

Good morning,

We recognize that September opening plans will have a tremendous impact on your daily schedule, so we thought it better to keep you informed along the way, rather than present the plan finalized a month from now. Please keep in mind that ideas are moving quickly, guidance is changing constantly, and new information is presented to us almost daily. NOTHING will be finalized until the plan is presented in August. Even then, events may require adjustments.

We are working with several key documents to prepare the plans. These key documents are from government health officials, key research summaries, and guidance from the State of New Jersey. Links to the documents can be found at the bottom of this letter. We have been given a great deal of “guidance”, but very few absolute rules. This gives us a good deal of flexibility, but it also puts us in a position of making decisions outside our areas of expertise. Because of that, we are relying heavily on expert guidance.

We have set out our process with three key “yardsticks” that will guide every decision:

1. Protecting the health and safety of our students and staff
2. Providing the best learning opportunities possible
3. Acting as a responsible community organization to help parents normalize employment routines

Once we began work in earnest, it immediately became clear that these three priorities were in direct conflict with one another. Very, very few ideas contribute positively to one without damaging another. An easy example is in regards to the number of days students come to school. The more days they come, the easier it is for parents and guardians to organize work schedules. But the more days students come, the more students are in the building, which negatively impacts our ability to protect everyone’s health.

At this point, we have settled on some goals for our plan. I have set these out in a chart form, so I could note the “yardstick” that it addresses:

Goal	Yardstick/Rationale
Prioritize younger students coming to school more often if possible	LEARNING – The younger grades are where the foundation of reading and learning are established. Remote learning is especially challenging for our youngest students. COMMUNITY – Families are more likely to allow an older child to stay home and self-monitor during their work day.
Enact procedures and protocols that ensure that the classroom environment provides for safety of staff and students	HEALTH – Students and staff will be indoors in groups for extended periods of time. By providing smaller class sizes, requiring masks, limiting student movement, and avoiding mixing of different groups of students, we would be closely following CDC guidance for keeping staff and students safe.
Ensure that students have interaction opportunities with their teachers during remote learning.	LEARNING – Simply splitting the students into cohorts and having some come one day and others the next sets up a system where the

	teacher is teaching in-person lessons everyday. This would have students at home with extended time of self-directed learning. This has to be minimized through a schedule that allows for teachers to be available during remote instruction time.
Coordinate schedules as much as possible to have older middle school and high school students at home when younger siblings are also at home.	COMMUNITY – There will almost certainly be a “hybrid” model used to reduce the number of students in the buildings each day. It will be important for families to have consistent schedules that also allow for an older sibling to be home when a younger sibling is home.

Obviously, there are dozens of decisions to be made on many more topics. But by setting our 3 “yardsticks” and building goals out from them, we have ways to measure new ideas and identify new challenges as we work on details. At this point, there are several things that appear to be certain in any opening plan:

1. A hybrid schedule for most grades that includes some in-person instruction and some remote learning will be necessary to reduce the number of students in school each day.
2. Masks will be mandatory for any person – staff, student, visitor – inside the building. We will create some ways to have “mask breaks” for students and staff, but the general rule will be “everyone masked”. If you read “The Road Back” document for the NJDOE, students without masks would require 113 square feet each (that is the area of a circle with a 6 foot radius). That would allow 5 students in a classroom with a teacher – something that makes returning to school impossible. With masks on, we can reduce that to 64 square feet per student and get 9-10 students in most of our classrooms safely.
3. Masks will be required on school buses. Again, this is a numbers thing. Without masks, students would be seated one student, every other row. That is 11 students on a bus. We normally have 40-50 students on a bus. With masks on, we can put one student per seat, sitting against the exterior of the bus to provide safe distance between students. This would allow us to have 22 students per bus safely.
4. A system of “home health check” will be in place so that every parent/guardian is taking the proper precautions to ensure their children have no symptoms prior to boarding a bus or arriving at school.
5. Movement within the school will be limited, with one-way hallways wherever possible, designated separate entrance and exit points, limited use of lockers, etc.
6. Student attendance and participation from home will not be assumed. There will be greater responsibility placed on students to be fully participating in learning activities every day.
7. Technology will be widely available. Every student that is participating in remote learning will be issued a Chromebook and a carrying case. This will eliminate any need for sharing of computers in multi-child families. The district will assist any family that has challenges with internet connectivity.

Parent participation is an essential part of the planning. Recognizing that we have a very diverse community with varied circumstances and needs, we will be looking for quality input from any parent that wishes to participate while gathering thoughts from people in those varied circumstances. A survey was sent yesterday and in it I ask parents if they will commit to answering a series of surveys (instead of just receiving updates). This will allow us to hear from all areas of the community. We know that we have two caregiver households where one caregiver is home, two caregiver households where both caregivers work, single caregiver households with no one home during the day, etc. All of these present unique challenges to the school schedule and only by reaching all types of households can we make informed decisions.

A link to the parent survey was sent via email and text message last night. Please look for it and answer the questions as best you can. This will take an incredible amount of coordination and cooperation from many areas of our community. Your responses will be very helpful in the creation of our opening plan. My goal is to update you each week on our progress so you can see the plan as it is forming and provide your thoughts along the way.

Thank you and please stay safe and healthy!

The Westampton School District Team

New Jersey school reopening plan – The Road Back <https://www.nj.gov/education/reopening/>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention – Guidance for school

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-schools.html>

University of Washington Summary of School Reopening Plans in other Countries -

[https://globalhealth.washington.edu/sites/default/files/COVID-](https://globalhealth.washington.edu/sites/default/files/COVID-19%20Schools%20Summary%20%282%29.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0-)

[19%20Schools%20Summary%20%282%29.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0-](https://globalhealth.washington.edu/sites/default/files/COVID-19%20Schools%20Summary%20%282%29.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0-)

[O6V16Dtb3mRkeX288Zxvw2vnmhEISx6XollNJXwutKeLfqNLxdOVqA](https://globalhealth.washington.edu/sites/default/files/COVID-19%20Schools%20Summary%20%282%29.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0-O6V16Dtb3mRkeX288Zxvw2vnmhEISx6XollNJXwutKeLfqNLxdOVqA)