

Asheville Waldorf School Back-to-School Plan



August 18, 2021

-updated September, 8th 2021

Hands, Head, and Heart

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Dear AWS Community,

Our parents, faculty, staff and children worked together in the 2020-21 school year to make the unprecedented move to our off-campus, outdoor program. This courageous effort highlighted our community's resilience and dedication. Over the past few months, our Faculty, Administration, and Board of Directors have continued that dedication to prepare for the 2021-22 school year. We are committed to meeting whatever challenges the coming year may bring us with flexibility, creativity, and cooperation.

The recent uptick in the number of positive COVID-19 cases in our area prompted our school to review and adjust our plan to new guidance and information for safely opening our doors this fall. We appreciate your understanding and patience given the unique changes of the past few weeks.

Following the guidance from many, including the CDC and NCDHHS, Asheville Waldorf School will continue to hold in-person learning at our Magnolia Campus. We are layering mitigation strategies, including but not limited to enhanced air filtration and ventilation, cleaning, and physical distancing to help the school reduce the chance of transmission of COVID-19. You can help us keep our school and community healthy by monitoring your child(ren) at home, supporting their immune systems and sleep, and communicating with us about any symptoms that may arise.

We are moving indoors, but our classrooms have been transformed to hybrid spaces that allow for great ventilation and outdoor air exchange. There will be additional strategies implemented this year to create spaces that are more reflective of outdoor classrooms than a typical indoor school room.

The details of our policies and procedures for the upcoming school year can be found in our Back-to-School Plan below as well as will be available on Parent Square.

Grounded in our school pillars of Social Renewal and Human Connection, AWS is committed to creating a community and a sense of belonging where everyone feels welcome, respected, and their privacy is safeguarded. As our Social Harmony Council reminded us last year "...while there may not be a universal shared reality in regards to the covid crisis, there are many other values that are shared among our families and community. The biggest shared value is the wish for the physical and emotional health and wellbeing of our children, our families and our community. The ideas of how to best meet this value may look different for different families."

Our focus as a school is the education of the whole child. We respect the freedom of parents to make choices that feel best for their families, within the framework of our agreements as a community and our legal obligations as a school. As a school we strive to pave a middle way with doors and classrooms open to all who desire to be with us.

Our school is committed to holding and honoring the current guidelines outlined by North Carolina's Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS). Our Back-to-School Plan is also informed by current Covid-19 guidelines from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), consideration from the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA), and the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), among others.

The Asheville Waldorf School will continue to provide updates regarding health and safety protocols for the 2021-22 school year. Please keep in mind that the specifics of this plan are subject to change based on updates to health and safety guidance and also on the shifting conditions and needs of our school.

AWS's Health-COVID Team on behalf of the Asheville Waldorf School,

Lance Player, AWS Board of Directors, Interim President, Parent

Nicole DiDio Johnson, AWS Board of Directors, Parent

Jack Bryant, Administrative Chair

Kelsey Dion, Core Faculty, Fourth Grade Teacher

Brita Nordgren, Core Faculty, Educational Support Director, Parent

Overview

Asheville Waldorf School will follow state and county school Covid-19 requirements for opening in-person, on-campus for the 2021-22 school year. In addition, we will take into consideration any state, county, CDC, Association of Waldorf Schools of North America and other agencies' recommendations concerning school opening.

Additionally, there will likely be other variables for us to consider in the coming year. As a result, there may be the need for a whole class or a whole section to pivot to distance learning during times of quarantine.

Individual students who are at home for an illness or are required to stay home for an extended period due to Covid-19 symptoms, a positive Covid-19 test, or exposure to a Covid-19 positive person will be provided with instructional materials as appropriate for class and grade.

Values that Guide Us

- **Health and Safety** In order to open on campus, we must ensure that gathering together is done safely and in consideration of the health and safety of our community.
- **Predictability and Rhythm** Our students and their parents/caregivers need a predictable, healthy rhythm and routine.
- **Building Relationships** Regular interaction with teachers and classmates plays a pivotal role in students' educational experience and their social-emotional development.
- **Striving for a Full On-Campus Program** Having all of our students on campus for a full 5-day on-campus program is our preference and ultimate goal.
- **Education of the Whole Person** Our on-campus will continue to provide meaningful academic, co-curricular, and community components.
- **Flexibility** We recognize that creating innovative programming is necessary, especially given the uncertainty about the future.
- **Community** Maintain the strength and unity of our community through shared experiences to the greatest extent possible.

