



WASHINGTON  
Waldorf School

# REIMAGINING THE MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL JOURNEY AT THE WASHINGTON WALDORF SCHOOL

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**2025**

APRIL, 23

# INTRODUCTION

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Dear WWS Community,

You spoke, we listened.

Over the past several months, we have solicited input from current and past families, faculty, staff, and students regarding improvements to the middle and high school academic and extracurricular program. Combined with the feedback we received from our accrediting bodies, we have synthesized this valuable information and are excited to implement substantive changes. Our goal is that every middle and high school student experiences awe in their daily learning experience, and increasingly has agency as they progress through their journey at WWS.

This is an opportunity to further strengthen the incredible education we offer our students and enhance the community in which we live, work, and study. These changes will enliven our school to better recognize and support the needs of today's adolescent and utilize our teachers' strengths.

To implement these changes, we will undertake work in four distinct areas of our middle and high school, as outlined below:

- Broaden Course Offerings and Student Engagement
- Create an Upper School Model for Grades 7-12
- Strengthen Our Educational Support Program
- Allow our Teachers to Shine

We are very excited about these changes, and think the students will feel the benefits each and every day. We realize you may have additional questions. Please see the FAQ section below or feel free to reach out. Thank you so much for your partnership.

With gratitude,



**Margery Bank**  
Head of School



**Kate Knuth**  
College Chair



**Janet Dunwoody**  
Faculty Administrator



# REFRESHING THE MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

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## Broaden Course Offerings and Student Engagement

WWS will enhance programming in the high school with new core (main lesson) and intensive classes and increase opportunities for middle and high school students to engage with one another inside and outside of the classroom.

- High school students will experience more choice in their learning with a selection of intensive courses in STEM, the Arts, and Humanities from which they will build their own afternoon rotation of classes.
    - Examples of intensives may include: Advanced Calculus, Economics, Russian Literature, Debate & Oratory, and Graphic Design.
  - We will upgrade the high school math program with deeper course offerings particularly for advanced math students, in alignment with peer schools in DMV and other Waldorf high schools.
  - We will expand after-school programming for upper school students, with clubs such as volleyball, robotics, photography and other student-requested activities.
  - A daily upper school morning meeting with students and faculty will create more space for students' voices.
  - We plan to engage with other small area high schools for broader social engagement opportunities.
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## Create an Upper School Model for Grades 7-12

**WWS will develop a broader community of older students from Grades 7 to 12, while maintaining strong class communities.**

- **Grades 7 and 8 will maintain their class teacher as a guide and teacher, while also experiencing a wider variety of main lesson teachers, including some from the high school.**
- **Grades 9-12 will experience a more cohesive high school community with increased cross-grade engagement in intensive courses.**
- **Grades 7-12 schedules will more closely align, allowing joint course-taking and community-building opportunities.**
- **Upper School leadership will reflect expertise in both middle and high school teaching, with Kate Knuth and Taisto Saloma serving as co-chairs of the Upper School.**

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## Strengthen Our Educational Support Program

- **We recognize the gifts of different learners and the need to meet students where they are. As such, each department will now have a dedicated Educational Support teacher.**
  - **We have hired Enrique Gallego as the Upper School Educational Support teacher and to oversee the overall Educational Support program at WWS. Enrique's background, with a Master's in Neuroscience and Education and Waldorf training and teaching experience, will serve our students well.**
  - **With Enrique, Judith Graff in the Lower School, and Luna Oliveira in Early Childhood, the educational support team will create an interdisciplinary program to guide students through their years at WWS.**
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## Allow Our Teachers to Shine

**Outstanding teachers should be teaching! We are lengthening the Upper School main lesson teaching time each day, allowing teachers to delve further into their subjects. Students will experience subjects in a variety of ways and have more time for in-class work. The afternoon intensive classes will allow teachers new opportunities to expand their course offerings and explore a broader range of subjects within their areas of expertise.**

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# FAQ

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## **Does the new schedule meet high school graduation requirements?**

Yes. As a fully accredited high school in the state of Maryland, we are required to follow the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) guidelines for graduation. The new schedule meets or exceeds all of those requirements, while more closely aligning to local schools. We also expect that the new program will translate to a transcript that is even more compelling to college and university admissions teams.

