

Westmount School Council Meeting - August 2021

Westmount 2021-22 School Re-Entry Q&A

Date: August 30, 2021

Location: Video Conference

Time: 7:00 pm

Chair: Baljit Singh

Council

Vice-Chair: Roti Akinsanmi

Treasurer: Navdeep Kailey

Secretary: Thomas Chan

Communications Director: Kathy Good

Fundraising Director: Kim Anthony

Parent Engagement Director: Ashley Wilford-Matthews

Special Events Director: Ameet Kooner

Director-at-Large: Dawn Courtman

Director-at-Large: Laura Teterenko

Administration

Superintendent: Joe Frank

Principal Elementary Campus: Hal Curties

Principal Mid-High Campus: Graeme Finlay

Student Council representative: N/A

Note: Video recording of this meeting is also available online ([link](#))

1. School Council Opening Remarks - Baljit Singh & Ashley Wilford-Matthews

2. Introduction by Joe Frank

3. Q&A Session Moderated by Ashley Wilford-Matthews - Pre-Sent Questions

- a) **In an earlier email, there was a mention of enhancements to school ventilation to support ongoing health and safety with return to school. This is fundamental given the dominance of the Delta variant of the coronavirus, so I was very glad to hear this. Can you please expand on what enhancements were made to school ventilation this year, and can you also comment on what other measures to increase ventilation (for instance open windows, etc.) might be in place while weather cooperates, this school year?**

Air filters were updated last year. Could not go to the HEPA filters due to the age of the buildings. Elementary - Does not have the wattage for air purifiers, with exception of the Music room and Learning Commons. Windows will be open as long as it is not too windy. Mid-High - Windows will be open at teacher's discretion where possible. Lots of rooms do not have windows. Same limitations on wattage regarding air purifiers

- b) **We would like to know if students are allowed to use their own hand sanitizer.**

Yes, though try to meet the recommended guidelines for hand sanitizer.

- c) **My son is new to Westmount in Grade 2, I am worried he won't know his way around and very nervous on the first few days (he was also doing online learning last year at home). Will the school allow the new students to visit before the first day, since there's also no in-person welcome orientation this year (I guess there's not much time left until first day of school). Previously, parents are allowed to help them into their classrooms on the first day, but obviously this won't be allowed this year for legitimate reasons.**

Elementary - Parents are not allowed into the classroom unless by invitation. During the first few days, staff members will help to guide students to their classrooms.

- d) **Do the kids need to bring all their school supplies on the first day? Will we hear from individual homeroom teacher regarding what the kids need to bring on the first day of school?**

Both Campuses - For the majority of students these instructions have been sent out

- e) **Will there be online support/take home materials if a child is sick or staying home for 10 days?**

Elementary - Does not require teachers to provide daily activities that are happening in class. Asked teachers to prepare a 2-week package for students who need to isolate. Mid-High - everything will be posted on power learn. Not making specific assessments for students who are isolating

- f) **Since the kids will be cohorting with their homeroom, are they also staying at their own desk the whole day? Just wondering if it's ok to leave sanitizer bottle on their desk for them to use, or are the desks shared?**

Elementary - cohort students will be in the desk for whole day, including lunch. Students can leave hand sanitizer at their desk. Mid-High - Grades 5 will alternate between Humanities and Math/Science classrooms and will not be in the same desk all day. Grade 6 will stay with same teacher whole time. Highschool students will move every class. Grade 5 & 6 - source teacher. Other grades will move between classes.

- g) **Are masks required when outside? Such as during lunch and recess? Will kids wear masks in gym, especially since the Delta variant is airborne and much more transmissible?**

Elementary - Outside of the school students do not have to wear masks unless they are in a crowded area. Kids playing sports should not be wearing masks. In Phys ed, students will be wearing mask and teachers are encouraged to hold classes outside. Mid-high - Phys ed students will be wearing masks. Masks are not required outside.

- h) **How does cohorting work during recess/lunch break? Are my kids allowed to play with their friends that are in a different class but same grade? What about different grades? Just want to know the rules so I can give my kids a heads up.**

Elementary - staggered recesses. Grades 1 & 2 will be grouped together, Grades 3 & 4 will be grouped together, and Kindergarten will be on their own. Mid-High - Grades 5 & 6 will be cohorting for recess, but not within their grades. Grades 7 & 8 will not be cohorting.

- i) **Although AHS/Alberta Education will no longer be providing close contact tracing, and reporting of positive cases are no longer required, will Westmount be doing anything**

extra to communicate to the school community or individual families regarding exposure to positive cases? It'll be beneficial to know if my children are close contacts so we can avoid exposing them to other elderly family members or people that are high risk, just in case.

Close contacts are no longer legally required to isolate/quarantine. Parents/students do not have to identify their absence is because of COVID. Parents can volunteer that information, but that will not be shared with the community.

