



August 16, 2019

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the 2019-2020 school year at Berkshire Waldorf School! As your new School Director, I am eager to get to know each and every family and the students in the community. As a school, we have identified our individual 'aspirational' goals for the year as Waldorf education in general celebrates its 100th birthday. Whenever any organization goes through a process of change (as we have through our rebranding), the path is always filled with trepidation. In such trials, I am always reminded of Teddy Roosevelt's words:

"Nothing in the world is worth having or worth doing unless it means effort, pain, difficulty...I have never in my life envied a human being who led an easy life. I have envied a great many people who led difficult lives and led them well."

The school-wide theme this year --**One School: Building Bridges**-- marks the beginning of our year-long goal of coming together as a community and making this school a pillar of success! While the theme aptly describes the starting point of my journey in the Berkshires, I encourage each and every one of you to internalize this theme and dedicate a part of everyday to make new connections, revive old ones and be a model ambassador of the Berkshire Waldorf School---both in-and-out of school in the community-at-large.

The faculty and staff have been working diligently to prepare for this year's start and are looking forward to greeting you on the first day of school, which will be

- **Wednesday, September 4th** (a half day, 8:10am - 12:00 pm, followed by a picnic in the Big Backyard) for grades 1-8
- **Monday, September 9th** (11am-12pm, followed by a family potluck) for Early Childhood students.

A full calendar of events for the 2019-20 school year is available at <https://gbrss.org/events/month/>

Please make a note of special events, such as our Back-to-School Night, parent conferences and class nights.

As your new School Director, I am inspired to continue to build on the momentum of last year's achievements. The Board of Trustees and Administration are committed to:

- Establishment of clear and effective lines of communication.
- Investment in our astounding faculty through mentorship and professional development.
- An active partnership between the Parent Association and school administration to support important collaborations like the Annual Fund - which generated a record 98% participation last year. Our hope is to reach 100% this year!
- Evaluation of programming to best serve our students and families.

SCHOOL NEWS

Faculty

The Berkshire Waldorf School is fortunate to welcome eight new/returning faculty members this year. Please visit our website <https://gbrss.org/about-us/faculty-bios-2/> to learn more about these wonderful new teachers:

- Anna Taiga, Grade 1
- Safina Alessandra, Grade 5 Substitute Teacher while Mrs. Banach is on maternity leave
- Sara Greene, Games Teacher
- Christi Nordoff, Rainbow Room Kindergarten Lead Teacher
- Beth Oakley, Rose Room Kindergarten Lead Teacher
- Soheireh Meier, Assistant Teacher: Grade 1; Reading Assistant Teacher: Grades 2 & 3
- Kathleen Bissaillon, Assistant Teacher: Grades 2 and 3
- Georgene Poliak, Cyber Civics Teacher and Handwork Assistant Teacher

Administrative Staff

And we welcome a new member to our Administrative Team:

- Renannah Weinstein, Admissions Assistant

Parent Association

We also welcome back **Renannah Weinstein** in her role as PA Chair. Mother of Ayana in 2nd grade, and Angelina in Early Childhood. As a BWS parent, you are automatically a member of the Parent Association. We encourage you to attend the PA Launch Party in September, TBD.

UPCOMING EVENTS

New Parent Orientation, Wednesday September 4th, 8:30am

We welcome all new BWS families to attend this special event in the BWS library to meet teachers, staff, trustees and parent association members and all the BWS families joining this year, plus envision your child's first day of school. If you are a **first grade family who is "new" to the elementary side of the street, you are warmly encouraged to attend**. Childcare provided; email Robyn Coe at admissions@gbrss.org to reserve.

First Day of School, Grades: Wednesday, September 4th, 8:15 am-12:00 pm

Please ensure students arrive between 7:55 and 8:10 am for a prompt 8:15 start. They will need their backpacks, school supplies, any summer assignments, and a snack. Children should wear assembly dress on the first day, with a change of comfortable clothes for the picnic at midday.

