

Back to School



July 8, 2020

Our weekly “Back to School E-newsletter” for families!



Important Information

District officials have been awaiting guidance from the state regarding the 2020-21 school year. The Governor’s Office and the Ohio Department of Education each have issued documents; links to that information can be found below. Upon our initial review of these materials, the planning that already has occurred in our district is not very different from what the state is recommending. Survey data from families and staff is also being used to shape our final plan. Our teams continue to review these materials from the state and are working to ensure that our reopening plans are in compliance. We expect that we will be able to share our reopening plan with families sometime during the week of July 13-17.



Academics

Last week the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) released a document titled, “[The Reset and Restart Education Planning Guide for Ohio Schools and Districts](#)” which is designed to help teachers, principals, and administrators with solutions to safety challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic as they contemplate how to reopen safely. This guidance issued by ODE was developed in consultation with school superintendents, teachers, parents, the Ohio Federation of Teachers, Ohio Education Association, Ohio Association of Public School Employees, Buckeye Association of School Administrators, Ohio School Boards Association, Ohio Association of School Business Officials, Alliance for High Quality Education, and Ohio Association of Career Tech Education.

With a little more than a month left before most students return to school on August 13, there’s still a lot that can happen to impact the plans for school districts across the state. One thing that our district will be monitoring closely is the “status level” issued for each county. Since WCSD is spread across two counties, district officials will defer to the county with the least favorable status for continued decision making. For example, Franklin County is currently at a Level 3 status. However, should the spread of COVID-19 continue and Franklin County moves to a Level 4, this could impact any planning and decisions to date.

Based on current conditions and Franklin County being designated a Level 3, the district plans to open school next year in a blended model. The Board of Education reviewed various options for blended learning and charged the administration with developing a recommendation. In addition, the board discussed the state-required Face Mask Policy, which is also being developed. Finally, the board directed the administration to develop a fully online option for any families that would prefer not to return to school. Details regarding these decisions will be released once finalized.

Regardless of what our return to school looks like, district officials are committed to approaching the reopening of school from a teaching and learning perspective. Things will look different, so we will be working to educate students on expectations, as well as proper behavior and etiquette, moving forward. Per state guidelines, we also will be monitoring and addressing any learning loss resulting from the long-term closure of facilities this past spring.



Operations

Last week Governor Mike DeWine announced new guidance for resuming school in the fall. The guidance focuses on the following five areas that schools are recommended to comply with:

- Assessment of symptoms;
- Washing and sanitizing hands;
- Cleaning and sanitizing surfaces;
- Social distancing; and
- Face coverings.

"We know that each school system, and perhaps each school building, will likely look different in the fall," DeWine said. "We also know that Ohio has a long history of local control and that school administrators and teachers know their schools best. Working together and consulting with educators and other health officials, we have developed a set of guidelines, backed by science, that each school should follow when developing their reopening plans."

State guidelines require school staff to wear face coverings to reduce the spread of the virus, unless it is unsafe or when doing so could significantly interfere with the learning process. When face coverings aren't practical, face shields for staff may be considered. Though not required, the state strongly recommends that students in 3rd grade and up wear face coverings in school as well, and all students who ride a school bus should wear face coverings while being transported to and from school.

DeWine also acknowledged the new costs facing school districts in the upcoming school year and pledged to work with the General Assembly to provide additional funding to schools from Ohio's share of CARES Act funds.

View details on the new school guidance by [clicking here](#).

Read Governor DeWine's full press release by [clicking here](#).

Other



Survey Results Summary

We continue to evaluate family and staff survey results. Here is a summary of some of the key findings available at this time:

- Forty-eight percent of responding parents (5,881 total responses) report that remote learning is not a burden, while 43% indicate it is stressful.
- State guidelines will require staff to wear face coverings, which appears consistent with the more than 60% of responding families who favor staff wearing face coverings.
- The state recommends students in grades 3-12 to wear face coverings while in school, and survey responses appear to align with these guidelines. The weakest support for requiring students to wear masks in school came from pre-kindergarten through second grade families (50.6%), with increasing support as grade levels increased (grades 3-5 = 58.8%; grades 6-8 = 61%; grades 9-12 = 63.3%).

- As for students wearing masks while riding a school bus, the state also recommends this approach, given issues with space and social distancing. Family survey responses appear to align with this recommendation. The weakest support for students wearing masks on buses came from pre-kindergarten through second grade families (59.1%) with increasing support as grade levels increased (grades 3-5 = 67.2%; grades 6-8 = 68.8%; grades 9-12 = 69%). The number of families reporting their ability or willingness to transport students means we may see a significant number of them opt out of transportation, which would improve social distancing efforts.
- Regarding possible blended learning models, parents at all grade levels indicate the greatest support for an alternating weeks model and an A Day/B Day approach versus a two days on/two days off model. In contrast, teachers indicated that the two days on/two days off model is a more effective model for students. Regarding staff comfort level for themselves, all staff rated the two day model and the weekly model as slightly more favorable than the alternating day model.



Phase 3 for activities

This past Monday, the district entered Phase 3 of its return to activities:

- All previous health guidelines and scheduling processes remain in place
 - Middle School may now use the gymnasium and weight room
- Groups may be paired together to create larger participation sizes
 - Weight room, Gymnasium, and Band room may have two groups (max 24 student-athletes) at one time
 - Outdoor facilities may have four groups (max 48 student-athletes) at one time
 - Marching Band may have up to 48 musicians outside at any one time
- Competition
 - Baseball and Softball teams may have scrimmage games against other Westerville high schools ONLY at the district's high school facilities
 - All other sports are permitted to compete and play intra-squad only; Students from other schools are not permitted in open gyms, open nets or any other interscholastic activity
 - Football will be permitted to issue helmets; Students must clean and disinfect their helmet daily
 - Coaches inside and outside are still required to wear masks
 - In accordance with Health Department guidelines, parents/spectators watching practice or competitions must adhere to social distancing guidelines; When in close proximity with a WCSD staff member or student-athlete not living in their household, a mask is required for parents/spectators



GPA requirement waived for fall extracurriculars

Due to the long-term closure of schools and subsequent modification of last year's fourth quarter grades to a pass/fail system, the Board of Education recently approved a resolution to waive Grade Point Average (GPA) requirements for fall extracurricular activities and determining athletic eligibility. The waiver was necessary because last spring's pass/fail grading system does not allow for GPA calculations. This waiver applies only to participation in extracurricular activities and eligibility during the first grading period of the 2020-21 school year.

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Parents/Guardians: The District is sometimes able to provide free language assistance in other languages. If you need such assistance, please contact the building secretary or building administrator at your child's school and let them know the language you speak.

Spanish: Padres / Guardianes: A veces el Distrito puede proporcionar asistencia gratis en otros idiomas. Si necesita esta ayuda, comuníquese con la secretaria del edificio o con el administrador del edificio en la escuela de su hijo y hágales saber el idioma que usted habla.

Somali: Waalidiinta/Mas'uuliyiinta: Degmada Waxbarashadu waxay mararka qaarkood idinka caawin kartaa luqoyinka kale. Haddii aad u baahan tahay caawintaas, fadlan la xariir xoghaynta ama qofka maamula iskuulka ilmahaagu dhigto una sheeg luqadda aad ku hadashid.

