

The following document contains two question and answer responses. The questions were generated from parent forums and questionnaires. Similar questions that were generated have been combined.

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WAJ Reopening Plan Question and Answer Document

Q&A August 7, 2020

(Based on the Parental Survey)

In developing the WAJ Initial Reopening Plan, input from various stakeholders was sought in order to best address COVID-19 related issues that might be on the minds of members of our school community. While the WAJ Initial Reopening Plan is now posted, the District continues to address the ever changing requirements and expectations by state agencies for the reopening of schools. The following Question and Answer document lists and answers several concerns posed in our most recent parental survey. Additional Q&A Documents may be posted before the start of the school year. Please read the reopening plan before going through this Q&A document. Thank you.

Will WAJ start in September or have a delayed start date?

WAJ student instruction will begin on September 14, following a hybrid model. The 2020-2021 school year officially begins with two Superintendent Conference Days on September 8th and 9th to provide mandated training to teachers. On September 10th and 11th, WAJ will be providing parents and students specific orientations and training in preparation for the beginning of instruction. We will provide opportunities for small groups of students and parents to review the safety protocols and classroom procedures the week prior to the start of school.

Why did WAJ file for an extension and post a reopening plan after July 31st?

Since March, the rules and regulations around school operations have changed rapidly and often. Throughout this period, viewpoints shared with the District regarding any topic related to COVID have been very opinionated and not necessarily aligned with that of the next person sharing their feelings. The New York State Education Department recognized the same situations and offered districts the opportunity to extend submission. Based on the polarity of views among our key stakeholders, even during this latest survey period, we felt it prudent to take additional time to determine common ground as a starting point for future reopening plans. Our goal is to avoid confusion and limit revisions, while also incorporating the most current data possible from a variety of sources,

including the governor, the Center for Disease Control, the Department of Health, the New York State Education Department, and most importantly our school community, which includes parents, students, faculty, and staff.

The reopening plan was developed using input from a variety of sources and key stakeholders.

What are some of the things the school has done since students left in June to prepare for this fall, including cleaning methods and related policy changes?

Since the end of the 2019-2020 school year, the District has developed a comprehensive approach to sanitation, purchased equipment, materials and supplies to ensure areas are properly maintained and sanitized and trained staff on how to prevent COVID-19 spread. Instructional programming, nutrition, facilities, transportation, special education and technology have been reviewed to meet our goals within the strict guidelines and expectations of the NYSDOH, NYSED and other agencies involved in the COVID-19 response.

Our custodial staff has been cleaning and disinfecting all areas of the school building. The cleaning methods have been more intensive and conform to the CDC guidelines. WAJ employs electrostatic sprayers that aid in the disinfection process on a routine basis. This allows us to disinfect WAJ on a much more efficient basis.

The District has also worked closely with local and state agencies to prepare for the upcoming year by making policy adjustments to assist with providing and supporting parent choice in coping with the stress and uncertainty created by the current health crisis.

Does research show that students are at more risk to spread the virus or less risk?

COVID-19 research and data dissemination is evolving and ongoing. The NYSDOH, CDC and other agencies have posted up-to-date information regarding the virus and spread. However, much is still unknown. It is encouraged that all parents stay current with information from formal sources, follow healthy preventative practices and consult their medical professionals in developing family plans during this time.

According to the CDC: “Based on available evidence, children do not appear to be at higher risk for COVID-19 than adults. While some children and infants have been sick with COVID-19, adults make up most of the known cases to date. However, a few children have developed [multisystem inflammatory syndrome \(MIS-C\)](#). Currently, information about this syndrome is limited.” <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#Children>

A school community requires all stakeholders to stay healthy, including teachers, bus drivers, staff and parents. It is important to speak to our children about the risks of spreading COVID-19 to other people, including those with underlying health conditions and the elderly.

Will WAJ reevaluate the school reopening plan?

WAJ will continually reevaluate our plans and provide updates on the District website as well as communicate using email, the parent portal, and the school messenger system. Each day, analysis of attendance trends, case and illness data and resource availability (including availability of drivers, teachers and support staff) will help determine if school will be open or move to fully remote instruction.

How will you meet all the guidelines from the DOH and CDC?

