

July 17, 2020

Dear Families,

I hope everyone is enjoying summer and spending some well-deserved time relaxing with your family. I am writing today with updates on our planning for the fall. I know the idea of returning to school in the fall brings mixed emotions and raises questions and concerns for all. I hope that with open communication, we can address these concerns and feel confident moving forward together.

We know there will be challenges throughout the '20-'21 school year. But I want to assure you that our team will be transparent and straightforward with our communication as we prepare for the start of school. Our Reopening Task Force has been hard at work over the past 5 weeks, developing comprehensive plans for the safe return of students and staff on Sept. 2. As we get further guidance from the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) and the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) in the next few weeks, we will continue to adapt and refine our plans with more specific details.

On June 19, RIDE released health and safety guidance to reopen schools. A week later, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education came out with its initial fall reopening guidance to reopen schools, as well. As you can imagine, there have been a series of follow-up discussions and questions over the past few weeks, as schools across both states work to determine the various reopening scenarios.

I want to assure you that health and safety concerns are at the forefront of our daily discussions. With that being said, our team is in the process of outlining plans following state guidelines for the potential scenarios that could arise:

- Full in-person learning
- Partial/limited in-person learning
- Full distance learning

I. The 'New Normal' for Wolf

As you would expect, we are making substantive changes to many aspects of our operations, regardless of which scenario, or scenarios, we encounter. These include new cleaning procedures, building entry and exit rules, visitor policies and health screenings. I am going to first talk about these, before giving you a small preview of what our academic program could look like in the three scenarios.

Building/classroom preparation and social distancing

We are working in earnest to be sure the building is as safe as possible. Jen Sparr, our school nurse, and Joe Pagan, our facilities manager, have been researching and working together to:

- Install touchless hand sanitizer stations throughout the building;
- Create visual cues for traffic flow and social distancing in hallways;

- Reorganize classroom spaces and offices, in an effort to maintain six feet of physical distance between student desks as much as possible;
- Create an isolation room for the school nurse to use in case any student or staff member develops symptoms or an illness during the school day.

Home-School Partnership

We are going to rely on our home-school partnership now more than ever this upcoming year. Everyone in our Wolf School community needs to take responsibility for their family's health in an effort to keep everyone at Wolf safe.

- Families and staff will be required to conduct health screenings at home each morning prior to coming to school.
- Everyone will be required to complete a self-attestation using a web-based app.
- It goes without saying, but of course it will be critical for employees and students to stay home if they have any signs of illness.
- We will continue to connect with each other through Zoom for parent meetings, orientation, Parent Overview Night and other events, whenever necessary all throughout the year. Of course emails and phone calls are always welcome anytime!

Face coverings/masks

Masks will be provided to all staff and students at the beginning of the school year. Staff and students can certainly provide their own if they wish.

Adults: Face coverings **will be required for all adults in the building next year**, even for adults who are part of a stable group. Classroom team members will use clear face shields and clear face masks, particularly for instruction that requires visual cueing.

Students: While it is strongly recommended that face coverings be worn by students, we recognize that this will be a challenge for many of our students. Students **will be encouraged** to wear face coverings as much as possible in the classroom. However, students will be required to wear them when traveling outside of their classroom in the hallways, to the bathroom or when in close proximity to other stable groups. Every student **will be required** to have a face mask with them in the building at all times. We will be providing families with social stories and resources in the coming weeks to preview the importance of wearing a face covering with your child. We ask that all families work on building up your child's tolerance for wearing face coverings for longer periods throughout the day in the weeks prior to coming back to school.

Breaks: Face covering breaks will be built into the school day. Teachers will spend time teaching the importance of wearing face coverings and why it is necessary to do so during these times so that students are not afraid, but feel protected and safe.

Hand washing/hygiene

Students and staff will be required to follow strict hand-washing and sanitizing protocols throughout the day. Touchless hand sanitizer stations will be located throughout the building and in every classroom. Teachers will ensure that proper hand-washing techniques are being employed and lessons will be taught to students at the beginning of the year to explain the importance of good hygiene, especially during these times.

Cleaning procedures

Our facilities manager, Joe, as well as all classroom staff and faculty will be continuously disinfecting all touched surfaces throughout the day, including bathrooms, doorknobs, desks, tables and chairs. We are switching cleaning companies for the start of the school year to a company who will be able to handle an increased scope of work, which will include nightly disinfecting of all touched surfaces. Should the need for additional deep cleaning occur, we will be ready to engage the cleaning company in that effort, as well.

