

Westminster School



**COVID-19 Mitigation Plan
2021 - 2022**

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OVERVIEW

FULL-TIME, IN-PERSON LEARNING PROGRAM

Westminster School will provide a full-time, in-person program to students in Pre-K through 8th grade. No full-time distance-learning will be offered. However, students who must isolate or quarantine due to COVID will have access to virtual learning for the duration of their absence. Should pandemic developments lead to a mandated school closure, Westminster School is prepared to pivot to a fully virtual program. This includes virtual streaming of classes and digital transfer of quizzes, tests, and messages. Additional details will be provided to students/staff who are affected.

Please be aware that the scope and details of this plan may change, based on pandemic and guideline developments.



OVERVIEW

Following the pandemic-related state mandate to close schools in March 2020, Westminster School quickly pivoted to a well-organized, engaging, distance-learning program for all students. Thanks to the remarkable dedication, flexibility, and creativity of its teachers, staff, students, and parents, Westminster was able to successfully deliver its academic program for the remainder of the school year. This included enrichment classes, such as art, music, P.E., and library, plus numerous virtual events to celebrate and bond our school community.



OVERVIEW *Continued*

As proud as we are of Westminster's accomplishments in distance learning, our experience reinforced our strong belief that in-person education is far superior to any virtual program, no matter how finely crafted. In this, we are joined by numerous experts in the fields of public health, education, pediatric medicine, and mental health. (Please see the list of resources included at the end of this presentation.) Relative to distance learning, in-person schooling at Westminster provides the following significant benefits:

- Students are more attentive and engaged, and achieve greater mastery of course content;
- Maintains designated academic curriculum and pace;
- Limits school-related screen time;
- Better meets social/emotional needs;
- Provides positive structure and purpose to students' daily lives, enhancing a sense of security and self-esteem;
- Frees parents to work.

Last school year (2020-2021), Westminster School offered full-time, in-person learning in all grades, as well as a virtual component for those who chose to learn from home. Following our carefully designed COVID-mitigation plan, including all the measures outlined in this document, we had a remarkably successful year. There were very few cases of COVID in our community, and those were neither contracted nor spread at school. With modifications, we were also able to provide our students with school. With modifications, we were also able to (cont. p.5)



“The American Academy of Pediatrics

strongly advocates that all policy consideration for the coming school year should start with a goal of having students physically present in school.”

August 18, 2020

[Click here for full article](#)

[AAP](#)



provide our students with many of the events and experiences that are an important component of a Westminster school year. While we began the school year with about 23% of our student body learning from home, as the overall safety of our program became increasingly apparent, almost all distance learners returned to school. In light of the current information and guidelines provided by the CDC and the Fairfax County and Virginia Health Departments, and based on our own experience last year, Westminster School will provide a full-day in person program for students in pre-school – 8th grade. While no distance- learning component will be offered, the school is prepared to pivot to distance learning should the authorities require a school closure. For required quarantines of individuals or groups, distance learning will be provided as necessary.

In such instances, affected students will have access to live streaming of all classes and will be able to access assignments, assessments, assistance, and general communications using Blackbaud, email, and scheduled Zoom meetings. We are also offering an After-School Care Program for students in grades PreK – 8 (details to be sent separately). However, no drop-in students will be accepted in Early Care.



Thank you for your understanding and support as we strive to uphold the mission and program of Westminster School, and best serve our families in the face of unprecedented challenge and complexity.

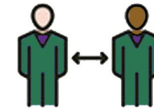
Sincerely,

The Westminster School COVID-19 Mitigation and Return-to-School Team

- Keith Fulk, Chair, Board of Trustees
- Nancy Schuler, Head of School
- Susan Glazier, Assistant Head of School
- Dolores Nelson, Business Manager
- Kristine Lee, Director of Preschool
- Kate Jacobson, Director of Curriculum and Publications,
Teacher (Team Leader, Grades 7-8)
- Pavel Dasek, Maintenance Supervisor
- Tourne Shipman, Maintenance Assistant



ADVANCE PREPARATIONS



Westminster has made the following preparations to reduce the incidence and spread of disease.

