

Dear WCA community,

We trust this finds you all safe, healthy and refreshed from summer break. We are excited to welcome all of our returning and new students to Willow Creek Academy for the 2020-21 school year. As you know, due to the State and County Health Orders regarding safety and health during the COVID-19 pandemic, **the 2020-2021 school year will begin with *Distance Learning First***. As a reminder, **the first day of school is Wednesday, August 26, 2020.**

Our teachers and staff have spent much of their summer break attending online classes and workshops to improve online learning. The work continues with teachers attending professional development training and collaborating with grade level/subject matter colleagues. Distance Learning will continue until we are notified that we can safely return to in-person instruction. At that time we plan to implement a hybrid model following any State and County guidelines. In the meantime, we are working on several plans that would allow for small groups of students to come together either on campus or off in order to better support their needs.

Supporting At-Risk Students

While we remain on the State watch list, we have the opportunity to apply for a waiver with the County. Should we receive the waiver, we will bring small groups of students on campus to work with teachers and staff. Students will be prioritized based on need, taking into consideration their spring performance, their academic level, any special needs, and parent need for student supervision.

Community Learning Hubs

We are working with community partners and families to create Community Learning Hubs. These are being modeled after a program in San Francisco. Hubs would allow students to come together in small cohorts at local community centers to complete online work together in a positive learning environment. More information will be forthcoming.

While distance learning is challenging for adults and students alike, we know it is incredibly stressful for students that miss the personal and social interaction with their peers and school staff. For teachers, the most important thing they can do at the start of any school year is get to know students. Every teacher is planning for relevant and meaningful ways to ensure this is a priority in each of their classes.

Additionally, in response to parents' requests for more structure for the **Distance Learning** school day, please note the following expectations during Distance Learning:

1. Student attendance in all classes will be mandatory and teachers will take regular attendance. Parents should call or email the attendance office if students cannot participate due to illness or family emergency.
2. The grading policy will be the same as past years: K-5 students report cards reflect mastery of standards and 6-8th graders receive letter grades based on participation, tests and assignments. All classes will be graded, including core subjects, art, PE and Spanish.

3. All students will have a schedule that will provide learning opportunities to meet State requirements. Families will receive a daily schedule next week. Learning times are:

Kindergarten: 180 minutes
Grades 1-3: 230 minutes
Grades 4-8: 240 minutes

4. During Distance Learning, school will start at 8:45am with a morning meeting and end at 3pm. We will continue with early dismissal at 2:00pm on Wednesdays.
5. The majority of the school day will consist of synchronous learning: whole class instruction, small group instruction, individual teacher support and feedback and intervention/social support groups. Additionally, the 7th and 8th graders will have several options of electives. Asynchronous learning includes recorded PE and art classes, independent work and reading, and online learning programs.
6. Students will have the opportunity to come to school in small groups to pick up books, supplies and Chromebooks during the next two weeks. Teachers will send out details to families next week.

Last, but not least, we are happy to invite you to a **parent orientation on Monday, August 25th at 9:00am** ([please click here for Zoom link](#)). This will be a wonderful opportunity to meet all our staff members and hear a few words from some of our partner organizations, board members, parent council and our foundation. Families will also have the opportunity to attend individual orientations with their respective grade level teachers (the schedule will be forthcoming, and will be staggered to support families with children in multiple grade levels).

We're looking forward to a strong 2020-2021 school year whether we are learning remotely or in person.

Respectfully, Emily