

**August 2020**

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ's) FOR REOPENING SCHOOLS**

**Updates made on 8/12 - see highlighted sections on Parent Choice Remote and Transportation**

Parents/Guardians:

We are working diligently to answer all of your questions. The situation remains fluid and information continues to change at the state level, from both the Governor' Office and from DESE Commissioner Riley. This FAQ is a living document and will be updated accordingly. Your continued questions are welcome!

### **Return to School OPTIONS:**

- **District Remote**
- **District Hybrid**
- **Parent Remote Choice**

Many of the questions that we received were about “what is hybrid”, “can I choose remote”, “what is remote”, “can I choose to come back from remote” etc. I’m going to chunk the questions into the paragraphs about the academic plans below.

#### **DISTRICT REMOTE:**

**The Remote Learning Plan for the district** will go into effect if the Governor shuts down the state of MA, or we determine that there is a spike in COVID 19 in Whitman or Hanson or surrounding communities. **The district will not start school in September on a remote plan.** These are some of the logistics in the district remote plan.

Elementary students will have class from 8-12 daily

Middle School will have class 9-1 daily

High School will have class 10-2 daily.

When the district is remote, students will follow a schedule that is daily and establishes routine.

Google classroom and Google Meet will be used by WH teachers and students. Attendance will be taken using Infinite Campus.

Elementary students will be using iReady and Into Reading along with the distance learning site located on our website.

Daily expectations for students should not exceed 7 hours (via teacher interaction and extended lesson work).

Assessments will be given based on a variety of methods with advanced notice.

High needs populations will report to school unless we are shut down by the Governor.

**REMOTE LEARNING IN 2020/2021 WILL NOT LOOK LIKE REMOTE LEARNING FROM MARCH 2020-JUNE 2020.**

**DISTRICT HYBRID**

**The Hybrid Plan for the District as approved by the WHRSD School Committee on 8/6/2020**

- Students will be broken in cohorts.
- Cohort A will report on Monday and Tuesday, in person with half of a classroom (example Duval 5th grade class has 26 students, 13 will report in Cohort A)
- Cohort B will report on Thursday and Friday, in person with half the classroom. (Duval 5th grade class the remaining 13 will report)
- Everyone Virtual on Wednesdays. (Except for certain student populations).
- We will follow a half day schedule and teachers will meet with their cohorts during the half day.
- Content will be delivered via Google Meet and classroom, both synchronous and asynchronous.

What does this look like:

Elementary: In person days will focus on ELA and Math and related classes.. Home cohort days will be staff dependent but our hope is to deliver Social Studies and Science content with district staff. Students can also expect extended learning work from their in person days with no more than 1 hour of ELA and Math from their teacher of record (in person teacher). Hours online at home will be similar to the district remote plan 4 hours but may be less.

Middle level: In person students will follow their assigned schedule. On home cohort days students have 2 half hour in person sessions per day during extension ( One day Science and Social Studies, the other day ELA and Math)

High school: In person days, students will follow their schedules. On home days, we are working on live-streaming classes. Students will be expected to attend their assigned class. If this doesn't work, students will have a seminar check in period with their classes and assigned teacher.

Hybrid Cohorts - FYI

The way the district is selecting cohorts consists of placing families in the same cohort and, geographically for bus routes. Once the cohort is assigned, parents can contact their building principal to request a cohort change.

**What does a day look like on a hybrid in person day?**

Students will follow a regular schedule. At elementary students will have a morning meeting, class instruction, related arts, lunch and recess. Mask breaks will be given, teachers will use outdoor spaces, students will be socially distant when they are in hallways and cafeteria. In both the Middle and High

Schools students will follow their schedule. Class may be shortened to allow for longer passing times to keep students socially distant. Related Arts will look different at all grade levels to ensure safety of students.

**Can I change from hybrid to remote or from remote to hybrid?**

Yes, you can always change from hybrid to remote. If you decide to change from remote to hybrid we are asking that these changes are made at the grading periods/quarterly. We are also asking that parents provide the district two weeks notice to prepare a cohort for your child.

**PARENT CHOICE FULL REMOTE:**

**“REMOTE OPTIONS”**

The Commissioner of Education is allowing parents the right to choose to have their child enroll in school fully remote.

Parents also have the option to choose “remote” and then choose to return to the district plan (in-person, hybrid or remote).