Building Preparation

- The HVAC system has been serviced to ensure optimal ventilation throughout the building.
- A medical-grade air purifier, which purifies the air twice each hour, has been installed in each classroom.
- Each classroom has windows to the outside. One window will be kept open. A window fan has been installed in each classroom to maximize air circulation.
- Purchased an electric disinfecting atomizing sprayer capable of disinfecting a classroom (99.99% of all pathogens) in 10 minutes.
- Created and installed signage and other graphic indicators to promote social distancing and recommended hygiene practices.
- Full-time custodian to disinfect throughout the day.
- Touchless water-bottle filling stations have been installed.

Space Planning

- Based on the latest guidelines provided by the CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics, social distancing of at least 3 feet will be maintained in all classrooms.
- Large or unnecessary furnishings have been removed from classrooms to maximize space, and student desks have been placed to ensure appropriate distance, with all desks facing in the same direction.
- Designated an isolation room (main office conference room) to receive students/staff who fall ill at school. The room is furnished with cots, mats, plexiglass barriers, and medical grade PPE to be used by staff interacting with ill individuals. The isolation room will be sanitized after each use.
- For those students using the bus service, assigned seating will be implemented and every effort will be made to distance the students appropriately.
- Established a “clean room” which can be used to relocate a class should a student become ill during the day, to allow for disinfection.



HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES AT SCHOOL

Westminster has established the following policies and procedures to reduce the likelihood of disease transmission.

Education / promotion of healthy behaviors

- Share with students (as age appropriate), parents, and staff information about COVID-19 and the school's plans for mitigation.
- Teachers and school office workers will be trained to check students and recognize symptoms and signs of COVID-19, and understand the steps to take in case of illness or suspicion of infection in students or staff members.



Face masks

- Students and staff will be required to wear face masks throughout the school day. Under appropriate conditions, "mask breaks" will take place.
- Visitors will be limited and those who enter must wear face masks (the school will provide, if needed).



Physical distancing

- Movement at school is controlled and directed to maintain recommended physical distancing.
- This includes before-school wellness checks, assigned entrances, and separate routes to homerooms, which will reduce the number of students gathering and entering the building at the same time and place.
- Alternative procedures for dismissal have been developed which avoid congregating in hallways.
- Desks in classrooms have been placed to maximize distance between students (at least 3'). All desks face the same direction.
- Student visits to lockers, restrooms, water fountains are staggered.
- Whenever possible, P.E. classes will take place outside. Masks are required when an activity involves students coming close to one another.
- Students do not change into P.E. uniforms; they do not use the P.E. dressing rooms. They change into P.E. shoes in their classroom.

Hand hygiene

- Students and teachers follow a regular schedule of hand washing or use of hand sanitizer throughout the day.
- Students are required to have a (small) personal dispenser of hand sanitizer on their desk each day.
- Hand sanitizer stations are located throughout the school.
- Students bring their own water bottles.
- Touchless water-filling stations are in place.
- Lidless trash cans and recycling bins are used.
- School supplies provided by the school have been purchased in amounts that allow individual use (no sharing); Parents are required to provide the remaining supplies for their child(ren), which should be labeled and maintained separately.
- All shared equipment, e.g., laptops, sports equipment, lab equipment, are sanitized frequently and students hand-sanitize after sharing materials.

HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES AT SCHOOL *Continued*

Homeroom cohorts and *limited mixing of students

- Bathrooms are designated by grade to minimize the number of students using each one.
- Academic schedule and classroom use are designed to keep students in small, consistent groups during the day. Teachers visit the classrooms. Students travel to P.E. class and outdoor recess.
- *Students in grades 6 – 8 may change classrooms in some instances in order to accommodate their individual academic tracks. Spaces are designated for each grade daily.
- Students remain in their classrooms for lunch.
- Recess time is staggered by grade to ensure that only one grade at a time is on the playground.

Enhanced cleaning/ disinfection schedule

- Daily cleaning practices are compliant with CDC recommendations, including the types of cleaning products used and the frequency of cleaning. Special attention is paid to the cleaning of high-touch surfaces throughout the day.
- Buses are sanitized after each use.
- Bathrooms are sanitized multiple times a day.



HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES AT SCHOOL *Continued*

Health screening

Each morning, parents/staff members are required to conduct and submit a wellness checklist (by smart phone app), and to retain students at home/stay at home if:

- there are signs of COVID-19, such as difficulty breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest; or persistent cough;
- there are symptoms of COVID-19, such as a fever of 100.1 degrees or higher, chills, persistent cough, undue fatigue, muscle/body aches, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, nausea/vomiting/ diarrhea; or
- there are any other signs of illness, whether associated with COVID-19 or not.
- Visitors who enter the school, including parents, are health screened, including a temperature check.
- Westminster staff members check each student's temperature upon arrival and at lunch time.
- For students who are absent for any reason, parents are required to notify the school of the reason for the absence that morning.

