



# *Early Childhood Program*

## *Back to School Guide*

### *2023-2024*

*"...I am struck by the fact that the more slowly trees grow at first, the sounder they are at the core, and I think that the same is true for human beings. We do not wish to see children precocious, making great strides in their early years like sprouts, producing a soft and perishable timber; but better if they expand slowly at first, as if contending with difficulties, and so are solidified and perfected. Such trees continue to expand with nearly equal rapidity to an extreme old age." -Henry David Thoreau*

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## Hours of Operation

Office	7:45 am to 3:15 pm
Early Childhood Classes	8:15 am to 1:00 pm
Grades Classes	8:15 am to 3:00 pm
Aftercare	1:00 pm to 3:00 pm (EC Only) 3:00 to 6:00 pm (EC & Grades)

# Welcome

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the 2023-2024 school year! We hope you have been enjoying a refreshing summer and that you are feeling renewed and ready to start a new school year at RWS. We are grateful that your family has chosen to be part of this very special Waldorf community. We welcome and value your dedication to Waldorf education, and look forward to working with you and your children this year.

Here on campus, we are gearing up for another fantastic and productive school year. Our capable faculty is already preparing for the children's return. Our enthusiastic administrative team is registering new families, planning for the new school year, and overseeing a few building updates! We are excited to have welcomed our new Director of Administration, Mr. Andrew Ross, as of July 1, 2023. We cannot wait to see your students and to reconnect with our community, new and returning.

Within this guide is everything that you will need to have a successful start to your student's school year. For full details on RWS' Policies, Procedures, and School Information, please review the 2023-2024 Family Handbook. Please know that we are here to help and partner with you as we guide students through their educational journey. We couldn't do what we do at RWS without your support. It is such a pleasure to be involved in a community like ours with the common goals of nurturing responsible, caring students while promoting a lifelong love of learning. We are looking forward to the upcoming year and getting back to school!

Sincerely,

The RWS Administration Team

# *Back to School Registration: BigSIS Portal*

BigSIS is RWS' Student Information System, and we look forward to getting you acclimated with the features in BigSIS. Within BigSIS we electronically maintain student files, health records, contact information, as well as daily attendance, school rosters, parent directories, and student reports.

LaToya Good is our BigSIS Administrator and will be able to answer any questions you may have and/or provide technical assistance.

Families received an email on August 4, 2023 with a link to begin registration for the 2023-2024 school year. We require that the following items be completed or uploaded into BigSIS **no later than Friday, August 18, 2023.**

We require the following student information be completed in your BigSIS Portal:

- Parent contact - address, phone, and work contact information
- Emergency contacts
- Authorized pick up people
- Health information including allergies, health conditions, etc.
- Permissions to apply sunscreen and insect repellent
- Permission for student photo use
- **Aftercare registration due by August 17, 2023**

Upload into the BigSIS Portal (or bring to front office):

- School Entrance Health Form completed by physician with immunization records for all new Grades students and all new and returning Early Childhood students
- Birth certificate for all new students
- Notarized Religious Exemption Form for all new students, if applicable

## *Morning Arrival*

Parents may drop students off between 7:55 and 8:15 am. When dropping off, all vehicles should enter the school's main entrance where Brookland Parkway and Robin Hood Road intersect.

Early Childhood Parents should keep to the inner right lane when entering the parking lot. Pull up to the side of the building in the fire lane and drop your child(ren) at the side door by the Early Childhood classrooms where a teacher will receive your child. Families who need more time to drop off may park in the designated Early Childhood parking spaces located just past the drop off lane. You can also park along Brookland Parkway and utilize the crosswalk to get to the drop off area.

If you are dropping off both an Early Childhood and a Grades student, please note that Grades students drop off at the back of the school.

After 8:15, all doors will be locked (for safety and security) and all students and visitors must be buzzed in through the front main entrance.

## *Dismissal and Pick-up*

Parents should pick up their children between 12:50-1:10, unless children are staying for Aftercare. If you need to pick your child up early, please notify the teacher and the front office.

When picking up at 1pm, parents should park in the fire lane where a teacher will bring your child to your car.

Children who have not been picked up by 1:10 will be placed in Aftercare. When you arrive, please proceed to the school's main entrance and ring the doorbell. A staff member will provide help picking up your child.

## *Early Releases*

On Early Release days, Early Childhood students will be dismissed at 11:45 am on the EC Patio. Grades students will be dismissed at 12:00 pm. Families should arrive at this time to receive your child. Aftercare will not be available on the following Early Release days for the 23-24 school year: August 30, September 29, October 6, November 21, December 19, and June 7.