The "Rose Ceremony," where the 8th grade class welcomes the incoming 1st graders in a lovely procession, will be held at 11:00am in the auditorium. All classes and teachers attend this in-school assembly, but due to space constraints, only parents of 1st, 8th and 12th graders join this event. Dismissal for students is at noon and families meet behind the main building for our annual Opening Day picnic! The 8th grade will be selling burgers and hot dogs of the meat and veggie variety, seltzers and other drinks. Please join us in supporting the 8th grade class trip by purchasing a tasty lunch. *Don't forget your blanket and sun hat.*

Early Childhood Welcome Night, Thursday, September 5th 6:30 - 8:00 pm

Please join all Early Childhood parents and teachers for introductions and discussion about the coming year. Teachers will share a few practical details for the start of school; please bring any questions you may have regarding our program.

First Day of School, Early Childhood: Monday, September 9th 11:00am-12:00 pm

Parents join their children in the classroom on this gentle transition day which is followed by an all-family potluck picnic in the upper EC play yard. All children and parents attend, even if your regular schedule does not include Thursdays. The second day of school, Tuesday, September 10th, will follow the regular EC schedule of 8:15am to noon for half-day students, or 8:15am to 2:45pm for those attending the full day.

All-Parent Back-to-School Night: Thursday, September 19th, 6:30 pm

Save the date and book your sitters! The evening will begin in the auditorium. After my opening remarks, you will proceed to your respective homerooms, where each teacher (Grades and EC)

will share a brief overview of the school year. The subject teachers will be in their respective spaces if you have any questions for them.

BACK-TO-SCHOOL INFORMATION

Early Care

We are excited to announce that early care is being offered for our early childhood students starting at 7:30am (Monday-Friday). Please complete the online aftercare registration form now, so you can take advantage of aftercare at any time during the school year.

Aftercare

Aftercare is available every day from 3:00-5:30 pm on the EC side for EC-3, and on the grades side for 4th-8th graders. Please complete the online aftercare registration form now, so you can take advantage of aftercare at any time during the school year. Send your child's teacher a note with either their regular aftercare schedule, or with a daily note if you plan to utilize aftercare for the day. Last-minute emergency changes can be called in to the front desk, but in general, parents should communicate their child's schedule directly with their teachers. Aftercare is billed monthly at a nominal \$8/hour.

The first day of Aftercare for grades 4-8 is **Thursday, September 5th**; the first day of Aftercare for EC-3 is **Tuesday, September 10th**.

After School Music Lessons

Please make arrangements for your child's music lessons now. Private lessons are recommended for students in 3rd grade and up; younger students may begin lessons at parents' discretion. A list of local music teachers can be found on our website at <http://gbrss.org/music-lesson-information/>. All arrangements including scheduling and billing are made with the music teachers directly. Lessons may take place at school, or at the instructor's home. In general, the first day of music lessons is **Monday, September 23rd**. If your child will need aftercare while they are waiting for a lesson at school, please fill out the aftercare form. There is a flat \$5 fee for any music student staying in aftercare on lesson days.

School Communication

Please take a moment now to review the Back-to-School Parent Packet, available on the school website under the "Parent" button (<https://gbrss.org/parents/>). You will find all you need for the start of school, including a welcome letter from your class teacher, sports forms and more! The Parent Handbook is currently being revised and will be available before the start of school.

Please take the time to read all documents carefully and return any necessary forms to the Front Desk by the first day of school.

Other action items so we can help you be ready for the first day of school:

All families are asked to check in to your BigSIS parent portal and make sure your contact information is completely up to date.

The all-school parent directory and grades students' reports from the last two school years are also available to view here. Login and view detailed instructions on the welcome page at <https://gbrss.bigsis.com/portal>. If you have never signed up for BigSIS, send an email to office@gbrss.org and we will send you a sign up link.

Be sure to bookmark these important websites for all your BWS parent communication needs:

- <https://gbrss.org/parents/>
- <https://gbrss.bigsis.com/portal>

This year marks the 100th anniversary of Waldorf Education. This education and its emphasis on the development of the whole child is increasingly - even urgently - more relevant in our current contexts.

It is heartwarming to see how deeply committed our faculty and staff are to the students and community. I am grateful to you, our parents, for your continued support and belief in the Berkshire Waldorf School.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sue." with a period at the end. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Sue Das
School Director