



Walker School- Needham Campus Fall Re-opening plan

Executive Summary:

Walker School is committed to a safe return to an in-person model of instruction for our high-need students and appreciate the collaboration and efforts from home and school to maintain a culture of health and safety along the way. Our plans, to date, have been made based on information obtained from the Department of Public health, guidelines from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, input from caregivers about the needs of their students, and thoughtful consideration of our ability to implement safety protocols. These are unprecedented times, but even in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, school plays an integral part in student growth and success in order to help them grow into their best selves. School is not only a place where children learn math and science, it is where they learn social skills, emotional regulation, the ability to work collaboratively in diverse teams to achieve shared goals, and much more that cannot be gauged from a test. Students at Walker need the support of school more than ever before.

In the fall of 2020, Walker has proposed an in-person model to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for all students, with the option of both hybrid and remote learning models for parents/caregivers who may feel more comfortable with a part time in person or virtual option. At any point in time, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education may make the decision for schools to move to a hybrid or remote learning model due to an increase in the risk of the spread of COVID-19. Walker's residential school will remain as an in-person model, unless otherwise specified by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and our local Department of Public Health.

Walker School is committed to continued vigilance towards health and safety measures to continue to contain COVID-19. Walker School will ensure that necessary precautions are in place as well as appropriate PPE, and staff will monitor themselves for daily symptoms, and will self-certify at a single point of entry. Caregivers will inform Walker School if a student meets any of the criteria from the provided self-certification checklist and both students and staff will stay home if they are feeling unwell. Both staff and students will continue to be required to wear masks that adequately cover their nose and mouths with exception to those students who have medical, behavioral, or other challenges who are unable to wear masks/face coverings. Opportunities for mask breaks will occur throughout the day and windows will be open when possible to maximize fresh air. Due to our small population of students and staff and available outdoor space, Walker School will be able to ensure to the extent possible at least three to six feet of social distancing. Students will be seated at a distance of at least three feet apart, with a distance of six feet apart during mealtimes. Walker School will continue to ensure consistent daily cleaning and disinfecting of all spaces, and will continue weekly fogging of all buildings.



Returning to Walker's Schools in Fall 2020: A Letter from the President & CEO

August 14, 2020

Dear Walker Community:

This Fall, we are entering a school year that has no historical precedent in our lifetime. We are still in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, even in Massachusetts where our COVID rates are fairly low statewide, but recently have begun trending upward in some communities. To ensure that we can continue to keep ourselves and each other safe and healthy at Walker, we are collectively committing to following public health guidelines designed to minimize the potential spread of COVID in our schools.

This means that we have put into place and will abide by practices that are different than how we would traditionally operate in our schools. These practices include, but are not limited to:

- consistent and proper use of personal protective equipment, including masks;
- creating and maintaining sufficient space between student desks and work spaces to ensure appropriate physical distancing measures; and
- proactive plans for delivering instructional and support services in an alternative manner should there be a need to change course and offer more of a hybrid learning model and/or quarantine should there be an outbreak.

We understand that these practices can be difficult to implement in the best of conditions and may be even more challenging for us as we strive to be responsive to students' sensory, spatial, and other needs. We aim to do our best, and welcome recommendations and strategies for how to be as equitable as possible in meeting students' needs while also maintaining the safety and health of the larger community.

In addition to addressing needs related to COVID, we find ourselves also needing to address potential issues related to inequity in our schools. Throughout the past few months, there has been increased dialogue and action, locally and nationally, about the impact of systems of oppression on student learning and feelings of belonging in school settings. We will continue to engage in our own dialogue and action at Walker to identify and determine where improvements can be made to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for all members of our community.

In developing our reopening plans, we delved deeply into the topics discussed above, brainstorming and planning for the many ways in which we will assess and regularly monitor the physical and social-emotional wellbeing of students, families, and staff. We are a strong community, and we will weather this time together. I have always appreciated the resiliency of



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our community, and our ability to weather a storm has never been more evident than the past six or so months.

This school year, I am confident that Walker will create and facilitate positive, welcoming, and affirming learning environment in which are students are fully engaged academically and connected to their peers, teachers, clinicians, and other school staff. Thank you for your partnership in making this vision a reality.

Dr. Gene Takahashi, President & CEO
Walker Therapeutic & Educational Programs

In-person services:

Walker recognizes that it is imperative for students to have as much in-person instruction as possible, especially given the high-needs of Walker's population. In an effort to provide the most effective, safest in-person instruction, Walker staff, families, caregivers, and students need to work together to minimize the risk of exposure and assist in containing the spread of COVID-19.

