



Willie Ross School for the Deaf Reopening Plan

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Willie Ross School for the Deaf prioritizes our students' and staff's health, safety, and well-being as we make plans to reopen our schools this fall. In accordance with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) guidelines, we are committed to bringing back as many students as possible back to in-person learning while providing support to the families that will be learning remotely.

However, it is important to keep in mind that we will continue to monitor the pandemic and make decisions in response which could dictate a full return to remote learning at a moment's notice. We also continue to plan for the day the virus has run its course or a vaccination is made available and we are able to return to school fully.

The following is a plan we have developed with our management team, faculty, staff, and outside organizations including our maintenance company, fire department, our consulting physician, and others.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

To our families,

We are pleased to share with you our plan for school reopening for this fall. After reaching out to all our parents and families to better understand their needs and preferences; Willie Ross School for the Deaf will be implementing an In-Person Learning Model as our primary approach when school begins on September 1st.

For parents who choose to keep their children home, we will be providing online access to the classroom activities live in real time. We will also record classroom activities to be viewed later if that works better for your family.

It is a priority to keep all our students and staff safe at all times, so we will be implementing safety procedures, social distancing and employing masks and other PPE.

We have extensive back-up plans to revert to a hybrid approach or to full time remote learning if the situation should change.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Robert W. Carter
President/CEO

GUIDELINES FROM DESE

- Students in Kindergarten and Grade 1 will be encouraged to wear masks but it is not required. Students in Grades 2 through 12 and staff will all wear face masks unless there is a medical, behavioral, or other challenge.
- A physical distance of six feet is required whenever possible but there is a minimum distance of three feet as long as everyone is masked.
- Student groupings should be minimized in order to limit mixing student groups.
- Screenings are required both prior to and upon arrival at school.

MODELS AND OUR APPROACHES

IN PERSON LEARNING

Student Learning

WRSD is committed to providing standards based content instruction in all academic subjects with appropriate modifications made as needed. For those students who are unable to join us in person, we will have running concurrent Zoom sessions in order to have the students join us for synchronous learning. Google Classroom and Google Meets/Hangouts may also be used. For students who do not join us concurrently, there will be recorded lessons and assigned work made available to them. Teachers may also use Remind for communication purposes with families.

There will be a focus on social emotional learning as well to support both our students and staff. In addition, we will continue to support our special education and high risk student populations. However, grades on assignments and participation will follow normal expectations based on class policies. Students not making progress, not completing academic packets or opting not to participate during this closure, may not move up to the next grade level next year based on their attendance and grades. For promotion to the next grade level, students will need to have completed the requirements and earned the credits. WRSD will be taking attendance daily whether students are on campus or learning remotely. For promotion to the next grade level, students will need to have completed the requirements and earned the credits.

Instructional Delivery

All services will continue to be provided in accordance to each student's IEP. Some services may be provided virtually depending on the service provider's location. As is typical for WRSD students, we will continue to provide small class ratios.

Scheduling

While maintaining the required structured learning times in our schedules, schedules will be simplified as much as possible in order to allow for remote students to join consistently and will be reflected to include mask breaks and handwashing breaks.

Protocols

Increased cleaning/sanitizing protocols throughout the day and at the end of the day will be implemented across all settings. Health checks daily for students and staff before entering the school buildings will be required. The use of personal protective equipment (PPE) will be in place for all students and staff and closely monitored. Protocols have been developed and implemented for COVID suspected illnesses and shut down procedures.

Facility Use

Individual student desks have been set up in each classroom in such a manner that they are accessible for all Deaf/Hard of Hearing learners but also adhering to physical distancing guidelines. Breakfasts will be served in each classroom. Some classes may have lunch in the classrooms in order to spread out students while they are taking mask breaks depending on the size of each classroom. There will be flexible use of common areas (Student Center and Wing Hall on Longmeadow Campus) to support physical distancing. An isolation station has been set up in the school for any person with suspected COVID symptoms. Clear markings (i.e. taped arrows) are in place for student and staff flow in the building to support physical distancing.

For any students and staff working in the East Longmeadow school buildings, if and when they re-open, they are expected to adhere to the East Longmeadow protocols and procedures.

Transportation

WRSD is not responsible for transportation but will work closely with districts, bus companies, and students/families to help students understand requirements for transportation.

Technology

Students will be provided chromebooks and support connecting to these chromebooks. Students learning remotely will be provided chromebooks on an as-needed basis. In addition, instruction will be provided to those who need it to learn the different applications needed for learning. Technology support will be made available to students and families.

HYBRID LEARNING

Student Learning

WRSD is committed to providing standards based content instruction in all academic subjects with appropriate modifications made as needed. For those students who are unable to join us in person, we will have running concurrent Zoom sessions in order to have the students join us for synchronous learning. Google Classroom and Google Meets/Hangouts may also be used. For students who do not join us concurrently, there will be recorded lessons and assigned work made available to them. Teachers may also use Remind for communication purposes with families.

