



Washington Township Schools

~ A Community of 21st-Century Learners ~

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SCHOOL-HOME COMMUNICATION FOR OUR ENTIRE WTS FAMILY

~ Friday, June 5, 2020 ~

June has arrived and it is hard to believe that we are about to enter our final full week of the 2019-2020 school year. Together we have experienced a global pandemic that I know has brought unforeseen challenges, and even deep sorrow, to many of our families and faculty. As your Superintendent, I remain in awe of how the adults of our fine community have worked with such diligence and care to support every child throughout this horrendous health crisis. THANK YOU parents and teachers for sharing so closely in the responsibility of educating our young people over the past three months and THANK YOU children for always trying to be the best you can be during a time when your school world was turned inside out and upside down. May you all continue to take good care and keep your families safe as we witness what we all hope will be the continuing decline of COVID-19. With the end of the year approaching, I want to share the following information with you as we prepare to welcome the summer season ...

SURVEYS as New Jersey and WTS Prepare for the New School Year: As I am sure we have all seen, the challenge of reopening a State presents tremendous challenges in the midst of a pandemic. Our State Department of Education is working closely with Governor Murphy (just as school districts are working closely with the Department of Education) to determine the feasibility of opening schools in some capacity to start the new year. School Superintendents and School Business Administrators have been providing the Department with information regarding foreseen needs and challenges and the Department, in turn, plans to provide guidance to school district on the critical topic of *reopening*. The New Jersey Department of Education has released a survey to gather information from parents and educators to assist the Department in developing guidance documents for local school districts. The survey takes just *two minutes* to complete and the Department would like you to complete the survey by June 8th (Monday) ... Click [HERE](#) to complete the survey! Please note that WTS has developed a survey for you to complete as well. The survey is more specific to our school community and will be shared with you in my next School-home communication planned for next Friday!

WTS Plans for the New School Year: Here in your Washington Township Schools the district's Leadership Team has been meeting to discuss and plan for the potential school scenarios that may emerge as we head to Opening Day 2020 (Currently scheduled for August 26, 2020). Currently we expect one of 3 scenarios to emerge:

1. A full reopening of all schools, with "safe school operations" such as personal hygiene, medical/nursing care, and sanitizing/cleaning in place. A key impediment to realizing a full reopening is, of course, the threat level of COVID-19. New Jersey will be watching the landscape of this pandemic closely in the weeks to come for certain. As the State reopens (i.e. retail stores, summer camps, restaurants etc.) data pertaining to new COVID-19 cases and potential regional outbreaks will be examined closely by State health officials.
2. A Reopening of Schools with State-mandated restrictions that do not permit all children to physically attend school on the same day (i.e. social distancing). If this scenario emerges, it could very well mean that a rotational school schedule for all students would result; meaning that children would attend school for full day, 2 to 3 days per week. Our goal is to use the technology we have available to us to ensure that children are present in the classroom virtually on the days they are not physically inside the school.

3. The third scenario would be a continuation of our “at-home” learning program until which time schools are permitted to reopen. WTS will be making refinements to the “at-home” platform this summer in the event it needs to be delivered at any time during the 2020-2021 school year.

Please note that no definitive decisions can be made at this time as this health crisis has many moving parts and is constantly changing. WTS will continue planning for the scenarios outlined in this communication and will do so through 7 key lenses: *Physical Health; Mental Health/Well-being; Instruction/School Operations; Transportation; Facilities; Technology; and Communications/Governance*. Our entire WTS School Community will be kept apprised of any latest developments throughout the month of June (and into the summer months) with regard to our planning effort and any forthcoming guidelines/decisions from the State of New Jersey.

The **NEED** for **CHANGE!**: As a community we are witnessing a period of abundant unrest here in our Nation following the sad and senseless death Mr. George Floyd. The Washington Township Schools recognizes the need for change in our country and, yes, even here in our beloved community. This week many of us (myself included) witnessed a video circulating on social media that featured horrifically, racist language - - a video that was immediately condemned by members of our community and your Washington Township Schools. I thank the fine, upstanding citizens who forwarded that deplorable, senseless expression of hate to my attention, and Chief Almer for taking the matter very seriously. As parents and educators we know the importance of fostering within our children/students an appreciation and understanding of the similarities and differences that make the human race unique and, very often, worthy of celebration. Through its character education and curricular initiatives, WTS strives to promote healthy citizenship and highlight the inequities and injustices of the past (in age-appropriate fashion) so as to make the World a better place now and in the future. We need to keep those ideals in the forefront of our minds and strive continually to use our collective power, voice, and resources to create a more just World for the children of Washington Township ... *within our schools, within our homes, within our community*.

As many of our community’s children are witnessing the peaceful *and* the violent protests unfold, including the serene demonstration here in our own Washington Township earlier this week, now is a good time to have conversations with children. I also want parents of tweens and teens to know that the application TikTok is growing in popularity with many of our young people. The TikTok application is used to create short-form mobile videos that capture and present creativity, knowledge, and precious life moments across the globe ... and it achieves just that when used appropriately. Unfortunately, some people in our World are using the application to spread messages of prejudice. It is possible that children who use the app are being exposed to videos highlighting racism, sexism, stereotypes, and hate - - another good conversation starter to help our young people talk about what they are witnessing and to seize the opportunity as a teachable moment. Thank you for helping to make our world a better place for all!

Take good care, please stay safe, and enjoy the upcoming weekend!

Jeff Mohre
Superintendent of Schools

*PS ~ Please be reminded that the final two days of the school year are Friday, June 12 and Monday June 15. These two school days will reflect a slight change in the hours we have grown accustomed to during this period of at-home learning. The hours for both of these days will be **8:30am to 12:30pm**. There will be no formal lunch period for these final two days.*