



Aurora Waldorf School Reopening Plan for NYS 2020-2021

Prepared by Aurora Waldorf School Reopening Task Force

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Aurora Waldorf School
525 West Falls Rd
West Falls, NY 14057

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Overview

Aurora Waldorf School (AWS) is a small, independent pre-K through Grade 8 school in rural West Falls, NY. We have prepared this comprehensive safety plan for reopening in compliance with the New York State Department of Health standards for the year 2020-21.

The report was produced by the Aurora Waldorf School Reopening Task Force (RTF) with recommendations by the RTF Health, Safety, and Facilities Working Group. The RTF is made up of the Administrator, Board members, faculty representing each section of the school, and parents. The RTF Health, Safety, and Facilities Working Group is made up of faculty representing each section of the school, administrative staff, and parents. It was undertaken in individual and group conversations with faculty, staff, families, and students; parent and employee surveys, community meetings, and feedback from teachers from their own conversations with parents and students. Because Aurora Waldorf School is governed collaboratively by the Administrator, Board, and Aurora Leadership Circle, all major school-level decisions are undertaken in a spirit of transparency and responsiveness to the entire community.

Questions may be directed to Anna Harp, Administrator, at aharp@aurorawaldorfschool.org.

Communicating our Plan to Family & Community

Aurora Waldorf School maintains a healthy dialogue with its constituency and will leverage all our usual communication methods to message out our reopening plans, as well as safety information pertaining to mitigating the risk of COVID-19 infection. We email employees and families important announcements and notify them of these emails via text. In addition, we use our website, e-newsletter, and Facebook to reach our families and community.

Specifically, we will:

- Publish our reopening plans on our website and update them as they evolve

- Provide resources and education on COVID-19 prevention and safety, including information on CDC and DOH COVID-19 guidelines
- Ensure that students and faculty are trained in how to follow COVID-19 prevention protocols safely and correctly, including but not limited to hand hygiene, proper wearing of face-coverings, social distancing, and respiratory hygiene
- Use verbal and written communication (e.g., signage) to encourage all students, faculty, staff, and permitted visitors to adhere to CDC and DOH guidance regarding the use of PPE, specifically acceptable face coverings, when physical distance cannot be maintained

Section I: Health and Safety

Admittance to the Building

For the safety of our students and faculty, only faculty, staff, and students will be permitted to enter the building. Outside tutors, essential vendors or contractors, Trustees, and College members will not be permitted entry without prior permission from administration and/or the Aurora Leadership Circle.

Health Checks

Mandatory Daily Online Screenings

For those entering the building, including students, faculty, staff, and where applicable, contractors, vendors, and permitted visitors, AWS will implement mandatory health screening to identify any individuals who may have COVID-19 or who may have been exposed to the COVID-19 virus.

All individuals entering the building must have their temperature checked before they enter the building each day, ideally at home, prior to departing for school.

If an individual presents a temperature of greater than 100.0°F, the individual will be denied entry into the facility and sent directly to a dedicated isolation area prior to being picked up or otherwise sent home.

Our screening program will have the following components:

- Faculty and staff will fill out a daily online screening questionnaire at home and submit it before departure for school in the morning. Alternatively, a paper version of the health screening questionnaire can be completed upon arrival at school. The questionnaire currently includes the following questions:
 - Have you knowingly been in close contact in the past 14 days with anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19, is being tested for COVID-19, or who has or had symptoms of COVID-19?
 - Have you or anyone in your household, returned from travel within the past 14 days from a state on the [NYS travel advisory list](#) or a country from the [CDC travel advisory list](#)?
 - Have you been medically directed to self-quarantine due to possible exposure to COVID-19, or tested positive for COVID-19, in the past 14 days?
 - Have you experienced any of the following symptoms in the past 14 days: Cough • Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing • Fever (100.0°F or higher) • Chills • Muscle Pain • Sore throat • New loss of taste or smell?
- Authorized visitors with appointments will have their temperature taken and be asked the above health screening questions before being signed in.
- For students, parents or caregivers are strongly encouraged to monitor their children for signs of infectious illness every day. Students who are sick shall not attend school in-person.
 - Upon arrival at designated drop off areas, designated employees will have handheld touchless thermometers to take the students' temperature.
 - All students will have their temperature checked each day. If a student presents a temperature greater than 100.0°F, the student will be sent home or sent directly to a dedicated isolation area prior to being picked up.
 - The school will periodically send a health screening questionnaire for parents to answer for their children. The parents will have the option of answering the questions online, on paper, or by phone.

- The school will not retain individual medical or health information from any online questionnaire. Only the “clear/not clear” status of the individual, as determined by the questionnaire, will be available to the school or kept on file.
- Any “not clear” statuses (of children who have been turned away or have stayed home) will be reported to the school nurse and/or the office for follow up according to DOH guidelines.
- Our health screening questionnaires and procedures will be updated periodically to reflect any updated understandings of COVID-19 as expressed by the CDC and/or NYSDOH.

Positive Screens

Any individual who screens positive for COVID-19 exposure or symptoms, if screened at the school, will immediately be sent home with instructions to contact their health care provider for assessment and testing. Students who are being sent home because of a positive screen (e.g., the onset of COVID-19 symptoms) will be immediately separated from other students and supervised in a safe, contained area in the nurse’s office until their parent/legal guardian or emergency contact can retrieve them from school. When possible, the school nurse will provide such individuals (or their families) with information on health care and testing resources. The school will immediately notify the State and local health department about the case if the individual’s diagnostic test results are positive for COVID-19.

