

Office of the Superintendent
Westmoreland County Public Schools
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August 23, 2021

Greetings Westmoreland County Schools' Families:

I write to bring you news that has evolved from our first weeks of school. Faculty and staff are working incredibly hard to meet the instructional and social-emotional needs of our students. Special thanks to all of our students and staff for strictly adhering to mitigation strategies, which are designed to keep everyone safe.

We are coming to grips with some unspoken realities of COVID. Specifically, COVID will be around for a while. Westmoreland Schools has to anticipate that some of our students and staff will become exposed to COVID and that quarantines will be utilized. Therefore, we are taking this time to articulate the processes in place to address continued instructional support for students when quarantined, actions being taken to keep students safe, and Frequently Asked Questions. This notice will provide families and the community the guidance on our procedures for continued learning for students when placed under a quarantine status.

CONTINUED LEARNING - INSTRUCTION:

- If a child is quarantined due to COVID EXPOSURE, the following steps will be taken to secure the student's continued learning experience:
 - a. Within 2 days of the child being quarantined, the classroom teacher(s) will contact the parents to explain the continued learning plan.
 - b. Within 2 days of the child being quarantined, teachers will begin to post daily instructional materials in Canvas while the child is in quarantine. This will allow the student to access continued learning and remain up to date with instruction.
 - c. The teacher will attempt to meet with the student via phone or Google Meet at least one time per week to check in with the student for questions and support.

ATTENDANCE WHILE QUARANTINED:

- While a student is quarantined, the student will be counted present in school if certain criteria are met..
- In order for the student to be counted present, the student must engage in "Meaningful Interactions" with a school-based staff member (teacher or other principal designee).
- The following transactions, grouped together, can serve as "Meaningful Interactions," which may also be used to certify daily attendance:
 - virtual presence for asynchronous learning

- login time
- phone call
- email
- electronic submission of task
- Teachers will explain the attendance process to parents and the student in the initial call to discuss the continued learning plan.
- Elementary Example of Attendance - When in quarantine, a student is counted absent if the child does not submit work on a daily basis in Canvas.
- Secondary Example of Period Attendance - When in quarantine, a student is counted absent for a class period if the child does not submit work on a daily basis in Canvas for that classroom period.

We believe that these strategies will ensure continued learning in cases where our students are quarantined. The academic progress of our students is foremost for us and we are committed to ensuring excellent teaching and learning experiences for our students. In the event that you notice a lack of adherence to any of the procedures, please contact the building principal.

WESTMORELAND COUNTY SCHOOL ACTIONS TO KEEP STUDENTS SAFE

Vaccinations

Westmoreland County Public School students age 12 and over are eligible for COVID-19 vaccines. Students are encouraged to visit the health department for more information and to find a free vaccination site in their area. The Virginia Department of Health has offered two student vaccine clinics in the division. More clinics are being planned and will be announced through Instant Alert and the division website.

Stay home when sick

Parents should conduct a health screening with your child every morning before school. Check for any symptoms before putting the child on the bus or sending them to school. No students or staff may enter a WMLCPS facility if they are:

- Diagnosed with COVID-19 within the last 10 days
- Exposed to COVID-19 within the last 14 days and not fully vaccinated
- Instructed to quarantine
- Sick or experiencing any of these symptoms of illness
 - Fever or chills
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Fatigue
 - Muscle or body aches
 - Headache
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Sore throat
 - Congestion or runny nose
 - Nausea or vomiting
 - Diarrhea

Students Returning to school

Students who are not feeling well but do not have one of the COVID-19 symptoms listed above may return to school after they have gone at least 24 hours without a fever or the use of fever-reducing medicine.

Masks

Masks are required for all elementary, middle and high school students when indoors and on school-provided transportation, including school buses, activity buses, and school cars. Masks are also required for staff, and for visitors when indoors at schools or division buildings, including visitors to the school offices, Central Office, School Board meetings, and indoor sports. Masks are optional when outdoors. Teachers provide students with outdoor mask breaks.

Physical distancing

Schools are taking actions to ensure all campus spaces and buildings support health and safety, including asking students to maintain physical distancing of at least three feet whenever possible. Signs and spacing markers are posted throughout our facilities to remind everyone of physical distancing practices.

Handwashing

Handwashing is one of the best ways to protect yourself and your family from getting sick. The CDC recommends washing hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds. Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to get rid of germs in most situations. If soap and water are not readily available, individuals are encouraged to use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.

Eating on Campus

Students utilize the grab-and-go program for breakfast to reduce their time in the cafeteria and to reduce cohort mingling. Lunch is served in classrooms or in the cafeteria when students can successfully be socially distanced.

Healthy spaces

Buildings are cleaned and disinfected throughout the day and every evening. Disinfecting supplies are provided to each classroom. Well-maintained HVAC systems are also important in reducing risks associated with COVID-19. Our school's HVAC systems have been designed in accordance with the VA mechanical code and American Society of Heating Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) recommendations. In response to the pandemic, we've upgraded to the highest quality air filters, an important risk-reduction strategy for COVID-19.

COVID-19 reporting and contact tracing

Even with thorough measures in place to reduce the spread of COVID-19 on school campuses, anyone in the community could be exposed to the virus through everyday interactions on-campus or off-campus. To assist with maintaining a healthy school community,

we ask students, employees, and visitors to notify the school as soon as possible if you or your child are diagnosed with COVID-19. Westmoreland Schools reports all known cases of COVID-19 to the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and works with them to conduct contact tracing, which will determine who, if anyone, will need to quarantine. Only unvaccinated individuals who had close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 will need to quarantine. WMLCPS and the VDH will work together to ensure that individuals believed to have been exposed to COVID-19 are notified. Westmoreland Schools will utilize Instant Alert messages to alert parents to positive cases in the school; letters to alert parents to possible exposure if your child shared classroom, bus, or other space with a positive case; and individual phone calls to alert parents if your child is identified as a close contact to an individual who has tested positive.

Visitors

Only essential visitors will be allowed on school campuses in an effort to protect the health and safety of our students and staff. Visitors will be required to strictly follow all health measures, including wearing masks indoors and physical distancing as much as possible.

Water Bottle Filling Stations

Water fountains have been replaced by water bottle filling stations. Students may bring a refillable water bottle.

This information in this guidance document will be updated as needed. Please refer to the division website (www.division.wmlcps.org) for the most up-to-date information at any time. Information presented on the website will include a **COVID-19 Data Dashboard** (updated weekly with positive cases and numbers in quarantine), as well as **Frequently Asked Questions** (based on questions received from students, staff, and parents).

Respectfully,

Dr. Michael D. Perry
Division Superintendent
Westmoreland County Public Schools