



Walsh, Jane <j.walsh@wissahickoncharter.org>

Weekly Wissahickon 07-31-2020

1 message

WCS-Fernhill <a.oliphant@wissahickoncharter.org>
Reply-To: WCS-Fernhill <a.oliphant@wissahickoncharter.org>
To: j.walsh@wissahickoncharter.org

Fri, Jul 31, 2020 at 11:40 AM

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Message from CEO

Dear Families,

I want to thank you for all the ways you've been in touch over the past week since we shared that we plan to offer a remote model this fall. I want to especially thank all of the parents who came to our meeting on Wednesday night. It was incredibly helpful to hear your experiences and your questions.

We know that not everybody could be at the meeting so I wanted to share a few things that we know and that we're working on:

- We are working towards every student being able to have a loaned device from the school. Students in K-2nd grade would get an iPad and students in 3rd-8th grade would get a Chromebook.
- We will offer a food distribution program.
- We would like to get creative about some in-person socially distanced outdoor opportunities for connecting students, possibly using the parks across our city.
- We are working to launch the year by connecting teachers with their students through conferences.
- Feel free to only purchase the school supplies that were listed for use at home at this point and hold off on the supplies needed for when we return to our building.

We are working on a wealth of details right now and will stay in touch as we have them, including sharing much more information about how instruction will look.

Take care,
Kristi



Parting Words from the Inspirational John Lewis

***NEW* Updates**

Summer Meals for Students

Urban League of Philadelphia has partnered with Aramark to provide summer meals for students this summer - See [here](#) for a list of sites.

Important Reminders

Summer Reading & Math

Students can complete the paper packets by hand, and if you need access to them or any of the websites online, **you can find everything [HERE](#)**, including helpful videos that walk you & students through the work.

We'll be grading summer assignments for completion, not getting everything "right". We hope to see each individual student showing effort and engagement with this work and practicing skills. This means completing the packets to the best of their ability. It could also mean talking about the reading & math assignments with family & friends (we know sometimes people learn best together!), and writing down specific questions for parts of assignments if they don't understand.

[Summer iPad & Chromebook information and guidelines LINKED HERE](#) <very important if you borrowed a WCS device>

If any issues come up with your device, please email helpis@wissahickoncharter.org ASAP. Don't wait till the end of summer.

Additional resources

- Please click [here](#) for updated information about the Covid-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program.
- Check [here](#) for financial support and eligibility requirements through the PA Department of Human Services.
- During the summer, feel free to reach out to [Ms. Rebecca](#) for any additional support as needed.

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Walsh, Jane <j.walsh@wissahickoncharter.org>

Weekly Wissahickon 07-24-2020

WCS-Fernhill <a.oliphant@wissahickoncharter.org>
Reply-To: WCS-Fernhill <a.oliphant@wissahickoncharter.org>
To: j.walsh@wissahickoncharter.org

Fri, Jul 24, 2020 at 2:30 PM

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Message from CEO

Dear Families,

I hope this finds you all well. I am writing to share the important news that Wissahickon will be in a fully remote model of instruction this fall. We will use the time we have remaining in the summer to plan for a stronger model than we were able to offer last spring.

While we believe in-person instruction is ultimately best for children, we cannot reopen our schools if it means compromising the safety of our community members. We also know that the hybrid model we have been developing was not actually a return to the typical in-school experience.

Over the past two weeks, we have seen many things that have led us to this decision including:

- [rising case numbers in our city and state](#)
- the absolute lack of clear public health metrics that would need to be met and maintained for schools to reopen safely (e.g. fewer than 50 cases for every 100,000 residents)
- [new research](#) showing that children ages ten and older spread the virus at the same rate as adults
- little definitively known of the [long term impacts](#) of the virus
- just as we feel the need to protect children, we also need to keep our staff safe and many have expressed concern over in-person models in this moment
- making this decision now leaves us with time to improve on the model we offered in the spring

I'm sure you have all seen the [plan that the district shared](#) last week at this point and many of you likely followed their Board meeting yesterday. After a long meeting where over a hundred parents, teachers, students, and administrators called for a fully remote model, the School Board of Philadelphia decided to delay their vote on a plan for a week. **We will be in a remote model regardless of their decision.**

A natural next question is when will we go back to some form of in-person instruction. We will look first to the health of our city to determine when we can return to school. Once our city's infection rate has

gone down (to a point that will hopefully be defined by public health experts), then we can look internally again at Wissahickon to measure our own ability to implement best safety practices and staffing. Because things are in flux with the district's decision making which is closely tied to what is possible with transportation, we do not know what kind of flexibility we will have around possible in-person start dates. It could be as early as sometime this fall. It could be January or later.

