



# Milton Fall 2020 Plan

Building Strong Connections Across Our Community

# Path Forward

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Milton's administrators and faculty members have spent the summer reevaluating every aspect of our approach to the school experience and leaning into the culture of creativity, flexibility, and innovation for which the school is known. At the heart of all of our planning has been a deep commitment to whole child education and building strong connections across our community and throughout our program. In this historical moment defined by distance and separation, Milton is working to build strong, sustaining, and meaningful connections for our students - connections to **friends**, **teachers and mentors**, **Jewish values and traditions**, **academic learning**, **the natural world**, and **self**. Milton is poised to ensure that our program meets the moment, and more important, meets the authentic and essential needs of our students and families.

Milton's school leaders have been laying the groundwork for a joyful and engaging 2020-21 school year. For several months, administrators and staff have been preparing creatively to:

- Support the social, emotional, and spiritual well-being of our children, families and staff.
- Mitigate the health risks to our faculty, staff, students and families.
- Reimagine our educational program within new constraints.
- Effectively teach students who may be learning apart together, with some students on campus and others off campus.
- Optimize our distance learning program.
- Prepare our faculty for the challenges of teaching next year (from transitioning across learning modalities to preparing for socially-distanced, masked, in-person interactions).
- Anticipate staffing complexities considering Covid requirements for staying home.
- Create opportunities for joy, exploration, deep learning, and meaningful connections.



# Planning and Current Thinking for Fall

We have been developing five different scenarios for teaching and learning. Each scenario is a complex puzzle on its own, and the process of developing them also requires that the models interplay with one another for maximal synergy and minimal disruption during times when the school transitions to a different educational model. We are seeking to balance continuity and consistency with excellence and engagement across all subjects and modalities.

Considering our current level of community spread and local health officials' deeming returning to school buildings unsafe, our Board of Trustees and Leadership Team have determined that we will start the 2020-2021 academic year with an Off-Campus & Outdoor model. Students in Grades 1-8 will principally use distance learning for academic instruction, with regular in-person opportunities for outdoor education and community building, under the school's guidance and led by Milton educators. We are still exploring whether our youngest learners in Pre-K and Kindergarten will be able to learn on campus based on distinct guidance for that age group from local health authorities.



Milton is committed to a school year distinguished by academic excellence, a caring and talented faculty, and learning that is engaging, experiential, and enduring. We will continue to provide opportunities for our warm, close-knit community to share in each other's lives, to learn together, and to participate in a variety of student, family, and adult programs.

# Off Campus and Outdoors Education

Milton academic leaders developed the Off Campus and Outdoors model in keeping with our commitment to educate the whole child. This approach optimizes the student experience by meeting our children's most essential needs: engaging and effective learning experiences, strong and sustaining connections, and opportunities for joyful and rejuvenating encounters in nature.

## Key Components

### מילטון מפגשים

#### Milton Mifgashim (Gatherings)

In-person gatherings of small pods in which children and teachers are physically distanced but socially connected in outdoor spaces.

### מילטון מחובר

#### Milton Mechubar (Connected)

Community building and social emotional learning for students who opt for a fully-online model.

### מילטון מקוון

#### Milton Mekuwan (Online)

Engaging academic learning using our enhanced distance learning model.

# Milton Mifgashim (Gatherings) מילטון מפגשים

The Milton Mifgashim (Gatherings) program will feature outdoor experiences in which the children will be physically distanced but socially connected. Students in the different grades will engage in developmentally-appropriate activities, from on campus outdoor play and hands-on learning for younger students to hikes, nature-inspired scientific exploration, and creative team-building challenges for older students. We will use these opportunities to advance our program of study in science, engineering, and Judaic studies. We will tap into the benefits of multi-sensory, interdisciplinary learning, which is associated with increased retention, satisfaction, motivation, and engagement. We will build our 'classroom' communities to be strong wherever they may be over the course of this year. And most importantly, we will give our students the restorative joy of being together in nature.

## We Will Reconnect as We Disconnect

We developed this model because we believe it best meets the needs of students and families at this time. Effective education is built on a foundation of strong relationships between students and teachers and among peers. We will use the month of Elul to prioritize opportunities for building strong pod communities, as well as building the habits of mind and soul. There will be a significant emphasis on social emotional learning and students' well-being as we encourage students to connect with themselves and with nature. Our outdoor programs will also provide students with the sense of freedom and joy that engaging in the outdoors brings forth.



