



July 16, 2020

Dear WTPS Families and Staff,

In the last 12 hours the district released its preliminary plan for providing a combination of both in-person and remote instruction for the start of the new school year. Let me begin by apologizing that the information led to some questions and need for clarification. In our efforts to communicate as frequently as possible, we overlooked some important items that will give our families and our staff a better understanding of how our program is taking shape.

It is important to understand that all of these items are still being reviewed and amended to include more specificity; therefore, we will continue to send updates as they become available. We will try to do this on Thursdays each week unless something pressing arises that requires our immediate attention. In addition, the district is building a page on our website that will serve as a repository for all communication and other documents related to the reopening of schools.

Attached to this email is an updated version of the document you received yesterday that serves to expand and clarify information related to the plan.

Why are we implementing a hybrid instructional model?

Folks have asked why a hybrid of only 2 days per week in-person versus a 5-day in-person model has been selected. In my letters I have shared the link to the NJDOE guidance all districts have received. One of the mandates in that guidance is regarding social distancing which requires us to have students 6 feet apart in classrooms. Given our population we cannot abide by this mandate without physical barriers between students. Even if physical barriers were plausible, this would not be effective when students needed to change classes, particularly at the secondary level. We are charged with having in-person instruction while also doing all we can to keep our students and staff safe. That is a significant challenge; therefore, the task force agreed that our best chance to safely do this is in a hybrid model that divides our population in half and combines both in-person and remote instruction. This will allow us to meet the social distancing requirements in the NJDOE guidance.

Why an early dismissal schedule?

Our teachers will be required to teach in-person 4 days per week while continuing to provide remote instruction 5 days per week. Time must be built into the day to allow our teachers the ability to tackle this challenge. This is critical in providing continuity of instruction regardless of the cohort a student is in. Please see a more detailed explanation of the scheduled day in the updated attachment.

What is Cohort C?

Cohort C is only for self-contained special education students and students in our English Language Learner Program. These students will come to school 4 days per week following the same early dismissal schedule as Cohorts A and B. In addition, they will receive supplemental remote instruction.

What about preschool?

Information will be forthcoming on the schedule for our preschool program.

Does my child have to wear a mask?

We have conflicting guidance from the Department of Education and the Governor on this account. The DOE guidance states student masks are not required in the classroom if students are 6 feet apart, while the Governor recently issued an order requiring masks be worn at all times, except in specific situations like dining at a restaurant. We are seeking more guidance on this front and will include our determination in future communication. In the meantime, I would personally recommend that students wear masks as frequently as possible while in school. This will help ensure everyone's safety. If your child is riding the bus a mask will be **required**.

When will school begin?

We are delaying the start of school for our students to Tuesday, September 8. This will allow us more time to effectively plan while allowing us to start during a 4-day week. This will also allow for 2 days of in-person instruction for Cohort A on Tuesday and Wednesday, September 8 and 9, and 2 days of in-person instruction for Cohort B on Thursday and Friday, September 10 and 11.

What is Cohort "R"

Cohort R is for any student with a medical need for whom in-person instruction is not safe or for any parent who does not want their child to receive in-person instruction. These students will remain at home and receive instruction remotely from their teachers.

Will children in the same family living at the same address be placed in the same cohort?

Yes.

What about childcare?

Joe Greer, Owner of Kids Choice sits on our task force. We are working with him to develop strategies to increase childcare opportunities and options. These details will be shared in future correspondence.

Our task force and our sub-committees are continuing to hold meetings to further develop and plan. Additional surveys are being developed to solicit input from our staff and families. We appreciate your feedback and thank you for your cooperation as we navigate this new environment together.

My thanks to all and continue to stay safe!



Joseph N. Bollendorf, Superintendent