If an individual’s responses to any of the screening questions change, such as if they begin to experience symptoms, they must report immediately to the nurse’s office for follow up. Teachers will receive training prior to the start of the school year in how to identify pediatric symptoms of COVID-19 and will refer any students they see exhibiting such symptoms to the nurse’s office.

AWS will follow the local DOH requirements for determining when individuals who screened positive for COVID-19 symptoms can return to the in-person learning environment. At a minimum, a return to school will require documentation from a health care provider evaluation, negative COVID-19 testing, and symptom resolution.

Protections for Individuals Conducting Screenings

AWS will ensure that any person performing in-person screening activities, including temperature checks, are appropriately protected from exposure to potentially infectious individuals entering the facilities. Personnel performing screening activities will be trained by individuals (identified and approved by AWS) who are familiar with CDC, DOH, and OSHA protocols.

Screeners will use the PPE provided by the school, which at a minimum includes an N-95 mask and gloves.

Staff and Student Testing

Following strong recommendations by the CDC and NYSED, AWS does not require routine mandatory COVID-19 testing or antibody testing of students, faculty, and staff as a screening mechanism. The decision of whether a test needs to be conducted should only be determined by a healthcare provider or the local department of health. AWS may, however, require testing to prove that an individual who has previously tested positive for COVID-19 while at school is “clear” to return to the building.

Management of Ill Persons

AWS has developed protocols for caring for a student, faculty, or staff member who develops COVID-19 symptoms during the school day. These protocols include:

- Any students, faculty, or staff with symptoms of COVID-19 will be isolated from others in a dedicated area of the nurse’s office until they can go home or to a healthcare facility, depending on the severity of illness.
- Any symptomatic students will be provided with a face mask while waiting to be picked up, and they will remain under the visual supervision of a staff member who is physically distanced.

- Parents will notify our school office when they arrive, and the student will be escorted outside to them.
- The nurse will instruct the parent to call their health care provider, or if they do not have a health care provider, to follow up with a local clinic or urgent care center.
- Since the school nurse is provided by the East Aurora Union Free School District (EAUFSD), he or she will be directed to follow the school district's protocols. AWS staff filling the role during the hours that the part-time district nurse is not present will follow the same protocols.

Immediate Response and Cleaning Protocols

If COVID-19 cases are discovered at school, the immediate response will include closing off areas or classrooms where individuals were infected and engaging in the process of “deep cleaning” either in the affected area, portions of the school, or more broadly the entire school, as determined in consultation with DOH guidelines or conversations with our local DOH contact.

We may choose to modify operations prior to instituting school-wide closures to help mitigate a rise in cases.

Contact Tracing Support

In the case of an individual testing positive, AWS will report diagnosed cases of COVID-19 to the health department. The school will not be doing contact-tracing as that is a responsibility of the health department and not our area of training or expertise. Pertinent information will be provided to the health department as required. Confidentiality will be maintained as required by federal and State law and regulations. AWS will also cooperate with state and local health department isolation and quarantine efforts as required by law.

Whereas State and local health departments will implement monitoring and movement restrictions of COVID-19 infected or exposed persons, AWS is responsible for notifying faculty or families of students that they have come into close or proximate contact with a person with COVID-19. Please note that medical privacy laws explicitly prohibit AWS from revealing the name of the individual

who has tested positive for COVID-19. We may only reveal that the student or faculty member has come in close or proximate contact with an unnamed person, and how we came to know this information (school tracking systems, governmental contact tracing, or another mechanism).

Return to School

If a person **is not** diagnosed by a healthcare provider (physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant) with COVID-19, they can return to school:

- Once there is no fever, without the use of fever-reducing medicines, and they have felt well for 24 hours;
- If they have been diagnosed with another condition and have a healthcare provider written note stating they are clear to return to school.

If a person **is** diagnosed with COVID-19 by a healthcare provider based on a test or their symptoms, or does not get a COVID-19 test but has had symptoms, they should not be at school and should stay at home until:

- It has been at least ten days since the individual first had symptoms;
- It has been at least three days since the individual has had a fever (without using fever-reducing medicine); and
- It has been at least three days since the individual's symptoms improved, including cough and shortness of breath.

Face Coverings & Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)

Who Must Wear Them and When

All persons in the building who are not maintaining a physical distance of 6 feet must wear masks. This applies to all students, faculty, staff, and any other individuals in the building. There are exceptions and special circumstances as outlined below, and with the youngest children, mask-wearing is balanced with other ways of maintaining safety in a developmentally appropriate way at the discretion of the teacher.

Masks must always be worn when entering “common areas” such as hallways, bathrooms, or other spaces multiple individuals or groups may pass through, or in situations where physical distancing may be difficult to maintain, such as entering/exiting classrooms with others, or in narrow halls and passageways. Individuals should always have their masks with them, as they must be prepared to put them on if someone else who is unmasked is unexpectedly unable to physically distance.

Students playing games considered “high risk” as defined by the DOH guidelines (e.g., contact sports) must wear masks even when outside.

Exceptions to general mask-wearing are outlined below.