# Health and Safety Measures

## Health and Safety Measures for Outdoor Learning

The primary focus of Milton's plans is the health and safety of its students and staff. We are adhering to CDC guidelines, DC Department of Health recommendations, and consulting with our own panel of medical and legal experts. Multiple preventive measures are in place with measures such as:

- Health screenings will be required for all students and staff prior to attending an outdoor education program. Temperatures will be checked upon arrival.
- ALL students and teachers will be required to wear masks at all times except when eating and drinking while in a stationary position.
- Students and staff will adhere to social distancing guidelines.
- To limit exposure, we created pods with a maximum of 11 students. Outdoor encounters will happen by pod. There will be no mixing of pods.
- Frequent washing of hands and the use of hand sanitizer will be required among students and staff before, during, and after our outdoor education programs.
- There will be multiple bathrooms at outdoor locations that will be cleaned regularly according to guidance from the medical advisory task force.



# Milton Mechubar (Connected) מילטון מחובר

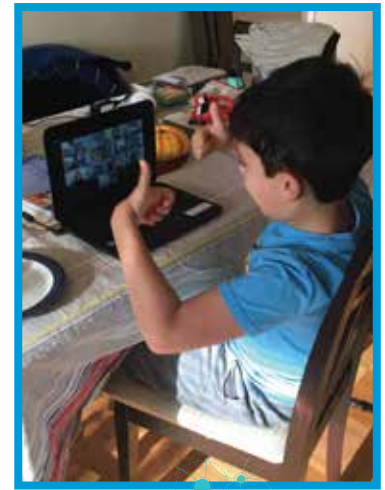
We are mindful that there are members of our school community who will be unable to gather in person for health or personal reasons at some points during the year or for the entire school year. We recognize the added challenge for these children to feel connected and we are committed to working together with children, teachers, and families to ensure that every child's individual needs are understood and supported with warmth, compassion, respect, and kindness.



Through our Milton Mechubar (Connected) program, we will create opportunities to forge genuine connections among the children who opt into the fully virtual program. These activities may include fun and interactive games and puzzles. Our students can look forward to events like murder mysteries, trivia contests, virtual field trips to parks and museums around the world, and more. Through such activities, these students will have a chance to explore, discover, and have fun.

## Milton Mekuwan (Online) מילטון מקוון

In early fall, students will be given guidance, training, and support to reacclimate to school and to use our enhanced online program, Milton Mekuwan (online). This model will allow students to connect and learn with all the talented teachers and content specialists in their program, in a way which is most appropriate for their individual learning needs. This would not be possible with an on campus model at this time because of limitations on teacher contact with students.



We were rightfully proud of Milton's online program during the spring, which garnered widespread appreciation from parents. We are grateful to our teachers for the courage, creativity, professionalism, and dedication they modeled as they learned, adapted and stretched to meet the unprecedented circumstances. And still, it should be noted that the online program in the spring was an emergency online learning program. We acknowledge that it was not as successful for some children, especially our youngest students. We have learned a great deal since then. In the spring, we had to pivot quickly and began our online program within days by attempting to replicate the on-campus experiences in the digital space. This fall, **Milton Mekuwan** will be designed with additional intentionality and expertise. As part of our fall planning, the Off Campus Design Thinking task force and educational leadership have been working on ways to optimize the online learning experience.



## Distance Learning- Refined and Redesigned

### Responsive Approach

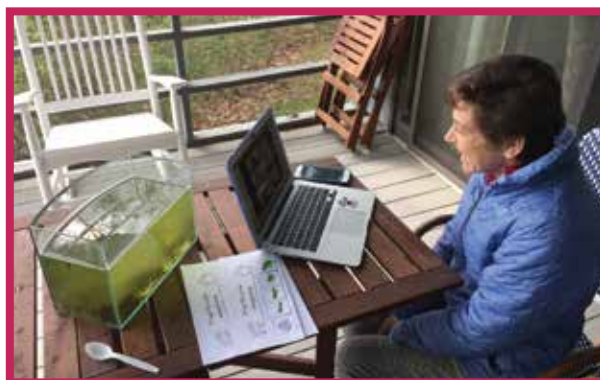
Our redesigned distance learning model incorporates feedback from students, parents, and teachers about their experiences in the spring.