1. Smaller Self-Contained Groups

- a. Students will be kept in a self-contained classroom with the same peers and adults each day with most specialists rotating into the classroom for lessons.
- b. Day students will always be separated from residential students throughout the day both in classrooms and within the school building.
- c. Classes will remain at or smaller than the state guideline of twelve people in a classroom at one time.
- d. Seating will be assigned in all spaces to help minimize transmission and assist with contact tracing.
- e. Each student will have their own supply of pens, pencils, paper, and a Chromebook. Supplies will not need to be shared AT ALL.
- f. Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language and clinical offices will all be thoroughly cleaned using a standardized checklist before and after each student's sessions.
- g. Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy, Adaptive Physical Education and Clinicians will stagger their in-class services and pull students out to the extent possible as to avoid too many people in a classroom at one time.
- h. Students will have opportunities to attend Art, Gym, and Library during their structured scheduled time once per week (twice for Gym). To the extent possible, Art and Gym will be held outside. If class needs to be held inside, spaces and materials will be sanitized before and after use.
- i. Music class will be held outside when possible. Activities involving singing will be acceptable when students can be outside and maintain a distance of at least six feet. Horn instruments will not be used at this time.
- j. Health class will be held outside when possible or in students' homeroom.
- k. Small reading and math groups at set stations, in homerooms or outside where students will remain at their desks and materials will be delivered to them. To the extent possible, students will receive their own materials and they will be washed before and after use.
- l. Recess will be held outside unless extreme weather (e.g. thunder and lightning, heat advisory) prohibits this. If recess is held inside, students will be assigned a location which will be sanitized before and after use.
- m. Students who are learning remotely will join classroom activities via Google Meets

2. Classrooms

- a. Desks are going to be arranged the same direction and must remain where they are placed in order to assure social distancing. Each desk will be a minimum of three feet from any other desk with the goal of keeping desks six feet apart.
 - b. Students will be assigned desks for their use and will remain at their desks for instruction.
 - c. To the extent possible, students will be provided with individual materials to assure no cross contamination. All materials used will be cleaned before and after use.
 - d. Desks will be cleaned at the beginning and end of the day as well as before and after mealtimes and various times throughout the day.
 - e. Each classroom will have a “used” bin for materials that cannot be immediately cleaned. The “used” bin will have a cover as to minimize risk of contamination or accidental use. The “used” bin will be stored in a closet until materials can be cleaned.
 - f. Students and adults will be expected to wear masks while at Walker. Please see below for more detailed instruction of mask use and mask breaks.
 - g. Frequent handwashing and sanitizing will be done throughout the school day. Please see below for all handwashing and sanitizing protocols.
- 3. Hallways, Entryways, Arrivals and Dismissals**
- a. Many classrooms have a door with outdoor access; students and adults will transition in and out of that door whenever possible. Transitions will take place outside. For classrooms that do not have access to the outdoors from their classroom, only one group will be in the hallway at a time. We will use handheld radios to coordinate.
 - b. Hallways will have arrows pointing in the correct direction on each side of the hallway to designate a direction in which students and adults should move through the hallway. Smaller hallways will allow for one person in the hallway at a time, while others will remain at least three feet away from the small hallway until the other person passes through the hallway.
 - c. Proper signage will be posted throughout the school building to maintain a limited amount of people in the hallway at a time.
 - d. Each main entry/exit will be designated as such; students and adults will be asked to enter and exit through specific doorways.
 - e. During arrival and dismissal, specifically designated doors will be propped open as to avoid the touching of door handles.
 - f. Students’ arrival and dismissal will be staggered to limit the amount of students in entryways and hallways.
 - g. Caregivers will self-certify each day that their student meets criteria to attend school (see Appendix A).
- 4. Sensory and break spaces**
- a. Sensory and break spaces will be limited to one student per sensory space.
 - b. Sensory and break spaces and materials within the space will be cleaned before and after use. Materials will be limited in the space and students should bring sensory materials to the space.
 - c. Adults supervising will remain at least six feet apart from the student or outside of the sensory/break space while the student uses the space. All sensory/break spaces are doorless and students can be monitored from outside the sensory/break space.