While we feel this is the right course of action for safety, it is not a decision that was made lightly. We know that this will present hardship for families, especially around the question of childcare and your need to get back to work. Unfortunately, this is not a moment where there is one solution that addresses all of the needs of our stakeholders concurrently. In moments such as these, safety comes first.

Families, please let [Ms. Rebecca](#) know about any extenuating hardships, and she will work with the team to determine any support the school may be able to provide.

All Fernhill families are also invited to come together for a meeting on Wednesday, July 29th from 4:00-5:00 where we will again talk through our rationale for this decision and invite you to share your questions and input. Zoom information for next week is below.

Peace,
Kristi

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84174609852?pwd=VINRYVQ1R1pFdDB3dVpxOHd3c201dz09>

Meeting ID: 841 7460 9852

Passcode: fox

***NEW* Updates**

Philadelphia Rental Assistance Has Been Updated

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Additional resources

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-



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Walsh, Jane <j.walsh@wissahickoncharter.org>

Weekly Wissahickon 07-17-2020

1 message

WCS-Fernhill <a.oliphant@wissahickoncharter.org>
Reply-To: WCS-Fernhill <a.oliphant@wissahickoncharter.org>
To: j.walsh@wissahickoncharter.org

Fri, Jul 17, 2020 at 1:44 PM

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Message from CEO

Dear Families,

Hope everyone is doing well. As you know, we've been working hard to develop our plan for re-opening for the 2020-21 school year. Two weeks ago I shared that to allow for social distancing in schools, our buildings are not large enough to have all students in-person every day. Because of this we have been working on a hybrid model (some students in person, some remote) that can be scaled up or down quickly to shift as the situation with COVID-19 changes.

This week, the [Philadelphia School District announced their plan for the fall](#). Their plan is a hybrid model that aims to have children in school buildings two days a week with a remote program for the other three days. We are now in the process of reviewing their plan in depth to see how it can inform our own thinking. There may be questions or approaches that they have considered and tackled that we can now learn from.

Our goal is to be able to share Wissahickon's plan by the end of the month. We will send it out via email first, with family meetings scheduled right afterwards to talk through the plan and answer questions. Once we've shared the plan, it is still possible that it may need to change based on what is happening with the virus itself and local infection rates. Thank you for staying in touch this summer by reading our newsletter each week and taking surveys like the one we sent out last week. We appreciate your partnership in this tough time.

Stay safe,

Kristi

***NEW* Updates**

Philadelphia Rental Assistance Has Been Updated

Please click [here](#) for more information about the Covid-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program.

Student Address Change

If your student's address has changed during the distance learning due to the pandemic, please email [Ms. Q](#) with your updated address information. Please note you will be contacted to provide a completed Change of Address form with two supporting documents.

Saying Goodbye to 8th Graders

In the next few weeks, families of 8th graders and any other students leaving Fernhill will stop receiving this Weekly Wissahickon. We wish you all the best!

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Walsh, Jane <j.walsh@wissahickoncharter.org>

Weekly Wissahickon - Special Edition 07-14-2020

1 message

WCS-Fernhill <a.oliphant@wissahickoncharter.org>
Reply-To: WCS-Fernhill <a.oliphant@wissahickoncharter.org>
To: j.walsh@wissahickoncharter.org

Tue, Jul 14, 2020 at 2:15 PM

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WCS Fall 2020 Survey Reminder

If you haven't had a chance to complete the quick survey for all families, please do so ASAP. The survey closes tomorrow, Wednesday, July 15. Please see the excerpt below from the Weekly Wissahickon for more information.

We are making progress on our fall plans, and need **ALL FAMILIES** to let us know if they plan to send their child to school in the fall or not. Complete [this 2 minute survey by Wednesday, July 15](#) to help us make our planning meet as many needs as possible.



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Walsh, Jane <j.walsh@wissahickoncharter.org>

Weekly Wissahickon 07-10-2020 RESPONSE REQUIRED

1 message

WCS-Fernhill <a.oliphant@wissahickoncharter.org>
Reply-To: WCS-Fernhill <a.oliphant@wissahickoncharter.org>
To: j.walsh@wissahickoncharter.org

Fri, Jul 10, 2020 at 11:52 AM

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Quick Survey for All Families: RESPONSE REQUIRED ASAP

We are making progress on our fall plans, and need **ALL FAMILIES** to let us know if they plan to send their child to school in the fall or not. Complete [this 2 minute survey by Wednesday, July 15](#) to help us make our planning meet as many needs as possible.