### Building Our Expertise

This fall, Milton learners will benefit from the implementation of innovations in the field and best practices. Over the summer, faculty and administrators participated in more than 50 professional development programs. Faculty members deepened their practice in the following areas: pedagogy and best practices for online and hybrid learning; social emotional support; executive function; learning support; pedagogical and curricular innovations in the areas of reading, writing, math, science, STEM, Hebrew, and Israel education; content development and strategies to help students engage with serious social issues such as racism, identity, injustice or violence in ways that cast more light than heat and foster conversations that give students voice while building understanding.

### Applying Design Thinking to our Schedules

Rather than replicating our on-campus schedules, we are designing off-campus schedules that better reflect the needs of students and teachers. Off campus academic schedules will include engaging and interactive lessons with their teachers and classmates, small group learning, office hours with teachers, regularly scheduled 1-on-1 check-in meetings with every student, independent work time, and break/play times that reflect the needs of students at various stages of development. Consistent break times across divisions can help our students and their siblings find more time to connect with family and friends across divisions.



# Milton Mekuwan (Online) מילטון מקוון

## Balancing Offline and Online Learning

Research shows that projects can work particularly well with online instruction, optimizing the technology for content delivery and skill building and then freeing students to use materials, their own spaces, and their copious ingenuity to create in a more hands-on and inspired manner.

## User-Friendly Parent and Student Experience

This fall, families can expect a more user-friendly, efficient, and organized approach to online learning. We will have consistent start times, simplified Zoom connections for young students, streamlined schedules, and a Zoom support hotline to better support learners and parents.

## Equity of Engagement

We are committed to equity of engagement and will be providing additional resources and apps to support the different learning styles and needs of our diverse learners.

## Mentorship and Real-Time Support

Dynamic and responsive teacher feedback on student work and real-time support on class assignments, empowering students to constructively engage with learning tasks and turn them into opportunities for iteration and growth.



# Supporting our Students

These are times of extraordinary hardship for many children and families, and Milton professionals are here to support you. In addition to your child's teachers, Milton's guidance counselors prioritize building warm, trusting relationships with each student and foster open, collaborative communication that allows them to guide students and families through some of their most challenging times. Our learning specialists will provide academic and executive functioning support for students through one-on-one sessions, in small groups, and in breakout rooms during online classes. We have a dedicated team of learning specialists and guidance counselors who specializes in the best practices and particular needs within early childhood, elementary, and middle school, and tailors their approach to supporting children with these distinct developmental stages in mind.

At in-person outdoor gatherings and online meet-ups, guidance counselors will provide social-emotional support to students. These will happen individually, in small groups, and through regular classroom lessons. Our research-based social-emotional curriculum focuses on themes around empathy, belonging and inclusion, emotion management, communication, and problem-solving. Counselors also partner with teachers to provide students with opportunities to practice the skills they're learning during the day and to promote a culture of caring and acceptance.

Likewise, our teachers are attuned to the importance of students' social and emotional well-being. Our educational program is designed to support the intrinsic interplay of the social emotional and the academic needs of children.



# Advantages of Our Approach

## Encounters in Nature

Science affirms the restorative and cognitively and spiritually healing value of spending time in and learning from nature. Through outdoor adventures and learning, we will hone our abilities to observe details and see the big picture, hear and support each other, discover, wonder, work as a team, adapt to changing circumstances, compromise, find beauty in simple things, and be more in tune with ourselves, connected with the earth, and connected with each other.

## Mind, Body and Spirit

We educate the whole child and our program aims to meet their needs on multiple levels. Spending time in nature and engaging in physical activity helps students recharge themselves rather than their laptops.

## Vibrant Classroom Culture Online

Engagement with more of their teachers and more of their peers is possible online, thereby creating opportunities for the vibrant discourse of multiple perspectives and ideas.



## Content Mastery and Skill Building

Learning with a variety of content experts will help students build a stronger foundation of content and skills that they need to advance academically. Students will have the opportunity to extend their studies in novel and engaging ways through the interplay of online classes with outdoor activities and applications.

## Optimizing Connections and Flexibility of Online Learning

Teachers are creating opportunities for students to see the ways different disciplines weave together and inform their understanding. Online learning also allows us the flexibility to give students time in their schedules for "genius hours", a time to imagine and innovate during which they could access teacher specialists as mentors and guides.