5. Meals and snacks

- a. All meals will be held in classroom or outside and student's desks will maintain a distance of at least six feet while eating with masks off.
- b. All meals and snacks will be individually portioned by the nutrition staff to maintain limited contact.
- c. Adults delivering meals will wash hands before and after delivering meals. Adults and students consuming food will wash their hands before and after meals.
- d. The Cafeteria will not be used for eating until further notice.
- e. All meals will be provided at a designated time and students will eat during that designated time.
- f. If a student wants a fruit, they must maintain a distance of at least six feet while eating with their mask off.
- g. Fruits will be stored in a container and will need to be washed thoroughly before giving to a student.

6. Social Distancing

- a. Everyone (both student and staff) must maintain a social distance of six feet to the greatest extent possible.
- b. Desks must be placed at least three feet apart and facing the same direction.
- c. Whenever possible, students will enter and exit the building through classroom external doors. Moving through the school should be minimized for necessary travel.
- d. To the extent possible, academic instruction and activities will be held outside.

7. Materials

- a. Students will be asked to bring a change of clothes to have on hand and stored in large plastic bags and will be encouraged to limit any other materials that come to school.
- b. All necessary school supplies will be provided by Walker. All supplies that are not disposable will be cleaned before and after use with proper storage to minimize contact.
- c. Student who bring personal technology (ie. Phones, tablets etc.) to school will be asked to either keep the devices in their bag for the entirety of the day or put the device in a storage bin to be sanitized and kept locked in an office.

Hybrid Instruction:

Parents/caregivers will have the opportunity to choose hybrid instruction for their student. Hybrid instruction provides an opportunity for a combination of in-person instruction and remote learning. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education may make the decision to move to this model of learning should the risk of COVID-19 increase at any point during the school year. Additionally, families may choose a hybrid model to mitigate the risk of exposure for their student. If Walker makes the decision to move to a hybrid model, we will use the data provided by the state of Massachusetts and our local Department of Public Health.

- a. For families who opt to participate in a combination of both in-person and remote instruction
- b. Walker will suggest a process for Hybrid instruction

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- c. If at any point in time, the DESE, Federal, State, or Local guidelines dictate that we must change to a hybrid format, immediate notification to families and a combination of in-person and remote learning will begin
- d. Planning and preparation will continue as outlined in this document for both in-person and remote instruction
- e. Students will remain learning in their homeroom for lessons and sign in via Google Meets when learning remotely as to avoid any missed curriculum
- f. Additional materials for caregivers to use outside of classroom time will be available on a google drive
- g. When in-person, students will adhere in-person standards and expectations including wearing masks and handwashing
- h. Desks will always be available for students to transition to in-person learning and remote learning will always be available through google meets should a caregiver want to move to another form of learning
- i. Reading and math instruction will remain with their smaller groups
- j. In-person and remote attendance will be noted in weekly school logs with specifications as to whether the student participated in person or remotely

Remote Learning:

In an effort to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19, Walker may need to move to a remote learning model. In this model, students will have the opportunity to participate via Google Meets with their homeroom teacher. At some point, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education may require us to move to remote learning based upon any increase in the spread of COVID-19. Additionally, parents/caregivers may choose to have their student participate in academic instruction remotely.

- a. For families who opt to participate in virtual opportunities, remote learning students will join on-campus students in the classroom via a camera, with one Google Meet link that streams all day; self-directed classes and activities will not be offered. Related services specified in a student's IEP (clinical sessions, Speech/Language, OT, and APE) also will be offered virtually.
- b. If at any point the DESE, Federal, State, or Local guidelines dictate that we must reclose the school, remote learning will immediately begin.
- c. If a student's behavior is putting others at risk, a decision may be made to have the student return to remote learning for the remainder of the term. This is a worst-case scenario, but we are committed to putting the health and safety of our students and staff as our #1 priority.
- d. Technology (google screen, microphone, camera) will be tested regularly to ensure that all materials are working optimally when providing instruction.
- e. Students will follow the same classroom schedule as they would for in-person learning in an effort to maintain consistency and academic progress while providing socialization with same aged peers. Additionally, if a caregiver decides to allow the student to attend in-person learning, students will have had the same instruction as their classroom peers.
- f. All academic instruction and services as delivered by way of the service delivery will focus on making progress towards the student's IEP goals and objectives. Data will continue to be collected during all modalities of learning, including remote learning and



