



08/25/2020 5:35 PM

Email Subject: WMA - Town Hall Zoom Link & Reopening Updates

Dear Parent,

Before we meet tonight, we want to provide some updates regarding our reopening plans for September.

Parent Survey Results

The overwhelming majority of parents have replied to the survey and we were following up with those who have not responded. The majority (66% overall) prefer in-person learning, but there is a difference in grades 4 and below (76%) and grades 5-8 (51%). 15% chose at home learning and 17% chose a hybrid model (2% didn't answer).

Reopening Plan Changes

In reviewing the survey responses in conjunction with ongoing guidance from health departments indicating a much stronger preference for keeping students 6' apart, we have adapted our reopening plan for our students in grades 5-8. Please note that the plan for grades 4 and under remains the same, as those students are 6' apart in their classrooms regardless of whether some or all attend.

For your information, it is our understanding that the health department considers a school that offers parents both virtual and in person options to be considered an approved plan if the students are 6' apart.

Grades 5-8 Physical Distancing

The number of parents who have chosen in-building learning for September is significant enough that the students, even with some learning from home, would not be 6' apart in classrooms. As we shared earlier, a large percentage of our rooms only accommodate 5-10 students 6' apart. It is also important to note that in these upper grades, the entire grade effectively becomes one cohort spread among at least three rooms.

To keep the upper grade students 6' apart, we are going to use overflow rooms in any cases where the number of students expected in a class that day exceeds the number that can be 6' apart. Overflow rooms will be proctored with students operating virtually, the same as if they were at home. Weather permitting, they would join their respective classmates outside for recess and any activity outside class rooms. This will allow us to keep all of our students 6' apart at all times and respects the parents who want to have their children in the building five days a week. Students who are in the building will be rotated in and out of the overflow room. Parents will

know in advance when their children are in the overflow rooms and can opt instead to keep them home.

Movement of Students

As you know we have redesigned our schedule to be a 5 day rather than a 6 day cycle to provide a simpler plan that is easier to follow both in and out of the building. In conjunction with this new schedule and in order to accommodate additional cleaning needs throughout the day, we developed plans to have students move safely throughout the building. With the help of some of our Health & Safety Task Force members, we outlined the steps our teachers should follow in guiding staggered and physically distant student movement, and we plan to practice these with our teachers next week.

While all students will arrive in the building and go directly to their classroom, some students in grades 5-8 will start with their math grouping while the others will start with their homeroom grouping. These upper grade students will remain in their classrooms without switching rooms for three periods and the teachers will rotate to them. This will be followed by lunch and recess and when they are not in the classroom, it will be disinfected. When they return from lunch and recess, they will enter with the opposite grouping they experienced in the morning (math or homeroom) and remain with that group through dismissal as the teachers rotate to them. This eliminates 12 groups switching classes almost simultaneously.

At Home Learning

We have heard that there are concerns that students at home will not be getting the same quality education that their counterparts in school will receive. We've been working on, and will launch this week, a page on our website that addresses this issue and explains learning at home, whether a student participates virtually some or all days of the week.

In general, since every classroom will have a camera with a microphone, students at home will be watching what the teacher is doing and saying live (approximately 8am-3pm each day) and will be able to participate in real time. This means that this fall, the students' day will look like it did last September before COVID forced us to close the building, not the way it did as we first adapted to distance-learning last spring.

Building Connections

We do realize that building relationships among students and their peers, and between students and teachers, is much more difficult when we're not all together. We will be specifically working on this in the next three weeks, and will continue that focus as the school year unfolds. This connection piece is one of the reasons that we are asking students at home to look and act like their in-building counterparts, so as not to create divisions. For this reason as well, we're going to be wearing uniforms part of the time to be respectful to those who prefer them and those who spent money this summer on new purchases.

Staffing Updates

Sister Barbara MacWilliams will join us virtually in October to resume Reading Enrichment. Sister Carmel Rondinelli will interact virtually with our younger students by reading them stories and sharing lessons.

This summer we bid goodbye to our math specialist Mrs. Mary Ann DeHoratius as she retires and enters the next phase of her life story. Mary Ann's significant body of knowledge, large bag of math "tricks", and her loving caring way with students who needed extra help has been extremely valued and will definitely be missed. We wish her well in her new journey.

Mrs. Gina Flatley has decided to leave her third grade position and assume the responsibility of math specialist. Gina has significant experience in support roles, and we know she will be fantastic in her new job!

We are excited that Mrs. Janet Mammen, our science specialist for the past three years, jumped at the chance to take over the third grade position! She is excited to return to classroom teaching where she loves developing relationships with students and witnessing their growth over the course of a school year. Janet has 34 years of experience in education as well as a Bachelor of Science in Education for K-12 special education and a Masters in Education.

First Week of School

You will shortly receive more information about the first four days of school and learn which students will be attending which days (in general, it's an alphabetical split). Please note that if your student will be attending virtually, we will ask you to sign up for a slot to pick up your students' materials on one of the first two days in order for the virtual students to participate at home on Thursday or Friday. You also will shortly receive a separate email via Sign-Up Genius regarding arrival and dismissal times so we can attempt to manage the volume of traffic.

On the first day of school, students will be permitted to wear any Waldron attire (full uniform, Spirit Wear) that they desire. Please note that the face covering must be a mask, not a neck gaiter, as the neck gaiters are not approved by our Health & Safety Committee for use during the school year.

And finally, please know that we expect all to adhere to the Governor's recommendations on out-of-state travel. If you are traveling in these next two weeks to a location that is on the recommended quarantine list, we ask you to quarantine. Your student will still be able to participate virtually, so they will not be marked absent. If this applies to you, please email [Fran Gallagher](#) immediately.

Town Hall Meeting

Thank you to all who submitted questions for our Town Hall Meeting tonight at 7:00 p.m.! We will be recording the meeting for those who are unable to attend; please email wma@waldronmercy.org if you cannot attend and would like to watch the recording.

As always, stay safe, and keep God in your thoughts and turn to him when the anxiety and uncertainty becomes overwhelming. I do. It helps.

In Mercy,

Ann Marie