## Individual Care and Support

Students will have one-on-one sessions with teachers, access to additional office hours, and small group meetings in addition to class instruction on Zoom and engaging offline independent work. In addition, Milton's learning specialists and counselors will support and guide our children through one-on-one and small group meetings.

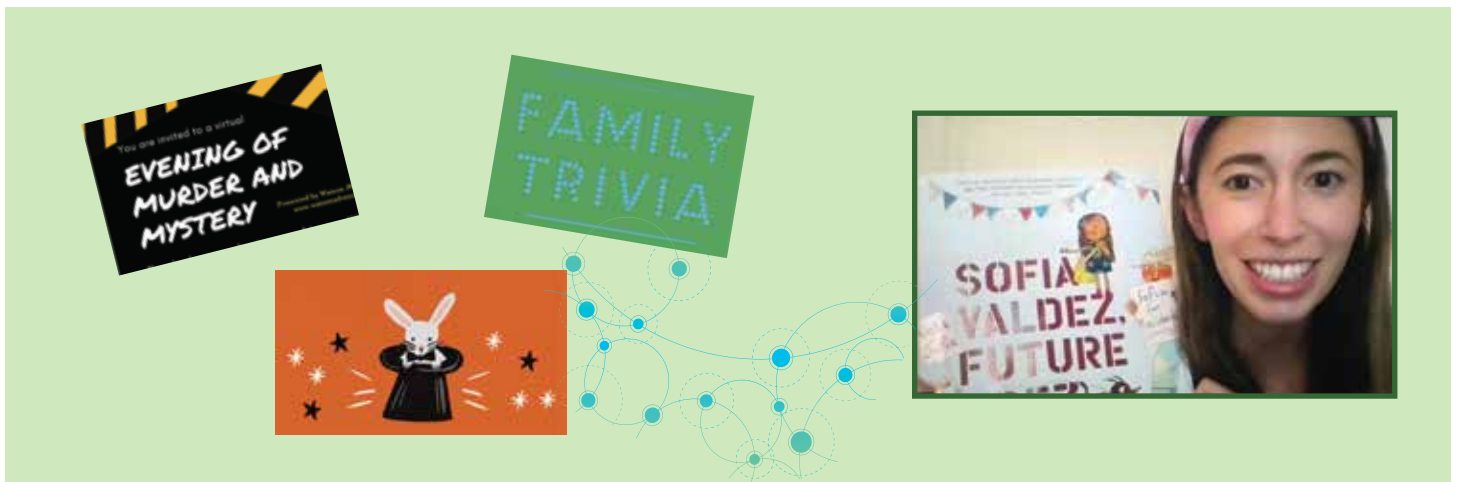
## Strong, Sustaining Relationships

Emphasis on building strong, meaningful social connections outdoors and online will contribute to a sense of safety, belonging, and well-being, which is fundamental to effective learning and academic growth.

In this unprecedented time, our talented educators remain intentional, creative, and attuned to the essential needs of our students and families, and approach their sacred work with caring and flexibility to best meet those needs.

# Our Milton Family, Our Mishpacha

We embrace the role we can play as a center for families to find connection, support, and a bit of fun. During this period of physical distance, we have become ever closer and interconnected as a Milton family, as a true mishpacha. Over the summer, we further strengthened our ties through programs that brought students and families together - events such as Virtual Magic Shows, Family Trivia Night, Rube Goldberg Design Challenge, Communal Kumzits, Storytime, and more. This coming year, we are planning regular activities that will bring our community together, including family events, parent education sessions and “parents nights in,” adult learning such as People of the Book and Talmud classes, as well as chesed and holiday-oriented activities that can help us celebrate together.



## Milton Matanot (Gifts)

Families in Grades Pre-K to 1 will receive Milton Matanot (Gifts), special packages of games, crafts, challenges, and activities for children and families to complement their learning and play.