Air circulation

Our plan is to increase air circulation in indoor spaces to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus in these spaces. Specifically we are:

- Looking at the HVAC systems in the parts of the building that have air conditioning to ensure ventilation systems are operating properly;
- Evaluating if we can make any enhancements to maximize the air circulation and filtration;
- Increasing the circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors (while being mindful of seasonal allergies when necessary);
- Encouraging the use of the outdoor spaces around the building as much as possible this year. Teachers will be reimagining their curriculum to include as much time in the outdoors as the weather allows.

Drop off and Pick up

There will be different drop-off and pick-up procedures this year. We will communicate the specific locations for each class as we get closer to the start of school.

- Drop-off and pick-up will be through the same door each day for each stable group.
- The drop-off time for all students can be **no earlier than 7:45 a.m.** in order for the classroom team to be settled in their classrooms ready to receive students as they come into the building.
- **Classes will begin promptly at 8 a.m.**
- Students will enter the building through their assigned door with their face coverings on, get checked in by an adult with a temperature screening and head straight to their classroom. There will be no congregating in the lobby or down by the gym at drop-off and dismissal time. Dismissal will occur at the end of the day with face coverings on, at 3 p.m., and students will be walked out by their classroom team at the end of each day to meet their rides through their assigned door.

Visitors

We will be limiting the number of visitors in the building throughout the year. All visitors will be required to:

- Wear face coverings;
- Sign in at the office when they arrive;
- Have their temperatures taken and provide all necessary contact information;
- Maintain social distance at all times.

II. Full In-Person Learning

I know you're all wondering, 'what is school going to look like this fall?' This is what we know so far. We WANT to have everyone here in the building, every day. This remains Wolf's first priority. To do so, we will need to closely monitor and understand the latest health and safety recommendations from RIDOH and RIDE and make the best decisions for our community.

A key recommendation from RIDOH and RIDE is to group students and staff into stable groups, or “pods.” The goal is to help facilitate contact tracing for the virus and limit transmission if there is a confirmed positive case of COVID-19.

Given our class sizes and model, these stable groups are fairly easy to create here at Wolf. In some cases, the pod will be the group of students and the teachers they see most frequently in a single classroom. In other cases, the pod will be more than one classroom, with their shared teachers. In all cases, the total “stable group” will have no more than 25 people.

Why are there differences between single-classroom and multi-classroom pods? Because although we anticipate students interacting with the students and teachers from their own classroom grouping for the bulk of their day, there may be times when two classes come together during Move to Learn, Physical Education, Middle School Electives or during recess, for example. This will occur only in larger spaces, like outside on the field or playground, or in the gym, which can accommodate a larger group. Physical distancing will be taken into account at all times when two classes come together.

Anytime multiple stable groups are in close proximity, the stable groups must maintain at least 14 feet of distance.

Virtual Learning within the ‘Full In-Person’ Program

As difficult and jarring as it was, we learned a lot during our Wolf School Connected experience. We’re discussing several scenarios where some of those elements continue throughout the school year — even in the full, in-person learning model. This may include:

- Teaching to students who are home sick;
- Teaching to one of the ‘stable groups’ that is forced to quarantine in the event of a possible exposure;
- Delivering school-wide classes like Art, Music, Health or Integrated Art and Music.

It’s possible we could have staff, inside the building, teaching virtually to students who are just down the hallway. Awkward as that seems, it may become a necessity to keep that teacher from entering every classroom and disrupting the stable groups. In fact, All School Assembly may be done virtually each week, as well!

To support all the scenarios above, we are exploring various forms of technology that could make all of this easier and better.

III. Partial In-Person Learning

Each school is being asked to come up with a **partial or limited in-person** plan that would occur if our school, community or state experiences a surge in COVID-19 cases where additional precautionary measures need to be taken. Due to the size of our school, the numbers within each stable group, and all of the universal precautions in place, we are in a good position to be able to maintain in-person learning.

However, we need to plan for additional scenarios to be proactive. The primary goal in any of these scenarios would be to reduce the number of people in the building at the same time. One possibility that would have only moderate disruption would be to reduce the size of the stable groups to only one classroom

and the classroom team — each pod would be fewer than 15 people — and to eliminate any interactions or exposure between the groups or with any of the school's specialists. These would all move to virtual platforms.

