

WPS Reopening Plan
FAQ
August 9, 2020

1. What are the options for Westfield Public Schools to reopen in the Fall?

As a result of our feasibility study, we are not able to fully reopen any of our schools. The School Committee will be voting on a Phased in Hybrid Model or Full Remote Learning Model to start the school year.

2. Do I have to send my child to school in the Hybrid Model or can our family select a fully remote option for our students?

Families can select a full Remote Learning Option for their child/children. An Enrollment Verification Survey will be sent to all parents and guardians the week of August 10 for this purpose.

3. Will students be screened daily for symptoms prior to entering school?

No. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) does not currently recommend universal symptom screenings (screening all students grades K-12) be conducted by schools. If CDC or DPH guidance changes, WPS practices will change accordingly.

4. How will Westfield Public Schools respond if a student or staff member tests positive for COVID 19?

Westfield Public Schools will follow all protocols recommended by the City of Westfield Health Department. This includes contact tracing and notifying individuals that may be exposed. We are working collaboratively with our local health department and will follow all Massachusetts Department of Health mandates and guidelines.

5. Will all students and staff be required to wear masks?

All students and staff members who are entering the school buildings will be wearing a mask/face covering as required by the CDC, MA DPH, and our local health department. Masks are one of the most important tools to prevent transmission of the virus. There will be certain exceptions for students/staff due to pre-existing conditions or other needs where a mask would be more of a detriment to the person's health as opposed to being a piece of protective equipment. In those cases, other safety precautions and arrangements need to be made, such as a barrier AND a face shield. Our Back to School Safety Subcommittee is exploring exempting students in grades Pre-K-1 from this policy. Masks are not required when appropriate social distancing is enforced for mask breaks, while eating or drinking, etc. All students will be required to wear a mask on school busses. *Note: this policy will need School Committee approval.

6. My student would prefer to wear a face shield instead of wearing a mask. Is that allowed?

The standard set forth by the MA Department of Public Health and the DESE (supported by Governor Baker's COVID-19 Executive Order No. 31) is that masks are always required. Face shields are one of the additional possible mitigation strategies but do not replace the standard requirement of a mask/face covering. Shields do not provide adequate protection when used alone. This standard has also been confirmed by the City of Westfield Health Department.

7. What will happen to students that refuse to wear a mask?

If students are in violation of the district's mask policy, the building principal will consult with the parent/guardians to determine whether an exception is appropriate, or the student may be removed from the school building during in-person learning until such time as they can comply with the requirement or the requirement is lifted. *Note: this policy will need School Committee approval.

8. How will Remote Learning be different than last spring?

All teachers and students will use a learning platform and tools that work with Google G Suite for Education. All students will be provided with a Chromebook for use at home and at school. Families that do not have Wi-Fi connectivity will be provided with a hotspot device so that all students are able to participate in the remote learning environment. Students will have a balance of synchronous and asynchronous learning equal to the hours of the regular school day. The specific expectations for this are being recommended by the Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee, determined by the E-Board, and negotiated with our teacher's union. Current recommendations include a daily consistent schedule for synchronous instruction that is equal to roughly half of the scheduled class time. Students will be expected to attend the live sessions and they will be expected to complete the work associated with the session prior to the next day's session. One reason to limit the live instruction to half the class time is that we want to prevent students from spending six straight hours on a screen. During the time that students are 'assigned' to a teacher's class but not in a live session, they will have access to the teacher. Asynchronous learning would include written assignments posted to Google Classroom, web-based assignments to use specific programs for a specific period of time, and videos of teacher instruction that students could watch when they have support with learning in the remote environment.

9. Will students receive grades, and will attendance be taken during Remote Learning?

Yes. WPS will return to our normal grading and attendance policies.

10. Do I have to send my student with their own supplies?

Students should continue to bring their own personal school supplies as they have done in the past. The schools are assessing what shared supplies we normally provide and will order accordingly to ensure any supplies used are available for safe, individual use.

11. Will students have access to lockers in school?

Locker use will be minimized to limit numbers of students in hallways. Students can put their coats, lunches, backpacks in the lockers in the morning, but will not be allowed to their lockers between classes.

12. When students are in school, will they be spaced 3 feet or 6 feet apart?

As much as possible, we will adhere to the CDC recommendation of six feet. However, this will differ in our schools because our classroom sizes vary. Some schools may only be able to accommodate 3 feet of space. Principals are in the process of developing individual site plans and will share these with parents and staff once these plans are finalized.

13. What are the criteria for determining the district's movement through the phases?

The number of positive cases in our schools is an important factor as well as the percentage of cases in our community. Westfield Public Schools is working very closely with the City of Westfield Health Department. We will follow the Health Department's recommendations.

14. Will students be eating lunch in the cafeteria or in their classrooms at all grade levels?

This will vary by school. We are still working on this in negotiations with our labor unions as well. Principals are in the process of creating site specific plans and will share these plans with families once they are finalized.

15. How will cohorts be determined? Will you be able to change a cohort if needed?

Cohort development will be led by the Transportation Department to ensure that we are able to provide bussing to students that would typically need transportation to and from school. Our plan also prioritizes siblings being in the same cohort. After A/B cohorts are developed at the district level, Principals will create class lists and course schedules based on these cohorts. It is possible to request to move to the other cohort, but all requests are subject to Principal approval and will be made on a case by case basis. Transportation to and from school may have to be provided by a parent or guardian due to the change, and a cohort move may affect student class schedules at the secondary level.