

July 10, 2020

Dear Willow Creek Community,

This summer continues to be a busy time of discussion and planning for the health, well-being, and comprehensive education of our community's students. Deep exchange about unifying WCA and Bayside MLK continued at the July 6th Joint Study Session of the Sausalito Marin City School District (SMCSD) and Willow Creek Academy (WCA) Boards (meeting videos are on the WCA site). We discussed budget, governance, and curriculum, among other things with the intention of uncovering the best from both schools, and bringing them together in one. There is much more to discuss, including a timeline that will allow for successful unification. Another Joint Study Session has been scheduled for July 14th from 4-7pm. We will share the Zoom link as soon as it's available.

Regardless of the timeline of unification, we are moving forward with comprehensive plans for a safe re-opening. The re-opening team, led by Emily Cox and WCA Board member, Marijke Smit, have created detailed plans which seek to protect the health of students, teachers, and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please be assured that this is our priority, as is the ability to get all of our students back in school this fall. **For details, please see the Re-Opening Plan Details and FAQ below and/or attend our next Morning Coffee on Thursday July 14th at 9AM.**

Please note that, as preparations are intensive, **we expect the start of the school year will be delayed by up to two weeks, with a plausible start date of August 27th.** This will allow for the completion of needed physical changes to the campus, training for staff and teachers, and the procurement of protective equipment. We know you are anxious to plan ahead and will share the exact date with you at the next weekly update.

Thank you,

WCA Board of Directors

[Re-Opening Plan Details and FAQ:](#)

We wanted to take the opportunity to share the progress of our current 2020-2021 Reopening Plan knowing that families are eager to make arrangements for the coming year. This year will be like no other. We'll need to do things differently. But that won't stop us from having a healthy, productive and joy-filled school year. Last spring our whole community of parents, caregivers, students and staff banded together to meet the challenges of at-home instruction during the shelter-in-place ordinance. It wasn't easy, and it wasn't perfect, but we all learned a lot from the experience. The new school year will require much of the same flexibility, resiliency, and patience as we navigate the return to campus life under a changing set of conditions related to the pandemic.

Over the summer, we have been working closely with County health and education officials to interpret their latest June 18th guidance (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mG8uGowT4aZrzHPSu9-rSiRVrqLepiHC/view>) and prepare a plan that:

1. complies with our goals for health, safety, equity, and instruction;
2. adapts to changing levels of restriction over the course of the school year (light, moderate, and strict); and
3. responds to the inputs and concerns of our staff and families, a majority of whom expressed the desire to return their kids to campus provided that stringent health and safety and cleaning protocols were in place (for families and staff who express continued health-related concerns, we are planning on-line instruction options).
4. paves the way for unification in the best interest of all kids in the district

What is our current plan for the Fall?

Under current county health guidelines, we are progressing a “full opening with restrictions” model that would allow for all of our students to return to campus.

This reflects the most current guidance for schools throughout Marin County, and is therefore a likely scenario for what the start of school might look like.

This model also rests on the scientific findings that, unlike influenza and other respiratory viruses where children are known to spread infection, children and adolescents do not appear to play a major role in COVID-19 transmission. COVID-19 has mainly spread between adults, or from adults-to-children. With this and other factors in mind, we will try to maximize student presence on campus as long as we can do it safely and in accordance with public health guidance and orders.

What will my child's day and week look like under a Full Opening with Restrictions Model?

In this model, all WCA students will return to campus on **August 27th** (pending upcoming board approval). This is one week later than originally planned to allow extra time for staff training and classroom/campus preparation. Students will be assigned to normal class-sizes, while maintaining several precautionary measures. This setup may be the most familiar to students and parents, but it rests on something a bit different called the 'stable cohort - a group that moves through the school day and trimester together but has limited interaction with other cohorts or classes. This cohort structure is at the core of county health guidance and will allow us to better isolate and manage any potential cases at the cohort level without ramifications to the rest of the school.

Students will receive daily, in-person instruction and support from school employees. In this scenario, pending board approval, we are shortening the school day by 45 minutes and staggering arrival and departure times for elementary and middle school students. Students in grades K-5 will begin their day at 8:00AM and end at 2:00PM, to provide extra time for cleaning and preparation. Students in grades 6-8 will start their day at 8:45 AM and end at 3:00PM (except for Wednesdays, which will end at 2:00PM). Parents may choose to keep their children at home due to COVID related health concerns. For these families, we will support their students through distance learning opportunities.

What happens if current County guidelines change to be more restrictive?

We expect that, through the course of the school year, state and county health restrictions may change depending on Marin County's COVID-related performance and have planned contingency models accordingly, including: 1) the Blended Schedule Model, and 2) Distance Learning Model.

1) The Blended Schedule Scenario

This a combination of in-person and distance learning and rests on a smaller cohort model of either 1 teacher to 12 or 1 to 15 students to allow for greater physical distancing in classrooms and across campus. WCA students return to school on August 27th (again, pending board approval) in these smaller class 'cohorts' on a three week rotating schedule: This means that half of the class attends school in person for three weeks, while the second half of the students work remotely. The group learning remotely will do so via pre-recorded lessons, Google Classroom and synchronous learning, where possible. **Continuous on-campus instruction will be prioritized for students who struggled with distance learning in the prior trimester. Students whose parents are essential workers will also be prioritized for on-campus learning.**

2) Distance Learning Model

A distance learning model is being prepared in case there is a surge in COVID-19 cases that prompts public health to recommend school closures. The program will be enhanced with synchronous classes with required instructional minutes, higher expectations, more structure, and more accountability than what was in place for the end of spring trimester 2020.