Fortunately, NYSED has included DOH and CDC guidelines within the reopening guidance that has been provided. Our plan is based on that guidance. The best way we all can minimize the risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19 is to follow the appropriate guidelines for social distance, wearing masks, following personal hygiene standards and rigorous sanitation. The most important factor will be to stay home and away from others if you exhibit any of the COVID-19 signs or symptoms.

Is there a plan to review safety protocols with students?

Yes. As part of our reopening plan there will be an orientation phase that includes speaking with both parents and students.

Training aids, videos, posters, flyers and online resources will also be provided.

Training:

- Following COVID-19 protocols safely
- Identification of COVID-19 symptoms
- Review and reinforcement of social distancing requirements
- How to properly wear and remove a face covering
- Proper hand and respiratory hygiene

Signs will be throughout the building as visual reminders to:

- Wear a mask
- Proper hand hygiene
- Social distancing expectations
- Identifying symptoms of COVID-19

Does my child(ren) have to wear a mask all day at school? What kind of masks should my child(ren) wear?

Proper masks will be required on WAJ’s campus, as well as school transportation. The only exceptions are during meals and short mask breaks, as directed by staff when all are socially distanced. If a student cannot wear a mask, for whatever reason, they will participate in remote instruction.

Acceptable face coverings for COVID-19 include, but are not limited to, cloth-based coverings and surgical masks that cover both the mouth and nose.

Any mask that is worn on the WAJ campus must comply with the WAJ dress code. “A student’s dress shall not include items that are vulgar, obscene, libelous or that denigrates others on account of race, color, religion, creed, national origin, gender, sexual orientation or disability.....A student’s dress shall not promote and/or endorse sexual activity of any kind, the use of alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs and/or encourage illegal, violent or gang activities. This includes depictions of guns, knives, and other weapons.” *WAJ Student Handbook, p. 6.*

It is strongly recommended that parents review proper mask use and provide an appropriate mask for their child. If you need help securing a mask covering, please contact the school main office.

What happens if a student feels ill before or during the school day?

If your child feels ill in any way, **DO NOT SEND THEM TO SCHOOL.** If a student feels ill during the school day, they will be sent to the Nurses’ office for evaluation. WAJ will require students with a temperature, signs of illness, and/or a positive response to the questionnaire to be sent directly to a dedicated isolation area where students are supervised, prior to being picked up or otherwise sent home. Students will be supervised in the isolation area while awaiting transport home and will be separated by at least 6 feet. Students will be escorted from the isolation area to their parent/guardian. Students will be referred to a healthcare provider or local health department should they not have a health care provider and given resources on COVID-19 testing.

Traditionally, WAJ students often look forward to visiting our school nurse office for minor issues. Due to the safety requirements within this health crisis, only those students requiring medical attention will be allowed to see the nurse.

What happens if a student/staff becomes infected with COVID19?

Students/staff suspected of having COVID-19 must be assessed and evaluated by the Registered Nurse. Each individual showing signs of COVID -19 will be isolated in a room or area separate from others, with a supervising adult present, to the extent possible. Students/staff will be assessed privately and should they be found to show symptoms will be required to return home. If multiple students are suspected of having COVID-19, they may be in the isolation room provided they can be separated by at least six (6) feet until parent pick up is available. Parents will be contacted for immediate pick up, and students will be escorted from the isolation area to the parent/guardian. **DO NOT SEND A CHILD WITH COVID-19 SYMPTOMS TO SCHOOL.**

What is WAJ's protocol if it becomes known that a student/staff has tested positive with COVID-19?

If a confirmed case of COVID-19 is discovered, the District will contact the local health department to receive guidance. The rooms/wings where the infected person was located will be immediately closed and will not be allowed to reopen until full disinfection of the area has taken place. Appropriate contact tracing will occur with assistance from Greene County. It is highly likely that the process of tracing and identifying risk, including issuing quarantine guidance, may require a part or the entire school to be closed.

If a student or staff member tests positive for COVID 19, will the school shut down?

Yes, depending on the situation, school could be closed if one or more individuals are identified as COVID-19 positive. WAJ reserves the right to close the building anytime conditions require it. All parents must be ready to keep their child(ren) home if they are symptomatic or if the school is closed on a particular day. If school is closed, remote instruction will be necessary for all students.