[Message from CEO](#)

Dear Families,

We are about one month into summer vacation. I hope everyone is getting to safely enjoy some aspects of summer, finding some ways to relax and have fun. We know it can be tough to hold kids to homework during the summer, but we've created assignments that are hopefully engaging and will set them up to be ready for the next grade. It's essential they complete them - and start now, if they haven't already.

It's also a good time to practice some health-related skills that students will need as we head back to school, in whatever form that takes. We know that wearing a mask will be needed in school and on buses. Please practice this with your child now. Get them a mask they like and have them practice wearing it so they get used to it. One way to get your child invested in proper mask wearing is to give them the job of making sure the whole family is wearing masks responsibly.

Another important skill students need to practice now is handwashing and using hand sanitizer. Please make sure your child knows to wash their whole hands (back and front, between fingers, even the wrists) for 20 seconds with vigorous scrubbing. There are tons of how-to videos online.

These two skills are paramount to safety during the pandemic and as we head back to school. Just like any new activity, they need to be practiced for them to become habits and for students to become independent in doing them correctly.

Take care,

***NEW* Updates**

Upcoming Webinar: Digital Wellbeing During Tough Times

How can we help our children find the balance with tech when so many other options have been taken away? How can we help them navigate friendship drama and conflict online and offline that may come up during this time? For answers to these questions, please join the live Zoom webinar on **Thursday, July 16, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.** Strategies, skills and best practices will be discussed. Please click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Philadelphia Rental Assistance Has Been Updated

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Student Address Change

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Walsh, Jane <j.walsh@wissahickoncharter.org>

Weekly Wissahickon 07-03-2020

1 message

WCS-Fernhill <a.oliphant@wissahickoncharter.org>
Reply-To: WCS-Fernhill <a.oliphant@wissahickoncharter.org>
To: j.walsh@wissahickoncharter.org

Fri, Jul 3, 2020 at 10:39 AM

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Planning for Fall

Dear Families,

I hope this finds you all safe and well and able to enjoy some aspects of summer. As you know, Wissahickon will follow guidance on reopening schools that is provided by the Centers for Disease Control, Pennsylvania Department of Education and the School District of Philadelphia. At this point, we have some general guidance from the CDC and PDE. We are pursuing & expecting more detailed information, especially from the city, at some point in July. In the meantime, I'm writing to share some of the key principles on which we are basing our fall program.

While it is impossible to eliminate all risk related to the spread of COVID-19, we believe the following guiding principles can help us in minimizing risk for our students, families, and employees.

Physical Safety & Cleaning/Disinfecting

- As long as it is being recommended, we will maintain social distancing of 6ft between individuals at school.
- Classes will be broken into smaller cohorts that will be housed in separate classrooms. Each group will only interact with the students in its own group to limit the number of people students are exposed to.
- With this guidance for spacing, our buildings are not large enough to have everyone in person every day for learning. We will work to provide some combination of in-person and remote learning for all students, with a priority on serving our youngest and most vulnerable students in person the most.
- Students and staff will wear reusable masks. Masks will likely be kept on campus to be laundered.
- Portable hand washing and sanitizer stations will be distributed throughout the buildings. Handwashing schedules will be developed to ensure increased hand hygiene.
- Cleaning and disinfecting practices will be increased and aligned to all recommendations for schools. This will include cleaning spaces between different cohorts' use of them as well as

- regular wiping down of high-touch surfaces.
- Visitor, as well as drop-off and pick up protocols are being developed.
- Some form of health screening (e.g. symptom reporting, fever scans, etc.) will happen daily for students and staff.

Curriculum & Programming

- Breakfast and Lunch will be in the classrooms. Plans & spaces for specials are being discussed.
- Students will stay in their own classroom throughout the day with the exception of trips outside, to the restroom and to receive special education services.
- A fully remote learning option will exist for all K-8 students whose families are not comfortable with sending their child(ren) to school.
- The social-emotional health of students is a high priority. We will work on ways to actively continue to build community and relationships between students and staff, whether they are working remotely or in person.
- Large events will not be held in person until there is guidance that confirms that it is safe to do so.

We will show flexibility and adapt our model as the conditions and guidance for our area evolve. We will share a model later this summer, once we have seen the School District of Philadelphia's plans. We strive to have plans that align with the different colored phases (e.g. *If the city moves to the "red" phase again, WCS will move to a fully remote model and there will be a plan for exactly how that model looks.*) so all members of our community know what to expect.

Thank you for reading this and for your patience. I know it's hard to not know what things will look like exactly, but I hope this also gives you something to hold on to in the meantime. We will continue to use the Weekly Wissahickon for updates so please be sure to check it each week.

