



Welcome,

My name is Lisa Miccio and I'm very excited to be your child's kindergarten teacher and to welcome you to the new school year.

While much has changed since the beginning of last September, there is still much that is familiar as we begin preparing for the start of the new school year. Here in Greenwood Lake, in *my cabin on top of the mountain*, cool breezes off the lake hint to the coming change in the season, while the boldness of deer coming ever closer to nibble the flowering geraniums and the local orchards selling ripe, red, rosy apples by the roadside are also predictable steps in the seasonal dance moving towards autumn.

Another familiar constant is the priority that Waldorf early childhood teachers place on caring for the social, emotional and physical needs of young children. A commitment to nurturing your child's developing senses and creating age-appropriate learning experiences for them continues to be our program's north star. We understand how challenging the past few months have been, and we are evermore committed to supporting you and your child as you transition into the new year.

As you may already know, there has been much recently reported regarding the advantages of being outdoors; therefore, I'm very happy to share that the majority of our kindergarten day will take place in our beautiful outdoors spaces. According to Beverly Amico (Association of Waldorf Schools of North America,) "[the results of learning outdoors are overwhelmingly positive](#) and include benefits for [academic performance, health and well-being,](#) and [child development.](#)" (*Amidst Pandemic, Waldorf Schools See Resurgence in Outdoor Learning*)

Of course, this is not a new idea for us. We have always included expansive outdoor experiences as part of our daily rhythms. Our outdoor spaces, which include the kindergarten play yard, the Nature Trail and our gardens, offer us a variety of natural niches where we can learn, grow and play in ways that are optimal for early childhood education and development. For me personally, the year presents an opportunity to return to my roots as a "Forest Waldorf kindergarten teacher." I eagerly look forward to sharing a picture of a typical day in our kindergarten with you during our **Class Meeting and Orientation, 5:30-7:00PM on Tuesday, September 1, 2020.**

Visiting and Getting to Know Your Teachers

I am also very happy that Ms. Covas will continue as Kindergarten Assistant Teacher this year. We truly enjoy our partnership and have begun planning for the coming year with great joy and excitement.

We are eager to see our returning kindergarten children and to note how much they have grown, and we are equally eager to meet all the children and families new to our class. Therefore, everyone is invited to join us for a visit at school before the first day. These visits will allow us to reconnect or to begin getting to know one another. They also provide you and your child opportunities to explore the classroom and outdoor spaces and serve as an important step in bridging your child's home to school experience. You can learn more about us before your visit by reading our teacher bios available on the school website at [Kevin can you please insert a link for the bio page.](#)

Visits with the Teacher will be held on Monday, 8/31 from 1-3:00PM and Tuesday, 9/1 from 9-11AM. You may sign-up for your visit by clicking this link: <https://lisammiccio.youcanbook.me/>

Class Meetings and Parent-teacher Conferences

Please note that your visit is only the first step in our journey together. Over the course of the school year we will have many more opportunities to work together and to build our class community through Class Meetings and Parent-teacher Conferences.

Participation in Class Meetings is required for all families. These bi-monthly meetings will keep you informed of your child's experiences, provide opportunities for you to learn more about Waldorf education and child development, and weave us into a rich and diverse class community.

The first meeting will be held outdoors from **5:30-7:00PM on Tuesday, September 1, 2020.**

Communication - Phone, Email and Google Classroom

Phone Calls

Regular and on-going communication between parents and teachers is critical to your child's education. Please contact me to arrange a phone call if you have any question or simply wish to hear about your child's day. In most circumstances, I will return your call the same day between 1-4pm. An evening call can be scheduled when necessary.

To plan a phone call please:

- Email me at micciol@waldorfgarden.org to arrange a phone call.
- Schedule directly through the Youcanbookme link.
- Call the school at (516) 742-3434 and leave a message with the school receptionist to request a call.

Email

Email will be my primary mode for communicating announcements about class meetings, festivals and birthday celebrations. I will also share anecdotal experiences from our kindergarten, along with articles on child development and early childhood education.

Reading these email letters will deepen your connection to your child's Waldorf school experience and keep you well informed of important dates and information.

During the school year I will check my email each morning between 7:00-7:30am, after the noon dismissal between 12:15-12:45pm, and once more at the end of the day at 3:30pm.

Google Classroom

An access code to log into our google classroom will be sent to you soon. Google Classroom offers a digital safe space for parents to view all class emails and announcements and to access posted content including:

- our daily and weekly rhythms
- our seasonal circle songs, stories, festivals and activities
- links for our Zoom meetings and the youcanbookme phone call sign-up schedule

School Gear/Supplies

To support our daily work and play, we ask that your child has the following clearly labelled items before the first day of school.