A closure refers to contingency plans, protocols, and procedures for decreasing the scale or scope of in-person education and/or closing the school. WAJ will collaborate with the local health department to determine the parameters, conditions or metrics (e.g., increased absenteeism or increased illness in the school community) that will serve as early warning signs that positive COVID-19 cases may be increasing beyond an acceptable level.

How can we be assured that staff members and students follow guidelines including social distancing, mask wearing, and hand hygiene?

All people must take personal responsibility for their own actions. Faculty and staff will be vigilant and visible, providing verbal reminders and training to help students understand and comply with necessary rules. Additionally, visual reminders will be posted throughout the building. Any violations will be immediately reported to the school principal and appropriate consequences will follow. Students and staff not following safety guidelines will be subject to appropriate administrative and/or disciplinary action.

Will students with symptoms at school be immediately sent home? Will there be isolation areas set up for those with symptoms?

Yes, students will be sent home if exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms and there will be a designated isolation room for symptomatic individuals.

Will WAJ provide students with computers?

If students do not have home computers, WAJ will provide them with one. Students will have to sign-off on the "student material loan" document in order to borrow a school computer. For planning purposes, computers that can use Google suite products, Zoom and email are strongly suggested.

Will there be an option for remote instruction?

Yes. Parent choice and collaboration is an important part of WAJ's approach. 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.

What support services are in place if a student needs extra help?

Teachers are available to assist students with questions regarding instruction via email, phone, and/or video conferencing sessions. Further, the guidance team is available to assist students with study skill plans, social and emotional health, and developing strategies to deal with stress and anxiety as students adjust to the new school year.

How will WAJ address the social emotional needs of students?

The guidance team, including our school counselors and school psychologist are available to provide individual counseling sessions over the phone and via Zoom. Additionally, referrals can be made to Greene County Mental Health to further assist families.

Will you provide Internet access if we have unreliable or no Internet?

We will do our best to help people obtain internet access. We are also working with local officials to provide local internet hot-spots.

How will WAJ handle the transportation of BOCES students?

At this time, BOCES is still working out details as to whether they will provide CTE or other programs as a hybrid or remote program. We will update those students impacted as soon as a plan is established by BOCES.

Will you provide in-home services for students with IEP's?

Students who elect to remain remote will receive teletherapy related services and Zoom resource room services, aligning with the services on their IEP.

My child has an IEP, how will their special education needs be met if students learn remotely or on a hybrid schedule?

Students will continue to receive the accommodations and modifications outlined in their IEP with face to face as well as remote resource room support, if indicated on the IEP.

Will we have sports in September?

Unfortunately, WAJ will not be offering or participating in fall sports. WAJ will evaluate participation in winter sports during the coming weeks.

Will we have extracurricular activities?

Extracurricular activities will not be offered initially; however, the District will continue to revisit opportunities for clubs to meet in a virtual or socially distanced setting.

Is there going to be CROP?

Not in the fall. Like other fall school activities, whether CROP can be offered will be re-evaluated. Any decision to reinstate any currently suspended or cancelled program will be communicated on our website and directly to parents.

Q&A August 19, 2020

(Based on the Parental Survey/Parental/Faculty Meetings)

How will attendance and participation be assessed while the classes are live streamed?

Teachers will take attendance for those students who are physically in the classroom as well as students attending virtually via Zoom. Students are expected to participate in both learning environments, sharing insights to class discussions and asking questions when appropriate.

Will K-6 students be taught by a certified WAJ teacher at all times?

Yes. When students are at home, they will be expected to participate in scheduled virtual class sessions in which they will participate in synchronous lessons with their in-person peers.

Will iPads and laptops still be shared between classrooms?

WAJ will be able to provide devices for every room.

With no lockers, How are students going to handle all the books/binders needed for the in school instruction?

WAJ faculty are aware that students are unable to use their lockers and will therefore try their best to reduce the amount of material brought back and forth.

Will we have a choice of Cohort or will it be chosen?

Cohorts are initially created alphabetically based on the student's last name. Then we focused on additional considerations affecting groupings such as ensuring siblings stay together, related service needs, and special programming.

What will recess look like?

The playground/basketball court will be divided up into four sections. Each class will stay in a section for one day and then will rotate for subsequent days. Students will have to maintain social distancing and wear masks. The playground will be sanitized daily.

The plan says that you have to opt into the hybrid or remote model? Can I switch at any point?

