Fall 2020 FAQ

Q. 1. What is the difference between the Online Virtual Program and Remote Learning?
A. The Online Virtual Program is designed to be a full-year 100% online learning program designed for students who do not plan to return to on-site instruction for the 2020-2021 school year. The courses would be taught by West Geauga teachers. We ask for a minimum one-semester commitment to the Virtual Online program. If a student wishes to return to on-site learning at semester break, we would honor that request. Remote Learning is a program for students who are typically on-site but must move to an online program for a set period of time but plan to return to on-site learning in the classroom. It is a more structured version of the online learning that took place last spring. Remote learning is taught by the students’ regular on-site classroom teachers during their regularly scheduled classes with built in assignment breaks to alleviate screen time. Attendance will be taken regularly.

Q 2. What exactly will virtual learning look like? Will there be a camera set up in the classrooms? Will the students who are learning from home be engaged in the same lessons as the students who are in the actual classrooms? Will there be a set schedule for their school day? Will they be able to reach out to teachers for help during the class time?
A. Students K-12 who are learning from home will be assigned specific West Geauga teachers to provide instruction to them. At the high school level, some classes may incorporate live streaming due to the specificity of the content. This will require agreement from the teacher in order to provide access. At all levels, time online should consist of a balance of direct and indirect instruction. At this time, sample schedules per grade band will appear in the building plans.

Q. 3. Why is WG planning to offer remote learning from August 18 through September 7 for students who are planning to return to on-site instruction?
A. Pending ratification of a Memorandum of Understanding with our teachers’ union, the Board has approved the superintendent’s recommendation to implement remote instruction for students scheduled to return to school in-person. The postponement of students’ return to the school buildings allows additional time to monitor COVID-19
spread in Northeast Ohio and Geauga County. It permits continued revisions/updates to our Reopening Plan. It eliminates the unpredictability of “calamity days” and school closure due to excessive heat and mandated use of face masks in late August. Calamity days due to soaring temperatures still may be required throughout September, but the number should be significantly reduced. It gives us more time to introduce students and families new to West G to our school buildings in-person with social distancing protocols in place. Additionally, it allows teachers time to acclimate themselves to a socially distanced school building.

Q 4. Would my child’s experience with virtual learning be the same as it was in the spring?
A. No. Our remote learning model is enhanced from what students participated in during the fourth quarter of 2020 and is significantly more robust and includes much more face to face time with teachers including both academic and social/emotional supports to create connection and continuity.

Q 5. Can I change my mind about choosing the virtual learning option for my child?
A. Creating a learning environment that is simultaneously in-person and virtual requires significant planning and logistics. Class sizes, classroom management and making sure that the number of students a teacher has who are in-person and virtual are balanced are all important factors. Therefore, selecting the virtual option for your child to start the year is a semester-long commitment. You may opt out of virtual learning at the beginning of the second semester.

Q 6. Why is West Geauga not offering a hybrid model?
A. Based on parent feedback from our second parent survey, the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the social-emotional well-being of our students, we felt that providing a full-time in-person learning experience for our students was best. We believe that we can do this in a safe manner while still giving our families the option of virtual learning. Consistency and continuity throughout the week is important for students and families. In addition, we are able to maintain social distancing protocols for those students whose families opt to have their children participate in on-site instruction without splitting up our onsite students.

Q 7. Will all students who choose the Virtual Option receive a Chromebook?
A. Yes. Every student in grades K-12 may have a Chromebook whether they are learning at school or virtually. We have ordered additional devices and will be fully One-to-One in all grades as soon as Chromebooks are delivered. We will ask parents who need Chromebooks to fill out a survey closer to the start of the school year.
Q. 8. What is the approximate percentage of students who are opting to participate in the Online Virtual Program instead of returning to the school building?
As of today, approximately 20-22 percent of our students are planning to participate in the Online Virtual Program.

Q 9. Will students who are participating in virtual learning be able to have the schedule and expectations in advance, so that parents can structure assistance?
A. Yes. Daily schedules and meeting times will be provided in advance so that virtual students are prepared and know the structure of the day. Class assignments will be given in real time just as they are in a typical school day. As in the past, daily lessons will be posted. Please note that any special needs will also be addressed in the virtual learning format (i.e. gifted, IEP, 504, ELL, etc.)

Q.10. The Back-to-School plans reference before-school screening families should do at home to be sure that their child is well enough to attend school each day. What exactly will we need to look for every morning?
A. Conducting an honest check of your child's well being each morning will be a critical component of helping keep our school communities as safe as possible. We understand some families would like us to do temperature checks prior to students entering the buildings for them, however, public health and medical professionals have stressed that it is important for daily screenings to cover more than just a student or staff member's temperature.

Q11. Will school personnel take temperatures?
A. We are requiring parents to assess their child's health each day before going to the bus stop and before arriving at school, including taking temperatures at home. Students should not come to school with an elevated temperature of 100 or above. Staff will refer students who appear symptomatic to our dedicated COVID clinics in each building. We absolutely need our families to partner with us on this. It is the responsibility of everyone in our school community to do their part in helping prevent the spread of COVID-19. This provision is under review for further study. The alternative would be that temperatures would be assessed at school. Options are being considered.