On Tuesday, August 4th the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provided school districts the list of state approved “Remote Options” for school districts available to purchase. Two options are the two Commonwealth of MA virtual schools; Greenfield Commonwealth Virtual School or TEC Connections Academy. Students enrolled will remain enrolled in the district. These schools employ MA certified teachers, the learning management system/curriculum platform, the courses synchronous and asynchronous content. The district will be responsible to monitor student progress but will not be the actual teachers.

The other two platforms are Edgenuity and FLVS Global. These are independent companies that were vetted by DESE and meet the state curriculum framework. This is a largely asynchronous model. Students will be provided lessons, instructional videos and assessment by the company according to the course taken. When a Whitman-Hanson student is taking an Edgenuity course, one of our teachers chooses the content and curriculum for the student to take. The WH teacher will provide coaching, some teaching and support.

The REMOTE options offered by DESE each have different pricing structures. Parents will not have to pay the expense, costs will be covered in district. (For example, if 200 students chose the TEC Connections they would be offered courses from the bank library, English, Math, Science and Social Studies. Each course is both synchronous and asynchronous with live teaching twice per week. This would be a district cost of \$480,000.

What we have heard from parents is that they want a remote plan that keeps students connected with Whitman-Hanson. That’s what we are working on. However without data, (the number of students who are choosing remote, and the number of teachers who cannot return to school in-person because of health) this is nearly impossible. Once our data is collected we are trying to put teams together, to teach our students. Our goal is to provide a remote experience for all students with WH teachers, however these

students will be grouped remotely with other grade level students in the district. (Duval, IH, and Conley)(HMS and WMS). **More to follow soon! See below updated info!!**

### **Updated information 8/12:**

#### **Parent Choice Remote Options**

After a lengthy discussion with the principals today (8/12) the district is able to offer a WH remote learning option. Briefly, this is what we can offer based upon current staff availability and district finances. This will look different at each level. Elementary, Middle and High.

Elementary - We will offer elementary grades 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, cohort for parents who choose a remote platform. Right now we will run one section of each grade in the district. As mentioned before, Conley, Duval and Indian Head students who opt for remote will be placed in the appropriate grade level with a WH teacher. That teacher will become the child's teacher of record for the year. If the district moves to remote, students who are in this platform (WH Parent Choice Remote Option) will remain with this teacher for the duration of the year. Students in this model will not have related arts.

We are working on a Kindergarten remote option but this is to be determined. We need to have a clearer idea of enrollment figures since Kindergarten numbers have fluctuated over the last two weeks.

Middle School (WH parent remote option) The middle school option will consist of a team of WH teachers teaching the 4 core subjects Math, Science, Social studies and Science.

High School (WH parent remote option). We are planning to live stream high school classes so a student choosing this option will follow their schedule and remote into class. This is subject to change pending implementation of live streaming. Edgenuity is currently used at the High School and if we cannot live stream students will have a choice of Edgenuity classes.

#### **KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS**

The district is offering the traditional half day kindergarten model. Students will come to school every day for a half day. We are also providing a tuitioned full day kindergarten. Full day K will meet Monday-Friday. The School Committee approved that the collections of tuitions for full day kindergarten will continue if the district or the governor decides to move from hybrid to full remote. The district will begin collecting tuition on September 1st.

- Half day kindergarten is a choice if a parent wants a hybrid option.
- A parent remote option for Kindergarten is now being explored.

**I originally had registered my daughter for full time kindergarten. I am no longer comfortable sending her to school full time. Will parents be allowed to change their minds in regards to this? I much prefer half days?** Yes, parents may switch from full day to half day.

**How much of a notice do parents need to give to change from full day K to half day K?**

If it is before the program has started, they need to notify you to make adjustments and then you will contact buildings so they are aware. If it is during the program, it may still happen but the school and transportation would need to be more actively involved to make adjustments.

**Will class size be 22?**

Not a hard and fast rule but close to that number, Yes. The assumption is this is a full day model. Principals are working on accommodations for full day and social distancing, where students will be six feet apart and will schedule these classes in their largest classrooms.