Take care,
Kristi



I'll tell you what freedom is to me: no fear.

~ Nina Simone

***NEW* Updates**

Activating Pandemic EBT cards

If you are experiencing issues activating your P-EBT card, please try entering the following birthdate: 6/9/1999. We have learned there is a glitch in the state's database. Please use this birthdate only if you are having trouble activating the card with your child's actual birthdate.

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[Additional resources](#)

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Walsh, Jane <j.walsh@wissahickoncharter.org>

Weekly Wissahickon 06-26-2020

1 message

WCS-Fernhill <a.oliphant@wissahickoncharter.org>
Reply-To: WCS-Fernhill <a.oliphant@wissahickoncharter.org>
To: j.walsh@wissahickoncharter.org

Fri, Jun 26, 2020 at 11:53 AM

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Dear Fernhill Families,

By now, you should have received your summer mailing, full of reading & math, as well as a letter from me, and the forms we all love. :)

If you haven't received it, please email [Ms. O](#) asap.

This year's summer reading and math are more important than ever before to keep students' skills sharp. The assignments have been created to be highly engaging. A nationally respected curriculum writer who saw our summer math packets called them a "great, helpful resource", one of the best she's seen.

Students can complete the paper packets by hand, and if you need access to them or any of the websites online, **you can find everything [HERE](#)**, including helpful videos that walk you & students through the work.

Additionally, here are two useful resources related to racial justice & healing. The first is a [17 minute talk](#) by local professor Howard Stevenson, about how to handle racially stressful situations. The second is a [one-pager](#) with language to use when faced with offensive comments. Please share helpful resources you find with us, too.

Hope summer is treating you well so far, and you & your kids are staying safe, healthy and cool,

Enjoy this shorter Weekly Wiss,
Ms. Rebecca

PS: I am very happy to be staying at Fernhill next year! I've heard from some of you that you didn't see that message in March, when it was originally shared.



2019-20 Kindergarten Memories

[Click here](#) to experience the 2019-20 school year in Ms. Hayley's (K-1) class!

***NEW* Updates**

Virtual Freedom Schools Literacy Academy

The Center for Black Educator Development still has space for rising 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade Black and Brown students. The deadline to enroll is Monday, June 29, 2020. Enrollment is free. [Click here](#) to find more information.

Vetri Community Partnership

Hello School Partners, Yogurt is the Food Hero for the month of June! [Click here](#) to find tasty yogurt recipes both sweet and savory. Wishing you all a healthy and safe summer!

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Walsh, Jane <j.walsh@wissahickoncharter.org>

Weekly Wissahickon 06-18-2020

1 message

WCS-Fernhill <a.oliphant@wissahickoncharter.org>
Reply-To: WCS-Fernhill <a.oliphant@wissahickoncharter.org>
To: j.walsh@wissahickoncharter.org

Thu, Jun 18, 2020 at 3:30 PM

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Dear Families,

I want to thank all of you again for your partnership this spring and moving forward. I am especially grateful to families who joined us earlier this week for our Zoom meetings to discuss fall planning. For those of you who couldn't attend, I am attaching our slide show today for your review. I'm also including some of the questions that families raised along with our responses below.

Please be sure you stay up to date with news and updates by reading your Weekly Wissahickon every Friday this summer and by staying in touch.

Stay safe this summer!

Warmly,

Kristi

The slideshow can be viewed [here](#).

Questions from Family Zoom Meetings:

1. Will any part of school be remote in the fall?

We are working hard on making plans for fall. With the guidance we have right now about social distancing at school, it would be impossible to have all students in the building every day so it is likely that there will need to be some aspect of remote learning. We also know that some families have expressed that their children or family members have health conditions that lead them to want and need a remote option. We will follow all guidance from the state around full closures if they are needed again at any point in the year and in that situation, we would offer a remote program. We are working to make our remote program more robust than the program we offered this past spring. Learning may also take on a hybrid model where students are remote on some days and in person at school some days but details are still being planned.

2. How will bussing work?

This question is on all of our minds as well as the agendas of public officials. The Pennsylvania Department of Education has said it will provide updates on bussing. Our goal would be to ensure that busses have fewer students on them to allow for distancing and ensure students have fair and equitable access to in-person instruction.

3. Will the school still offer an after school program?

The best research we've read says that students should be in small groups and stay in those groups for the whole day. In this way, students will be exposed to fewer people and thus less risk of exposure to COVID-19. We know some parents will need an after school option and will work to offer one that aligns to guidance around safety. Just as the school day will likely look very different, the after school program will too.

