



# School Opening Plan

## Fall 2020

from Meg Goldner Rabinowitz, Assistant Head of School

### Dear Northwest School Community,

I am hoping that the pace of summer has slowed down to allow you to experience “dolce far niente,” which translates from Italian to “pleasant relaxation in carefree idleness.” Yes, this is an unusual summer. One that will not allow me to travel to Martha’s Vineyard with my children and extended family for the first time in 30 years. And, we are seeking other ways to connect with each other and finding other ways for each of us to experience precious downtime, away from screens. From the perspective of self-care, I am hoping that all of you are well and finding solace in the beauty of our immediate natural surroundings.

What follows is a lot of useful information. A lot. We write to provide you with a sense of our process and the context in which we are making our decisions about how to proceed with the 2020–2021 academic school year, beginning in eight weeks.

We have been meeting weekly since the beginning of March to manage not only the Spring 2020 school year but also to begin the forward-planning work required to re-open in the fall. This has manifested in three task force groups now merged into one – one that focuses both on the academic program and on the operations recovery side of the challenges we face. I have been fortunate to be guided by the wisdom of Division Directors Sue Maul and Amy Berner-Hays, CFO Michal Allaire, and our Director of Facilities Tony Kaufmann. In our work, we are guided by the four principles outlined in the Strategic Framework: Teaching Excellence, Social Justice, Small is Beautiful, and Agile Mindset. In fact, in all of our forward planning, each one of these principles has informed how we respond to the current health crisis and manage the pandemic for our community in a way that puts health, safety, wellness, and equity at the center of our decision-making.

### Hybrid or Remote Learning

There are two pathways to re-opening in the fall. Whether we are hybrid or remote will be determined by the health conditions later in August, in consultation with public health. In either scenario, we will be using the same schedule whether we are on campus or teaching and learning remotely. The one we most fervently wish for is **the hybrid model, where cohorts of students will come to campus in rotations by division.** This will mean that one week Middle School students and faculty will be on campus, and the next week Upper School students and faculty will be on campus. During the week off campus, students will be engaging in their classes online. The second pathway to re-opening is that we **begin our program entirely online.** Our faculty are using this summer to prepare for either possibility. We are planning to give letter grades for both Middle and Upper School students.

Based on official state and public guidelines we will make a determination by mid-August as to which pathway we are going with in September, and will let you know immediately.

**Our intention as of this letter is that academic classes will begin on Monday, September 14th.** This will be dependent on our capacity to fulfill what we see as the essential components of our orientation program. We will have a better idea of this as our plans take shape in August.

No matter which pathway we decide to go with we will be starting school with the following orientation: Before we begin academic class rotations, we will be hosting grade-level and division-wide orientation programs during the week of September 8th. Our orientation will include introducing our students to the nuts and bolts of our schedule as well as training them in the safety and health precautions we will be honoring on campus. In addition, orientation will provide us with space to review policies that are critical to the healthy climate of the school, including participating in Advancing Equity workshops about acceptable and unacceptable language and behaviors, targeted technology training (introducing Canvas, our new learning management system, Zoom, Teams, and Flipgrid), and reviewing responsible usage agreements for technology. More details to follow on the orientation program we intend to hold by cohort, grade, and division on campus.





**As of this letter, our intention is to open the dorm to international students in August,** and we will be offering the program structured in such a way as to allow them to stay in compliance with immigration regulations and get the best possible Northwest School educational experience. **International students who are not able to come to Seattle due to visa delays and/or travel restrictions will participate in our academic program online** and receive academic support until they can travel to the U.S. We will provide more details to international students and families in the upcoming weeks.

## Safety Measures

Our work this summer has been to secure the necessary supplies for cleaning, signage, and handwashing so our campus is safe for our students and faculty. We have also determined our campus capacity, room by room and space by space, to ensure the safety of our students and faculty in our hybrid model. We have also undertaken projects in the main school building this summer, including refinishing our wood floors to ensure that they are able to be better maintained and cleaned in this time of intensified and routine disinfecting.

According to Tony Kaufmann, we are utilizing the **CDC Decision Tree for Schools** as a key guideline for our reopening process in conjunction with the Governor's Safe Start Phased Re-opening plan and the Safe 6 Essentials as our three primary points of reference. Together they serve as fact-based, objective resources devised by subject-matter experts. These guidelines also take the pressure off of us to forecast definitive timeframes and diffuse attempts to make decisions based on arbitrary or subjective information.

The most immediate news that we can share is that everyone on campus will be required to:

- **Participate in a health check prior to coming to campus.**
- **Wear masks.**
- **Follow the directions of which ways we will move through our campus.**
- **Wash hands at routine intervals.**
- **Be responsive to the guidelines we put in place to protect our community during hybrid learning.**

Our community should also know that we are in the process of hiring a Health Coordinator who will bring expertise to managing the health and safety of our community members and campus. We are also in the process of reviewing our Pandemic Manual that has been compiled over the course of the past two months, under Tony Kaufmann's wise direction.

In August, we will be providing a more detailed list of requirements for returning to campus.