**SPECIAL EDUCATION Q&A**

**Point of clarification- Not all students on Individualized Education Plans will be scheduled to attend school Monday-Friday. Full week instruction will only be available for the students in our highest needs population. We are following the recommendations provided to us by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The department of student services is contacting parents of the students in our highest needs category.**

- 1. What students will be offered full in-person programming M-F with a ½ day Wednesday?**  
Students who are currently on an IEP that are in a sub-separate classroom for the majority of their day are being offered full in-person programming. English Learners who are at level 1 or level 2 per their ACCESS scores are being offered full in-person programming. These student’s families have received a direct email from the Office of Student Services.
- 2. What students will be offered a half day of in-person learning on Wednesday?**  
English Learners who are at level 3 or level 4 per their ACCESS scores are being offered a half day of in-person learning on Wednesday. On a case by case basis determined at the building level, students who are homeless, in foster care or who are economically disadvantaged and require additional academic support are being offered a half day of in-person learning on Wednesday.
- 3. How was it determined which students will be offered full-in-person programs or the additional ½ day on Wednesday?**  
The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) released re-opening guidance that prioritized getting students and staff safely back to school in person, following a comprehensive set of health and safety requirements. DESE asked school Districts to prioritize “up to” full time in-person learning for students considered to be ‘high needs students’ including students with disabilities in substantially separate programs, English Learners and economically disadvantaged students.”
- 4. If my child is on an IEP but does not meet the criteria for full in-person programming, how will their IEP services be delivered?**  
All students on an IEP that do not meet the above mentioned “high needs students” as defined by DESE, will be on the hybrid model with two days of in person instruction and 3 days of remote

learning. All IEP services will be provided either on the days the student is in person or on the days students are working remotely.

**5. When will I know what my child's schedule will look like for IEP services if they are on the hybrid model or the remote model?**

You will receive a phone call from a member of your child's Team between August 31<sup>st</sup> and September 4<sup>th</sup> to discuss your child's IEP services, both remote or in-person. After this discussion, you will receive a "Student Services Plan" that clearly defines how your child's IEP services will be delivered in either model.

**6. Will my child on an IEP be required to wear a mask in school?**

We are requiring all staff and students grade K-12+ to wear a mask in school. We will have frequent mask breaks throughout the day and special education staff will be available to support students who struggle to wear a mask properly or to understand its importance. If your child has a disability or medical condition that prevents them from wearing a mask, they will be exempt.

**GENERAL QUESTIONS:**

**What if a holiday falls on one of the days of in school learning? Will that week be altered so each cohort is going to school in person the same number of days? For example, those Monday holidays and Thanksgiving week there is no school Thursday & Friday.**

Because of the hybrid model and the availability of content both synchronously and asynchronously, students will not miss content. We also calculated the number of holidays for the A cohort and B cohort, and it was almost evenly distributed, so face to face time will be similar for both cohorts.

**What grade levels will be mandated to wear masks?**

The district is requiring students in grades K-12 wear masks in school and on the bus. Staff at all levels will be required to wear masks.

**Will there be bus monitors?**

We anticipate having monitors on the elementary bus runs.

**Are visitors and parents allowed in the school buildings?**

We are looking to minimize the number of visitors and parents. If you must visit the school a mask will be required. Visitors will only be allowed to access the walk up windows or main office. The district is going to try and schedule all meetings virtually to minimize visitors.

**Are there any childcare options that would be available for teachers with different schedules than their children?**

We are meeting with the YMCA on August 14 to discuss offerings. The YMCA is looking to provide options for parents during the school day, however these services will not be offered in WH buildings and would be off campus. We also will discuss before and after school childcare options.

**What is the process if a teacher or student is diagnosed with COVID? Does the entire class quarantine?**

Please see the district protocol on staff or students diagnosed with COVID. This protocol is posted on the website.

**Can you provide resources for families on where and which model Chromebook to buy? Will there be Chromebooks available for all students? Or just one per family?**

Currently our Chromebooks are on backorder much like most of the country. If we were to go fully remote we will have just barely enough CB's for our students. We will use the same process we used last year for CB checkout if needed.

**I am new to the district and all information I receive about schooling is second hand. How can I ensure I am on the email listing to get updates?** Please verify with your school office to make sure all of your information is entered correctly. The official school calendar in our student system does not allow us to pull for email until the actual student start date. While we are working with our vendor to correct this, we update all emails in a Google form and send out info to that list. Information is also pushed out to our website at [www.whrsd.org](http://www.whrsd.org).