We are considering various other models as well, none of which we have settled on, all of which come with challenges. These include:

- Lower School in-person every day; Middle School in-person some days;
- Lower School in-person some days; Middle School in-person some days;
- Some classes in-person half a week; the other classes in-person the other half.

We don't love any of these scenarios, and we truly believe that the size of our school, our teaching model and our flexible environment give us tremendous advantages as we work to keep students coming to school every day. Nonetheless, we will be prepared for anything.

IV. Full Distance Learning

While we are planning to maximize full in-person learning this school year, we will also be fully prepared to implement virtual learning plans at any point during the year if **full distance learning** is mandated by the state. Our Reopening Task Force is working to incorporate family, staff and student feedback from the surveys done at the end of Wolf School Connected to ensure the best possible opportunities for all students should we need to return to Wolf School Connected.

As a reminder, each scenario and all plans for next year are subject to change and are dependent on RIDOH and RIDE guidelines.

V. Miscellaneous – Other Things You Might Be Wondering

After school programs

The Reopening Task Force is continuing to have discussions about the viability of after-school programming for Wolf. For Fall sports (i.e., cross country), we are waiting on the guidance from RIDOH and RIDE. In the next few weeks we will be asking for your feedback about whether or not you would consider after-school programming for your child next year.

Running after-school programs such as Homework Club or other activities is dependent on interest as well as whether we can safely follow all guidelines and universal precautions.

School Calendar

Everyone should have received the calendar for next year in the mail. In the last few weeks the Reopening Task Force has been looking at a few **slight changes** to the calendar that we will communicate to you in the next two weeks. I do not anticipate any changes to Thanksgiving recess, or winter and spring breaks, but as we look at scheduling, it has become clear that a major challenge will be in the availability of our classroom teams to engage in collaborative planning of the Immersion Model ©, which is the hallmark of the Wolf program.

With teachers and therapists staying in constant contact with a stable group of students throughout the day, they will have fewer opportunities for common planning time. This is one area we are continuing to evaluate

and search for solutions. This common planning time is very important to Wolf in a normal year, and it will be even more important in this most atypical of years. As soon as we finalize any changes, we will let you know.

Field trips/Lower School Enrichment (Horseback Riding, YMCA)

We will not be taking the students off campus this fall for field trips or enrichment activities for Lower School, including horseback riding and the YMCA. Hopefully, some of these activities will be able to resume later in the year and we will keep you informed of any updates to this plan.

Travel

For updated information on travel guidelines from RIDOH, please visit <https://health.ri.gov/covid/travel/>.

In order for the reopening of Wolf to be as safe as possible, we are requiring that all families and staff who are traveling from outside the United States must quarantine for 14 days prior to the start of school. It is also recommended that all families and staff do not travel within 14 days of the start of school on Sept. 2.

Everyone will be expected to follow all state and federal travel restrictions as they are announced throughout the year.

VI. The End – And a Chance to Zoom!

I know this is A LOT of information to digest all at once. I will continue to communicate with you as often as necessary to update you with the latest information prior to the start of school. Please feel free to reach out with any specific questions or concerns as you think about these initial plans for opening school in September. You can submit any questions or concerns around the reopening plan [here](#). Additionally, if you have any specific thoughts regarding your child's individual situation for next year, please let me know. I have heard from a few of you already, which is helpful as we continue to plan for each individual student.

In order to keep everyone informed each step of the way, I will be holding virtual weekly forums for families beginning next week. I will be available on Zoom **Wednesday evenings from 7:00 - 8:00 p.m. and Friday mornings from 8:00 - 9:00 a.m.** to answer questions, provide updates or to hear your feedback as we navigate this planning process and prepare for the year ahead. These meetings are NOT mandatory and you certainly do not have to join both sessions. Your input is invaluable and our collaboration is the key to the success of your children. Thank you for your continued support. We will get through this year together in true Wolf fashion — with kindness, hard work and dedication to everyone in our Wolf community.

Click [here](#) for my Zoom link to join the meetings at the time that is most convenient for you.

Stay healthy and enjoy the beautiful summer days! I look forward to seeing you all soon!

Anna