

Teaching and Instruction

WAJ is eager to welcome back our students and get to work on another great academic year. Given the current COVID-19 health crisis and restrictions on traditional routes, WAJ intends to help guide parents, students and teachers toward establishing a positive learning environment that meets their current needs.

The 2020-2021 school year begins on September 8 and September 9 with two Superintendent Conference Days to accommodate teacher and staff training and preparations. While our schedule is subject to change, the District intends to operate two Parent/Student Conference Days on September 10 and September 11 to inform and guide all participants in how the school day will look this fall. These days will also be utilized for student orientation. This time will allow small groups of students to meet with their new teacher and begin to establish the relationship necessary for a successful school year. Additional details regarding whether these days will be in-person, remote or both, along with a general itinerary, will be provided during the week of August 24th.

The first day of instruction for grades K-12, whether a family elects in-person or remote learning will be September 14, 2020. The school day will begin at 8 AM and end at 2:30 PM. The earlier end time will help account for proper loading of school buses. Parent pick-up and drop off procedures will be modified to reflect needed safeguards during the COVID-19 health crisis. These procedures will be provided to parents before the start of school.

The District will not be offering pre-Kindergarten this fall. WAJ will evaluate the situation and make a determination if pre-K will be offered in the spring by January 31st.

Regardless of the mode of instructional delivery, students will earn grades. Grading practices will follow a standards-based framework designed to provide direct feedback regarding students' mastery of course content. Lack of participation or attendance, regardless of the mode of instruction offered, will negatively impact a student's grade. While legitimate mitigating circumstances will be taken into account, all students are expected to be responsible learners and complete their work assignments, follow the Code of Conduct and participate in their own learning.

If parents are not comfortable sending their child to school, they will have the option to keep their child home for remote learning. This remote option may be staffed by WAJ teachers and staff, by other certified educators through BOCES or other collaborative, or a combination of the two.

During the week of August 17th parents will be required to identify which mode of instruction they will follow for the first marking period (September into November) in order for us to plan accordingly. The District intends to send to all families a summary of our K-12 school reopening plan, the terms and conditions for the remote learning option and a survey asking them to select the in-person / hybrid model or remote only model. We will send this communication both electronically and hard copy through the mail to ensure that we reach all households. For those who prefer to complete the hard copy, they may mail it back or drop it off at a mailbox that will be located at the District Office entrance.

Failure to submit a form by the due date may be viewed as the parent electing remote instruction.

Once a family has made their decision, students will be required to follow that plan for the entire semester, unless electing to go to remote only.

In-Person Instruction (including school schedules)

Upon reopening, the number of students in each of our classrooms will be reduced to adhere to CDC guidance regarding proper social distancing. Class size will reflect the need to ensure that students' desks/seats are positioned no less than six feet apart. Face coverings will be required to participate in the in-person instructional day.

Accommodating a six-foot radius around students will necessitate the identification of additional rooms and common-area spaces that can be converted into elementary classrooms. WAJ is currently investigating whether split schedules will be necessary to accommodate all the mandated safety protocols needed for this mode of instruction (depending in part on how many students enroll in-person versus remote learning),

K-6 In-person instruction will be provided on a modified schedule. Students will be placed into a cohort group and either attend classes on Monday and Tuesday in-person (Cohort A) or Thursday and Friday in-person (Cohort B). On the remaining days of the week, students will receive instruction remotely. Wednesdays will be a remote instructional day schoolwide. Reducing student density and allowing breaks within classroom and school use will allow for adequate sanitation to occur, assist with contact tracing when it is needed, and allow professional staff to meet all their requirements.

In this scenario, our teachers will move whenever possible, rather than our students. Students will be identified into cohorts to reduce COVID-19 exposure risks. Our need to create smaller groupings will potentially impact the number of adults a student will see during the day. For example, the classroom teacher may split his/her day between two groups, rather than remain with one. As a result, part of the student day may be spent with additional faculty/staff who will be responsible to teach and supervise.