There will be a focus on social emotional learning as well to support both our students and staff. In addition, we will continue to support our special education and high risk student populations. However, grades on assignments and participation will follow normal expectations based on class policies. Students not making progress, not completing academic packets or opting not to participate during this closure, may not move up to the next grade level next year based on their attendance and grades. For promotion to the next grade level, students will need to have completed the requirements and earned the credits. WRSD will be taking attendance daily whether students are on campus or learning remotely. For promotion to the next grade level, students will need to have completed the requirements and earned the credits.

Instructional Delivery

All services will continue to be provided in accordance to each student's IEP. Some services may be provided virtually depending on the service provider's location. As is typical for WRSD students, we will continue to provide small class ratios.

Scheduling

For hybrid scheduling, we will split the students into two different groups. Group A will attend school in person on Mondays and Tuesdays while Group B is learning remotely following concurrent instruction (with recorded lessons made available for those who cannot participate synchronously.) Both groups will stay at home on Wednesdays and focus on their work with staff support available as needed. Staff will also be expected to use this day for professional development and working with families. Group B would then come in on Thursdays and Fridays while Group A learns remotely.

A variety of instructional models would be used to support this schedule including paper and pencil packets, online learning, and project based learning.

While maintaining the required structured learning times in our schedules, schedules will be simplified as much as possible in order to allow for remote students to join consistently (with consideration to providing flexibility for families' schedules) and will be reflected to include mask breaks and handwashing breaks for those students attending in person.

Protocols

Increased cleaning/sanitizing protocols throughout the day and at the end of the day will be implemented across all settings. Health checks daily for students and staff before entering the school buildings will be required. The use of personal protective equipment (PPE) will be in place for all students and staff and closely monitored. Protocols have been developed and implemented for COVID suspected illnesses and shut down procedures.

Facility Use

Individual student desks have been set up in each classroom in such a manner that they are accessible for all Deaf/Hard of Hearing learners but also adhering to physical distancing guidelines. Breakfasts will be served in each classroom. Some classes may have lunch in the classrooms in order to spread out students while they are taking mask breaks depending on the size of each classroom. There will be flexible use of common areas (Student Center and Wing Hall on Longmeadow Campus) to support physical distancing. An isolation station has been set up in the school for any person with suspected COVID symptoms. Clear markings (i.e. taped arrows) are in place for student and staff flow in the building to support physical distancing.

For any students and staff working in the East Longmeadow school buildings, if and when they re-open, they are expected to adhere to the East Longmeadow protocols and procedures.

Transportation

WRSD is not responsible for transportation but will work closely with districts, bus companies, and students/families to help students understand requirements for transportation.

Technology

Students attending school in person will be provided chromebooks and support connecting to these chromebooks. Students learning remotely will be provided chromebooks on an as-needed basis. In addition, instruction will be provided to those who need it to learn the different applications needed for learning. Technology support will be made available to students and families.

REMOTE LEARNING

Student Learning

WRSD is committed to providing standards based content instruction in all academic subjects with appropriate modifications made as needed. For those students who are unable to join us in person, we will have running concurrent Zoom sessions in order to have the students join us for synchronous learning. Google Classroom and Google Meets/Hangouts may also be used. For students who do not join us concurrently, there will be recorded lessons and assigned work made available to them. Teachers may also use Remind for communication purposes with families.

There will be a focus on social emotional learning as well to support both our students and staff. In addition, we will continue to support our special education and high risk student populations. However, grades on assignments and participation will follow normal expectations based on class policies. Students not making progress, not completing academic packets or opting not to participate during this closure, may not move up to the next grade level next year based on their attendance and grades. For promotion to the next grade level, students will need to have completed the requirements and earned the credits. WRSD will be taking attendance daily whether students are on campus or learning remotely.

Instructional Delivery

All services will continue to be provided in accordance to each student's IEP. Services will be provided virtually. As is typical for WRSD students, we will continue to provide small class ratios. Professional development opportunities will be made available for staff on a regular basis.

Scheduling

Remote learning would occur during typical school hours with the understanding that schedules will be simplified as much as possible in order to allow for remote students to join consistently but also made flexible to support families' schedules as much as possible. Both synchronous and asynchronous learning would be provided each day. For example, whole classes, small groups, and 1:1 time in some cases will be scheduled at specific times throughout the day for synchronous learning.

A variety of instructional models would be used to support this schedule including paper and pencil packets, online learning, and project based learning.

Protocols

During remote learning, social and emotional wellbeing support protocols will be implemented for each student and family. Protocols have been developed and implemented for COVID suspected illnesses and shut down procedures.

