



Aurora Waldorf School Reopening Plan 2020-21

DRAFT - July 17, 2020

Our Mission Statement

Aurora Waldorf School provides a place where children love to learn, educating children for all aspects of life, and fostering capacities within to become successful, self-assured adults who contribute to a better world.

In all that we do, we take into account our school values:

- We create a network of deep, lasting relationships that forms a supportive community of lifelong caring connections
- We teach children to succeed in life, learning in community
- We educate the entire family, adults consciously leading children and each other to realize their full potential and become their best selves
- We promote interconnectedness that builds confidence and self-sufficiency
- We extend the classroom into the outdoors, translating joy-filled learning into wonder and appreciation for the natural world
- We strive to cultivate in our students a life-long LOVE of LEARNING and the capacities to selflessly CONTRIBUTE to a better world

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OVERVIEW

The AWS RTF (Reopening Task Force) and its many working groups have been hard at work creating this DRAFT reopening plan for 2020-21. We created this plan based on the following:

- Parent feedback provided through the June Crafting the Year Ahead survey
- Faculty feedback on remote learning
- Health and safety requirements from NYS

While Governor Cuomo, NYSED, and NYSDOH released their initial interim guidance for public schools this week, we are still waiting on the guidance for independent schools. We anticipate many of the requirements will be similar to those for public schools. Both public and independent schools are required to submit a reopening plan for approval by the state no later than July 31st.

It was also announced that a school may open on-campus if its region is in Phase 4 and daily infection rate is below 5% on August 1st, and remains below 9% leading up to the first day of school. Currently, the WNY Region is in Phase 4 with a daily infection rate under 3%. As long as the infection rate remains under 5%, our first day of school for all students (Pre-k - Grade 8) will be on-campus on Tuesday, September 8th.

The main question that we are working to answer with this planning is “What will the return to school be like for our students?” This draft of our plan is designed to help faculty, parents, staff and students begin to collectively imagine the answer. We have made the following draft plan with these key ideas at the forefront:

- We are committed to offering full days, and full weeks of school instruction on campus, whenever it is possible.
- We are working to ensure that our students will be the least affected by the changes we need to make. This means that adults will carry the extra work and care as much as possible, so that students will have the opportunity to learn, play, socialize, and enjoy their childhood.

As you read through these plans, please remember that they are in draft form. As we receive community input and get more guidance from the State of New York, our understanding and planning will develop. We will be updating and expanding this draft over the next few weeks as we fully prepare for the 2020-21 school year. We are working as a coordinated group of faculty, staff and Board to be ready for whatever is needed to operate the school safely and warmly this fall.

Remote Learning Overview

We learned a great deal from our Beyond the Classroom Learning experience in the spring and appreciate the input and feedback we received from our community. Common themes included the desire to minimize remote learning, offer tuition consideration for periods of remote learning, and increase connections among all members of our school community.

Minimizing Periods of Remote Learning

- Flexible Calendar

We have introduced 24 Flex Days to our school calendar to allow us the flexibility to shift our school breaks. This means we will be able to give our families up to 24 instruction-free days during rolling periods of campus closure instead of asking them to do remote learning. We will then make up those days later in the year, when we hope we will be able to have students on campus again. See the Flexible Calendar section below for full details.

Offering Tuition Considerations for Periods of Remote Learning

- Tuition Credit Program

We are offering partial tuition credit toward the 2021-22 school year for up to twelve weeks of remote learning if our campus must be closed. See the Tuition Credit Program section below for full details.

Increasing Connections School-Wide

- Interconnected Learning

As we prepare for possible periods of off-campus learning in 2020-21, we have renamed our remote learning program **Interconnected Learning** to emphasize our

focus on maintaining and building the connections between the teachers and students, the teachers and parents, the students with their classmates, parents within their children's classes, and the whole school community. The teachers are creating lesson plans and class rhythms structured with more connections to increase the engagement of students should periods of Interconnected Learning be required.

