



September 3, 2020

Dear West Side Families,

Welcome back to school! I hope you have had a safe and healthy summer. I would like to thank you for your patience and support while we continue to work diligently to address the myriad of school challenges created by world health events. In preparation for the upcoming school year, we have and will continue to follow guidance from state and local health department officials regarding school opening and continued efforts to keep our schools open and safe. As a result, this year's return to school will come with new protocols and procedures in order to keep everyone safe and healthy. This letter is intended to share this important information with you.

Assessment Days Next Week (Sept. 8-9 for all students):

- If you DO NOT know your assessment time, please contact your child's teacher.
- As part of our safety protocols, we are limiting the amount of people in the building and in the hallways. We are asking that only your child and one adult attend the assessment time.
- Please wear a mask and practice social distancing as you enter the building.
- School staff will greet you at the door and point you in the right direction and direct you to your child's classroom.
- For students who are attending school through the Learn@Home program, we would like to collect additional information from your student about their Reading and math skills to allow your child's teacher to better **meet** their needs via this distance learning model. Please plan to attend your pre-set time if possible.
- We will not be doing any health screenings during the assessment times but would encourage you to reach out to our school nurse if you have any medical needs, health concerns or medications for your child. 507-537-6962 Ext: 3003
 - Kathy Becker RN PHN LSN (kathy.becker@marshall.k12.mn.us)

First Days of School:

- The first day of school will be Thursday, September 10 unless your child is in group 4.
- If your child is in group 4, they will start out their year with their assigned distance learning day. Please plan to have your child connect to their distance learning tile in Microsoft Teams at 9:00am for a welcome back to school message and directions for the rest of the day.
- The official school day is from 8:00 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. You may drop your child off at school beginning at 7:30 a.m. which is when our first busses arrive. If your child rides the bus, please double check bus route information as some of the times have changed. If you have questions about bussing, please call **Southwest Coaches at 507-532-4043**.



- Breakfast will be available in the classroom for your child to purchase using their TAHER meal account. Additional funds for both lunch and breakfast can be placed in your child's account through Parent Portal.

Arrival at School:

- If you are dropping your child off at school, **please be sure your child is ready to exit the vehicle as quickly and safely as possible when you pull up to the drop off area to allow the line of cars to move through efficiently.** Your child should exit the vehicle on the curb side and have their face covering in place. Do not drop your child off in the parking lot area and allow them to walk across the busy parking lot alone.
- When we have nice weather, we will allow students to have a morning recess outside in designated areas. Our staff will work to limit the number of students in each zone and encourage students to not congregate in groups.

Dismissal from School:

- As noted previously, the end of the school day is 2:45. On Wednesdays we will dismiss students at 2:10. Parents will not be able to enter the building to wait for their child so we would ask that you keep this in mind as you develop your plans.
- If students ride the bus, they will be dismissed and escorted to the bus pickup area. Please double check what time your child will be arriving home in the afternoon.
- If your child walks to school, please communicate with them the importance of utilizing our crossing guards to cross the streets as they approach our school.

PLEASE NOTE: The pick-up and drop-off line is also a fire lane. Parents may drop students off or pick up in this area but **cannot leave the vehicle.**

These arrival and dismissal procedures are first and foremost for our student's safety. We request your patience and caution when dropping off and picking up your precious cargo here at West Side Elementary. PLEASE DRIVE SLOWLY, STOP FOR PEDESTRIANS, and USE CAUTION AS YOU DRIVE THROUGH THE PARKING LOT.



Face Coverings:

- Face coverings must be worn inside the building by all staff and students except when participating in activities that cannot be conducted with a face covering on, such as eating and drinking. Students will also not need to wear their mask while outside on the playground.
- Each student will be given four cloth face coverings during their assessment day. You are welcome to use your own face covering that you have purchased but you are not required to provide them for your child. We would ask that you develop a routine with your child to ensure they come each day with a clean face covering.
- Face shields will be available if a student is having difficulty with the cloth face covering. These face shields will remain in the classroom and a cloth face covering will have to be worn on the bus and when exiting and entering the building.
- We will be working with students to build their level of comfort wearing a cloth face covering. We also know that they will need to take breaks. Each teacher will be developing a schedule to allow for this.

What if my child is not feeling well?

- A separate communication will be coming from the district nurses with pertinent up to date health related information to help guide decisions related to illness and school attendance.
- In this communication, you will also find information about self-screening for COVID related symptoms. Please be sure to self-screen for both you and your child before attending assessment days. If you or your student are ill with any COVID related symptoms, please stay home and notify the office.

Additional Safety Protocols:

- West Side staff will be working with students to practice proper hand washing techniques. When encouraging your child to wash their hands at home, make it fun and explain why it's important.
- In the classroom, students will be encouraged to practice social distancing. When that is not possible, we will have additional barriers between students/teachers such as a plexiglass divider.
- Students will not be able to use the traditional water fountains, and only have one bottle-filling station. You are welcome to and encouraged to send a water bottle from home. It would greatly help us if they came filled with water at the beginning of the day to alleviate congestion by the water filling station.



Distance Learning Day:

- To allow appropriate social distancing in the classrooms, your child has been assigned one distance learning day per week. If you are unsure what day this is, please visit with your child's teacher.
- Your child will not physically attend school on this day but will be provided with activities to complete at home.
- Your child will be bringing home their laptop. Please help them to find a location where it can charge properly as they will need to utilize their devices when not in school.
- **Grab n Go** lunch bags for distance learners and Learn@Home students will start Thursday, September 10th. These will be picked up at the middle school, door 14 (north parking lot) or the high school theatre door from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm. This service will come at the same cost as if your child was present at school.

Visitors:

- To help reduce the number of people in the building, we are not allowing visitors in the building.
- Our hope is that as the community health improves, we can allow visitors in the future.

Social and Emotional Needs:

- Your child's mental health is more important than their academic skills. We are here to support them and help you navigate these uncertain times. Please reach out to us if you have questions or concerns, we are all in this together.

Welcome back! Staff has put in countless hours this summer and over the last few weeks to shape this year as one of growth for all of our students. We believe our students will take cues from our own behavior and actions, and for this reason we will be role models and convey a message of comfort and love to all of our West Side students. Together we will make this a year full of meaningful and joyful memories despite the difficult circumstances under which we are returning. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Your partner in education,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Thor".

Peter Thor, Principal
West Side Elementary