## Snack and Lunch

In keeping with a wholesome environment for the children, we make sure that the snacks we provide are of the highest quality. When possible, organic foods are used. Our intention is to make snacks with the children when it is safe to do so. If your child has allergies or special dietary considerations, you will be asked to complete paperwork detailing those needs. As the weekly snacks are providing nutrition for the whole class, we may not be able to accommodate every allergy on all days; however, teachers try to adapt the weekly menu so that each child can partake of at least part of the daily snack.

Children bring their own lunch from home. We ask that you pack a nourishing lunch; please do not include: soda, juice or sports drinks, candy, desserts (cakes, cookies, etc.), Jello or gum. Pack meat and dairy products in a sealed, insulated pack with a cold pack inside. We also ask that you be mindful to not create extra garbage with prepackaged foods and use reusable containers as much as possible. This is an important part of our children's education.

Families may be asked to contribute food to add to our weekly snack menu. Some teachers prefer that families bring in weekly fruits, nuts, etc., while others prefer that parents sign up to bring in extra items periodically. Your child's teacher or class parent will send out communication about family food contributions at the beginning of the school year.

- ***Please provide a lunch box and water bottle without characters and clearly labeled with your child's name. In addition, include silverware, placemat, and a napkin each day. (Two cloth napkins work great as a daily placemat & napkin.)***

## Dress Guidelines

The best clothes are those that are "play worthy", can get dirty, and do not draw attention from others. Simple, well fitted clothes are best. Keep in mind that all the children are outside everyday so we want them to be prepared for a range of temperatures and weather conditions. Given that the children will be outside for the majority of their day, dressing your child in layers allows them to be prepared for the change in temperatures from the early morning to afternoon.

*We appreciate your support with these guidelines and welcome your questions.*

- Clothes and shoes should have no logos, words, or emblems.
- Clothes and shoes should not have pictures, neon colors or flashing lights.
- Shoes should enclose or strap around the heel securely and enclose the toes.
- Shorts or tights/leggings should be worn under skirts and dresses.
- Pants should remain secure around the waist.

- Hair should be held back from the face.
- Save clothes that could be described as fancy, dress-up, or a costume for the weekends.
- Also, save jewelry, nail polish, and temporary tattoos for the weekends.

## Personal Items

Oh, how young children love their things! However, toys, jewelry, “collections”, stuffed animals, key chains, watches, stickers, tattoos, purses, etc., etc., etc. are all distracting and are discouraged in the school setting. Please leave these things at home and also “check pockets” if you know your child finds it irresistible to bring these things to school. It can often be the cause of much unhappiness when children have to part with their things when saying goodbye or later during the school day.

## Keep At School Items

*The list of items below can be brought with you on Visitation Day to stay in the classroom for the school year. Please clearly label every item with your child's first and last name.*

- Indoor Shoes
  - When the children enter the classroom, they change into indoor shoes to mark the transition to the indoors and to help care for the furnishings. Parents provide these shoes for your child.
  - The best type of indoor shoe is a slip-on type shoe that fully encloses the toes and heels.
  - Shoes should also be soft soled, like moccasins or ballet slippers. A favorite brand here at RWS is Soft Star Shoes that can be purchased online at [www.softstarshoes.com](http://www.softstarshoes.com). They are offering a 15% off back-to-school discount on a selection of our children's styles.
- Rain Gear
  - Rain coat with a hood or separate rain hat
  - Rain Boots
  - Rain Pants
  - If you purchase gear online, we suggest searching for “puddle pants”, “rain bibs”, “rain suit”, “puddle gear”, and/or “discovery pants” for a variety of options.
- Cold Weather Gear
  - To prepare for cold weather, dress so your children can stay warm for 2 ½ hours outside. This would include a coat with a hood or separate hat, gloves/mittens, snowsuit/snow pants, scarf, winter boots, and layers such as thermal wear/tights/leggings.
  - Please plan to leave a pair of snow pants, a warm hat and several sets of gloves at school. Other items can travel back and forth to home as necessary.
- Extra Set of Clothing
  - Please include a top, bottom, underwear and socks to be kept in the classroom.
- Bicycle Helmet

- Please be sure it fits securely.
- Aftercare Program Enrollees
  - Small blanket (2'x 3') and pillow
  - Optional small stuffed animal or doll
  - Extra change of clothes

## How to Stay Informed

There are several ways to stay informed and connected with the Richmond Waldorf School community throughout the school year.

