

June 25, 2020



Dear Community,

I am hopeful that this communication finds you well and that you and your family and friends are enjoying the warm weather and plenty of outside time together in this beautiful state—we are so fortunate to live in Colorado where our senses can be filled with an awesome climate and beautiful scenery.

I thank each of you for staying apprised of all the pick-up dates, the Town Halls, the class projects, and the celebrations and graduations as we wrapped up our school year. I am hopeful that as you engaged in these activities and events, you felt the impact and importance of our community and our intentions even during a tumultuous time.

As school leadership in both faculty and administration work this summer, we continue to reimagine and build DWS toward an even stronger tomorrow. Although we have been managing this COVID-19 crisis for months, we recognize that as we begin our 46th year, these difficulties will one day be behind us. By focusing on a future beyond COVID-19, we will make meaningful decisions now that we can build upon tomorrow.

The 2020-21 school year imagined

In the middle of June each year, DWS finishes up the school-year's business and gets focused on the year ahead. This is a major process, similar to a flower gardener's process of putting beds to bed, preparing the ground for winter and a bountiful next year. This summer, DWS has an accelerated preparation period in between school years, however we are optimistic that when you return in August, you will not have noticed any chaos that may have happened behind the scenes, but will see that we are ready for the opening day of the 2020-21 school year.

As we prepare, I know that many of you are wondering what the upcoming school year will truly look like. I continue to wish I had more answers, and far fewer questions. Please know I am thankful for the commitment you make to The Denver Waldorf School this year and each year when you enroll your child/ren. I recognize what a big commitment it is during an uncertain time.

Indeed, guidelines from local government, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) are still forthcoming and we anticipate hearing and learning more in the coming weeks as we plan to integrate this guidance. We also know that this guidance can change based on the changing pandemic conditions locally. We take the health and safety of our whole community seriously and also understand that, just as in our larger Denver community, there are mixed perspectives on the seriousness of our health crisis. As a school, we will follow the above listed organization guidelines for re-opening.

The Denver Waldorf School anticipates some, but not all, of the following requirements will be in place when we return together in August. As we seek continued guidance, it is our intention that we return to normal operations and loosen restrictions as allowed.

Increased cleaning

The school has increased our cleaning contract with our cleaning company and will also be cleaning high touch areas throughout each school day. As you return to school, you will notice a more tidy school environment that will allow for electrostatic air cleaning regularly in hallways and classrooms. Nevertheless, even with increased cleaning, we anticipate that when there is an exposure to COVID-19 directly in our community, we will close to

more thoroughly clean exposed areas. These increased cleanings will trigger students being transitioned to remote learning programming.

Increased outside time

Waldorf education has historically promoted our connectedness to nature and the importance of being outside. In our recent community survey, there was strong support for continuing to have students outside as much as possible. Fortunately, that desire is consistent with science suggesting lower levels of COVID-19 transmission in outside areas. We will have a healthy rotation of outside experiences, including outside classroom and learning time each school day. This outside time will also allow for time to take proper cleaning measures indoors.

Student Health and Employee Screening

The School anticipates there will need to be health protocols and screenings in place for students and employees. These screenings might involve a few daily questions along with temperature screenings. Screenings might need to occur in the home setting, school setting or both. If a student or employee exhibits symptoms of illness consistent with our current health policy, they will be asked to stay home from school. If at any time throughout the school day they exhibit symptoms consistent with COVID-19, they will be quarantined in a separate nurse room until a family member can pick them up. While all the DWS staff takes the health of community seriously, our Health Coordinator, Christa Gustafson, along with our nurse consultant from Children's Hospital, takes the health of our community especially seriously.

Social Distancing

Social distancing continues to be one way that we can help prevent the spread of disease and it is likely that we will be asked to practice it to the extent possible. These are some of the specific ways you might see social distancing implemented at the school:

- Flow throughout the building: Students may be asked to move throughout the building in ways that prevent co-mingling of different grades and minimizes group gatherings. This may mean that one hallway is for going out onto the playground and one hallway is for coming in.
- Staggered drop-offs and pick-ups: It is expected that the school will have drop-off /pick-up zones or staggered drop-off and pick-up times. This is to avoid all students coming in together at a given time from the playground or from the parking lot.
- Minimal or no group gatherings: It is unlikely that community life, festival life and committee meetings will continue on campus, in person, at least at the beginning of the year.
- Class size/group size: This is an area we are hopeful to get guidance on soon. As discussed at the last Town Hall, we have a plan that allows students to be in school (preferencing the youngest grades and up) and accommodating all of the students if we are able. If students do need to divide into smaller class groups, students will continue to have time with their lead teachers/main lesson teachers each day and we will accommodate special subjects to the best of our ability. Both of these program components are important for a Waldorf experience.

