

Communication and Engagement

The District's decision to secure an extension from the NYSED was made with the genuine goal of working through the polarity of response and opinion to our surveys and stakeholder interactions to find common ground. Engagement efforts included online surveys, virtual forums/meetings and one-on-one conversations.

The District remains committed to communicating all elements of this reopening plan to students, parents and guardians, staff and visitors. The plan is available to all stakeholders via the district website at www.wajcs.org and will be updated as needed throughout the school year when modifications are required in response to local community circumstances. All interested parties should visit the website for updates.

The District will continue to use its existing communication channels –website, School Messenger system, text messages (when appropriate), the parent portal, internal district email and written communication materials – as well as appropriate signage and training opportunities to support educating stakeholders about the risks and spread of COVID-19.

The District is committed to establishing and maintaining regular channels of communication and has reviewed and determined which methods have proven to be the most effective in communications with our school community. WAJ will rely on the district's website, School Messenger system, email, the parent portal and written communication materials to communicate news, requirements and updates related to reopening and in-person instruction, including social distancing requirements, proper wearing of face coverings and proper hand and respiratory hygiene.

In support of remote learning, computer devices will be available to students and teachers who need them. All students who require a device will be assigned a district-owned device. The District will provide students and their families with multiple ways to contact the school and teachers during remote learning, including teacher and principal email addresses.

WAJ will use existing internal and external communication channels to notify staff, students, and families/caregivers about in-person, remote and hybrid school schedules and any necessary changes to those schedules with as much advance notice as possible.

It is important for parents and staff to be available for updates each day. This information will be shared throughout the district through its existing communication channels – including the district's website, School Messenger emails, internal district email and written communication materials as needed. The WAJ Initial Reopening Plan will be updated on the website on or about September 1, 2020, to reflect any needed modifications and to inform all stakeholders of those major modifications (if any).

The District will continue to follow its existing engagement and communication protocols with parents regarding the provision of special education services for their child.

WAJ will communicate regularly regarding the importance of understanding how COVID-19 infections spread, methods for limiting exposure and school expectations for conduct around minimizing COVID-19 infection spread risk.

- **Hand hygiene:** Frequent hand washing, with soap and water, for a minimum of twenty (20) seconds. Bathrooms have been equipped with paper towels rather than hot air dryers, to reduce the risk of airborne spread. Signage on proper hand washing procedures will be placed in all bathrooms. Additionally, where hand washing is not practicable, hand sanitizer stations will be located throughout the school.
- **Proper face covering procedures** (how to wear and remove): Everyone will wear proper face coverings when on campus or in the building. All staff and visitors will be required to wear an appropriate face covering. Face covering must cover the nose and mouth and extend to the ears. In addition, face shields may be worn over top of a face mask. Staff are encouraged to supply their own mask, but disposable masks will be provided if needed.

Students are required to wear a face mask. At this time, if a student exemption to wearing a mask is requested, for whatever reason, the student will be provided remote instruction. Students will be afforded mask breaks throughout the day. However, parents should know that students will be wearing mask coverings for the majority of the time that they are in school and/or on district transportation. Upon completion of the day, reusable masks should be laundered and disposable masks should be discarded in the appropriate waste receptacles. Training about the proper wearing of masks and their removal/disposal will be provided along with signage throughout the buildings.

- **Social distancing:** Social Distancing of six (6) feet is recommended for all faculty, staff and students. Classrooms will be set-up with the appropriate distance between each desk and all desks must face in the same direction. Where necessary, floor signage may mark the one-way directions in the hallways and clustering of individuals will not be permitted. Student time leaving a classroom will be staggered, as well as arrival and dismissal times, to avoid clustering of a large number of students. Social distancing should be maintained on the school bus and the playground. Students will be spaced apart on the bus to the extent practical. On the playground, students will be instructed to maintain social distancing and physical education instruction will focus on non-interactive activities. Signage reminding students and staff to maintain appropriate social distancing will be posted throughout the buildings. Modifications to social distancing protocols will be made as needed.
- **Respiratory hygiene:** All students and staff will be trained on appropriate hygiene with regards to coughing and sneezing. When available, students and staff should cough or sneeze into a disposable tissue, discard it immediately in the appropriate trash receptacle and wash his/her/their hands or use hand sanitizer. If a disposable tissue is not available, he/she/they should use the crook of their elbow to cover the sneeze/cough and immediately follow proper hand hygiene procedures.
- **Identifying symptoms:** Staff will be trained on how to identify symptoms of a student or staff member who is ill. These include: flushed cheeks, rapid breathing or difficulty breathing, fatigue, irritability/extreme fussiness, or frequent use of the bathroom. Students who exhibit these symptoms will be sent to the nurse's office immediately for a health assessment. The student will remain in a separate room where he/she/they will be assessed by a medical professional and then sent home.