What happens if the boards choose to unify in the Fall under COVID?

As part of our contingency planning, we are also incorporating reopening scenarios that could support either a phased or full Unification during the 2020-1 school year, depending on the decisions of the District and Willow Creek boards, who are now meeting jointly on a weekly basis to explore and advance unification planning.

If the District and WCA boards choose to unify fully in September 2020 we are considering, among other options:

- Relocating and unifying WCA grades 6-8 on the B/MLK campus at a 1:15 class size
- Relocating and unifying Bayside/MLK Elementary students onto the Nevada Street (WCA) Campus at a 1:15 class size
- Providing distance learning for those who choose not to send their children to school for health-related concerns

If the District and WCA boards choose a phased unification in September 2020 we are considering:

- Relocating and unifying WCA classes 6-8 on the B/MLK campus
- Keeping WCA elementary students on the WCA campus
- Keeping BMLK elementary students on the B/MLK campus OR
- Exploring facility sharing at the elementary level to maintain 1:15 ratios throughout the district
- Providing distance learning for those who select not to send their children to school for health-related concerns

If shelter in place restrictions are in place during unification, we will all pivot to a remote learning model until restrictions are lifted.

What comes next? Preparing for a safe reopening.

School Safety Training

We will have an extensive educational program to promote good hand hygiene practices and proper mask wearing. Our campus will have extra sanitation stations installed and well-stocked bathrooms to promote frequent hand washing. Our campus will also have strict guidelines governing entrance into and movement around the buildings.

Hygiene and Protective Equipment

At this point, consistent with County and State orders, all students and staff will be required to wear face coverings while on campus. We will ask students to bring their own appropriate face coverings and will have disposable and cloth masks available for those who do not bring one to school or who cannot provide their own. Public health officials indicate good hygiene and face coverings will be the most critical pieces for mitigating COVID-19 spread and keeping schools open.

Health Screening and Monitoring

We will be performing health screenings and temperature checks at the start of each school day at drop-off. This will be enhanced by passive screening, which involves all students (with support of parents) reviewing a checklist for symptoms and performing a temperature check prior to coming to school each day. Protocols will be in place for staff or students who feel symptoms during the day to isolate and remove them from campus for COVID-19 testing. Flu vaccinations will be strongly encouraged. Students and staff who feel sick, must stay home. Complying with these safety guidelines will be essential to our success in returning to school and keeping schools open.

Physical Distancing

The current County recommendation for classrooms is a 4 to 6-foot separation between students and 6 feet between staff and students. We will be designing spaces with these parameters in mind and are creating outdoor classrooms across campus to enhance indoor learning. We will develop systems to stagger and direct flow in hallways and stairwells. Bathrooms will have usage protocols in order to minimize any students congregating in these areas.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

Cleaning and disinfecting of classrooms will intensify with deep cleanings each evening. Students will be encouraged to assist in wipe-downs as classrooms transition. Protocols will be developed for specialty spaces. Bathrooms will be cleaned frequently throughout

the day. The custodial staff is currently at work ensuring that all campus spaces are deeply cleaned and are provided with the tools for clearing, handwashing, and natural ventilation.

Will there be after school programming?

We are anticipating that we will be able to offer daily after-school programming from 2:00 - 5:00. More details to follow shortly.

Will my student still be provided with healthy meals?

Our Conscious Kitchen will offer 'grab n go' meals to students next school year. Students may eat breakfast and lunch either inside their classrooms or outside in stable cohort designated areas. If we go to alternating weeks, students at home will be able to pick up their lunches at designated pick up areas.

What will office operations be like?

School and office use by students, parents and the public will be restricted with the implementation of tight protocols. Office workstations will be appropriately fitted with plexiglass screens, desks will be rearranged, and traffic will be controlled to minimize exposure and maintain physical distancing. Alternative spaces will be utilized for meetings, as needed. Services (meetings, forms, etc.) will be redeveloped to enable more touchless and remote procedures. Parents and students will be informed of the new procedures as they are developed.

What happens if someone on campus tests positive for COVID-19?

We are working with County health officials to develop comprehensive plans and protocols for when we have a positive COVID-19 case in our school community. With a positive case, privacy will be protected, but students and staff within the specific cohort may be put on 14-day quarantine. We will provide parents and students with detailed protocol and expectations after they are developed.

How can I stay informed and provide input?

For those of you interested in providing additional input or have further questions as things develop, we will be discussing our current reopening plans at our next Morning Coffee channels at that time:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89094733406?pwd=SUtRK2FIK0hGUhNXUFhsZDJ1N1RyQT09>

We certainly recognize that this communication probably raises as many questions as it answers and the uncertainty around the reopening of our schools is incredibly stressful. We want to assure you that we are working hard on this challenge throughout the

summer with the interest to get our students back on campus as much as possible and as safely as possible. Despite the challenges we face as a result of COVID-19, we look forward to working with you to create a safe, healthy and happy school year for our students.

Respectfully,

The WCA Reopening Team

Emily, Marijke, Kristine, Maya, Jennifer and Kurt