Covid-19 Protocols: Health and Safety Guidelines

The Asheville Waldorf School expects that guidance for how the school can operate on-campus may change throughout the school year. The following health and safety guidelines are based on the latest guidance issued by many sources, including AWSNA, local, state and federal resources.

Screening Before Entry/Cases of Illness at School

NC DHHS as well as the CDC does not currently recommend schools conduct daily symptom screening for students. The effectiveness of COVID-19 symptom screening in schools is not well-known. Children are less likely to spread virus than adults. Children are more likely to have no or minimal symptoms from COVID-19 and symptom screening will fail to identify some students who have COVID-19. Symptom screening will also identify children who do not have COVID-19 and will unnecessarily exclude students from school. Schools provide essential educational, developmental, and support services to students and families. Therefore, excluding students from school has different consequences from excluding individuals from other settings. This makes the considerations for symptom screening in students in K-12 schools different from those for other settings or populations.

Students may not come to campus if they are ill or exhibiting any of the symptoms below:

- Fever of 100.4 or higher
- New or worsening cough
- Shortness of breath
- Chills
- Recent loss of taste/smell
- Body aches
- Sore throat not related to another medical condition
- New onset of vomiting or diarrhea
- New onset of severe headache, especially accompanied by fever

Please inform the Main Office if your student is ill.

Our Faculty and Administration will follow the same careful daily assessment.

After arriving at school, students (and staff) who develop a temperature of 100.4 F or any symptoms mentioned above, will need to go home. Parents/caregivers will be immediately notified, and the student must be picked up within an hour of being notified.

Great diligence will be given to our Illness Policy (as spelled out in our Parent Handbook.) If a child becomes ill while at school, parents will be contacted to pick up their child. Asheville Waldorf School does not have facilities or staff to care for children who are too ill to remain in class. Thus it is of great importance to secure support for your family in the event that you are unable to stay home.

Families should inform the Main Office if any enrolled child tests positive for Covid-19, so that AWS may follow guidance and implement sanitization protocols and proactively communicate while protecting privacy.

Students may return to school if they have been fever-free without fever-reducing medication and are otherwise symptom(s) free for 24 hours.

Response to any Positive Tests/Exposures in the School Community

We will continue to work with local and state guidance for handling any positively confirmed Covid-19 cases in our school community. We expect this to continue to mean the following (understanding that these directions are subject to change)

If a Covid-19 test is positive for an enrolled child or employee, parents/caregivers or employees are asked to inform the Administrative Chair immediately.

Enrolled child or employee may return to school when the following are met:

- 7 days out from the date positive test was taken, *AND*
- Fever free for 24 hours without fever reducing medication, *AND*
- Symptoms have improved
- *Note: If the student/employee's Doctor has suggested a later return date, we will follow the Doctor's recommendation*

If a student or employee has a confirmed exposure to a person(s) who tested positive for Covid-19, employees and parents/caregivers are asked to inform the Administrative Chair immediately.

Enrolled child or employee may return to school when the following are met:

- 7 days out from last exposure, *AND* is symptom free
 - If symptoms appear
 - Quarantine for 7 days from start of symptoms or duration of illness, whichever is longer *AND*
 - Be symptom-free for 24 hours before returning to school

Face Coverings

- In alignment with Buncombe County School Board and CDC recommendations, face coverings are universally required indoors unless exemption is on file with the school (see below)
- Consistent with government guidelines in 2020-2021, we will honor exemptions based on medical or behavioral challenges that would be impacted by a face covering. The child's parent or guardian may communicate the exemption through verbal or written communication to the Front Office *and* your child's class teacher.

- Parents/Guardians/Visitors are asked to wear masks indoors if accompanying children to their classroom.
- Face masks are not required to be worn outdoors by students, faculty/staff, parents, or visitors

Per CDC and NCHHS recommendations, it is necessary to ensure a layered mitigation strategy beyond masking. This includes physical distancing, ventilation, filtration, hand hygiene, adequate access to diagnostic screening and careful monitoring for increases in COVID-19 cases within our school. AWS is following all of these recommendations.

Please note that there may be students and faculty/staff who choose to wear masks when not required for personal reasons. We ask that everyone be understanding and respectful of that choice.

- The student/family will provide 2 face masks, one to wear and one extra in their backpacks, unless claiming an exemption.
- Reusable face masks provided by families should be washed by the families regularly.

