

May 27, 2020

Dear Maine Coast Waldorf Community,

We write to you now to share with you our planning for next year, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many thanks to those who have been in touch, whether by phone, email, Zoom, or in surveys, over the past weeks and months. We will continue to reach out to you: expect another survey next week. More immediately, we will hold a Zoom Town Hall meeting tonight from 8-9pm to discuss our planning for next year (and another next Wednesday, June 3rd at 8am). An invitation to this first Town Hall Zoom meeting can be found in yesterday's "Tuesday News" (May 26, 2020). For easy reference, the link to join the meeting is here and the password, should you be prompted, is 3bfQEV.

Some parents have told us that they are very concerned about whether it will be safe to send their children back to campus in the fall, and others are eager to safely send their children to campus. We have heard you all, and have developed a plan that addresses both sets of concerns. Our plan (attached to this email) is guided by the phased reopening plan issued last week by the US Centers for Disease Control (see p. 5 of this document).

The MCWS COVID-19 Plan in 5 Levels

Everyone is looking forward to a return to the pre-COVID days. We call this Level 0, and acknowledge that it is unlikely to happen during the 2020-21 school year (though, as with all aspects of our planning, we will be nimble as circumstances shift). At all levels, 1-5, we will have several features in place to reduce the risks of COVID-19 transmission.

These include:

- universal masking (for everyone over age 2)
- daily temperature and symptom screening for everyone on campus
- cleaning and disinfection multiple times each day
- physical distancing
- visitor restrictions
- spending as much time as possible outside, where the risk of transmission appears to be greatly reduced

With these basic provisions in place all year, we envision the following “Levels of Operation,” where we can move seamlessly from one level to the next as transmission of COVID-19 and State orders dictate:

Level 1: All students on campus; traditional groupings of students; typical class/subject rotations.

Safety limitations include: staggered drop-off/pick-up times; no large group gatherings; limits on athletics and performing arts; singing and wind/brass instruments in the main lesson classroom only.

Level 2: All students on campus; students in exclusive learning pods; modified schedule.

Safety limitations include: further staggering of drop-off/pick-up times; further limits on athletics and performing arts; continue with singing and wind/brass instruments in the main lesson classroom only.

Level 3: Reduced percentage of students on campus; students in exclusive learning pods; modified schedule.

Safety limitations include: no athletics; no performing arts, capacity limit on bus; no singing or wind/brass instrumental music.

Level 4: State mandated campus closure; most students in robust remote learning at home; children (EC to Grade 6) of essential workers on campus in small, static groups.

Safety limitations include: no athletics, no arts, no busing, no singing or wind/brass instrumental music.

Level 5: State mandated campus closure; robust remote learning for all.

Safety Limitations include: no on- or off-campus programming.

Financial Questions

We are also aware that many of you have questions about how we will be addressing financial concerns regarding next year. We have spoken to many of you already and encourage those who have new financial concerns about next year to reach out to us (Melissa Watson is ready to speak to you: mwatson@mainecoastwaldorf.org). Our aim is, as it was before the pandemic, to meet the demonstrated financial need of every family.

We will continue to deliver the world-class Waldorf education you have come to expect from Maine Coast Waldorf School. As ever, we will maintain the strong social fabric that is such a strength in our children and our families. And, we will continue to nurture the school community we have built together.

As the realities of the pandemic have come into sharper relief, the costs of delivering Maine Coast Waldorf education have increased. In order to ensure that we can deliver the best education next year, whether on-campus or at home, we will be purchasing AV and electronic equipment so that we have everything we need to offer the best quality remote learning, should this be necessary. Our teachers are simultaneously continuing to deliver “emergency” remote lessons this spring, and setting the stage to deliver well-planned remote learning next year, in accordance with best practices for Waldorf education.

The board of directors is considering several steps to address the possibility of at-home learning next year. First, during the month of June, we will be examining calendar modifications, including: starting school in mid-August for all students; offering optional school for students in August; extending the calendar throughout June of 2021. These strategies, if adopted, would allow us to compensate for some periods of at-home learning with additional days of school. We recognize, however, that these modifications may not be sufficient to offset periods of at-home learning, and that, especially for our younger students, the social/emotional aspect of a Waldorf education is at its strongest when delivered in person.

Thus, the board has authorized a tuition refund/credit for families of these youngest students (EC-Grade 6 in 2020-21). The refund/credit, payable at the end of the academic term, would be for any 4-week consecutive period of at-home learning and would be in the following amounts (with a 17-week maximum refund):

80% of tuition in Early Childhood
30% of tuition for Grades 1 and 2
20% of tuition in Grades 3 and 4
10% of tuition in Grades 5 and 6

Students of essential workers in this age group will, under some circumstances (Level 4), be eligible for on campus learning, even if remote learning is required by the State. Families who avail themselves of on-campus learning in these circumstances will not be eligible for the refund.

Closing

We know that you have many questions about next year. We hope this letter will provide some answers for you, though we know that questions are likely to remain. Please continue to be in touch. We will do everything we can to support and guide each of you through this challenging time. We are stronger when we stand together. We look forward

to continuing our partnership with each of you in this essential activity of educating the next generation of global citizens.

In community,

David Eichler, Pedagogical Director
Susan Stark, Board President