Mask wearing

It is likely that faculty, administrators and visitors to the school will be asked to wear masks in their interactions with students and each other. We do not have clear guidance around students wearing masks or the ages for which rules might apply. If it is not required to wear masks, students will still be able to wear masks if that is the best choice for their personal situation regardless of requirements.

4 Stages of re-opening

Stage 1: Together Again

Stage 1 is our back-together-as-we-intend plan. Our community is eager to be back together in ways that promote and encourage the social curriculum that has been developed and mastered during the 100 years of Waldorf education. We are not imagining that this, at least at the beginning of the year, is how it will be in school, but we remember that the changes we are asked to make now are temporary and that eventually we will look back at this challenging time knowing that we had courage to not only do, but maintain doing, the difficult thing.

I hold out high hopes that we will have a *Together Again* party and picnic similar to back-to-school picnics we enjoyed the past few years to celebrate our togetherness as members of the Denver Waldorf School Community!

Stage 2: In Person

This is the likely scenario and stage that we will be in when we return to school in late August. In this stage all students will have the opportunity for full-day learning in the school building with physical distancing measures in place. Students will be together with their own class as one group or in split small groups with the mixing of teachers and students minimized into cohorts. Further guidance will dictate how large the class sizes can be and how many students and teachers can be a part of any cohort. The idea behind cohorting in this way is that when there is an exposure or a case of COVID-19 in the community, the school will be able to better trace and treat cohorts of students and potentially have less impact to the whole school community at any one time.

Stage 3: Blended Learning

This stage would be in effect if the school needed to have less students on campus at the same time or if there were rooms on campus we couldn't use at any given time for in-class learning and therefore couldn't accommodate all students on campus. In this blended format, some students would be on campus and some students would integrate a schedule of in-person and distance learning. It is always a priority for us to be together for in-person learning as much as possible. In a Blended Learning model, younger students might be at school while middle school or high school students rotate between coming to school and learning from home.

Stage 4: Distance Learning

It is expected that the school will have to move between the above stages and distance learning throughout the school year. Distance learning may take place when the school is closed for cleaning or when a community member is affected by COVID-19 and we are asked to quarantine from each other. It is not likely that students will experience distance learning the way they did this year, being away months at a time, however we do anticipate that certain cohorts may need to be out for a couple of days or even a couple of weeks throughout the year.

Our Dream Team of teachers and administrators have been developing programming improvements and establishing student expectations for our Distance Learning stage.

- Platform Changes: We are moving from Zoom to Google Classroom because we believe that Google Classroom will serve our students and parents better than Zoom as many students should be able to navigate their lessons and classrooms more easily on their own and older students will be able to upload homework on a regular basis.
- Expectations and schedule K-12: The Denver Waldorf School offers a rich curriculum including both academics and arts. Students in all grades will be expected to engage in both. For all classes, student accountability through attendance, behavior, and work completion shown through uploads of homework, recordings, and pictures showing progress will be expected. Tardiness to class and late completion of assignments will affect student scores. Proficiency of content will be assessed regularly through participation and understanding, coursework quality and accuracy, and quizzes and tests. These expectations will be set appropriate to the grade of the student and shared on our website and class meetings at the start of the school year.
- Student support during remote learning: Meetings with all students and families who have a 504 plan are being scheduled now to occur during July. A remote learning plan will be developed and worked on with the class teacher. High School students will have formalized work plans and communication expectations set between students and teachers.
- Parents can expect the following depending on the grade level of your student:
 - Lower School Grades 1 and 2
 - Consistency and rhythm that includes pre-recorded songs, verse, stories, artistic activities and lessons
 - Small group Google Classroom calls for reading and math weekly