Facility Use

School staff will teach from WRSD classrooms as long as we can stay in compliance with school and local requirements/guidance. For students who we are able to bring in due to their disabilities, we will continue to follow the following guidelines:

Individual student desks have been set up in each classroom in such a manner that they are accessible for all Deaf/Hard of Hearing learners but also adhering to physical distancing guidelines. Breakfasts will be served in each classroom. Some classes may have lunch in the classrooms in order to spread out students while they are taking mask breaks depending on the size of each classroom. There will be flexible use of common areas (Student Center and Wing Hall on Longmeadow Campus) to support physical distancing. An isolation station has been set up in the school for any person with suspected COVID symptoms. Clear markings (i.e. taped arrows) are in place for student and staff flow in the building to support physical distancing.

For any students and staff working in the East Longmeadow school buildings, if and when they re-open, they are expected to adhere to the East Longmeadow protocols and procedures.

Technology

Students will be provided chromebooks on an as-needed basis and support connecting to these chromebooks. In addition, instruction will be provided to those who need it to learn the different applications needed for learning. Technology support will be made available to students and families.

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

The Education Directors will reach out to each family prior to school restarting via phone/text/videophone, email and mail. The communication will include a discussion on how we will create an individualized plan for the student's learning time, our expectations, our system for distribution of materials needed for students learning remotely, and what we will do to support our students including pre-teaching and providing social stories/videos. As school gets closer to starting, teachers will take over contact but parents are always welcome to contact the Education Directors anytime.

OUT OF SCHOOL TIME PLAN

At this time, WRSD does not plan to have any in-person activities outside of school hours including after school programs or recreational sports until further notice. However, various activities will occur virtually such as Jr. NAD (middle school through high school), Academic Bowl (high school students pending tryouts), and Yearbook Club (middle school through high school.) For students or families who need additional support at home, school counselors will work with the families and make referrals to other agencies as needed.

STUDENTS SUPPORT AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Safety / wellness / social emotional supports

Prior to the beginning of the school year, we will be connecting with families and students to provide social stories and connecting via Zoom to prepare the students for their return to school. The timing of the pandemic actually coincided with our plans to purchase a new Social Emotional Learning curriculum called "Second Step" and we will be implementing this curriculum in the fall. This will support us in specifically focusing on relationships, partnerships, opportunities for students and staff to connect, and to provide continued safe, supportive, and equitable learning environments that bolster all students' social and emotional development. In addition, our supportive services team and consulting psychologist will continue to work closely with our students and their families performing social-emotional wellness checks and addressing individual needs including keeping updated lists of community resources related to receiving social and emotional support, healthcare, and food. All services will be done both in person and remotely.

Planning and instruction

WRSD faculty will continue to have the appropriate time needed for planning and providing instruction with additional support in place to help navigate the technology. All instruction will continue to be provided at each student's instructional level.

Assessment

Assessments (used to measure student learning) will continue to be used to gather data in order to refine teaching and learning strategies. Assessments may be done both in person and remotely. Training will be provided for faculty to administer appropriate assessments remotely.

Intervention

Due to the small class sizes at Willie Ross, academic interventions happen on a regular basis but regardless, any and all interventions will continue to happen, whether it be in person or remotely. Data will be collected on a regular basis to monitor progress or lack thereof.

Any social emotional issues that require intervention will be done under the school counselor's guidance and may include the consulting psychologist as needed.

Behavior interventions will continue to follow the CPI (Crisis Prevention Intervention) model done by trained staff. If a family member witnesses any behavior issues that occur while remotely learning, they are encouraged to contact their child's teacher or an administrator for further support.

School calendar

We are still mandated to meet the 180 day requirement set forth by the DESE since we do not qualify for the 170 day waiver that public schools received. We have adjusted our school calendar to meet that expectation for all our students, regardless of their site. It is our current plan that students placed at an East Longmeadow site will come to the Longmeadow Campus until September 16.

DESE required August 2020 for parents and staff

Additional Information

East Longmeadow students

Our partnership sites in East Longmeadow will be learning remotely until at least January 15th. As previously mentioned, we will house our East Longmeadow students at the Longmeadow Campus until September 16 and we will determine what will happen at that time shortly. Our East Longmeadow students will join their mainstreamed classes remotely along with an interpreter whether they are in person in our classrooms or remotely at home. In addition, due to their class sizes at East Longmeadow, some classes may not be available for our students but this would only be a possibility if they return to in-person instruction. We will communicate any and all schedule changes with our families on a regular basis.

Pandemic handbook

We have created a separate handbook that specifically focuses on our new procedures during this COVID-19 pandemic. This separate handbook covers staff training requirements, student and staff attendance and health screenings, the use of our facility, main office procedures/visitor policy, technology support, cleaning protocols, and other things also mentioned in this plan. We will be updating this handbook as needed.

Certification of health and safety requirements

Willie Ross School for the Deaf certifies that we have met the health and safety requirements issued by DESE.