

EC WELCOME July 31st

A warm welcome, in an incredibly unique and exciting time, to be part of this community of teachers, administrators, and families. After this past spring, we have had time to adjust to our new realities and gauge what is important to us all. In the BVWS Early Childhood program, we continue to move forward with planning and readying our classrooms, minds, and hearts to welcome the children with warmth, beauty, and safety. We appreciate you and your families who are taking this leap with us into this 2020-21 school year together.

Let us make this space an oasis for our children, where we hold everyone with great care and compassion, communicate questions and concerns with an open mind in the spirit of maintaining engagement, and encourage each other to keep striving to do our best. In this time of pandemic, we all carry a little extra anxiety and sometimes frustration around with us, even as we try to keep our balance and stay positive. We all have our unique ways of coping, processing information, and creating new rhythms that take our current circumstances into consideration. We, as teachers and caregivers commit to treating ourselves, the children, and all of you with the utmost respect, kindness, and grace as we navigate through this rough patch. In the process, we hope and strive to create a supportive community for all of us to thrive within. We invite you to join us in the spirit of cooperation, respect, and kindness.

As you may be aware, our understanding of and adaptation to current health directives is in constant flux. When the governor says jump, not only do we ask, “how high”, we need to have what kind of jumping we will do processed and written out by the local health department and regulatory agencies within our county. We then get to apply it to our unique institution, create our own procedures and write it all down, share and train our colleagues and families on how it will work, buy the jump ropes and obstacles we intend to jump with or over, etc. And all of this gets done just before our leaders make new changes! We are starting to have a sense of humor about this; we are all human beings, after all, constantly evolving after processing new information, and our leadership and health experts are no exception. With this in mind, we know we (and you) will continue to experience anxiety, frustration, disagreement, and extra workload each time we experience new changes that affect us all. We will do our absolute best to keep you informed and aware as new possibilities arise. And please remember that we as a school must always follow our local health department regulations to be able to stay open and running for the safety of all in our community. Last week we provided details for the grades programming at BVWS, this week we are outlining details for our Early Childhood (preschool and kindergarten) families.

We are so eager to begin again, as we keep a close watch over the health and well-being of our community on both the smaller and larger scale. We look forward to connecting with you in the very near future!

Details for the Early Childhood Programming

We want to tell you a little about what we are doing to prepare for your arrival.

- We have completed two weeks of training in Waldorf 101 for our associate teachers this summer, and they are eager to work with the children with new thoughts, impulses, and ideas in their minds and hearts.
- Our wood floors in the EC building have been refinished by our building and grounds coordinator, Anthony Andrist (we call him Mr. Anthony or Mr. Tony), and they look beautiful.
- Our classroom lists with children matched with teachers are taking shape.
- We will have **three 5-day classes**, with Rachel Nielsen, Julie Voss, and Jennifer Powell Palmer as lead teachers - more introductions to follow.
- We will also have **one 3-day** class led by Nicole Martens on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday
- All classes will host children ages 3-6 (with maybe a few who are not yet 3, but precocious enough to be using the bathroom independently).

These new class configurations are slightly different than those of the last two years. The new age-configuration is a happy result of covid-19 regulations which ask that we keep a group of teacher(s) and children together without mixing with other teachers and groups of children. We found that this requirement would be best met by grouping children not by age, but by the schedule they need for care, since no one can be mixed with before or after care children from other classes. We are pleased to see that each group has balanced out to have several children at each stage of development. This family style model has been successfully used by BVWS, and other Waldorf schools, for many years.

Opening the age range allows for opportunities for each age child to observe, imitate, and help those who are more or less able in physical, emotional, and social realms. This approach allows for greater development of social awareness, caring and empathy in the older children who realize how much bigger, stronger, and able bodied they are compared to their younger friends. As 6-year olds begin to realize their “bigness” in a more homogenous age grouping, they can tend towards competitiveness as a way of flexing their new muscles of self-awareness. This same milestone looks a bit different in the wider age range, as their self-awareness turns toward a growing recognition of how they are needed and relied upon within their group, family, community, world. They walk a bit taller in the knowledge that they are becoming more capable in their bodies, hearts, and will-forces; attuned to using their gifts in service of others. The older child in this larger age range grouping is more prone to slow down and help a friend who is in need, which is an important part of scaffolding in the child’s dawning concept of “self”. The younger children, who most often need the adults more for their self-care, start to develop a sense of awe and admiration for their older classmates. They begin to see their own future in their older classmate’s growth and accomplishments and want to be kind and strong and helpful “just like them”

one day. The older children will have more projects and nourishment in preparation for grade school in the offerings of the teacher, as they get more out of the verses, games, movement journeys, stories and puppetry, as well as practical work to care for the space and fix what needs mending. We are very excited that we are getting a nudge back in this direction of a family style age grouping. Each class and teacher will find their way in this new journey that works for their group of children with their unique needs.

Due to the essential nature of in-person care for young children and their parents, under State Licensing guidelines BVWS Early Childhood will continue to operate, in PHASE A, even during *Stay at Home* alert level, unless directed otherwise by [Boulder County Health Department](#). In the coming weeks, you will receive information such as:

- your child's teacher and classmates
- opportunities to volunteer in the classroom to prepare for school (you and your child with the teacher, one family at a time)
- parent meetings to get to know other parents and connect with the teacher (formerly done in person, currently on Zoom),
- lists of what your child needs for success in the classroom
- lists of classroom daily/weekly/yearly rhythms, and
- information on how we will do things such as drop off and pick up of your child at school with social distancing, health checks, and first-time goodbyes in mind. We will also be informing you on the most up to date rules and regulations we are working with.

With warmth and gratitude,

The Early Childhood Teachers of Boulder Valley Waldorf School