General health and mental health services

- All school policies and procedures regarding non-COVID-19 illnesses, as articulated in the Parent/Student Handbook and Teacher's Manual, remain in effect.
- Homeroom teachers and upper-school advisors (in their capacity as advisors) are on the alert for students' academic/social/emotional struggles related to the pandemic.
- Stress relief activities may be implemented in class, such as stretching or in-place exercises, mindfulness activities, etc.
- Short outdoor breaks are included in the daily schedule, which include mask breaks.
- Teachers may show videos that address stress and strategies for stress relief in children, including specifically pandemic-related material.
- Homeroom teachers and advisors communicate with parents and school administration any concerns regarding students' mental health, including pandemic-related issues.
- Should students need additional counseling or mental health services, the school maintains a roster of suitable mental health and family guidance professionals to share with parents.



SUSPICION OR INCIDENCE OF COVID-19

Westminster School has established the following policies and procedures to reduce the likelihood of disease transmission.

Suspicion / possibility of COVID19

- Any student or staff member who falls ill while at school (e.g., has a fever of 100.1 or higher, vomits/has diarrhea, or shows other signs/symptoms of COVID-19) will be placed in isolation until he/she can be picked up, and will be advised to consult a doctor.
- In case of a positive diagnosis of COVID-19 for a family (household) member of a student or staff member, that student or staff member will be required to remain quarantined away from school for the duration of two weeks without symptoms and show a negative diagnostic test prior to return to school.
- A student or staff member who has a family (household) member in quarantine (i.e., the family member has been exposed to a positive case) will be permitted to attend school.
- Parents must report reason for student absence on the morning of the absence.
- The school will determine whether or not a child must be tested before returning to school.
- The school will make accommodations for coverage of classes for staff required to quarantine
- Students who are quarantined or isolated will be able to attend classes virtually. Such students will be required to submit a doctor's note of alternative diagnosis or negative PCR test to return to school. A rapid test result will not be accepted.

Positive diagnosis

In case of a positive diagnosis of COVID-19 for a student or staff member:

- Westminster School will notify the Fairfax County Health Department, as required by law.
- The positively diagnosed individual will be required to remain away from school for 10 consecutive days.
- The classroom of the positively diagnosed individual will be sanitized.
- The school will notify the school community of the grade of the positive case.
- The school will fully cooperate with the recommendations and requirements of the Fairfax County Health Department.



COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS

Our families play a vital role in maintaining health safety at school. Westminster School has established the following expectations for all members of the community, including students, parents, and staff members. We must all work together, with respect and integrity, to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19.



Return-to-School Agreement

- All parents are required to review and sign Westminster's Return-to-School Agreement (on Blackbaud). No student will be allowed to attend school without submitting this document by **August 30, 2021**.



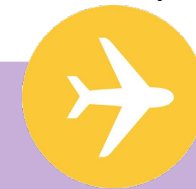
Daily health checklist

- Each day, parents and staff members must complete an app-based checklist, including temperature check, and submit it to Westminster School prior to arrival at school.
- The number-one safety measure of our cooperative plan is to keep a sick child home / stay home if you are sick.
- A student or staff member who is showing symptoms of illness should seek medical advice.



Communications regarding illness

- Notify the school immediately if there is a positive diagnosis of COVID-19 in your household.
- In case of absence, notify the school of the cause on the morning of the same day.



Travel Policy

Revised, 8/26/21

- It is our hope and recommendation that our families not travel by plane, train, or bus while our students are in school, as travel heightens the risk of contracting COVID-19. If, however, you do plan to travel (by mode other than car), please take note of the following policies established to lower the risk to all our staff and students.
- If an unvaccinated student or staff member travels by plane, train, or cruise ship, he/she will need to be tested with a PCR test a minimum of three days upon return. The student may return to school once a negative PCR test result is obtained. Please note that virtual classes will only be provided for students who are forced to isolate or quarantine due to a positive case (see pages 3 and 11).
- When traveling by car, we recommend checking the transmission rate of your destination, and considering postponing your trip if the area is a "hotspot." To determine whether your destination has a high transmission rate visit this link: <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>



ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Extended-day programs

- There will be no Early-Care Program.
- Regular and Drop-In After-School Care is offered to students in grades PreK-8. Additional information will be sent separately.

