



West Valley School
Above and Beyond
The West Valley Way

4/24/2020

Dear West Valley Parents,

Let me once again thank you for the tremendous work you are doing with your kids and online learning! We know it hasn't been easy, but I can tell you the staff has been working hard to make sure we are providing the best experience we can for all of you. This has been a real learning experience for all of us and one I hope we don't have to experience again.

On Wednesday, April 22, Governor Bullock gave the directive that Montana schools could reopen on May 8. What he did not mention in his speech were the stringent guidelines to allowing kids back into school. The guidelines for kids to come back to school include: wearing masks, high risk students and staff stay home, gym, library and playground can't be used, temperature checks, kids staying in the same room all day, including lunch, no more than 10 in a group and keeping with the social distancing guidelines, and bus riding limits. The Governor left opening schools to the local control of the school boards. Each school board in the state will need to decide to continue with online learning, go back to the regular school day, or a hybrid of both. There are over 250 school districts in Montana, ranging from 3 students to over 12,000. Obviously some districts could go back to a normal school day fairly easily, while others will find it to be nearly impossible with the aforementioned guidelines in place. Schools are not set up for social distancing and it would be an extreme challenge to bring students back under the current guidelines.

I have been meeting with several groups over the past few weeks, both local and state. Our NWMASS group of 20+ district superintendents in the Flathead area have been meeting at least weekly since the Covid-19 closure occurred. We have also included Hilary Hanson, the Flathead County Health Director on our conversation, as well as, the Office of Public Instruction(OPI), School Administrators of Montana(SAM), Montana School Boards Association(MTSBA) and the MFPE.(State Union Group). After receiving guidance from all of the aforementioned groups, I will be recommending that the West Valley School District continues with online learning for the remainder of the 2019-20 school year. This will be voted on by the West Valley School Board, at a special board meeting on Tuesday, April 28, at 5:00,

via Google Meet. Most, if not all, of the districts in the Flathead Valley will be going forward with the same recommendation to their respective boards.

While we know this has not been easy for you, we feel this is the safest direction to take for the remainder of the year. This decision was not taken lightly and has been discussed with the board chair for the West Valley School District and the other members have been informed of my recommendation. We will continue to provide the best online education for your kids the rest of the school year and have already started the planning process for filling learning gaps that have occurred for many students. We will look for ways to get kids up to speed next fall and possibly this summer. We will let you know of these plans once we have them in place.

Other Items

- **Donations** - Our school counsellors have recognized a need with some of our West Valley families during this unprecedented time. If you would like to donate money, or gift cards to help some of our families during this time, please contact Laura Cox at 755-7239, or email at lcx@westvalleyschool.com. We have a list of families who could use a little support right now, so any help would be appreciated.
- **Office Hours** - We will have a secretary in the office daily to answer phone calls and return messages. We will not be allowing entrance into the school, so if you need something please call the school at 755-7239 and leave a message if there is no answer. We will get back to you within a day.
- **No School** - We are following the 2019-20 school calendar, so there will be no school on Monday, April 27. Enjoy the 3 day weekend!

Thanks for your patience, understanding, help and words of encouragement during this trying time! This has been a great team effort by everyone and, remember if you have any questions be sure and reach out to your child's teacher, principal, or central office staff.

Take care and be well!

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