Health & Safety Overview

Requirements for school health and safety are still evolving and will likely continue to evolve throughout the school year. We are preparing to adapt to a changing situation and plan to:

- Follow the State of New York requirements and the guidelines from the CDC for reopening schools, and meet their expectations in the way best suited to teaching our students on our campus
- Keep our campus open to students unless we are mandated to close, or if student attendance or staffing is too low to operate on-campus learning
- Spend time outside to mitigate the risk of spreading COVID-19 and to counter the effects of the statewide stay-at-home order this past spring
- Provide a remote learning option for students with health concerns, even when campus is open for other students

Next Steps

We are continuing to develop these plans throughout the next several weeks and will be both gathering community input and reporting back to the full community regularly.

- July 18th - Draft Plan emailed to parents
- July 22nd at 6:30pm - Virtual Community Meeting for questions and input
- July 31st - Revised Plan emailed to parents
- August 4th at 6:30pm - Virtual Community Meeting for clarifying questions
- September 8th - First Day of School for Pre-K through Grade 8

Questions and concerns should be directed to:

School Administrator:	Anna Harp	aharp@auroraws.org
Faculty Chair:	Lisa Carrow	lcarrow@auroraws.org

HEALTH AND SAFETY

General School-Wide Health and Safety Plans

Protecting Our Students, Families, Faculty and Staff

Monitoring of COVID-19 Symptoms

- Faculty and Staff will complete a health screening before or upon arrival at school each day that will include completion of a symptom checklist and temperature check.
- Each household is required to administer a symptom check, including temperature taking, prior to departure for school for each student and keep any symptomatic students home.
- Families are required to report if their child has:
 - knowingly been in close or proximate contact in the past 14 days with anyone who has tested positive through a diagnostic test for COVID-19 or who has or had symptoms of COVID-19;
 - tested positive through a diagnostic test for COVID-19 in the past 14 days;
 - has experienced any symptoms of COVID-19, including a temperature of greater than 100.0°F, in the past 14 days; and/or
 - has returned from travel from a state on the New York State Travel Advisory or the CDC Travel Advisory in the past 14 days.
- Upon arrival students will have their temperature taken.
- Students with COVID-19 symptoms will be isolated and sent home.

Students Who Show Symptoms While at School

Teachers will monitor students for symptoms of COVID-19 throughout the day. If a student displays COVID-19 symptoms, the teacher will contact the Front Office and the parents will be called to pick up the student. A designated COVID-19 Monitor will come to the classroom and escort the student to the predetermined, comfortable, but isolated location. The student will be cared for by the Monitor while he or she waits for their parent or guardian to pick them up. Students will be asked to wear a mask while waiting.

Hygiene

Students, faculty and staff will be washing hands with soap and water frequently, or will use hand sanitizer when handwashing facilities may not be available. Faculty and staff, families and students will be instructed on proper handwashing and hand sanitizing techniques, as well as proper respiratory hygiene.

Physical Distancing

A physical distance of 6 feet will be maintained between individuals in the school building and on school grounds, unless safety or the activity requires a shorter distance (during which face coverings will be worn).

Face Coverings/Masks

- Face coverings will be worn by faculty, staff and students throughout the day, except during meals, instruction, or when outside with appropriate physical distancing.
- Wearing face coverings may be required more often, if the area COVID-19 infection rate increases without rising to the level that requires us to close our campus.
- While students are not required to wear a face covering when outside and physically distanced, they must carry one in case physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- We will follow all public health guidelines for any exceptions to the use of face coverings.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

The school building will be cleaned following the recommended cleaning protocols during the time of COVID-19. We will be using child-safe and ecologically friendly products that meet state guidelines whenever possible. All high touch surfaces and bathrooms will be cleaned regularly, and any shared spaces will be cleaned between groups of students.

Ventilation

Windows will be kept open and fans running to keep air fresh and moving as much as possible. During inclement weather, they will be opened at regular intervals.

Arrival and Dismissal Protocols

Designated entrances, exits and new procedures for arrivals and departures will be implemented to maintain physical distancing. Staggered drop-offs and pick-ups may also be necessary.

Campus Closures

AWS will close our campus for in-person learning if the daily infection rate rises above the NYS mandated threshold of 9%, or if attendance of staff or students is too low to operate.

Visitors

For the safety of our students, faculty, and staff, we will not be able to welcome visitors, including parents, to our campus during the 2020-21 school year.