**Do we know if teachers are going to use Zoom or Google Meet?**

Our goal is to use Google classroom and Google Meet. The reason being is that our internal testing of chromebooks proved that Meet had less "hangups" than Zoom when we went to do advanced features such as breakout groups. The overall internal processing speed lagged with Zoom where it does not seem to with Meet. We have offered professional development to our staff so that we can be ready to begin.

**Is there a dress code for remote learners?**

Clothing should be school appropriate.

**What is the first day of school for students?**

The first day of school for all students is Tuesday, September 15, 2020

**What are the start and end times for all schools?**

The regularly scheduled start and end times will apply for all schools.

**For a child on an IEP, will the services be provided by the school district or the online learning program?**

Yes, IEP services will be provided by the district whether hybrid or remote.

**Will any effort be put into ensuring a connection between remote learning students and hybrid students?**

Yes, we are working on making sure students are connected whichever remote platform is used.

**If parents decide to change from the hybrid model to remote learning, does that impact the students who chose remote learning in the first place? What will that transition "look like" for all?**

There will be a transition for the student moving to remote depending on the platform that is chosen.

**Will the remote children have the same remote teacher every time; or, will it be a new person each time they interact?**

This will depend on the platform. If the district can provide a remote platform, we can control the interaction.

**What are the differences between full remote learning and homeschooling? What will the district offer remote learning families? If we choose to homeschool without the remote curriculum, will there be assistance to navigate this option?**

If a child is homeschooled, the parent assumes the responsibility for the curriculum which has to be approved by the Assistant Superintendent. For Homeschool options a parent writes a letter describing the subjects being taught and the ability to send in a year end evaluation of progress. WHRSD then follows up with a letter of approval or further questions if any. This is based on the Charles decision and the internet had quality resources that parents should look into on this subject.

**It was mentioned at the SC meeting that a WHRSD staff member will oversee the program remote students will be using. How so? When and with what frequency?**

In all parent remote options there will be WH staff involved. It will determine on the option the parents take will determine the extent which staff member is involved.

**If enough parents select the remote learning option, is there an opportunity for students to be assigned a W-H teacher (or teachers) to educate them versus using Edgenuity or a similar program?**

Yes, decisions are based on numbers of students doing remote and the numbers of staff needing to work from home because of health concerns.

**Since there are teachers and other staff members who are considered "high risk" or may have "high risk" family members, how will they be utilized in the district? What accommodations will be made for them and their safety and is it possible for them to be used to help educate remote students who, perhaps, find themselves in a similar position (or whose parents do not feel comfortable sending them to school)?**

We are working with the Teachers Union (WHEA) and these staff members to see what options are available for them.

**If and when the decision is made for the entire district to go to remote learning, what does that mean for our children? Will they continue using Edgenuity (or other) or will they be fully integrated into the WHRSD (being part of a "class" and all that entails)?**

We are working on what that transition would look like.

**What is the plan for art, music, and phys ed for both the hybrid and full remote?**

Will those still be offered? If the district is in the hybrid or remote model these related classes will be



offered. If a parent chooses the remote option, these related classes will not be offered. The focus will be on core subjects.

**Is there still MCAS?**

Yes, this is state and federal law. Only the legislature can cancel. Call your representatives if you would like to see the tests cancelled.

**Will there be athletics in the fall?**

No decision has been made. The MIAA is working on a plan for students to be able to participate in athletics.

**If I choose a remote plan, can my child play sports or participate in after-school clubs?**

Yes, if available and logistically will need to be worked out.

**Ventilation and Air Quality**

The district is looking to purchase the IWave air purifier for every classroom and rooftop units to “clean the air” These will be installed prior to the start of school.

**Will fire drills still be conducted in schools and will the procedure change at all?**

We will meet with both Whitman and Hanson Fire and Police to review safety protocols and modify for social distancing prior to the start of school.

**All inquiries regarding crossing guards should be deferred to the Whitman Town Hall.**

**Updated 8/12 - Transportation**

**TRANSPORTATION**

Students riding the bus will be required to wear masks. The district will provide a bus monitor at least for elementary pick-up and drop-off. We are only allowed 23 students on a bus. Students cannot sit together unless they are siblings. Students will be assigned seats. The drivers and monitors will wipe the bus down after each run with appropriate cleaning materials. We are encouraging parents to provide transportation if possible. Principals are working on plans for an increased level of traffic at drop off and pick up.