All instruction will continue to be aligned to the New York State Learning Standards. All WAJ teachers are excited to begin working with your child(ren).

The movement of students will be minimized. This potentially means having students eat meals in their classroom instead of the cafeteria and eliminating assemblies, field trips and other large-group activities. Special-area subjects (e.g., art, music, physical education) may be pushed into the classroom, may be offered on a reduced frequency or not offered to all grade levels.

Whenever possible students will utilize outside space for physical education instruction. We will adhere to 12 feet between students when engaging in physical activity. Students will not be changing for physical education. Therefore, gym lockers will not be used.

The entire in-person instructional model will not work if parents do not closely monitor their child's health and daily engagement in the content. **PARENTS MUST NOT SEND SYMPTOMATIC CHILDREN TO SCHOOL.**

To the extent possible, students will remain in small cohorts if/when leaving the classroom, such as for recess or any necessary transition, so as to reduce their exposure to additional students.

7-12 In-person instruction will be provided following a similar cohort day as the elementary. Students will be placed into a cohort group and either attend classes on Monday and Tuesday in-person (Cohort A) or Thursday and Friday in-person (Cohort B). On the remaining days of the week, students will receive instruction remotely. Wednesdays will be a remote instructional day schoolwide. Reducing student density and allowing breaks from classroom and school use will ensure adequate sanitation occurs, assist with contact tracing when it is needed, and allow professional staff to meet all their requirements. 7-12 students will generally follow a typical bell schedule. Passing time will be staggered to minimize student congregation opportunities. Students will be required to wear face coverings. Any student violations of the Code of Conduct that jeopardize health and safety may result in the student being assigned to remote instruction, along with any other suitable consequences. It is expected that students will take everyone's health seriously, including that of their classmates, teachers and themselves.

In short, students electing in-person instruction shall come to school and follow the bell schedule for their classes. K-6 remain in their areas and rooms for all content. 7-12 follow a bell schedule with limitations on movements and congregations in the building. Students will be placed in a cohort where part of the week they will be in-person and for part of the week they will attend remotely.

ALL PARENTS MUST BE PREPARED TO SWITCH TO REMOTE LEARNING if the situation calls for it each day. Like with inclement weather, if the conditions warrant it, the District shall notify all parents of a building closure and movement to remote learning by 6:30 AM.

Remote/Hybrid Instruction

Given the possibility that we may experience spikes in COVID-19 cases or other related situations at any point during the school year, which may prompt short or long-term school closures, WAJ has developed a hybrid learning model and schedule that can continue in a fully remote environment.

All core courses will be livestreamed or otherwise provided remotely while in-class instruction is occurring. The level of rigor and interaction will be the same for all students enrolled at WAJ. Those electing to attend remotely (or if required by school closure), will follow a typical daily bell schedule. Final draft schedules will be provided to students within Welcome Back packets during the week of August 24th.

All instruction will continue to be aligned to the New York State Learning Standards.

Student schedules will remain the same whether instruction is in person or remote so that students do not encounter conflicts wherein synchronous lessons for different subjects are offered simultaneously.

Remote learning opportunities for secondary students will include a greater emphasis on synchronous instruction, with teachers finding ways to provide live instruction and lessons to students. While recording of live lessons is still essential for students unable to attend at a

scheduled time, teachers will ensure that their students are directly engaged with them and their class peers in experiential learning on a regular basis.

To ensure high-quality remote learning experiences, we will standardize the use of a single learning platform (Google Classroom) and video-conferencing tool (Zoom), to the extent possible, and develop a common, coordinated set of guidelines for teachers to follow when using the platform with students.

Grading practices for all students will follow our traditional policies as outlined in the course selection guide and in course/teacher syllabi. Student work will be graded and a GPA will be generated. If a student becomes ill, efforts will be made to support the student through the illness, just as we have always done before COVID-19.

WAJ will be using two possible platforms for our remote learning, Google Classroom and ZOOM. Support will be provided to families needing help in utilizing either platform. Teachers will also be available during 'office hours' should there be questions about an individual teacher's classroom.