Patel is also a BWS alum parent.
- **Krista Palmer** - Grade School Handwork Teacher, Chairperson of the Council of Teachers. Also a Fair Chair, hosting Friday morning crafting sessions from now until November 4, to prepare for our biggest fundraiser, the BWS Holiday Handcraft Fair. Mrs. Palmer is a Waldorf grad and BWS alum parent.
- **Kevin Crowley** - Grade School Games Teacher, Middle School Athletic Director, Cyber Civics teacher for Seventh and Eighth Grades. Mr. Crowley is a Waldorf alum.
- **David Ree** - Woodworking Teacher, Grades 2-8. Mr. Ree has three students at BWS.
- **John Helmke** - Middle School Math and History Teacher. Mr. Helmke is a Waldorf grad and also a BWS alum parent.
- **Philip Ormanovich** - Registrar, in charge of student records. Mr. Philip has two students at the school, a First Grader and an EC student.
- **Ruth Callahan** - Front Desk, in charge of student care, attendance - your first point of contact if your student is ill or you have changes to your schedule.
- **Jenna John** - Administrative Assistant and Leadership Support, working closely with Leadership Team, and co-chairing our reaccreditation effort with Hadley Milliken. Jenna has two students at BWS, in Sixth and Third Grades.
- **Sally Michael Keyes** - Communications Manager and BWS alum parent, working on the Week-at-a-Glance newsletter and other communications.
- **Hadley Milliken** - Known to the children as "Farmer Hadley," teaches biodynamic farming for students from Early Childhood through Eighth Grade. Co-chairing our reaccreditation efforts with Jenna John. Farmer Hadley invites you to visit the BWS Farmstand, open on Fridays at pickup under the big oak tree. Farmer Hadley has a Sixth Grader at BWS.

Overview of Our Waldorf Year - Season of Courage, Season of Light, Season of Renewal

At BWS, you will learn the magic of rhythm. Since we are outside a lot, we live by the rhythm of the seasons. (For a detailed look at the year, [click here.](#))

- This seems like a lot to accomplish one year, and it is!
- What will carry us, just as it carries your children, is the Waldorf concept of rhythm.
- Rhythm of the day, the week, the year.
- Consists of "in breaths" and "out breaths."
- Festivals in each season that support rhythm

- Season of Courage (Fall)

- Michaelmas, Sukkot, First Nations Day, Harvest Festival, Homecoming, Holiday Handcraft Fair
- Bold, energizing, gathering strength
- Season of Light (Winter)
 - Lantern walk, Diwali, Hanukkah, Advent, Kwanzaa
 - Inner light and warmth to get through the long dark winter
 - Time of strong academic work, focus
- Season of Renewal (Spring)
 - May Day, Field Trips, class plays, Olympiad
 - Energy, planting, new growth
- Rhythm, with firm and loving boundaries, holds the students and holds us all together as a school community.
- As a parent/caregiver you will be learning more about rhythm and how you can support children at home via **class nights** and **parent education series**.

For a full overview of the year, see the [Parents page](#) on the website.

1. How We are All Connected

- Our Values - Anthroposophy, STAR Code
- Pedagogical Lead Christianna Riley read a quote from Rudolf Steiner, founder of both Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education (1919). What is Anthroposophy? A conscious awareness of one's humanity. **Several Steiner/Anthroposophical study groups are starting or restarting this Fall, both at our school and at the Berkshire Waldorf High School - watch your Week-at-a-Glance Friday email for details.*
- An Idea of Shared Agreements - Culture of Health (not 24/7), Culture of Collaboration (learning to think of the whole group) - a concerted effort to take care of head, hands and heart, for oneself and each other.
- "We are not here to be perfect, we're here to have courageous conversations." - Christianna Riley
- Collaborative governance
- How you can support all this - reach out in person to have courageous conversations.

2. How You Can Get Connected

- **Kevin - Homecoming Friday, October 21, 3:30pm** on the soccer field behind Early Childhood. Middle School Soccer showcase, scrimmages with alums and parents, grilling, treats, activities, sustainable pom-poms! This is the marquis athletic event and fundraiser

for the BWS athletic department, and there will be Bobcat gear for sale! Brings the whole BWS community together and is an absolute blast. All invited.

- *Krista Palmer* - A few weeks later, **Holiday Handcraft Fair, Saturday, November 12, 10:00am - 4:00pm**, we open our school to the whole Berkshires community for one magical day.
- Leslie Bissaillon (fair@berkshirewaldorfschool.org) is our Fair Coordinator.

How to get ready:

1. Your Class Fair rep will be in touch about your class's activity at the Fair.
 2. Each parent/family contributes set up time the day before the Fair (no school Friday, November 11 for setup) and a shift on Fair Day.
 3. Fair prep crafting workshops Fridays after drop-off in the Handwork Room in the Grade School building.
 4. EC Parents are making little gifts for the "Pocket Person." EC Fair coordinator Vicky Ehrich will be in touch about EC-specific crafting sessions. All are invited, no experience necessary.
 5. Watch your Week-at-a-Glance email for other ways you can contribute - make a pie, knit a square As we say in Waldorf school, Many hands make light work!
- *Yvonne Perez-Zarraga and Tanveer Ahmed* - **Scrip**. What is scrip? An easy way to earn money for the school. You buy gift cards to area grocery stores (Guido's, Berkshire Coop, Big Y and Hawthorne Valley Farm Store), and they give us back a percentage of each purchase. First week of each month - card orders due Friday. (October they will need checks but hoping for paper-free payments thereafter.) Second week of the month - you get your cards. They're fun to buy groceries with, but hang on to them; they're just like money. To order or for questions, email scrip@berkshirewaldorfschool.org
 - **Parent Association - PA Meetings are the first Wednesday of every month**, alternate morning and evening, to accommodate as many parent/caregiver schedules as possible.
 - **Wednesday Coffee Hour** - every Wednesday 8:30 a.m. join us on the lawn in front of the Grade School building for Community Cafe. Inclement or cold weather brings us inside.
 - **Week-at-a-Glance** - check your email in box every Friday evening, for a look ahead at important events in the coming week, and a peek at what students were up to in the week just passed.
 - **Parent Handbook** - Access through your Educate parent portal or the [Parent page](#) on the website, berkshirewaldorfschool.org.
 - **Calendar** - Note that the website calendar is currently not updatable (we are working to fix the problem). Please refer to your calendar in the Educate parent portal, watch the Week-at-a-Glance for weekly events, and keep the **2022-23 Academic Calendar** handy. (Link on [Parent page](#).)



Please call or email Ruth at the Front Desk (frontdesk@berkshirewaldorfschool.org), Philip at the Parent Desk (registrar@berkshirewaldorfschool.org) or Renee Far as your Community Lead (rfar@berkshirewaldorfschool.org) if you have any questions.

3. How You Can Support Your Student

- Be on time! (drop-off & pick-up) - supports your child's education and character development, supports the whole class
- Stay home if sick - supports the teachers and students - use the **symptom checker** to confirm - one or more symptoms means "no go."
- Call and email BOTH your teacher and Front Desk - for illness, pickup changes frontdesk@berkshirewaldorfschool.org - we report attendance at 9:00am.
- At least one parent at each class night.
- Follow Media Guidelines - to get the most out of your child's education
- Dress Code
- Read emails - we won't send 'em if they're not important
- Drive with courtesy and safety - there are children everywhere!
- No Dogs/pets on campus any time

Thanks for joining us! Followup Survey to come:

- Add any questions that are still on your mind
- Let us know Parent Education topics you'd be interested in