Physical Distancing

Physical distancing requirements are a minimum of 3 ft indoors between students and staff when possible.

We acknowledge as a school that physical distancing cannot happen at all times. Based on studies from the 2020-2021 school year, CDC recommends schools maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms, combined with indoor mask wearing to reduce transmission risk. When it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of at least 3 feet, it is especially important to layer multiple other prevention strategies, such as indoor masking, symptom monitoring, improved ventilation, handwashing and covering coughs and sneezes, staying home when sick with symptoms of infectious illness including COVID-19, and regular cleaning to help reduce transmission risk.

Classroom and Facility Configuration

- Classrooms will be configured with physical distancing in mind.
- Repurposing of alternative spaces in the school to decrease density of student traffic, especially in shared spaces, entrances, bathrooms and hallways.
- Faculty are considering schedules that will reduce multiple classes passing in the hallways and entryways
- Classes with outdoor exits will exclusively use these routes for entry and exit
- Outdoor spaces will be used to maximize outside time, except in extreme weather conditions.

Student Cohorts

To minimize potential student exposure to Covid-19, the school will follow these protocols

- Keep students in the same cohort throughout the day in EC-7th grade and prevent inter-group contact with others.

- EC
 - Nursery will operate as their own cohort
 - The two Kindergartens will operate as one cohort
- Grades classes will each have their own class teacher and operate as single cohorts:
 - To note, grades 2, 4-7 will share an entrance/exit to the building, but will maintain class cohorts to the fullest extent possible. Given this shared space, quarantines for these cohorts may need to be adjusted.

Quarantines

We all know how important it is for our students to return to in-person learning, five days a week. A universal mask policy should also greatly **reduce** the need to quarantine students who have been in close contact to a COVID positive case. We acknowledge this will disrupt our regular schedules.

- Cohort/individual exposure to Covid-19 will quarantine for 7 days.
 - Parents will need to keep the school (class teacher and Main Office) updated on their child's wellness status.
 - After the quarantine time has ended, students and faculty/staff may return to school if they have been symptom free for 24 hours
- All school members who were exposed (within 3 feet physical distance for fifteen minutes or longer, unmasked and indoors per CDC guidelines) will be quarantined as well.

Early Childhood:

It is not in alignment with our pedagogy to engage children electronically on the screen. In the case a nursery or kindergarten class is required to quarantine, teachers will provide support to parents in bringing healthy rhythm and activities to their children at home.

Grades:

In the case a grades class is required to quarantine, teachers will provide remote learning options for that class during the designated quarantine period.

Covid-19 quarantines have given us an opportunity to deepen our school's relationship with distance-learning. We have been in conversation as Faculty and Staff examining what meets the needs of the students during these times as well as what aligns with our pedagogy and values. To this end, we note that distance learning will look different for each class. Just as we are holding the developmental stages at the forefront of our curricula, the same awareness and attention will be given to what is asked of students during distance learning periods.

Hand Hygiene: Handwashing and Hand Sanitizing

Handwashing removes pathogens from the surface of the hands, and using soap and water is the most effective method to achieve this.

- Students and staff must wash hands or sanitize upon arrival at school, before eating, after bathroom use, and before dismissal.

- When handwashing, students and staff will use soap and water to wash all surfaces of their hands for at least 20 seconds, wait for visible lather, rinse thoroughly, and dry with an individual disposable towel.
- If handwashing is not feasible, students and staff will use hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent ethanol or at least 70 percent isopropyl alcohol content. They will apply to all surfaces of their hands and in sufficient quantity that it takes 20 seconds of rubbing hands together for the sanitizer to dry. Hand sanitizer will be placed at key locations throughout the school buildings.
- Grade 1 – 7 students are welcome to bring their own bottles of hand sanitizer to carry and use throughout the day.

Cleaning

- We have arranged for thorough cleaning of the school with non-toxic Covid-19 disinfectants.
 - High traffic and high touch areas will be cleaned daily
 - Whole school cleaning will happen twice a week
- In the event of any Covid-19 diagnosis in our student body or the faculty/administration, we will follow the cleaning recommendations of the Buncombe County Department of Health.

Vaccinations:

Faculty, Administration and Board ask all community members to respect individual choice and privacy when it comes to vaccination status.

Reduce Campus Density and Congestion.

Indoors

- When indoors, there should be 3 ft physical distancing between students
- On-campus events, when permitted, will be limited to numbers and protocols specified by state and local guidance or at the discretion of the school.