First and foremost, every Wednesday, our Administration team sends out a weekly email called ***The Messenger***. This weekly newsletter will include everything you need to know about RWS, from important upcoming dates to event reminders and community happenings. *Please be sure to save the email address [admin@richmondwaldorf.com](mailto:admin@richmondwaldorf.com) to ensure that this weekly email does not end up in your Spam or Promotions folder.*

Sparingly throughout the year for very important information, we utilize a text alert system via Remind. You will receive a text in the next few weeks from the school asking if you'd like to opt in. Please do!

We also have an active RWS Community group on Facebook. Throughout the year we live stream events, post pictures of school happenings and chat about all sorts of RWS things in the group. If you'd like to join, please search "Richmond Waldorf School Community Private Group" on Facebook and answer the questions for admittance.

On the RWS website, in the upper right hand corner, there is a tab labeled "Parents Corner". Here, you can access our most important documents anytime you need them throughout the school year.

Parents will also receive class specific communication through their student's class teacher throughout the school year.

## Tuition & Billing At A Glance

As an independent school, RWS' funding is predominantly tuition payments. Your tuition payments contribute to the welfare of the whole community and enable Richmond Waldorf School to exist, to employ highly qualified faculty and staff, and to continue to develop and refine our program.

At any point in the school year, if you have questions or concerns about your tuition payments, reach out to Mary Williard, Business Office Manager. Her email is [mwilliard@richmondwaldorf.com](mailto:mwilliard@richmondwaldorf.com).



To change a payment due date, adjust your payment plan, or other payment-related needs will be handled directly with TADS. Their phone number is 800-477-8237 and hours are Mon-Fri 9a - 6p. If necessary, TADS will submit a 'ticket' to the RWS Billing Office to approve changes.

## Parents Association

The Parents Association (PA) is the collective parent body of the Richmond Waldorf School. Our mission is to infuse our school community with vitality through social gatherings, education, special events and fundraising that promotes the school's mission. The PA works in partnership with the Faculty and Board of Trustees, and together we embrace the mission of Richmond Waldorf School to support and enrich the lives of our children and ourselves.

Working together as parents and staff strengthens our school, and when we volunteer and serve, we model important values for our children. *We encourage all parents to contribute to the life of the school by getting involved in at least one event each year.* It is a great way to get to know other parents, share your special talents, and support the students and faculty.

**The PA holds regular open meetings which will be posted on the RWS Online Calendar and in the Weekly Messenger.** Each class has 1 to 2 representatives who attend meetings, and all parents are invited to attend. PA information and important school links are located on the Parents Corner of the RWS website located at <https://richmondwaldorf.com/Parents>

### Fundraising and the PA

You can help support the work of the PA and the mission of RWS by participation in our free fundraising programs.

**Kroger Rewards:** Our easiest fundraiser. Swipe your Kroger card when you shop for groceries, and funds are generated for the school. It takes 5 minutes to register your card, and it's FREE! Anyone can sign-up: Family and friends - even if they live out of town!

Sign up by phone by calling Kroger Customer Service at 800-576-4377, and tell them you'd like to enroll in the Community Rewards Program. The code for Richmond Waldorf School Code is **83872**.

Sign-up on-line by visiting [krogercommunityrewards.com](https://krogercommunityrewards.com), signing in, and selecting RWS, **code 83872**.

Amazon Smile is the charitable page for Amazon.com, with exactly the same selection and prices. Ordering from this page automatically generates funds for RWS. Go to [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) and select **Richmond Waldorf School** as your supporting organization.

Box Tops for Education earns \$.10 for every Box Top submitted. There are two submission dates each year, in November and March. Please place your collected Box Tops in at the front office.

SCRIP is our no-cost Gift Card Program. By purchasing gift cards for your favorite stores through RWS, a percentage of each card is given back to Richmond Waldorf School. Visit our Shop and Earn Page on the RWS website to learn more about how to participate. <https://richmondwaldorf.com/shop-earn>

## Waldorf Festivals At A Glance

Richmond Waldorf School celebrates many festivals during the school year. Some festivals or celebrations are for the grades students only, others for the whole student body. Some festivals will be held in school for children and teachers, while others will be for the whole community. Please check the school calendar for specific dates. Below are some basic descriptions of our festivals. Your child's teacher will provide more age specific information on each festival throughout the school year.

### Friday Gatherings

Every Friday, grades students gather together in the gym at 8:20am. Parents are encouraged to join us! Usually about 20 minutes, this informal gathering begins with one of the lower-grade classes reciting its morning verse, and then birthdays are celebrated. Selected classes share things they've been working on in class, and the group sings seasonal songs together. The gathering ends with one of the upper-grade classes reciting its morning verse.

### School Assemblies

Before Thanksgiving, before spring break, and on the last day of school, we have major assemblies that are designed to showcase each class's academic and artistic work. Families are encouraged to attend assemblies because it allows them to experience what has been learned in different subjects. Friends & Family Day is another special opportunity to showcase the students' work to their extended families and supporters.