- Students of any age learning or playing outside in low-risk activities do not need to wear masks. This includes most common childhood games and activities that do not involve prolonged close physical contact.
- Early Childhood students, especially younger ones, maybe given “mask breaks” at the discretion of the teacher. Teachers will provide areas in the classroom where students may physically distance themselves from others while taking a break from mask-wearing.
- Older students may take mask breaks in the outdoors. Students sitting at their desks in classrooms that allow for proper physical distancing may also take mask breaks.
- A student who is having difficulty breathing should immediately be given a mask break, and if the difficulty continues, be evaluated by the nurse.
- Students may remove their mask to eat if it is done in an area of the school determined to have the appropriate capacity for physical distancing during mealtimes.
- A teacher has discretion in determining whether or not a child is safe in removing their mask, as all teachers will receive training on COVID-19 specific hygiene.

What Types of Masks and Protection are Appropriate

General Guidelines

Acceptable face coverings for COVID-19 include but are not limited to surgical masks and cloth-based face coverings (e.g., homemade sewn, quick cut, bandana) that cover both the mouth

and nose. Face shields worn without other face coverings are not considered adequate protection against COVID-19 and should not be used except in combination with an acceptable mask.

For staff engaged in workplace activities that require a higher degree of protection due to the nature of the work (e.g., health screenings, nurse's office work), N-95 masks, N-95 respirators, or other PPE used under existing industry standards will be used, in accordance with OSHA guidelines.

Provision of Masks

Each family is encouraged to purchase or make five cloth face coverings (one for each day of the week) per child to reduce environmental waste. Face masks/coverings should be labeled with the child's name or initials, so it is clear to whom the mask/covering belongs. Families who prefer to use disposable masks must send their child to school with a new mask each day.

The school will have a supply of disposable masks on hand (adult and child-sized) that community members can use at no charge, including any children who forget their masks.

Cloth face masks/coverings should be washed, disinfected, or replaced after each day's use and must not be shared. Students and families should take responsibility for maintaining their individual face coverings. In our employee health and safety training we include the CDC guidance on cloth face coverings and other types of PPE, as well as for instructions on use and cleaning. This information will be shared with parents as well.

AWS will provide all students and faculty with training on how to adequately put on, take off, clean (as applicable), and discard PPE, including face masks/coverings.

Procurement of Masks

The school will obtain disposable masks and other PPE and maintain adequate supply levels through our local school district and the NYS Office of General Services (OGS).

Hygiene

Handwashing

AWS follows all hygiene requirements as advised by the CDC and DOH. These include:

- Training all students, faculty, and staff on proper hand and respiratory hygiene, including providing information to families and guardians on ways to reinforce this at home.
- Creating extra time in the schedule for handwashing, especially before and after eating, after restroom breaks, recess, using shared equipment, or other higher-risk activities.
- Providing hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol-base for areas where handwashing is impractical. Hand sanitizer use will be minimized in areas serving younger children, where handwashing is preferable for safety reasons.
- Providing hand sanitizer and wipes (or spray disinfecting and paper towels) in common areas or near shared workplace items (copy machines, computers).

Parents who do not wish their child to use hand sanitizer should inform the school office in writing, and provision will be made for the child to use a handwashing station instead.

Cleaning & Disinfection

The daily cleaning and disinfection of the school is performed by a cleaning company and our facilities manager. A comprehensive COVID-19-specific cleaning plan per State guidelines is being developed for the school. Per DOH guidelines, the employees who clean and disinfect will keep logs that include the date, time, and scope of cleaning and disinfection. In addition to the daily cleaning work, classrooms and common areas will be stocked with child-safe, CDC-approved disinfectant spray so that teachers can also contribute to cleaning efforts at periodic intervals during the day. Extra time has been built into the schedule for hygiene maintenance—both handwashing and the disinfection/cleaning of surfaces.

In addition to these measures, the following extra steps will be taken in classrooms, offices, and common areas:

- Use of water refill stations will be restricted to individual, wide-mouth, non-breakable, refillable water bottles. Students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to bring their own labeled water bottles for refilling.

- In general, students remain with their cohorts outdoors or in their own classroom. However, shared items (gym equipment, etc.) will be cleaned and disinfected between each cohort's use. Such cleaning will be primarily the responsibility of the teachers involved in supervising the cohorts.
- Children will each have their own personal classroom supplies (of pencils, crayons, paper, etc.) that they will draw from rather than using common materials. Each child's supply will be labeled and stored either in a desk, individual file, or other methods that ensure the separation of materials.
- Materials and tools used by staff or employees are regularly cleaned and disinfected using registered disinfectants. If cleaning or disinfection products or the act of cleaning and disinfection causes safety hazards or degrades the material or machinery, AWS will supply disposable gloves and/or place limitations on the number of employees using such machinery.

Food Service and Preparation

AWS students do not eat in a cafeteria, and instead eat in the classroom. Due to an increased number of students with severe peanut allergies, AWS became a peanut-free school in 2018. Parents provide information on other food allergies to the nurse who in turn informs the teachers and staff. Additionally, we have a pre-existing rule against food sharing to further protect students with food allergies.

This coming year, the following adjustments will be made to our existing food routines.

Students and Teachers will:

- Refrain from sharing food and beverages unless individuals are members of the same household.

Teachers will:

- Always wash hands before preparing or serving any food.
- Be alert to hygiene protocols during all mealtimes.
- Model appropriate physical distancing and hygiene while eating with children.
- Pass out any food directly to individual students.

- Remind students of safety rules at mealtimes.
- Always wash hands before resuming work after a meal.

Students will:

- Always wash their hands before eating.
- When possible, eat outside while physically distanced.
- When eating inside, sit physically distanced at tables or desks facing the same direction, or in a wide u-shape formation if there is enough space for physical distancing compliance.
- Only help prepare their own individual portions of food (in the case of uncooked food) or for food that will be cooked before serving, and only when it is part of their school day activities.
- Always wash their hands after eating before resuming the school day.