PARENTS MUST MONITOR CHILDREN FOR SYMPTOMS EACH DAY. Parents will be provided information on how to appropriately assess their child(ren)'s health condition prior to the student being sent to school. This includes the identification of symptoms and temperature checks. Students who display symptoms must remain out of school until such time that the symptoms are no longer present or he/she/they have a negative COVID test.

Parents/guardians will be responsible for taking the temperature of their student(s) before they come to school. The parent/guardian will also have to attest on an app. that they have taken the temperature and that they have no symptoms. If families are in need of a thermometer, they can email chthorington@wajcs.org and WAJ will provide information on how to obtain a thermometer, or provide them with a thermometer prior to the start of the school year, depending on availability.

All students, staff and visitors will have their temperature checked prior to entering the school building. Temperature readings of over 100°F will be cause for the student or staff member to be sent home. Individuals responsible for conducting the temperature screenings will wear appropriate PPE and will be trained on the use of the contactless thermometers. Individual temperature readings will not be recorded, only the “pass/fail” result. If there is any doubt about whether to send a child into school, keep your child home. Remote instruction will be available and will generally follow the in-class schedule routine.

All staff and visitors will be required to complete a daily “self-attestation” form, preferably prior to their arrival at school. The self-attestation will require the answering of several questions related to their personal health, contact with a COVID positive individual and travel outside of NYS. Any “yes” answers on the self-attestation will require the employee to remain out of work until such time as he/she/they can attest “no” to all questions. A final electronic self-attestation form will be provided to stakeholders and posted on the website prior to the beginning of school.

Parents, on behalf of the student(s), will be required to perform the daily self-attestation. Parents/guardians of ill students should report the absence to the school following traditional procedures. Periodically, parents/guardians will be reminded about assessing the health of their child(ren) prior to sending them to school via the district's website, School Messenger emails/calls and the parent portal.

WAJ will create and deploy signage throughout the district to address public health protections surrounding COVID-19. Signage will address protocols and recommendations in the following areas:

- Proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Acceptable face coverings and requirements related to proper wear and care
- Hand washing
- Adherence to social distancing instructions
- Symptoms/prevention of COVID-19

In addition to signage, the district will encourage all students, faculty, staff and visitors through verbal and written communication to adhere to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

and DOH guidance regarding the use of PPE through additional means such as the district's website, school messenger and the parent portal.

The District is committed to creating a learning environment that protects student and staff health, safety and privacy. Our district will operate under a standard procedure for addressing situations in which an individual has tested positive for COVID-19 or appears symptomatic. These procedures are outlined in the Health and Safety section of our plan.

WAJ will post on the district's website, School Messenger emails and in the parent portal information about our safety measures and containment. In the event that a student or staff member is sick or symptomatic, notification to exposed individuals will occur pursuant to the state's contact tracing protocols as implemented by the local health department. The District will not notify the wider community unless specifically directed to do so by local health officials. Please do not inquire about rumors around possible infections or symptomatic individuals, as privacy protocols will be followed.

School Closures

WAJ is preparing for situations in which the building and grounds might need to close due to a significant number of students or staff testing positive for COVID-19 or a considerable regional increase in COVID-19 cases or local factors reducing staffing or our ability to provide in-person instruction safely. Every day, WAJ will make an assessment, similar to when there is a significant risk for inclement weather and notify all stakeholders if a closure is warranted.

WAJ will monitor daily student and staff attendance. The families of all students who are absent from school will be called by our attendance secretaries to confirm the reason for absence. Any report of absence is potentially COVID-19 related will be shared with the District's COVID-19 Coordinator.

All staff will complete a daily attestation which will alert us to any possible interactions with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. Our COVID-19 coordinator will report all spikes in absences as well as all possible exposures to COVID-19 to the Superintendent and GCDOH.

The District may choose to modify operations prior to fully closing to help mitigate a rise in cases. WAJ may consult appropriate agencies when making such decisions to close. If a decision to close is made, every attempt will be made to communicate using our district website, an announcement made through the School Closings Network, and direct messages through our School Messenger communication system.