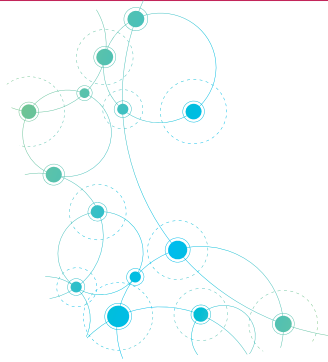
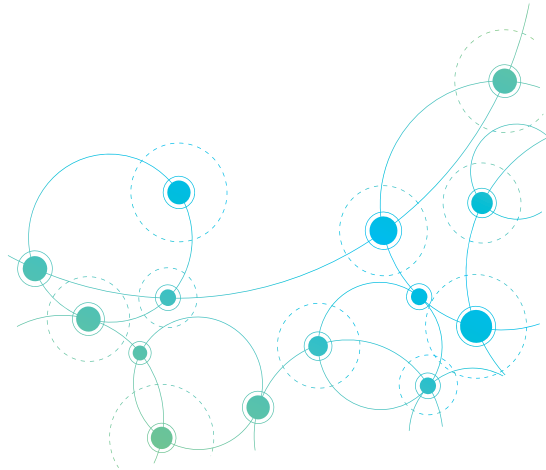
## Resources

We will continue to build our online resource board for the school community which includes mental health resources, activities calendar, online workouts, live zoom events, and more.

# Afterschool

## Extracurriculars

Milton will be postponing extracurricular programs during this 2-month initial opening period. We will reassess our options in November.



## Wonders Learning

We are working with Wonders to provide virtual aftercare for our families. This summer, Wonders ran a successful online summer camp for students which they plan to adapt for the fall. [Learn more.](#)

# Glossary

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- **Asynchronous Learning** Online learning centered on assignments and recorded video content rather than live Zoom instruction.
- **Pod** Small group of students in the same grade with a maximum of 11 students.
- **Distance Learning** Online learning.
- **Milton Matanot (Gifts)** Families in Grades Pre-K to 1 will receive special packages of games, crafts, challenges and activities for children and families to complement their learning and play.
- **Milton Mechubar (Connected)** Online games, gatherings, and special events to meet the social-emotional needs of children learning fully online.
- **Milton Mekuvan (Online)** Enhanced distance learning program that will enable students to learn with content specialists, have leveled instruction, and engage in more vibrant discourse with a larger peer group.
- **Milton Mifgashim (Gatherings)** Outdoor experiences in which the children will be physically distanced but socially connected. Students will engage in developmentally-appropriate activities, from on campus outdoor play and hands-on learning for younger students to hikes, nature-inspired scientific exploration, and creative team-building.
- **Milton Mishpacha (Family)** Social and community-building events for families that may take place virtually or in person.
- **Synchronous Learning** Online learning in which students learn from teachers and specialists or work with peers in real time, but not in person.
- **Virtual Learning** Online learning.

# Opportunities for Engagement

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- **Send Us Your Questions**

We imagine that you have many questions and we want to answer any and all of them. Please send us your questions [here](#) by **August 9**. We will ask them during the webinars and use them to build our FAQs.

- **Webinars**

We will schedule webinars between **August 10-12**. Please check your inbox for the invitations. We will be recording these events so if you cannot attend the webinars, you will still be able to watch a recording.



- **Survey**

Parents will receive a survey opting into the Off Campus and Outdoors model or a fully-online academic and community building program. We will also ask for your reflections and suggestions about the online program in the spring.

- **Communications**

We will update you on our plans as they develop. Expect sample schedules, details about outdoor activities, and information about technology resources and support by **August 21**.

- **Pod and Class Lists**

Parents will receive pod and class list information by **August 10**. Students may not attend any school gatherings if their health forms have not been submitted to Magnus.

- **Meet the Teachers Events**

Milton will have grade-specific virtual welcome gatherings for families in Grades 2-8. Students in Grades Pre-K to 1 will be invited to join an outdoor, socially-distanced gathering with their pod at our playground. We will require health screenings for children, parents, and staff and completed health forms submitted through Magnus prior to attending.

- **Feedback**

As we develop more elements of our fall plan, we will update you and provide opportunities for you to ask questions and share your feedback. We are in a *brüt* (pact) and ours is a partnership. The school will continue to share news and seek feedback as we reassess our plans.

- **Community Building Events**

Check your inbox for invitations to our back-to-school events this month. We are so excited to see you and your children!



# Action Items

## 1. Send Us Your Questions

[Complete this form.](#)

## 2. Register for a Webinar

Link will be sent by email.

## 3. Fill Out the Fall Survey

Link will be sent by email.



## 4. Sign Up for Magnus App & Upload Health Forms

[Access Magnus through the Parent Portal.](#)

## 5. Join Us at our Community Building Events

Invitation will be sent by email.

We are grateful for your patience, perspective, and shared commitment to Jewish values and community. We are so excited to see you and your children - in online classes, at online social events, and at outdoor gatherings.