Additionally, if cohorts are unable to eat in their classrooms and need to eat in a common space, then the common space will be cleaned and disinfected between cohorts

Restrooms

- Each student cohort will have a dedicated restroom to use. Restrooms designed for multiple people will be limited to half their usual capacity. Signage demarking the cohort and maximum capacity will be posted on doors.
- For classrooms without an interior restroom, an adult will accompany each child to and from the restroom and ensure that proper hand washing protocols are followed.
- Faculty and staff likewise will use designated bathrooms to mitigate cross-exposure.
- Restrooms will be cleaned and disinfected during the day, following recommendations established by the DOH.

Cleaning & disinfection After a Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19 Case

In the event an individual at the school is confirmed to have COVID-19 while at school, AWS will

immediately:

- Close off areas used by the person who is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19.
- Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area.
- Wait 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting. If waiting 24 hours is not feasible, we will wait as long as possible to allow aerosolized particles to settle.
- Clean and disinfect all areas used by the person suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, such as offices, classrooms, bathrooms, and common areas.
- Reopen the area once it has been appropriately cleaned and disinfected.

If more than seven days have passed since the person who is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 visited or used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection are not necessary, but routine cleaning and disinfection should continue.

Physical Distancing

AWS will strive to maintain appropriate physical distancing between all individuals while in school facilities and on school grounds, unless safety or the core activity (e.g., instruction, moving equipment, traveling in common areas) requires a shorter distance or individuals are of the same household. Mask-wearing will also be required in cases where six feet of distance cannot be maintained.

Creation of Cohorts

AWS has always valued our relatively small class sizes. In the context of COVID-19, the small classes allow us to make each class its own “cohort” with a specific schedule and space that does not overlap with any other group.

Space Configurations

Space configurations and usage will change for the duration of the COVID-19 period. Some of the changes include:

Classrooms

- Moving desks to be as distant as possible, all facing one direction so that students sit side-by-side rather than facing one another.
- Disinfecting shared surfaces or workstations between student use.
- Increasing the use of outdoor spaces for instruction and play.
- Moving higher-risk activities (instrumental ensembles, chorus, movement) outdoors.

Common Areas

- Encouraging classes to eat in available outdoor spaces whenever possible.
- Delineating two-way traffic in hallways and marking them accordingly with signage and arrows.

Music, Wind Instruments, Sports

Singing and the playing of wind instruments—including recorders/flutes, as well as all activities requiring vocal projection and/or aerobic activity producing heavy breathing—will be performed outdoors with a required distance of twelve feet in all directions between individuals.

All persons playing wind instruments should wash their hands immediately following their instrumental play.

Arrival, Departure, and Scheduling

There will be designated outdoor meeting areas as well as designated doorways specific to each age/grade level. Entrance, egress, and outdoor travel and space usage will be scheduled to mitigate cohort mingling.

Social Distancing Considerations for Faculty and Staff

In general, faculty and staff schedules will be arranged so that only faculty members who are needed on a given day are required to be in the building. Otherwise, faculty and staff whose work

can be performed at home and who are not scheduled to be in the building that day will be asked to work remotely. A schedule of who is expected to be on campus will be provided for guidance before the start of the school year. Other changes include:

- Limiting the faculty lounge to only three persons at a time, with individual physical distancing.
- Limiting the faculty quiet room to only two persons at a time, with individual physical distancing
- Limiting the faculty computer room to only two persons at a time, with individual physical distancing.
- Reminders to physically distance in staff office spaces. Under no circumstances should faculty/staff be present together in small spaces (storage rooms) for longer than 15 minutes.
- All faculty, committee, and board meetings will happen outside or remotely until further notice, except when physical distancing can be maintained appropriately for smaller groups.
- Outside tutors and other private service providers will either provide services remotely or be required to undergo a daily health screening to provide in-person services inside the school building. On campus, they will meet with the student in a room which will be sanitized between uses.

Metrics Used in Decision-Making

During the coming year, there may be times when we are ordered to close the school by governor and/or county executive order. For example, the State has established the metrics that schools will close if the regional infection rate rises above 9 percent, using a 7-day average.

Additionally, there may be situations within our own town or school community when community spread of COVID-19 needs to be addressed. Pending approval by State and local authorities, AWS has identified the following policies to help us track and trace the level of transmission in the school setting so that we can responsibly provide for the health and safety of our students, families, faculty, and staff.

Metrics for Quarantining a Class

Students will be grouped in cohorts to allow for fewer opportunities for cross-exposure and easier containment of the virus if there is an outbreak.

- If a student from a given class is confirmed to be COVID-19 positive, then the class will self-quarantine at home for the following two weeks, and the school community will be alerted that we have entered “watchful” mode. The school may take extra precautions in the form of increased cleaning, changes in school schedules or space use, etc. during this time to mitigate the risk of spread.
- If the student who tested positive has a sibling in a different class, the sibling will also self-quarantine for two weeks; however, the sibling’s classmates will not need to quarantine unless the sibling themselves tests positive.
- If more than half the students from any given class are out sick, the class will self-quarantine at home either for two weeks or until all students are tested and come back negative, whichever is sooner. In the case of sickness but no positive test, the community will not be alerted until such time as a positive result comes back from a quarantined student.