Parent/Caregiver

- Parents/Caregivers not claiming an exemption should wear a mask indoors and maintain physical distance when possible.
- Parents/Caregivers may be on campus if they have an appointment with school personnel, are volunteering or are attending a pre-approved school meeting/event.

Visitor/Service Worker on-campus restrictions will apply as follows:

- Service workers needing to enter the buildings- (i.e., contractors and vendors) will be required to sign in at the Main Office, wear a mask and maintain physical distance.
- Pre-approved visitors (non-parents/caregivers) need to sign in at the Main Office, wear a mask and maintain physical distance.

Designated drop-off and pick-up locations for each class will be outdoors to reduce congestions. We will continue with the following drop-off and pick-up practices:

- Grades: The back play field will be used for drop-off and pick-up, while parent or caregiver stays in the car (except for new students who may need their parents to accompany them to a designated gathering space)

- Early Childhood: The Kindergarten and Nursery playards will be used for drop off and pick up. Parents will accompany students to their designated meeting place.

We will make the following school day adjustments:

- Bathroom breaks will be staggered.
- Outdoors: Each class will be outside daily utilizing our campus outdoor areas for lessons when possible/appropriate.

Physical Campus Adjustments

According to the CDC recommendations, ensuring proper ventilation with outside air can help reduce indoor airborne contaminants, including the virus that causes COVID-19. During the school day, improved ventilation will be a priority in our school building.

Specific Adjustments:

- Keep windows open during the school day to increase natural ventilation
- Use indoor fans in combination with air filtration
- Configure classroom desks and equipment considering 3 ft physical distancing
- Repurpose alternative spaces in the school to decrease density of student traffic, especially in shared spaces such as entrances, bathrooms and hallways through staggered schedule
- Continue to use outdoor spaces for recess, main lessons and subject lessons when appropriate.

Though we have a building this year, we are striving to maximize our time outdoors. EC-7 grade students will need to be prepared with appropriate rain gear, cold weather gear, boots, and extra clothing, which will remain at school for the first semester to ensure success. These items should be labeled with the student's name.

Early Childhood Program

We are excited to welcome you and your children back to school! Children are so very sensitive to the energies around them, and during this time of great anxiety and unrest, our focus will be on fostering a sense of security, trust, and connection within the children. At the very core of our work with young children is an understanding that the primary task of the human being in the first seven years of life is learning to feel at home in our own bodies. When children feel secure in their bodies, they feel secure in the world. Together, we can create an environment in which children feel that the world is a beautiful and welcoming place, and have ample opportunities to practice being in their bodies, in community, and in the world.

Early Childhood Program-specific protocols

- The bridge and parent-child classes will operate 100% outdoors this year.

- The EC program will begin the school year outdoors. The school will reassess the situation with COVID as cold weather approaches to determine whether we will continue to be fully outdoors or move portions of the day indoors.
- Each nursery and kindergarten class will have a designated outdoor space including a covered shelter
- Face Coverings will not be required outdoors
- Please note: There may be children and faculty/staff who choose to wear a mask when not required for personal reasons. We ask that everyone be understanding and respectful of that choice.
- Students will wash their hands frequently throughout the day, and teachers will support children in learning and practicing proper handwashing techniques.
- Each outdoor classroom will have a hand washing station
- Teachers will support children and parents with creative strategies and shared language between home and school regarding our safety practices.
- Indoor space may be used in case of emergency need due to danger in the immediate area
- There will be regular cleaning and airing of the classrooms and their contents.
- Nutrition remains a vital part of our curriculum. We will provide snacks that are easy to prepare and eat outdoors.
- Students enrolled in the full-day kindergarten program will rest indoors for quiet, calm, and a break from the elements. After an indoor rest time, there will be outdoor playtime.
- Rest time cots will be placed a minimum of 3 ft apart.
- Bedding will be sent home periodically for laundering.
- Children will not wear face masks during rest; due to the risk of suffocation or strangulation, children should not wear face coverings while napping.
- Bathrooms will be used by one class at a time.
- Surfaces will be sanitized regularly. Bathroom surfaces will be routinely sanitized.
- Hand sanitizer will be available in every indoor and outdoor classroom.
- It is not in alignment with our pedagogy to engage children electronically on the screen. In the case a nursery or kindergarten class is required to quarantine, teachers will provide materials via Google Classrooms to support parents in bringing healthy rhythm and activities to their children at home.