## Schedule Review Process

In preparation for constructing our weekly schedule, we have:

- Solicited and reviewed stories from our Teaching Faculty, based on the following prompts:
  - "Tell us about a time when you felt like you were in a flow or positive rhythm in your online teaching. When did your class go particularly well?"
  - "Tell us what worked for you this spring in connecting with students, either individually or collectively, during our teaching online."
  - "Tell us a moment that was particularly challenging this spring in connecting with students, either individually or collectively, online."
- Surveyed our parents, guardians, and students several times this spring
- Studied and discussed dozens of articles, that were particularly influential in our thinking:
  - **"Preparing to Reopen: Six Principles that Put Equity at the Core,"** written by Eric Tucker and Lindsay Kruse
  - **"A Trauma-Informed Approach to Teaching Through Coronavirus,"** written by the staff at Teaching Tolerance
- Attended a webinar led by Leadership + Design Educator Greg Bamford titled "The Design Thinker's Guide to Planning 2020-2021"
- Participated in a week-long professional development program hosted by Global Online Academy. Topics included planning for online learning, wayfinding, and assessment in Canvas, our new learning management system.



## A Schedule Guided by Principles

In thinking of an acronym to capture our thinking, the word “**ARCTIC**” comes closest, though several of the letters represent more than one intention.

*Our weekly schedule will:*

Be **adaptable** to be able to be experienced in person or online, for both domestic and international students, as well as **accommodating** to provide space for individual attention to students.

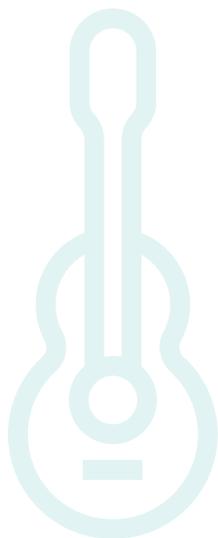
Be **routine** in order to provide stability and predictability, in addition to providing dedicated space for intention-setting and **reflection**.

Provide **continuity** in order to move the academic program forward in shifting circumstances, and **connection** to be able to provide daily points of contact in and out of the scope of academic coursework.

Be **transferrable**, to adapt learnings from last spring and summer work with Global Online Academy into our forward curriculum planning.

Allow **individual attention** to support our students as they manage the stress of what it means to be in school in this time.

Foster **community** to be able to build and maintain a cohesive sense of togetherness.



## Configuring the Schedule

We are still working through our daily and weekly schedule models and puzzling through room capacities and campus safety. **The daily schedule will be followed both on campus and online. That is, we will have one daily/weekly schedule that will be followed by everyone.**

**Our current schedule models use the following parameters:**

- The academic school day will begin at 9:00am and end at 3:30pm.
- Academic periods will be from 45–60 minutes in length, with the possibility of a shorter 30-minute check-in block.
- There will be built-in time each morning, first thing, for advisory/homeroom or for a larger group gathering (with Morning Meeting in our minds).
- There will be dedicated time(s) for Office Hours, for individuals or small groups.
- There will be Community Meeting time each week, with Drop Everything and Read in tri-weekly rotation.
- There will be weekly time for advisory period with a dedicated Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Advancing Equity curriculum.
- There will be weekly time for Affinity Group and Interest Group meetings.



## Anticipated Questions

**Will the school calendar be what was published in January?**

As of now, the general calendar for the fall will be the same in regards to holidays and beginning and end of trimester, following the “**2020–2021 School Calendar Highlights**.” This is subject to change based on the needs of the academic program and the dormitory.

**Will Northwest School be providing lunch?**

Yes! Bethany Fong, our Director of Dining Services, is working on a plan for safe lunch delivery to students on campus. We are also considering how to provide healthy, daily snacks.



**Will there be Summits (our two-week immersion and experiential education courses), International Trips, or participation in Exchange Programs in the 2020–2021 academic school year?**

Our current plan is to make a determination about Summits, International Trips, and Exchange Program participation by January 6, 2021. At that time, we will decide what is the safest way to proceed with these programs that we believe are essential to who we are as a school. If we proceed with Summits and International Trips in the spring of 2021, we will need to provide time in the calendar for professional development to allow faculty to prepare.

**Will Upper School students be allowed to go off campus during the school day?**

First, there will be dedicated spaces on campus for students to work and relax safely during free periods.

For the health and safety of our school community, at this time, our intention is to have a closed campus for all of our students when they are attending classes. We will open campus as soon as it is safe to do so.

Our boarding program will have its own set of rules regarding leaving campus and accepting visitors at the dorm when classes are not in session to minimize possible exposure to the virus. Later this summer, we will communicate to international families the special arrangements we plan to implement in the dorm.

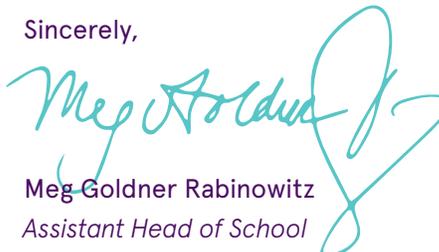
**What will happen with athletics?**

We will follow the lead of the WIAA and our league regarding what form athletics will take. The WIAA is examining options for the format and timing of the fall, winter, and spring seasons, and is slated to issue an update on July 22nd. To every extent possible, we will provide avenues for students to enjoy the physical, mental, and social benefits of participation.

**In Closing**

While we can't give you certainty at this time, we are more than certain that we're ready. Please reach out to me with any specific concerns or questions and I will answer the best that I can, given our ongoing planning. We are guided by the core values of connection, continuity, and community, and are endeavoring to build the most robust representation of a Northwest School education that we can, given the circumstances. We remain committed to our Mission to graduate "students with historical, scientific, artistic, and global perspective, enabling them to think and act with integrity, believing they have a positive impact on the world." I feel deeply fortunate to be at a school where my personal values are reflected in the shared values of the school.

Sincerely,



Meg Goldner Rabinowitz  
Assistant Head of School