- Overall-style rain pants for daily outside gear. (Abeko, available through Amazon, makes an excellent choice of over-all style rain pants that can serve as daily outside gear for all months that we are not wearing snow gear.)
- Hooded rain jacket (Abeko and LandsEnd are good sources for breathable rain jackets.)
- Sturdy rain boots
- Warm socks (Breathable wool is a good option inside rain boots.)
- Extra set of clothing kept at school: top, pants, underwear, socks, and a sweater or light jacket
- Inside shoes: a pair of slip on or tie "Sneakers" or "Mary Jane" style shoes that remain at school for school use only
- Child-sized backpack to carry back and forth from school that is large enough to put their extra layers into for the days that we need to shed layers, but not too large for them to carry.
- Child-sized outdoor sleeping bag for our morning outdoor rest time.
- Two child-sized masks to leave at school and protective face shields.

We request that all clothing worn to school be free of cartoons, picture graphics and logos. More information on appropriate school clothing can be found in the early childhood parent handbook available online at [link for handbook](#). You may bring their extra clothes and rain gear to store in their cubby when you come for your visit.

First Day – Wednesday, September

Our first day of school is Wednesday, September 9th, beginning at 8:00 am. We will dismiss at 12 pm. The arrival and dismissal location for our kindergarten class is on Cambridge Avenue, at the double gates that open onto campus.

We anticipate that you may have many questions regarding the start of school and assure you that we are planning ample time during our first meeting to preview our school's arrival and departure protocols and to answer all your questions.

The following message from our early childhood teachers may also support your family as you prepare for the first day of school.

Talking with Our Children About Returning to School

Children need loving communication and emotional support. The world is full of change; we need to make sure our children are reassured with honesty paired with calm connection. For parents, it is important to remember that young children are looking to us to guide them. We are modeling the calm surfer on an ocean of various waves, some calm, some intense. Even in the most challenging waves, we keep our view on the shore and through this, the children absorb our trust and ability to navigate even the most difficult waves.

Let's imagine ways you can support your child when returning to school this September 2020. Please give yourself time to find your own center of calm. This a confusing time, that is undeniable. As we surrender into many unknowns, we must rely deeply on ultimate trust in the spiritual world. When parents lean toward that trust and begin to live deeply into it, the children benefit, as does the world at large.

On a practical level, please remember to not over-talk. Model confidence about the opening of the school year and confidence in the teachers who are caring for your children. When a child feels your trust in the world, their trust grows. If a child exhibits nervousness or anxiety about school starting, reassure them. Acknowledge that these are interesting times and how grateful you are to belong to a wonderful school with teachers who love the children so much.

Some parents feel strongly about preparing their inquisitive children about changes they may experience at school. Yes, social distancing and mask wearing are significant changes in our world, and at the same time we must remember the nature and resilience of human beings, especially the young children. Many children at this point have been taking part or have been exposed to others wearing masks. You might say to a child that their loving teachers, in order to continue to protect all the people on the earth, will remind children at times to wear masks and to keep distances from others. We are so lucky to have such caring teachers at our school - it is wonderful to be part of a community looking to help others.

Some children will exhibit feelings about the return to school. The children have spent an extended time at home with family so separation can raise resistance. The resistance may lessen if a parent helps emotionally prepare a child. Accept your child's emotional expression as you would a wave on the ocean. Move with it, don't fight it, and help them calmly navigate to the shore.

For example, say something like, "This year when I drop you off at school/or before the bus picks you up, we are going to help everyone stay safe and healthy. Let's pretend I am dropping you off, we walk up to the gate and your loving teacher will be there and I can see how happy we all are! We hug and at the end of the school day you will see me at the school gate again with my

arms wide open, just like this!” (Give your child a bug hug, that physical hug will happen each day before you leave them at school and when you pick them up or see them return at home.)

Please remember that over-talking can be burdensome and stressful for a child. Keep it simple, delivering your support from the center of self-assuredness and care. If you feel it is not authentic because you yourself feel like you are coming undone with confusion or uncertainty, respect yourself. Take time to notice your inner life and give yourself some self-care: meditate, breathe consciously, use lavender oil, speak about your feelings to a person who brings calm and center to your life or seek a person to help you. Your child may experience your nervousness, but they will also experience your ability to meet it and take steps toward transformation.

Our school is a unique place. That warmth and care which the children experience will always be there. In these times of navigating larger waves than usual, we are so happy to be the ones to hold your child with our calm and reassurance. Together, we will help the children navigate and before you know it, they too will be confident surfers!

In Closing

In these final glorious days of summer vacation, I hope that you take many moments to rest in a hammock, dream while observing the clouds, watch fireflies dance, and ultimately, lose yourself in nature. Then you may be reminded of what it is to live in the infinite wonder of early childhood. It is an honor to be your child’s teacher. I can hardly wait for our journey to begin!

Please email at micciol@waldorfgarden.org if you have any questions.

Warmly,

Lisa Miccio

Mixed Age Kindergarten Teacher

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