

8/27/21

Dear West Valley Parents,

Welcome to the 2021-22 school year, we are excited to be back and have been preparing to welcome the kids and families back into the school! I wanted to give you a quick update on how this school year will begin. There is still some uncertainty about what the expectations are for coming back to school this year, so hopefully this information will help guide your decisions.

- **Face Coverings are Optional**

Face coverings are optional for students, staff and guests to start the school year. We will continue to use other mitigation strategies, such as, frequent hand washing, sanitizing stations and social distancing when possible. With the increased cases of Covid-19 in the Flathead Valley, we are asking that you monitor your kids before coming to school and to keep them home if they are sick. We will continue to monitor Covid-19 cases at school and may need to mandate face covering in the future.

- **Current Enrollment and Staffing**

At last count, our enrollment stands at 780 students and growing, with 90 staff members. Currently, we have 52 more students enrolled at WV than we did at our spring student count last year. To put that in perspective, when I started at WV in the 2012-13 school year, we had about 515 students and 50 employees. As we continue to grow, there will be a need for additional space, which we are currently out of. We have a steering committee that started meeting last year. If you would like to be part of the committee looking at future growth and facilities needed, please reach out to me at cketchum@westvalleyschool.com.

- **Parking and Drop off Area:**

With the added growth comes a need for additional parking and a safe and smooth morning drop area and afternoon pickup. First, we encourage you to have your students ride the bus as this greatly diminishes the congestion of the drop off area, especially in the morning. We strongly encourage you to use the drop off area correctly by not letting your kids out of the vehicle until you have pulled forward past the front of the school. We also ask that you do not get out and assist your kids out of the vehicle unless absolutely necessary as this also keeps the flow of the traffic moving much smoother.

With very limited parking, we ask that you do not walk your kids into the school with the exception of Kindergarten and 1st grade students at the beginning of the year. While we are allowing parents back in the building this year, we still ask that you not enter the building unless you have a special circumstance. This will help mitigate the spread of Covid and we discovered how well your kids did coming in on their own last year. You may walk your child to the front of the school if necessary, but do not leave your vehicle for any reason in the drop off area. Thanks for your cooperation with this matter and working with us to keep things moving as smoothly as possible.

Please do not use any other area of the school for drop off, or pick up of your child. For safety reasons, only use the front of the school drop off and pick up area. Do not use McMannamy Draw, or the east side Farm To Market parking area to drop off, or pick up your kids.

- **Bus Riding Requirements**

We encourage you to have your kids ride the bus, as this helps tremendously with keeping the drop off area less congested. There is a federal requirement that any time you ride the bus, you must have a face covering. This is not something the WV School Board can vote on, it's mandated by the federal government. Please make sure your child has a face covering, as they will need it any time they are on a school sponsored trip and need to take a bus. This includes, but is not limited to, field trips, sports, etc.

- **Late Start Friday's**

The first late start Friday is on 9/24. The school day will start at 9:00 am, which is 45 minutes later than our regular start time. This time is used by our staff for PLC(Professional Learning Communities) and is extremely valuable for evaluating data and teaching strategies that drive student growth. If you need to drop your kids off at the regular school time, we will have staff available to watch them until school starts. Buses will run later to accommodate the 9:00 AM start time. We will get you specific times before the first late start date. See your school calendar for details.

- **Quarantine and Isolation**

The districts in the area have been working with the Flathead City-County Health Department on quarantine and isolation recommendations for the upcoming school year. I have attached the letter from Joe Russell, the director of the FCCHD, that explains quarantining this year. If you have any questions you can contact Joe, or Mr. Ketchum for details. [Quarantine Protocols 2021-22](#)

- **Parents in the Building**

While we are allowing parents back in the building this year, we ask that you limit your time in the building. We are excited that parents can once again come into the building, but we want to use precaution and continue to mitigate the spread of Covid-19. If you bring your kids to school, please use the drop off area and let your kids enter the building on their own. The kids did a great job last year entering the building independently and it keeps everything moving smoother. We are trying to do everything we can to ensure a safe start to the school year and we appreciate your assistance with this.

- **School Staff Openings**

Anyone interested in working at West Valley School, we still have several openings available. If you like to cook and enjoy kids, we gave a food service position open, as long as you can take the heat, come join our kitchen crew:) We also have some day time custodial and para positions available

Let's have a healthy and safe school year!

Thanks,

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