Grade Program

Organizational Principles

Grades classes will each have their own class teacher and operate as individual cohorts:

- Grades 2, 4-7 will share an entrance/exit to the building, but will maintain class cohorts to the fullest extent possible. Given this shared space, quarantines for these cohorts may need to be adjusted.
- Outdoor space will be used as much as possible to provide adequate outdoor time and physical distancing.
- Classroom spaces throughout the campus will be reallocated with 3 ft physical distancing
- Students in Grade 1-7 and faculty/staff are not required to wear a face mask outdoors. Students and faculty/staff are required to wear a face mask at all times when they are indoors except when eating or drinking.
- Please note that students and faculty/staff may choose to wear a mask when not required for personal reasons. We ask that everyone be understanding of that choice.
- After-School Care: Grades 1-7 After-School Care, 3:15-5:30 pm, will follow the same Covid-19 protocols as the school day.
- Faculty will provide remote learning options for students during quarantine, even when school is open for other students.

What we will provide:

- Hand sanitizer will be available in every indoor and outdoor classroom.
- All bathrooms will be used by one cohort at a time.
- Handwashing will be increased to maintain sanitization standards.
- All surfaces will be sanitized regularly. Bathroom surfaces will be routinely sanitized.

What you will provide:

- To minimize sharing of materials, all students need to bring adequate supplies (teachers will provide a list), and their own food and water. We need to limit sharing of materials as much as possible. Students should bring all of their belongings in a backpack.
- Students will bring a mask to wear during the day unless the student has an exemption
- Students are welcome to bring their own bottles of hand sanitizer to carry and use throughout the day.

Appendix: 2021-22 Asheville Waldorf School Community Commitment

2021-22 Asheville Waldorf School Community Agreement

Always treat children, other parents, faculty and staff in a respectful manner. When problems arise, contact the teacher or an administrative member to ensure that the matter will be resolved in a positive manner. - Pledge to pay fees on or before the due date and agree to the penalties identified in the enrollment agreement. - Understand that fundraising is a necessary and important part of the school's funding, and plan to assist with fundraising and to donate each year at your level of ability. - Volunteer on a regular basis to support the well-being of the school and to assist the teachers and staff as needed. - Agree to bring students to the program consistently and in a timely manner and to pick them up at the specified time without tardiness. - Attend parent-teacher conferences, festivals, parent meetings and special events. - Read Asheville Waldorf School e-newsletters and online calendar located on the school website (www.ashevillewaldorf.org) to be aware of activities and updates, as well as receive and read updates from AWS' ParentSquare account. - Eliminate or limit the amount of "screen" time (e.g. television, computer, videos, Wii, etc.) in your home and for your child, especially during the school week. - Provide healthy lunches and snacks for your child.

Asheville Waldorf School's Safety Measures

AWS's goal is to minimize outside exposure and have early identification procedures in place so the quality of our learning experience remains intact for your student while limiting opportunity for Covid-19 transmission to our community. In addition, out of great respect for each faculty and administrative staff member and their assumption of risk, we commit to the following precautionary measures:

- Close monitoring of symptoms
- Daily faculty and staff health checks
- Daily health screening (parent to student)
- Hygiene routines
- Teaching hygiene techniques
- Sanitation routines
- Teaching hand washing techniques
- Regular cleaning of school
- Face coverings (when required)
- Disinfecting and sanitizing high-touch areas regularly
- Air filtration

Family At-Home Safety Measures

I acknowledge and understand that participation in school activities or programs at AWS during the Covid-19 pandemic presents certain risks beyond AWS's control, and which may exist regardless of whether AWS controls or attempts to control such risks and even if AWS exercises the utmost care in trying to prevent anyone from getting injured or sick.

To show my support and help the school community reduce the chance of transmission, my family and I commit to the following precautionary measures:

When on the AWS campus, adult members of my household commit to the following:

- Pre-monitor for symptoms of Covid-19 and not be on campus with Covid-19 symptoms, if
- one has tested positive for Covid-19 or if one has been in close contact with someone who has been diagnosed with Covid-19
- Hand washing before and after activities

At home, all members of my household commit to the following:

- Disclosure to school if exposed to someone diagnosed with Covid-19, monitor for symptoms and self-quarantine if needed.
- Teach proper hand washing techniques to children
- Promote awareness, help children identify when hand washing might be necessary
- Reporting to school when there is a confirmed exposure or case in our family.