### Birthday Celebrations

The birthday ceremony is an important event at school and for your child. With respect and reverence, the class honors your child's birthday. In the grades classes, children typically celebrate birthdays at school with only their classmates and teachers present.

### The Rose Ceremony & First Day Assembly (Wed, August 30, 2023)

The Rose Ceremony marks the beginning of the school year for all grades students. This special ceremony welcomes the rising 1st grade into the Elementary School. Older students offer new students a rose and walk them through a flower arch to symbolize this new beginning. *8th grade class supports this event.*

### Michaelmas: A Celebration of Courage (Fri, September 29, 2023)

Richmond Waldorf School celebrates the Michaelmas (pronounced mick-ell-mas) season with service projects,

field games, and with a pageant performed by the students in the grades. Although Michaelmas is not commonly celebrated in North America, it is an important festival in Waldorf schools throughout the world.

Michaelmas honors the archangel Michael, who is the embodiment of courage. It is he who cast proud Lucifer from the heights, he who vanquishes the dragon in the depths. Michael gives human beings the courage to meet the trials of the present and the confidence to look to the challenges of the future without fear. Michael lends his strength to those who struggle against the forces of darkness. His arm guides those who fight the dragons of the lower self. He is the embodiment of divine justice, separating the moral kernel from our earthly chaff.

At Richmond Waldorf School, we try to put ideals into action—to look beyond our narrow selves to what others need and to what the world needs. The world is full of dragons. These dragons spread hatred and fear, doubt and destruction, but they also present opportunities. In the pageant that our students perform, the dragon that terrorizes the kingdom is tamed, not slain. He is led into service, and his strength is used for good. We hope that this picture strengthens our students as they move forward into the future and that it inspires them to work to make the world a better place. *2nd grade class supports this event.*

#### **The Lantern Walk and Martinmas (Fri, November 10, 2023)**

From France comes the story of St. Martin of Tours, a Roman soldier who exhibited great generosity. Upon meeting a beggar on the road, St. Martin cut his cloak in two to share with the unfortunate man, facing the ridicule of his fellow soldiers.

Each year, RWS gathers to celebrate Martinmas. Each student creates a beautiful candle-lit lantern, which symbolizes the light in all of us as we enter the darkening months of winter. We light lanterns and share gingerbread and warm cider. To emulate St. Martin's generosity, our community collects winter clothing for Richmond's families in need. *3rd grade class supports this event. The 1st grade class supports the coat drive.*

#### **The Spiral Walk (December 6 and 7, 2023)**

Advent, from the Latin “to come,” is the period including the four Sundays before Christmas. In Christian churches, one candle is lit each Sunday until the lights of four candles herald the birth of Christ. Yet Advent, and even the feast day we now celebrate as Christmas, has a far wider traditional context. Throughout Europe, northern Asia, and in ancient Egypt, this holiday has had festival connotations of light and the sun—of the time when winter draws to its close and spring begins. The Jewish festival of light, Hanukkah, falls very near to Christmas.

At Richmond Waldorf School, children are invited to participate in a very special Advent celebration. Each child walks through a spiral of fresh pine boughs to light his or her candle from the large center candle. This represents light in the darkest days of winter. As he or she returns through the spiral, the child chooses a place along the path to set the candle. As the number of candles grows, so does the beauty and magic of the experience. We invite our community to join us for a Community Spiral Walk as well.

### **Holiday Faire (Sat, December 2, 2023)**

*All families are encouraged to register for a volunteer shift!*

Each year, we welcome our community and the public to our campus on a cozy, winter afternoon to celebrate the season of lights together with delicious food, seasonal drinks, crafts for the whole family, and talented gift vendors to shop.

### **May Faire (Sat, May 4, 2024)**

*All families are encouraged to register for a volunteer shift!*

Early May brings the RWS Annual May Faire Celebration. Open to the public, this event brings members of the larger Richmond community to RWS to celebrate. Children decorate wreaths with fresh spring flowers, dance around the Maypole, and sing songs of spring. Children's activities, stories, and delicious treats are available for the whole family.

May Day was in ancient tradition the celebration of the beginning of summer in Celtic lands, and by Roman tradition sacred to Flora, the goddess of spring. The Maypole is thought to represent the tree of life and fertility. In the modern context it provides an opportunity for festivity and a reminder that warmer days are ahead. Children and adults have traditionally worn flowers when dancing around the Maypole. A single blossom in the buttonhole or hair, or an actual May Crown, or wreath of flowers for the head, symbolizes the full arrival of spring.