Students who present symptoms of COVID-19 during a period of self-quarantine need to follow the procedures for returning to school as outlined above.

During the time of a full-class quarantine, if possible, the class lessons will continue remotely. However, there may be situations in which teachers themselves fall sick, in which case AWS will make every effort to find substitute coverage. Online classes will NOT take place if more than a third of the class falls sick at the same time.

Metrics Used for School-Wide Decisions

In deciding whether to close the school building and enter a phase of remote learning, AWS will use the following metrics (either alone or in combination, as circumstances suggest):

- When three classes within our own school community are under self-quarantine

- When we are not able to staff our school programs safely because we have over 20% of AWS faculty/staff absent (currently 6 individuals)

Safety Coordinator

Administrator Anna Harp is designated as the COVID-19 Safety Coordinator, whose responsibilities include continuous compliance with all aspects of the school's reopening plan.

Section 2: Social-Emotional Well-Being

To quote the NY State Education Department, "Social-emotional wellbeing must be schools' and districts' top priority in supporting school transitions, not at the expense of academics, but in order to create the mental, social, and emotional space for academic learning to occur." To that end, AWS has worked to support students during this COVID-19 period in a number of different ways.

Support Team

AWS has a strong Social-Emotional Multi-Tiered Support System in place. It begins with the Early Childhood teachers and assistants who receive the young child into a warm and loving home-like school environment. Our teachers work closely with parents to support our youngest students' social and emotional needs until they are ready to begin their journey into the grades classes with a Class Teacher. The Class Teacher, who, in a Waldorf school, has "looped" with the class for several years, and hence knows the families and students well, continues to support the social and emotional needs of each student in their class. This support system is further strengthened by each of our subject teachers, who work in collaboration with the class teachers to support the students. Trust is actively cultivated through a close relationship with each student, parent meetings, frequent emails and opportunities for socialization among families—all possible because of our small class sizes and strong community life.

In addition to the class teacher, the school is also served by the Educational Support Team. When the need arises, this department holds a "Care Group" meeting that aims to share notes on students

of concern, collaborate on what additional support may be helpful, and track progress in getting students and families the help they need. When necessary, outside referrals for follow up are made.

Curricular Programs

Arts & Movement

We are fortunate to be able to lean into our usual arts-based curriculum as a means to allow children ample ways to process their grief, anxiety, and anger. Handcrafts, movement, painting, orchestra, and chorus are integral to our school life and are recommended by trauma-informed approaches to education. These subjects will remain in the curriculum and taught following COVID-19 guidelines.

Outdoor, Nature-Based Education

Expanding our outdoor, nature-based education is one way we will support the students' social-emotional learning school-wide. We know firsthand that the benefits include improved mental health and positive academic outcomes. These outcomes are also supported by a review of the literature on child-development, the benefits of nature-based learning, and mental health resilience. Additionally, time outdoors protects against virus transmission.

Daily Interaction

The social and emotional health of our children is of paramount importance. We recognize that during the Stay at Home Order all students have had different experiences and not everyone in the school will be in the same place. We expect that some students are disappointed, some had fun, some are grieving, some are exhausted from additional responsibilities at home, some have experienced trauma, and some preferred remote learning and are reluctant to return. We also recognize that children may have had an increase in screen usage and communication methods that are new and strange to them. Our goal is to welcome the students back into our warm, safe and positive environment, whether that environment is virtual or in-person. We are committed to:

- Re-establishing the healthy rhythm of the school day to which the children are accustomed, bringing security and predictability after this period of uncertainty and isolation
- Using morning activities to build social and emotional health within the class community
- Revisiting our outdoor campus and adjoining park of 40 acres, and expanding our classroom lessons and activities to the outdoors

- Helping students to “be seen” and truly “see” others while in the classroom or working remotely
- Working to support warmth and a sense of belonging and community both on campus and within the online environment
- In Early Childhood, creating a simple doll or stuffed animal for each child to snuggle while at school

Support for Teaching and Learning in a Crisis

In addition to our curriculum, we will provide support for students and faculty to process reactions to COVID-19 in the upcoming school year by:

- Beginning the school year slowly, with ample time to re-orient students to the “new procedures,” give the faculty time to unpack and process the previous six months and focus on rebuilding the social fabric of the class.
- Professional development for teachers in how to work with children in class during a prolonged crisis, with lessons taken from other trauma-informed schools and settings. Expectations of what “normal” child development and behavior looks like under these circumstances will be discussed, as well as opportunities for professional and personal growth around meeting the students’ needs during and after both COVID and the extreme social unrest many neighborhoods have experienced.
- Professional development for teachers around identifying signs of depression, anxiety, and trauma in children of different ages, and how to appropriately refer them to support staff for follow up.

Section 3: Facilities

Utilization of Space

AWS is fortunate to be housed in a building with spacious classrooms containing large, operable windows that provide extraordinary air circulation, vast outdoor spaces, and two large areas

(gymnasium, auditorium) that provide venues for activities that may pose slightly higher risks. In these existing spaces, we are making sure they conform to NYSDOH guidelines for capacity and usage.

Safety Drills

AWS maintains an internal guide for conducting safety drills. This will be reviewed and updated before the start of the 2020-21 school year to take into account physical distancing requirements by, for instance, indicating that students and faculty are to maintain a distance of six feet when they gather outside for our fire drill headcount, and by reviewing where each class should gather in order to preserve maximum distance.

Ventilation & Plumbing

As mentioned above, our school has very good air circulation already in most areas, due to many operable windows. In all areas, we will open windows and provide fans and HEPA air filters.