If there is an absenteeism rate above 10%, AHS will investigate and work with the Westmount to determine the steps that need to be taken (i.e. shift to online learning). In the past this has happened during the flu season. It is still mandatory if students have COVID they are still required to quarantine. If students are exhibiting symptoms they will be sent to the office. The office will take care of the situation at that point. Students are expected to remain home until they are no longer exhibiting symptoms.

- j) What are the procedures for a child who shows symptoms at school? What are isolation procedures for a child who has symptoms, and for a child who tests positive for COVID?**

Elementary - asking all parents and staff to look at the checklist in the morning. Have an isolation infirmary. Symptomatic students will be brought to infirmary. Parents will be called, and child is expected to remain at home until those symptoms disappear. Mid-High - Same process as the Elementary campus. Level of common sense/discretion for students coming in during cold weather.

- k) Will I be notified if several children in my child's class test positive for COVID?**

Answered above.

- l) For band and gym, what are the precautions being taken? Are the same procedures being used in band as were last year?**

Elementary - brand new music teacher. Kids will be wearing masks going into the Music room. Checking with AHS to see what can and can't be done in music. Mid-High - For gym, students will be able to use the locker rooms. Grades 5 & 6 won't change. Band will be the same as last year, but without the plexiglass shields. Band will be held in a new room that is well ventilated. Grades 5 & 6s will not start with instruments right away.

- m) If families aren't comfortable having their children at school in-person, what are their options?**

Elementary - can accommodate shorter absences (i.e. 1-week). Aren't able to provide a leave of absence or hold spots at the campus (i.e. 1-year), because of the impact to funding. Mid-High - not planning any online instruction, unless mandated. Everything is posted on PowerLearn

- n) Is there any way that online learning will be put into place at a later date? CBE is now offering online learning.**

Answered above

4. Q&A Session Moderated by Ashley Wilford-Matthews - Questions Submitted During Meeting

a) Staggered Entry

Elementary - Climatizes the students to the COVID procedures and ensure they know the routines.

b) Why are Grades 5 & 6 students eating in the cafeteria?

Grades 5 & 6 students will eat in the cafeteria due to the scheduling of the Source block. Source between block 1 & block 2. Cafeteria has the capacity for 240 students, but will be half full (i.e. separated by Grade).

c) Will the school introduce rapid testing or ask staff to be vaccinated?

Does not have rapid testing in place. Will follow AHS protocol, which does not require vaccination at this time.

d) How does a parent become a part of the council?

Ashley - as a Westmount parent you all are a part of the council and welcome to attend any meetings. If you want to be part of the executive open spots are vote on in the Spring.

e) Will there be extracurricular activities?

Mid-high - will be running sports. Different sport will have a different amount of contact. Different schools will have different approaches to spectators. Parents will be allowed to spectate at Westmount. Masks for spectators will be required and seating will be spaced out. Extracurricular activities will be running and people will opt-in and ultimately depend on their comfort level.

f) Clarify if Grades 5 & 6 students will be cohorted with their Source teachers?

Laurie Alisat - Grade 6 teachers (generalists last year) will stay with their source teacher for all of their core classes. Grade 5 will have different teachers.

g) How are the two campuses accounting for the different risk profiles of their student population?

Elementary - fully aware that kids at the campus are not vaccinated. Lunch supervisors will be vigilant. Masking procedures and sanitizing will be the same as last year. Mid-high - very intentional in the planning (i.e. cohorting), because Grades 5 & 6 will not be vaccinated

h) Was there any in school transmission at Westmount during the last school year?

Out of the 17 reported cases there were no in school transmission.

i) Will there be any field trips this year?

Elementary - there are no off-campus field trips planned. Guest speakers brought to the elementary campus are considered field trips. Field trips need to be approved by Mrs. Thomas Groot. The educational value and processes that need to be in-place will be

discussed beforehand. Mid-High - There are field trips planned for this year. For parents that want to volunteer to help on a field trip, make sure you have your background check in place. These may have lapsed in the past year. There might be venues that require proof of vaccination.

j) Can the rate of vacations among teachers be disclosed?

No, we don't collect this information.

k) Should teachers be wearing masks all the time?

Alan Chu, a Westmount parent and doctor, recommends teachers should be wearing masks at all times. Follow-up on whether students should be masked outdoors.

l) Should student be encouraged to take breaks from wearing their masks?

Elementary - This should happen during snack time and when they are outside (provided there is enough distance). Mid-high - Same.

m) Starting and ending the school day, what is the plan?

Elementary - students will be staggered when they are dismissed. Mid-High - Same entry as last year 8:15, buses enter 1 at a time. Grades 5 & 6 will be dismissed a few minutes early before rest of the school.

5. Closing remarks from Joe Frank, Hal Curties & Graeme Finlay

6. Meeting adjourned - 8:15pm