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- caregivers and sending school districts will continue to receive quarterly progress reports and bi-annual report cards.
- g. Students who are learning remotely will have the opportunity to participate in virtual check-ins to ensure they are understanding the material presented during class time
 - h. Attendance will be tracked similarly to those who are participating in-person. Attendance will be tracked for remote learning using the code "Absent-distance learning," when participating and "Absent-(reason)," when students are not present in remote learning.
 - i. Caregivers will be offered daily updates for all learners, including remote learners. Caregivers will also receive a weekly phone call from classroom teachers as well as consistent weekly communication from the student's Clinician.
 - j. Weekly school logs will be kept and include a summary of the students' academic and behavioral performance throughout the week as well as the student's attendance to instruction.
 - k. A communication log will continue to be maintained for students who are learning remotely as to deliver any updates to the student's sending school district.
 - l. Art and Physical Education plans will be executed by a member of the classroom team and modified as needed due to the lack of supplies or technology for a remote learner. For example, if a classroom is building with clay in art class, the remote learner may create an online project with a similar learning objective.
 - m. Ancillary services will be provided through a google meets link or using a push-in model where the specialist is working directly with the student on specific IEP goals/objectives.
 - n. Walker will provide any student in need with a Chromebook as well as work with the family to make sure they have food and should there be any challenges as it pertains to accessing the internet, Walker will notify the sending school district as the responsibility of internet access remains with them.

Academic support and curriculum:

- a. All portions of a student's IEP will continue to be delivered while participating in any of the three options stated above.
- b. Progress reports will continue to be sent as expected; data towards goals will continue to be measured during each quarter of a student's IEP and report cards will be delivered bi-annually.
- c. Lesson plans will be based on state standards and new material will be delivered within all three options of instruction. Review and repetition of learned skills will be woven into the curriculum.
- d. Benchmark assessments (i.e. Fountas and Pinnell, Let's Go Learn, etc.) will continue to be executed three times per year whether a student is participating in remote, hybrid, or in-person instruction in an effort to continue to monitor progress throughout the curriculum.
- e. The curriculum scope and sequence will be refined to meet the needs of all students whether they are participating in remote, hybrid, or in-person instruction as well as meet the requirements of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Sanitization and handwashing:

Walker recognizes the importance of minimizing risk, which requires consistent handwashing and sanitization throughout the school day. Evidence supports that consistent handwashing and sanitization reduces the risk of spreading COVID-19.

1. Hand Washing

- a. Staff and students must immediately wash hands or sanitize upon arrival to school.
- b. Everyone also **MUST** wash hands:
 - i. Before and after meals (including snacks)
 - ii. After bathroom use
 - iii. After coughing or sneezing
 - iv. Before putting on and after taking off masks
 - v. Before dismissal
 - vi. At designated times throughout the day
 - vii. Before and after medication administration
- c. Protocols for correct hand washing, including training to students, will be provided.
- d. Hand sanitizer will also be available, but its use does not eliminate the requirement of hand washing.

2. Regular Cleaning, Sanitizing, Disinfecting, and Disposal Protocols

- a. Most classrooms have a single-user bathroom in their classroom. For those classrooms that need to transition to a single-user bathroom in the hallway, a classroom adult will ensure that no one is in the hallway or the bathroom before a student transitions to use the bathroom.
- b. Each bathroom will be disinfected following use.
- c. All surfaces will be disinfected prior to students entering the classroom and periodically during the school day.
- d. Our maintenance and cleaning teams will clean all areas of student use after school hours.
- e. Disinfectant fogging of the school building will continue to occur weekly.
- f. Classrooms will be required to complete a daily cleaning/disinfecting form before leaving for the day and upon arrival in the morning.

3. Masks

- a. Everyone will need to wear masks while in the school building that cover both their nose and mouth.
- b. We understand that there are some circumstances which make mask use difficult or impossible. In cases in which face coverings / masks are not possible, **STRICT SOCIAL DISTANCING of SIX FEET** is required.
- c. Caregivers should provide masks for their children; however, the school will have back up (disposable) masks available for students who need them.
- d. There will be the availability of mask breaks for students as needed.



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- e. Plastic containers with covers to put masks in when taking a mask break or eating; containers will be cleaned before and after school.
- f. Residential students will be recommended to wear masks, but given it is their home, it is not a requirement.
- g. Students in kindergarten and first grade will be asked to wear masks, however it is not a requirement. All student second grade and above and adults will be required to wear masks all day, especially when a distance of six feet cannot be maintained.

Isolation and Dismissal for Students Who Become Ill During the School Day:

- a. If a student becomes ill or starts to have symptoms associated with COVID-19, they will immediately be brought to the school's identified COVID-19 Medical Waiting Room that is separate from the nurses' office. There, nursing will check with the student and determine if the student needs to get picked up.
- b. If a student needs to be dismissed due to COVID-19 associated symptoms, they must consult with their PCP prior to returning to campus. Remote learning will be available during any absences.