We are in the process of sourcing outdoor hand washing stations and outdoor portable bathroom options. Indoors, there are sinks that already exist in every classroom, as well as in the existing common bathrooms. Additionally, there are individual bathrooms in each classroom in the back wing of the school.

Section 4: Transportation

Many of AWS students are transported by area school district buses. At the time of this writing, it is not clear how transportation provided by the various districts will work in the fall. We will, of course, work with the school districts when their reopening plans are published.

We have confirmed that the one bus we do provide for Buffalo students will follow the health and safety procedures outlined by the NYSDOH.

We will:

- Require all students who ride buses to wear masks when seated, standing, or getting on and off the bus.
- Require all students waiting for the bus to physically distance.
- Provide a seating chart to help with physical distancing on the bus.
- Encourage the formation of “carpool bus routes” among cohorts of students, in which families with cars take turns doing a route to pick up and/or drop off 3-4 children from their child’s cohort.

In addition to these measures, we will work with the bus company and the districts to:

- Educate students and families who utilize buses about safe ridership, including mask-wearing, social distancing, and complying with other district or bus company guidelines.
- Provide staggered spacing for buses to the best of our ability.
- Make sure our staff who interact with buses are properly trained in any new procedures and requirements.

Section 5: Data Collection Compliance

Attendance

The school will have mechanisms for collecting teacher/student engagement or attendance and daily reporting, regardless of the learning scenario.

Chronic Absenteeism

AWS will work to identify any children at risk of becoming chronically absent due to sickness, family situation, or other circumstances, reaching out to families and providing educational support services that include:

- Check-ins with the class teacher to provide work at a rate and level that is appropriate to the student’s situation
- Additional support from our Care Team, if needed

- Help to arrange or alter any District services to which the child is entitled
- Help to obtain the necessary technology to ensure continuity of learning
- Reaching out to the local school district's student services department who can refer out to additional services, as needed

To achieve these goals, we will use the phone, email, and even physically distant meet-ups to engage and converse with family members and students who are experiencing difficulty.

Section 6: School Schedules

The AWS school schedule for 2020-21 takes safety as its first priority, followed by social-emotional well-being to lay the foundations for learning, and finally academic skill-building and maintenance. Continuity of educational support services is also a high priority.

Flexible Calendar

We all agree that in-person learning is best. In order to maximize on-campus, in-person learning time this school year, and in preparation for potential campus closures, we have created a flexible school year calendar. We have added 15 Flex Days to the end of the school year and have identified 4 Flex Days during the February school recess.

If there are periods of campus closure during the school year, Flex Days provide AWS the flexibility to choose one of the below options for the duration of each campus closure:

- Declare a school break with no instruction (similar to snow days)
- Transition to Remote (Interconnected) Learning
- Do a combination of the above

For each day during a campus closure that we declare a school break, we will make one of the Flex Days on the calendar an official school day. All of the dates highlighted in red are school breaks that will not change. We will provide as much notice as possible when the Flex Days become instructional days.

Scenarios: In-Person, Limited Remote (Blended), and Remote (Interconnected) Learning

In general, our three scenarios are designed to be relatively seamless, especially in the Grades, where students maintain a version of the same schedule in all three situations. In Early Childhood, the In-Person and Limited Remote (Blended) scenarios are relatively similar, while the Remote (Interconnected) learning scenario takes into account the shorter time-spans young children can (or should) spend in front of screens.

In-Person Instruction

Early Childhood

Days Per Week

The AWS Early Childhood program for 2020-21 has mixed-age classrooms:

- 3-Day Program with two choices of pickup times:
 - Option A: 8:00am - 12:15pm (Tuesday, Wednesday, & Thursday)
 - Option B: 8:00am - 2:50pm (Tuesday & Wednesday) and 8:00am - 12:15pm (Thursday)
- 5-days Program with two choices of pickup times:
 - Option A: 8:00am - 12:15pm (Monday-Friday)
 - Option B: 8:00am - 2:50pm (Monday-Wednesday, Friday) and 8:00am - 12:15pm (Thursday)

Cohorts

Each class will be a self-contained cohort that does not intermingle with other cohorts either indoors or outdoors.

In the Early Childhood program, children are grouped into cohorts based on these criteria:

- Past teacher relationship (if any)
- Age/Developmental stage

Students in a cohort will be grouped with their lead teacher or teachers and an assistant. Throughout the year, a subject teacher may join the cohort for a block of time. The afternoon program will not combine children from different cohorts.

Program

Our EC program is play-based and pre-academic, laying the foundations for success in the grades through a rich, story and song-filled environment that offers ample opportunities for small and large motor development, as well as social skill building through free play and guided movement circle activities. For the 2020-2021 school year, we will take extra care to provide the following:

- Increased outdoor time
- Indoor spaces that are inviting, warm and beautiful
- Age-appropriate, creative, and gentle education about mask-wearing, handwashing, social distancing, and other health precautions
- Reserved private corners or spaces within the classroom for young children needing “mask breaks,” where they can physically distance while still being supervised by EC teachers
- Creative rethinking of our usual curriculum to provide familiar rhythm, structure, and warmth to reassure young children following a time of increased isolation and possible anxiety.

Grades Classes

Days of the Week

Students attend 8:00am - 2:50pm (Monday-Wednesday, Friday) and 8:00am - 12:15pm (Thursday).