4. Will students and staff wear masks? What if a child has asthma?

As long as the CDC is recommending masks, WCS will wear them and provide them. We are looking into providing cloth masks and getting a washer and dryer so that laundry can be done onsite. As the CDC recommends, anyone who has trouble breathing should not wear a mask and will not be required to wear one at school.

5. Will students with IEPs and 504 plans still get services? What about pull-out programs?

Wissahickon will continue to meet the needs of students in accordance with their IEPs and 504 plans. We will work individually with families to address student needs. We are thinking about pull-out programs given that this could expose students to more peers outside of their small class group. All pull out programs would adhere to all health and safety guidance.

6. Will the school let us know if someone contracts COVID-19? If so, will the school close for 14 days?

We will work with local health officials and follow CDC guidance around what is recommended with regards to notifications and closures. Because students will likely be in small groups that do not interact with other students, we are hopeful that whole school closures due to illness will be rare.

7. If there is a vaccine developed, will students have to get it before they return to school?

Wissahickon would recommend that students receive vaccines when they become available. Decisions to vaccinate for COVID-19 will ultimately be the decision of families.

8. Will there be more technology resources next year?

If possible, we hope to use a portion of our federal funding to purchase Chromebooks for all students in fourth through eighth grades.

9. When will I know who my child's teacher is and have a supply list?

Because it is uncertain how classes will look next year, we are sending home information about the teachers in each grade but not a set classlist and teacher assignment at this point. You will be getting a supply list in the summer mailing that is going out soon. This year we will work for students to not have any shared supplies as a way to minimize the spread of germs.

10. What will lunch and recess be like?

Lunch will happen in the same classroom that students are already in. Lunch will be brought from the cafeteria to the classroom. Recess will still be a part of the day but it is highly unlikely that large groups of students will play and interact in the same space at the same time. Recess will be outdoors as much as possible.

11. Will there be more synchronous learning if school is remote for some or all students?

We are thinking about a variety of ways to make learning more robust for students who are learning remotely, including more synchronous learning. One option may be that while lessons are being taught to students in classrooms at school, they are also live streamed to students at home. Another could be that we have specific instructors assigned to plan and lead remote learning and others designated to teach in the building.

12. Will there be grading?

We are waiting on guidance from the Pennsylvania Department of Education to learn what is recommended.



Congrats Fernhill Class of 2020!

Thanks to our families and staff who made our first ever drive-thru graduation a success!

***NEW* Updates**

A Love Letter to Our Black Philly Students [LINK HERE](#).

The message is relevant and gives voice to parents of black children all over. It was borne out of a desire to protect, empower, uplift, celebrate, and encourage Black Philly Youth during a time when society devalues their very existence. We have had to have very difficult conversations with our children, and the urgency in those discussions is growing. This letter allows us to support each other in talking with our children about racism, inequity, resistance, and purpose. It is a reminder to each of them that their village is a protective factor, and the strength of our ancestors is their firm foundation. Love, Ohenewaa White-Ra, WCS parent, Educator and BSW Program Director at Alvernia University

Saying Goodbye to Staff

We are very grateful to Ms. Gail Schroder and Ms. Jenia Jolley for all of the love and care they've brought to WCS over the years. Ms. Gail, learning specialist, is leaving for a job closer to her home, to be able to spend more time with family. Ms. Jolley will be going back to school and become a Master Gardner with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society.

(Any communication with Ms. Gail can go to [Ms. Michele](#), and communication with Ms. Jolley can go to [Ms. O.](#))

Celebrating Juneteenth

WCS is joining the City of Philadelphia in honoring [Juneteenth](#) as an official holiday. We will be closed tomorrow & on June 19th each year.

Summer Reading & Math

You'll receive all assignments for your child's next grade in a mailing in the next week or so. Next week's Weekly Wissahickon will also review the details of it.

Vetri community partnership

Hello School Partners, Yogurt is the Food Hero for the month of June! [Click here](#) to find tasty yogurt recipes both sweet and savory. Wishing you all a healthy and safe summer!

Follow Wissahickon Charter on Social Media

Follow WCS on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) for important school updates and to see student learning and fun in action! And don't be shy- we love it when you like, comment, and share our posts!

Important Reminders

Summer iPad & Chromebook information and guidelines [LINKED HERE](#) <very important if you borrowed a WCS device>

If any issues come up with your device, please email helpis@wissahickoncharter.org ASAP. Don't wait till the end of summer.

Additional resources

- Please check [here](#) for the City of Philadelphia's rental assistance program and eligibility requirements.
- Check [here](#) for financial support and eligibility requirements through the PA Department of Human Services.