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Modes of Operation

In preparation for the coming school year we have imagined multiple possible “modes of operation” for instruction. We may have to move between these modes throughout the year as the State’s level of COVID-19 rises and falls. These modes are:

On Campus: Small Group or Pod Learning (also known as Cohort Learning)

We will be in this mode when the state indicates it is safe to be on campus. AWS is fortunate to have ample building space - as well as extensive outdoor options - in which to find creative solutions for educating the children according to safety guidelines. During this mode, of operation classes that exceed the maximum class size for safe physical distancing will be split into smaller groups of children (Pods).



We are planning to do this to avoid split weeks, staggered days, etc. In this mode, we would limit the number of teachers in contact with each Pod, and no community members or parents would be able to gather with students.

Off Campus: Interconnected Learning (also known as Remote Learning)

This is the mode in which students would primarily use Google Classroom from home computers to access their lessons. We will be in this mode of remote learning only if our campus is closed. We will return to on-campus learning when allowed.

On and Off Campus: Blended Learning

We know that there are students who will not be able to return to campus when the school is open and in-person classes are in session. The teachers are taking these students into consideration and working on ways to allow them to follow lessons in real time. Additionally, we are looking at what additional support and connection would look like for these students and their families.

Our Early Childhood and Grades Programs are making their own plans for how to best adapt their curriculum and instruction to each of these modes.

Early Childhood Program

On Campus: Small Group or Pod Learning (also known as Cohort Learning)

Our Small Group plan includes the following:

- Each class that exceeds the maximum class size for safe physical distancing will be split into smaller groups, or Pods

Off Campus: Interconnected Learning (also known as Remote Learning)

We understand and acknowledge that off-campus learning is far from an ideal way to deliver the curriculum of our Early Childhood classes. However, our plan is to maintain connections with students and parents and offer an Interconnected Learning experience for all instructional days during any potential periods of campus closure in the 2020-21 school year.

We will be preparing craft and activity take home packets this summer that will be ready at the school for periods of Interconnected Learning. If we must transition into this mode of operation, families will be able to take these prepared packets home to support both the activities that the Early Childhood teachers will be bringing during the Interconnected Learning time, and for their own independent use.

This summer, teachers are recording songs, movement activities and stories that can be used in our curriculum posts that are appropriate year-round to easily plug into Interconnected Learning periods any time of the year. These will be like the audio and video offerings of the past spring and will be shared with you through Google Classroom. During an Interconnected Learning period Early Childhood families can expect support for the social and emotional health of families and children through regular contact with teachers and a full array of curriculum ideas for multiple learning styles that provide rich sensory experiences including:

- A Weekly Curriculum Overview with crafts, stories, songs, movement activities, and resources for parents that can be accessed at any time
- A live-virtual class for students – 1x per week for each class for 20-30 minutes
- A live-virtual “Tea Time” for 5-day students and their parents - 1x per week for each class for 20-30 minutes
- Connections with teachers (phone or video chat) as appropriate and requested by the family. During our recent remote learning period, we found that some families did not seek contact with the teacher while others were grateful for a weekly call. Individual contact with teachers is entirely optional and each family is encouraged to request whatever works best for them
- Individual family support from the whole program (including class teachers, assistants and subject teachers) as families need and want during any Interconnected Learning period

Remaining Early Childhood Questions

As we move forward through this summer of planning, we know that there are significant questions for which we have not yet come to decisions. In the Early Childhood Program some of the questions we are carrying include:

Class Structure and Placement for Small Group or Pod Learning

- Classes that are too large to fit in their classroom with physical distancing may be moved into larger rooms or will be split into smaller groups and each Pod will have their own classroom. As we create these Pods, the teachers will take into consideration the constellation of the whole combined class as well as the smaller groups to help inform our decisions. Each Pod may include students from both grades within the class.
- We will be outdoors a great deal more than we usually are to take advantage of the fresh air and our beautiful grounds.
- We are enriching our nature and seasonal curriculum. For example, we will be working together with the students to modify the existing garden and to create beautiful and active outdoor play areas on our school grounds.
- Each Pod will have lessons with their Class Teacher, with additional faculty assigned to their Pod, who will assist with Main Lesson, subject classes and skills lessons.
- Each Pod and Class Teacher will have support teachers assigned. These teachers will stay with the Pod for a block (usually a period of 3 – 4 weeks). At that point, new support teachers may join the pod for another block period. This helps to minimize the number of adults interacting with the Pod of students during each block.
- Pods will not intermingle.
- Recess will be in designated areas of the playground and each Pod will have their own area. Recess and lunch will be scheduled/staggered to allow optimum use of the playgrounds.
- Healthy movement will begin each day and continue regularly throughout the day.
- Teachers are removing all but the most essential items that support curriculum from the classroom to simplify cleaning and sanitization between use.
- All students will be given a designated area to keep their supplies and individual belongings.