## **What is changing programmatically, if anything?**

Our programmatic offerings will expand more than anything else. Some current main lessons may move into the afternoon as intensives. Longer class times will allow for a deeper and more complete understanding of the subject.

Seventh and eighth grade students will benefit from having current high school teachers teach blocks in their areas of specialization. Class teachers will transition into more of a 'homeroom' teacher model in seventh and eighth grades, partnering with other teachers to hold the class community and at the same time having time to focus their attention on providing main lesson instruction in their areas of strength.

## **What is an "afternoon intensive"? Who teaches them? Who takes them?**

The afternoon intensives are quarter- and semester-long credited classes in specific STEM, arts, and humanities topics available to ninth through twelfth graders. A proposed list of intensives available for high school students to select follows below. Some courses will be required – such as ninth and tenth grade English skills classes – while others may be scheduled according to the student's interests and preferences. Advisors will help students to craft a balanced schedule that includes all three types of classes and ensures the students meet graduation and college entrance requirements.



## **FAQ CONTINUED**

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### **Will seventh and eighth graders get to choose any “intensive” classes?**

No. The seventh and eighth graders will continue to follow a set schedule, with the exception of their music elective. Music electives will include mixed groups of seventh through twelfth graders.

### **What about the art program?**

Our wonderful art curriculum will continue, and will take place as part of the Intensives offerings. Foundational art classes will be offered as prerequisites to more advanced courses, and some courses will be reserved for eleventh and twelfth graders. Seventh and eighth grade students will continue to have specialized art courses in their regular rotation of classes.

### **What other models did you look at to devise this new schedule?**

For some time, members of the high school and whole school faculty have been looking at models from a number of Waldorf schools, as well as local peer schools. We believe we have landed on a model that will serve our students well by preserving the core of a Waldorf education, while also expanding to include new means of nurturing deep engagement and learning.

### **Why are these changes being made now?**

After receiving much input from faculty, parents, students, alums, and alum families, it was clear that our community was asking for a thorough examination of our program for the upper grades. Common themes that emerged from all of this feedback included desires for more student choice and voice in the upper grades, as well as for updates to the curriculum that would breathe new life into an education that remains essential for inspiring social renewal.

Waldorf education was originally designed and intended to be adaptive to the context of people’s lives. These updates to our curriculum reflect a response to the times and place we live in and a revived effort to meet the desires from our community to meet this context and prepare our children for a rapidly changing world.

## FAQ CONTINUED

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### How will we tell if this model is working?

There are a few tangible outcomes we hope this model will inspire. One is increased retention, especially from eighth grade into high school. Similarly, we hope this new program will attract more new students into our middle and high school. These increases in enrollment will also promote financial sustainability for our whole school over the long term. We also hope to see more intangible improvements, such as deeper student engagement in the subjects they study, reinvigorated teaching from our faculty, more “aha moments” in longer classes, and stronger community among our upper school students and parents.

### Proposed Intensives

The below list of sample intensives has been proposed by the College, considering existing faculty expertise and expressed student interest. The intensives that are ultimately offered will depend on the availability of teaching faculty and sufficient student registration in each course.

STEM	Humanities	Arts
Advanced Calculus	African-American Literature	Studio Art
Advanced Chemistry	Creative Writing	Cooking
Computers & Technology	History of Architecture	Debate & Oratory
Economics	History of Modern Art	Drama Club
Internships	History of Music	Graphic Design
Nautical Architecture	Mock Trial	Photography
Optics	Model U.N.	Podcasting
Personal Finance	Monotheism	School Newspaper
Practical Engineering	Russian Literature	Social Justice
Robotics	Women’s Literature	Yearbook