You can always opt out, meaning, opt out of the hybrid model and go into remote learning. You cannot opt into hybrid once you've chosen the remote option.

If I pick remote learning, is this for the entire year, or is there a point when this will be reevaluated?

WAJ will continue to reevaluate the circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. We will work in conjunction with the CDC, DOH, and NYSED for guidance.

If our family opts for the remote option, is the school day the same? 8:00 A.M. to 2:30 P.M.?

Yes, the school day is the same. Since students at home will be following the same schedule as if they were in school. So, for instance, if English is being taught from 8:00 A.M. to 8:45 A.M., then that's when the student will live stream the English class at home.

I know that I have to make a decision regarding transportation for my kids. If I choose WAJ transportation, can I change my mind?

You can always opt out of WAJ transportation. You cannot opt in once you've made the decision not to use WAJ transportation.

Once the staff and students are in the class are they permitted to pull down the mask for a moment as long as social distancing is maintained? Will children be required to wear masks all day?

Students will have to wear their masks all day. Students will be permitted to take mask breaks every hour at the direction of their teacher. They will also be allowed to take their masks off for meals.

Is there going to be band/chorus?

Band and chorus will be a modified format, accommodating individual lessons and when possible the teacher will practice with students outside and twelve feet apart.

I have 4 children in different grades. Will they all be attending the same days and remote learning the same days?

Siblings will be together on the same AA or BB schedule.

Is there going to be an opportunity to use the microwaves for heating up meals?

Initially, students who bring their own lunch should have food that does not require the microwave.

When are the parents going to be advised as to where and when the new dismissal policy to pick up their children?

Parents will receive information regarding the dismissal policy before the start of school.

If parents want to send their children for onsite full days is that an option?

The current options for students are full remote learning or a hybrid model of in-person and remote.

What is the plan for students who attend BOCES this fall?

We are still awaiting the specific plan from BOCES.

If my children find that they have trouble breathing with their masks, are face shields acceptable alternatives?

Students can wear a face shield in addition to a mask, but not in lieu of a face mask.

Will ESL, speech improvement, and resource room services still be provided?

Related services and specialized education will continue to the greatest extent possible based on the services, modifications, and accommodations listed on a student's individualized education plan.

Are students' temperatures being checked upon entering the building? What if a wellness form is intentionally filled out falsely?

While WAJ is relying on families to submit an honest assessment in regards to the wellness form, any student suspected of having symptoms will be screened upon entry to the Campus by our school nurse or a trained faculty member.

If it was found that a wellness form was filled out falsely, this will result in the student/family choosing the remote option for their student for the remainder of the semester.

How will the district manage families with limited internet access?

The District and Mr. Savasta have been working to ensure internet access for families to the best of their ability.

Will there be gym class? Will the students have to wear their masks during gym?

Yes there will be physical education classes. Students will maintain social distancing regulations and be required to wear masks during physical education classes.

How will you address social distancing on transportation?

The transportation department has been working to make sure that social distancing on WAJ transportation is followed to the best of their ability. There are many factors involved in determining how many students will be transported, these include: the separation of the classes into different cohorts, students opting for remote learning, and students opting not to use WAJ transportation. Students will be assigned seats on WAJ transportation in order to optimally attain social distancing to the best degree practical.

Have you upgraded the filters in the HVAC systems to MERV 13 or above?

Yes

If desks are spaced 6 feet apart, why do the kids need to wear a face mask at their desk?

WAJ is committed to making the classroom environment as safe as possible for every student. Wearing a face mask at their desks, while they are 6 feet apart ensures the safety of everyone in the room.

If a person tests positive I understand they won't be identified, but will we know if it's a student in a particular grade? Or a teacher that instructed our child? How will we know how close they were to our child?

If a confirmed case of COVID-19 is discovered, the district will contact the local health department to receive guidance. The rooms//wings where the infected person was located will be immediately closed and will not be allowed to reopen until full disinfection of the area has taken place.

Confidentiality must be maintained as required by federal and state regulations. School staff should not try to determine who is to be excluded from school based on contact without guidance and direction from the local health department.

Will remote learners have textbooks? Will they be provided devices?

Before the beginning of school we will be making material boxes for students to receive during the orientation days. They will contain items such as textbooks and devices, if needed.