Off Campus: Interconnected Learning (also known as Remote Learning)

If we need to take up remote instruction, we will be cognizant of the pace of instruction. We recognize that children's attention span varies by age, and this will be taken into account for lesson presentations. Teachers at each grade level are working to create a plan that balances direct instruction, individual support and social interaction during times of off-campus Interconnected Learning.

Before school starts, teachers will have prepared sets of individual supplies including crayons, pencils, Main Lesson Pages, books and other necessary materials. In these packs, teachers will include instructional packets of lessons that meet the child's grade level needs. If Interconnected Learning is required, these packs can be sent home. We are developing our full set of curriculum materials and schedules for Interconnected Learning periods and will share these in detail with each grade before the start of the 2020-21 school year. However, an overview of what we are exploring includes the following possibilities:

Through Zoom, the teachers would provide the following direct contact with students:

- Two to four Main Lesson Zoom sessions per week, which would include instructional time as well as brief individual work time with the teacher present
- Zoom meetings with small groups to work on particular skills

Teacher office hours would provide an opportunity for:

- Student video conferencing via Zoom with the teacher for extra Main Lesson support
- Parent-teacher communication
 - A scheduled phone call or Zoom meeting
 - Google Chat or email
- Check-in time with students via a scheduled Zoom meeting or phone call

General Expectations for All Grades

- Starting at the beginning of the school year, we will begin to prepare students in Grades 1 to 8 for learning success online. We will give them rules for behavior and etiquette on Zoom and Google Classroom and teach them the social cues on-line, such as how to listen to others and raise their hand to be recognized.
- We will work out the weekly schedule for Zoom meetings to be more in line with the regular school schedule, paying special attention to those families with siblings in multiple classes.
- Each Class Teacher will inform their class about homework and provide a due date and a summary of their expectations.
- The social and emotional health of families is of utmost importance to the staff and teachers of AWS. You will be supported through regular check-ins by your child's teachers. The Care Group will also be available to further assist families and students in need of additional support and counseling.
- There is a wide range of a family's capacity to support Interconnected Learning and the school will be sensitive to these needs and provide an individual approach as needed.
- The Educational Support Team (EST) will continue to provide Extra Lesson, Therapeutic Eurythmy, Remedial Reading and Remedial Math, and will also continue to coordinate support provided through the Pupil Services Department of the East Aurora district. EST teachers have identified students who will need additional support before going into the school year and will have Support Plans in place.

Remaining Grades One to Eight Questions

As we move forward through this summer of planning, we know that there are significant questions for which we have not yet come to decisions. In the Grades Program the questions we are carrying include:

First & Last Day of School Rose Ceremonies	Reimagined to comply with safety guidelines	Reimagined tbd
Field Trips	Not this year	Not this year
Teacher Home Visits	Outside or via Zoom	Zoom
Cubby Day	Individually assigned times in school	Postponed until return to school
New Parent Orientation	Zoom	Zoom
Class Parent Meetings	Zoom	Zoom
Harvest Festival	Reimagined and celebrated in each small group	Reimagined and taken up in Interconnected Learning
Class Plays	Reimagined tbd	Reimagined tbd
Lantern Walk	Reimagined and celebrated in each small group	Zoom
Parent Teacher Conferences	Zoom	Zoom
Winter Faire	Not this year, will look at expanding May Faire instead	Not this year, will look at expanding May Faire instead
Spiral of Light	Reimagined and celebrated in each small group	Reimagined and taken up in Interconnected Learning
May Day	Reimagined and celebrated in each small group	Reimagined and taken up in Interconnected Learning
May Faire	tbd	tbd
Olympics	Reimagined with only AWS students	Reimagined tbd
End of Year Picnic and Field Days	tbd	tbd
Graduation	Outside as permitted	Outside as permitted