Q. 12. Will students and staff need to take a COVID-19 test prior to the start of the school year or at other times?
A. No. Decisions about the appropriateness of testing for children and staff will be left up to families and medical professionals.
Q 13. What will happen if a child forgets a mask or doesn’t have a mask at school? Will the school provide masks to kids who don’t have them?
A. Each school will have extra disposable masks on hand for any students who forget them or who arrive at school not wearing one.

Q 14. Are there consequences for kids who repeatedly take off their masks?
A. Learning to keep a mask on for extended periods of time is new for everyone. Our staff is working on ways to build positive culture in the classroom for keeping masks on during the day. This would include reminders and positive reinforcement, so students are hearing more affirmative messages than negative ones. We ask that parents begin this process at home over the next 6 weeks to help children get acclimated to wearing masks for increasingly longer periods of time. There will be updated information in student handbooks pertaining to the requirement of wearing a face covering.

Q 15. Will elementary school children have any chance at moving around the classroom/interacting with peers in groups or will they be at the desks the entire day?
A. The teachers will be working on ways to help students interact during the school day in the classroom while still remaining physically distant. We understand interconnectedness is important to students’ social-emotional well-being. Although they may not be able to interact in the exact same way they have done in the past, they will be collaborating with peers in the classroom.

Q 16. What about students with special needs (IEP, 504, EL, gifted)? How will my child’s services differ this year?
A. We understand the unique challenges our students with special needs are experiencing due to the pandemic. There are a specialized set of needs for each of these students. Therefore, each student’s team will create a plan as appropriate to address their individual needs. Parents will receive information specific to their student as the school year begins.

Q 17. Where will my student eat lunch?
A. Each school is creating new lunch procedures. For students in grades K-5, students will eat lunch on a rotational basis in the lunchroom and gym. Social Distancing protocols will be in place. Additional lunch proctors are being hired to supervise. At WGMS & WGHS, students will have a snack mid-morning and leave the building before lunch. Boxed lunches to go will be available to students at WGMS and WGHS as needed/desired.

Q 18. What is the policy on extra-curricular activities in person when selecting the Virtual
Learning Option?
A. If you determine it is in your child's best interest to learn virtually and participate in face-to-face activities, the district will honor that decision. Although the district is doing everything possible to mitigate risk and implement safety protocols, some face-to-face activities carry inherently more risk than others. As has been the case since we have resumed in person activities, all students participating in those types of extra-curricular activities and athletics must complete an assumption of risk waiver.

Q. 19. What happens if a student starts coughing or exhibiting other symptoms of COVID-19 in a classroom?
A. Students who develop sore throats, coughs or other symptoms of COVID-19 will be sent to the clinic and sent home. In each school building, a secondary clinic will be established to serve students and staff exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms. Families will need to send a medical note detailing that their child is not experiencing a contagious medical condition in order to return to school. We know many of our students have seasonal allergies with symptoms that resemble those of COVID-19. We will err on the side of caution in asking families to confirm with a health care provider that their child's symptoms are not contagious.

Q 20. If a student tests positive or is a close contact of someone who tests positive and needs to quarantine for 14 days, would online learning be available to that student during that time frame?
A. Yes, a student who must be absent from school due to COVID-19 or exposure to someone who tests positive for COVID-19 will be able to access the learning for their classes virtually in what we are calling an “Emergency Remote Absence.” We anticipate throughout the school year, students may need to be at home due to illness or exposure to COVID-19 and we want to ensure as much consistency in learning as possible. Any student on an emergency remote plan would return to his/her homeroom following the quarantine.

Q. 21. If drinking fountains are closed, will water refill stations be provided?
A. Yes.

Q. 22. How will the schools enforce rules related to COVID-19?
A. Student handbooks/codes of conduct will be amended to include a reference to COVID-19 and compliance with associated expectations.

Q. 23. What social emotional supports are being put in place for students?
A. We have intensified efforts to strengthen such supports during this challenging time.
These include a dedicated K-12 guidance counselor to monitor services to students demonstrating need for additional support, a full-time social worker, a partnership with Ravenwood for therapeutic behavioral support, Restorative Justice student circles at WGHS, and district-wide efforts to promote equity and inclusion for all students.

Q. 24. Will students be permitted to use lockers?
A. This question is building specific. High school students will be permitted to use lockers. Masks are required in halls as well as classrooms and students are not to congregate at their lockers. In the middle school, lockers will be assigned on an “every other locker” basis.

Q. 25 Will families new to WG have the opportunity to visit the schools prior to sending their children?
A. Yes, we plan to offer guided tours, utilizing social distancing protocols prior to the resumption of in-person instruction.

Q 26. What about orientations and meet the teacher events?
A. Each school is planning a combination of virtual and small-group orientation programs. Families will hear more about these at the beginning of August. The large group back-to-school ice cream socials and supply drop offs to meet the teacher are simply not possible this year. But we understand the importance of providing a smooth transition especially to a new school building and we will provide opportunities for that to happen prior to the start of school.