Cohorts

Our school always features small class sizes, and this year we can leverage that to our advantage by creating small, class-sized cohorts of students in each grade. Current enrollment has every grade at under 20 students and measures are being taken to assign cohorts to indoor classrooms which have enough space so that each student can be properly physically distanced within their classroom.

Programs

Students in a cohort will be grouped with their class teacher and if needed, an assistant. A subject teacher will join the cohort to team teach for a block. This subject block creates opportunities for close work between class and subject teachers, allowing them to focus on a specific project or intertwine the main lesson topic, skills work, and subject together in a way that fosters interdisciplinary connections. After the block period, the subject teacher will rotate and be paired with a different class.

Additionally, due to the nature of World Language and Movement Instruction, these particular subject classes, German and Games/Gym, will be taught on a weekly basis throughout the year. For Grade 6-8, Middle School Math and Cyber Civics will also be taught throughout the year and not in blocks.

This small group of subject teachers along with assistant will be responsible also for working together to supervise snack, lunchtimes, outdoor recess times (staggered, so that cohorts don't intermingle), and other incidental periods in the day.

Hybrid Learning

Due to our large campus (building and grounds), a hybrid learning environment is not needed to accommodate our small student and employee population.

Limited Remote (Blended) Learning

Limited Remote (Blended) Learning supports vulnerable students who cannot return to campus due to health issues, as well as students who are in quarantine, while the class continues to meet in-person.

Early Childhood and Grades Classes

In Limited Remote (Blended) Learning, the emphasis will be on providing those students who need to remain home (either for the entire year or shorter instances) with meaningful activities that will help connect the student to the class and the curriculum being taught by the lead and subject teachers. Limited Remote (Blended) Learning is different from Remote (Interconnected) Learning because teachers are instructing on campus. However, teachers will share class activities, materials, and assignments (for older students) via Google Classroom, and will be available to schedule

check-ins with students and families who are participating in Limited Remote (Blended) Learning. We encourage any family that is participating in Limited Remote (Blended) Learning to participate in occasional video calls with friends and classmates to help maintain friendships and connections.

Remote (Interconnected) Learning

Our Remote (Interconnected) Learning plan takes into account what is developmentally appropriate for children in terms of their relationship to the screen and its effects on their well-being. In Early Childhood and the lower grades, the emphasis is on shorter, frequent check-ins with teachers and classmates. Beginning in fourth grade, the amount of time is gradually increased, but at no time exceeds four hours of synchronous programming per day.

Early Childhood

We are preparing craft and activity take home packets 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.

Our 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 Remote (Interconnected) Learning periods any time of the year. These will include audio and video offerings and will be shared through Google Classroom. During a Remote (Interconnected) Learning period, Early Childhood families can expect support for the social-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, once a week for each class for 20-30 minutes
 - A live-virtual “Tea Time” for 5-day students and their parents, once 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 Remote (Interconnected) Learning period

Grades Classes

Teachers have prepared sets of individual supplies including crayons, pencils, Main Lesson Pages, books and other necessary materials. In these packs, individual teachers will include instructional packets of lessons that meet the child's grade level needs. If remote learning is required, these packs can be sent home. We are developing our full set of curriculum materials and schedules for remote 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:

Grades 1 through 3

Through Google Classroom teachers would provide enriching content such as:

- Daily Morning Circle Time, live or pre-recorded, including (but not limited to) a warm greeting, morning movement exercises, seasonal recitations, and pertinent news (seasonal, anecdotal, and/or specific class information)
- Pre-recorded stories, songs, dances, and verses uploaded in audio and/or video format
- Pre-recorded form drawing instructional videos, and math or language reviews of the previous day's work

In addition to the material uploaded to Google Classroom, we are considering having up to two Main Lesson Zoom sessions per week for approximately 30 minutes each. The same time on the other days would be dedicated to small group learning or recorded lessons, when appropriate.

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 (a scheduled Zoom meeting or phone call)

Grades 4 through 8

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

Through Google Classroom, teachers would provide enriching content such as:

- Pre-recorded videos from the teacher including, but not limited to: a warm greeting, movement exercises and seasonal recitations, seasonal or anecdotal news, and/or specific class information
- Recordings of stories, songs, dances, and verses uploaded in audio and/or video format
- Project-based curriculum delivered through online materials and instructional videos (both live and pre-recorded)

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

Extracurricular Activities, Before Care and After Care

For health and safety reasons, we are unable to offer Middle School Sports, Before Care, and After Care for the 2020-21 school year.

Section 7: Technology and Connectivity

Access to Technology

We surveyed families and faculty last Spring and in June to determine what access they have to technology and the internet. However, since places of residence and family/faculty circumstances may have changed, we will conduct further surveys of faculty and families in August. The surveys will cover not only technology, but also access to other school- and health-related supplies needed for a successful school year. We will follow up with similar surveys during the year as circumstances often change.

AWS has partnered with a local non profit organization, Mission Ignite!, to procure spare devices and equipment to loan to students and employees in need. We will work with families to provide the necessary technology to continue learning during periods of Remote (Interconnected) Learning.

Platforms and Security

The pivot to online learning presented AWS with a challenge that will have lasting effects on our school infrastructure. One of the positive outcomes has been in nudging us to use Google Classroom as an online platform for teachers to communicate with families and upload assignments that guardians and older students can access in a single place.