Extra-curricular activities

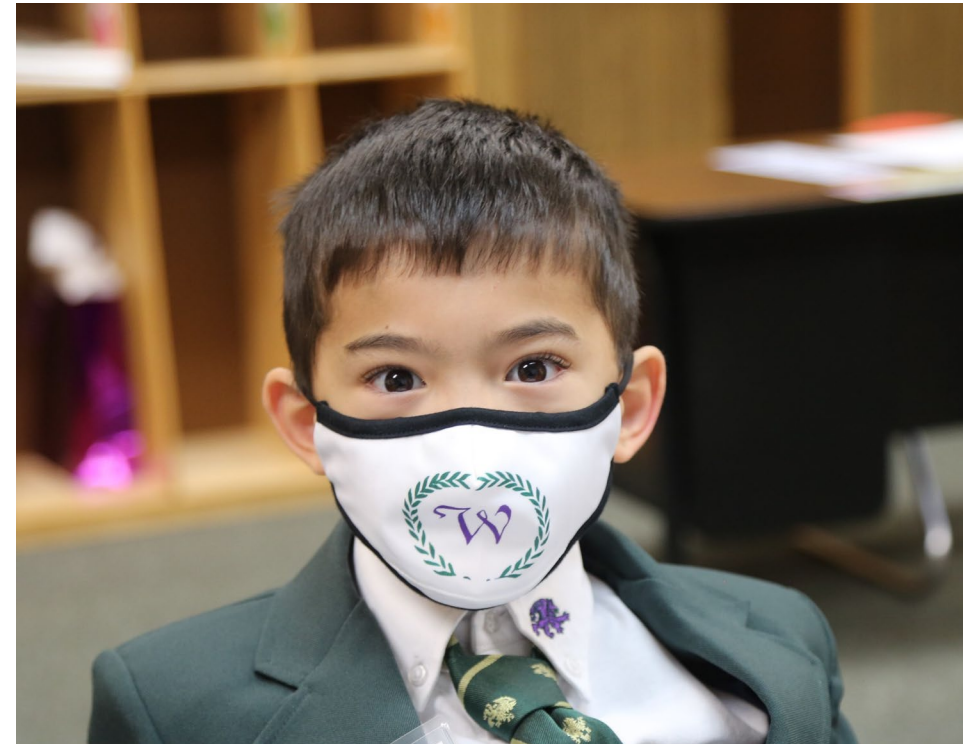
- Some after-school enrichment classes will take place – TBA.
- Safe participation in Junior Chorus and Gryphon Chorale remain under consideration.
- The orchestra program is open to students in grades 3-8. Health and safety measures are in place to protect all participants.
- Some after-school athletics will take place, including soccer. Basketball remains under consideration.

Plays

- Grade-level plays will be staged in the same manner as last year, with students masked, distanced, and video-recorded for virtual sharing with parents, friends, and the other students.

Field trips

- Field trips will resume to the degree that they can.
- Teachers will look for worthwhile virtual field trips.



ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS *Continued*

School communications with its community

- Westminster School has been in regular communication with its staff and families since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, sharing information regarding the mandated school closure, measures to deliver distance learning, community bonding activities/events, and plans for re-opening.
- The school has maintained and will continue to maintain additional, interactive communications among faculty and staff through frequent online meetings.
- The school will continue to communicate regularly through emails and online presentations to convey the school's plans, strategies to promote health safety, and expectations of the school community members, including any changes to the general situation or to the mitigation plan.
- Outdoor and virtual events will be scheduled to maintain a sense of community.



Sources of COVID-19 information and guidance

Fairfax County Health Department, Virginia Department of Health, Virginia Department of Labor and Industry, Virginia Association of Independent Schools, Virginia Council for Private Education, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and American Academy of Pediatrics.

- <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/health/novel-coronavirus>
- <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/>
- <https://www.virginia.gov/agencies/departments-of-labor-and-industry/>
- <https://www.vais.org/RelId/33637/ISvars/default/Home.htm>
- <https://www.vcpe.org/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/>
- <https://www.aap.org/en-us/Pages/Default.aspx>





THANK YOU!



WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER.

**LET US HOLD EACH OTHER'S PRECIOUS HEALTH IN ONE ANOTHER'S
HEARTS, MINDS, AND ACTIONS.**

GRIFFINS, UNITE!