- Office hour check ins with parent
- Google classroom meetings of whole group for sharing and connection
- Daily practice work and uploading of student work
- Lower School Grades 3 through 5
 - More consistency and rhythm across the grades
 - Daily live Google Classroom calls
 - Daily main lesson videos
 - Weekly artistic videos
 - Small group Google Classroom calls for reading and math weekly
 - Daily practice and project work handed out and collected regularly
 - Daily practice work and uploading of student work
- Middle School Grades 6 through 8
 - More consistency and rhythm across the grades
 - Similar schedule to Grades 3 through 5 with added student office hours for student support
 - Independent research and group projects
 - Work uploaded daily
 - Middle school math will include three lessons per week and meetings once per week in small groups
 - Assignments will be handed out at weekly pick-ups and turned in the following morning
- High School
 - During remote phases of learning, HS students will follow a consistent rhythmic schedule from 9am-3pm
 - Students will participate in Google Classroom meetings and engage in independent academic work, movement and music
 - Logs and/or recordings of non-academic work is expected
 - All classes will meet 5 days per week and be graded

We are hopeful that each student will thrive in the learning environment at The Denver Waldorf School next year whether in-person or remote. We expect to be flexible and adaptable, to continue modifying our work to meet the students before us, to respond to their needs, and we expect them to reach their full potential.

Student flexibility in learning on and off our campus

During this uncertain time, many families are curious about the school's flexibility around classroom and distance learning schedules for their individual child. We recognize that at any given time, a student may need to participate in their classes from their own home environment due to illness, exposure or the climate or comfort with the illness trajectory in the Denver metro area or DWS specifically. Although we know that our best work is when we are all together in person, we are planning on having main lesson classes available to students who are home. Many logistics are being examined to determine whether this same schedule is feasible for special subject classes. We are faced with balancing our intentions of the lesson, the classroom space and location, and our financial resources to better understand and navigate what is possible.

We are unable to offer tuition discounts for families who are interested in their child attending only a portion of the day throughout the school year. However, we are willing to discuss flexible schedules to better accommodate your student or family needs during this time.

Contracts, Timelines and Holding Class spots

We are hopeful that the combination of our intentional curriculum plan, STAR funds available, and a commitment to Waldorf education, will enable our community to come through this storm together. We recognize that none of us anticipated enduring these challenges to our learning and teaching environment and for some families, what DWS can offer during the coming year will not be workable for a variety of reasons. For those who have not enrolled yet, our discounted re-enrollment fee of \$350.00 still stands. For those who need to make a different

education choice for your student this coming year, please note that contracts will go into effect after the July 1, 2020 due date. Please contact finance@denverwaldorf.org or registrar@denverwaldorf.org should you need to make change regarding your contract.

Many questions have come to our attention in regard to the desire to hold classroom spots or prioritize our current student enrollment into the future if families are unable to return to school this year. The Denver Waldorf School cannot guarantee students a spot in a class at a later date if they unenroll during this time. DWS is building a stronger school through this crisis and in this strength, we want to prioritize healthy class sizes along with abundant resources for our students. Prioritizing these ideals while simultaneously maintaining the fiscal health of our school community must be navigated strategically, especially during this time of increased expenses due to COVID-19.

We are fortunate to have continued interest from students and families looking for a school model that meets their needs during this tumultuous time. We maintain that we can serve our current students with the intention of truth, beauty and goodness as our guiding principles. In that, The Denver Waldorf School must make room for new community members to join us when there are openings in a current class. Although we are unable to guarantee enrollment for students at later times, we will always welcome previously enrolled students back with open arms when it is at all feasible.

Upcoming

This Saturday we graduate our class of 2020 with a heartfelt, small, in-person graduation at our campus. Although this event cannot be open to the community, we know each of you shares in celebrating our graduates as they set out to make meaningful change in the world. Additionally, please continue to watch this summer for their radio play and class play! We know you will be impressed with this group's final class contributions to our community.

Community members can expect a school communication late in July informing families of any new developments, preparations, schedules and stages of school re-opening. We continue to plan for August 24th as our first day of school and we are imagining and hoping for this to be on campus with a Stage 2 start.

With Love, Light and Health,
Kelly Church



Kelly Church