Last year Zoom was mainly used with parents. Teachers took extra safety precautions when using Zoom with students. However, now that Zoom has improved security to a level appropriate for schools, the functionality offered by that platform, particularly its “breakout group” function may cause us to adopt it as our preferred videoconference tool. Our technical support team is evaluating possibilities this summer and will provide information to families as part of our annual back-to-school mailing.

We are likewise reviewing security concerns across all aspects of our school tech—online learning, medical data-keeping, school records, etc. An initial review has shown that our files are generally

quite secure. As we continue our review and make any changes to our data security, we will inform both the Board and the families of the school.

Education for Families and Teachers

Last Spring both our families and teachers successfully transitioned as we pivoted rapidly to remote learning. Having established a successful Google Classroom platform, we now are in the position of simply providing “maintenance” support to families who need troubleshooting here and there with the technology.

Similarly, teachers are relatively well-equipped for remote learning. Tech support staff will continue to work with teachers who are experiencing tech difficulties.

Professional development on the pedagogical side of remote learning will be provided in the form of assigned articles, opportunities to participate in prerecorded and small group workshops, and time in our annual faculty/staff work days in August devoted to discussing and brainstorming together.

Section 8: Special Education

As educators and policy makers across a wide range of fields have rightly noted, students with special needs and/or learning differences need extra attention and prioritization in the coming year. AWS is fortunate to have a strong Educational Support program in place already, and we expect to make full use of it in any of the three scenarios we might encounter next year.

Structure of our Educational Support Program

Our robust educational support program is comprised of two overlapping pathways/resources:

- The work of our in-house Educational Support Team provides
 - Individual and small group instruction in Extra Lesson (Foundational exercises for

Literacy and Numeracy), Reading and Math, and Therapeutic Eurythmy (Movement/Speech and Music to support constitutional, emotional, social, and cognitive development)

- Regular assessments of students in certain grades to flag any who need follow up evaluations and/or services
 - Classroom observations and suggestions to teachers for differentiated instruction.
- Some of our students are supported by the work with assigned District-affiliated providers and the District Support Coordinator who oversees them, as well as all other aspects of our school's interactions with the District. This District Support Coordinator's time is dedicated to:
 - Overseeing and coordinating referrals for District evaluations, and following up on subsequent paperwork and meetings
 - Providing support for families during IEP meetings
 - Coordinating District service providers' schedules as they relate to AWS students. Although they are not employees of the school, these individuals use our space to work with children whose IEPs/IESPs entitle them to services.
 - Assisting the work of the Educational Support Team by providing small group and individual instruction when needed.

Educational Support Across the Three Scenarios

During the 2020-21 school year, AWS will work hard at maintaining support for our Educational Support students by continuing to work via each of these pathways in whichever learning scenario we find ourselves: in-person, Limited Remote (Blended), or Remote (Interconnected).

In periods of in-person learning, our regular Educational Support plans will proceed as usual, with the schedule adapted as needed to accommodate health and safety regulations.

In periods of Limited Remote (Blended) Learning, our Education Support Team will continue to provide math and reading support to teachers and students both in-person and remotely. The District Support Coordinator will work with the District to ensure the smooth continuation of services

to the best degree possible, including the transition of services to an online setting, if the District makes that determination.

In periods of online learning, some aspects of the Educational Support Program will function completely online to the degree that District services allow. We will work with families individually to facilitate and support their advocacy for the resumption of interrupted services.

Screenings and Assessments

AWS conducts regular screenings and assessments of its students in Kindergarten (for rising 1st graders), 2nd grade, and 4th grade. We will prioritize any in-person learning time to conduct targeted assessments that were missed during the 2019-20 school year due to COVID. This will allow us to continue tracking and remediating gaps in student achievement, and flag students who need further follow up, including District evaluation.

However, we also recognize that our highest priority during the coming school year should be student well-being, and that assessments might be stressful to some students. We will therefore investigate alternate methods of assessment, including student observation and targeted individual assessments conducted by our Educational Support Team. To the extent possible, we will utilize these methods whenever we can rather than relying on wider assessments administered to the full class.

Section 9: Staffing & Human Resources

COVID-specific HR Considerations

We surveyed the faculty and staff in June regarding the upcoming the 2020-21 including any concerns they may have returning to campus. For faculty that express concerns due to being a COVID-19 high-risk individual or living with such an individual, we have worked with these employees to make accommodations. For teachers that are self-identified, high-risk individuals, but are comfortable returning to campus, we are making preparations to allow them to teach their subjects as blocks during times of lower risk in our community and/or teach remotely during times

of higher risk.

Additionally, we are updating the 2020-21 *Faculty & Staff Handbook* with a COVID-19-specific addendum covering all points of HR policy as they relate specifically to the pandemic. Copies will be available through the Business Office at the school or the Employee Central Google Classroom.

Professional Evaluation and Development

Evaluation plans were disrupted by COVID-19 this past Spring. In the upcoming school year, AWS will supplement our work with self-evaluations and evaluations performed by a peer mentor as needed. We are also exploring the option of remote observations by external mentors and evaluators with a view towards creating and implementing a new mentoring and evaluation policy in either Spring or Fall of 2021.

Conclusion

AWS believes we are currently well-positioned to return to an in-person scenario in the Fall. Our building and outdoor spaces lend themselves to hygienic airflow; our small class sizes make the spatial aspect of physical distancing relatively easy for us to implement; our flexible nature-based curriculum and strong Social-Emotional Learning program provide a solid foundation for student and faculty wellness. We anticipate that the further release of guidelines from the State will cause us to revise this document, and to that end, we will maintain updated copies on our school website.