Questions and Answers: Transitioning to Hybrid Learning in the Middle School
Update 4/9/2021

• Why are there NO sports for middle schoolers but the upper schoolers have them?
  The independent school leagues that we are a part of made the decision to start upper school athletics, including competitions, but the middle school league decided not to hold competitions this school year. Since Middle School athletics is part of the PE Health and Wellness class (unlike in the Upper School) we will offer choices like ultimate and other "athletics" during Trimester 3, but we won't be able to compete with other schools based on the league's decision. We were able to have Middle School students join cross country practices this fall and winter because those teams were not training for actual competitions.

• What metrics are you using to make your decision?
  The metrics and guidance we have received from the CDC, state, county, and other authorities continue to evolve. You may recall that in the fall we were using the metric of not resuming in-person activities until the number of reported cases per 100,000 residents for the last 14 days was below 75. That number 75 changed to 200 and then it changed to over 300. Emily Oster’s research findings at Brown University: schools not being significant sources of Covid-19 spread prompted independent schools to shift from waiting for a specific case number threshold to be reached and began bringing students back to campus. We continue to utilize the guidance coming from the CDC, state, and county as we make program decisions that minimize risk while allowing for learning to continue.

• Is it possible to send a student for only one of the two hybrid days per week? Yes. We have designed the program to offer flexibility to all community members. In addition, students may begin remote and then switch to in-person, or begin in-person and then change to remote. We also are designing the program to make it possible, even easy, for students to stay home when they are feeling sick.

• What safety measures recommended by health authorities are in place and which ones are not?
  These are the safety measures (the slices of Swiss cheese using the Swiss cheese model) that are both in place and ones we are confident faculty and students will comply with:
    o Air circulation within the building
    o Mask wearing
    o Cleaning protocols
    o Physical distancing within the classrooms
    o High rate of vaccinated teachers and support faculty
    o Daily symptom checks of all community members. This will require diligence both at school and at home. If you have not yet gotten into the habit of taking your temperature and your student’s temperature every morning, start practicing now. Symptomatic students should always stay home and engage in the program remotely.
    o Weekly Covid testing of faculty working in the building
These are the safety measures that are either not in place or ones we are not confident faculty and students will comply with:

- Students in cohorts of 15. Students will be in sections ranging from 13 to 19 for some of their classes (e.g., Humanities and Science) but will be with different students in other classes (e.g., PE, Health and Wellness)
- Physical distancing in the hallways or common areas. Adults will be on hand to reinforce the expectation that students are physically separated by a six-foot distance, but it is true what one faculty member said, “The kids have magnets in their bodies.” Once they are in proximity to each other, they often get closer than 6 feet.

When may I drop off my student and when should I pick them up once students return to campus?
The school doors will open at 8:30am and the last scheduled activities on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday end at 3:30pm. Even though office hours (held from 2:35-3:30 on Tuesdays) will continue to be optional, students will be expected to remain in classrooms until 3:30 unless they get picked up early or have been given permission by you to leave early. Though the school day ends later than originally planned for hybrid, we are still offering bus service in the morning and afternoon. Our Wednesday drop-off and pick-up plans for Performing Arts students from the week of April 19th to the end of the trimester are still being developed. If you have any questions or your interest in the bus program has changed since completing the survey, please contact Tony Kaufmann, Director of Facilities and Transportation.

When are Middle School students on campus during trimester 3?
Classes for Middle School students will be remote the week of April 5th. All Middle School grades will be on campus Monday and Tuesday, April 12th and 13th and remote for the rest of the week. If Covid cases remain low enough (below 200 per 100,000 residents over a 14-day period), all grades in both divisions will be on campus Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, beginning the week of April 19th. If case numbers remain high or continue to trend upwards, Middle School students, and only Middle School students, can attend in person on Mondays and Tuesdays.

Is it still okay for my child to participate in school remotely?
Yes! All community members, teachers, and students, may still participate remotely. We recognize that circumstances are still in place that may prevent someone from participating in person. Also, it is very important that if anyone is experiencing cold-like symptoms, they stay home, participating in school remotely if that’s possible.

Is there an option for kids or families who are only ready for half days to start?
Yes. We want to be as flexible as possible. Students are welcome to come to campus for the first two class periods and then get picked up at lunch (11:20) to participate in the last two classes remotely.
Could you tell us, for the outside eating option, are any of the places under cover? The kids are concerned about rainy days because we won’t allow them to eat inside. May my child eat outside? I can send her to school with a camping chair and umbrella if necessary.

We want to meet the requests for certain students to eat outside, but it won’t be possible for every student to eat outside. We have tents set up on the West Court and in the South Parking Lot and we are working on putting them in other spaces, too. In addition to the covered spaces outside, students will eat inside in classrooms, in the Commons, and in other spots that have enough air flow and space to allow six feet of separation, with kids all facing the same direction. For the beginning weeks of the trimester, students will eat with their class that meets in the block before lunch in an assigned space.

If we want to pick our student up at 2:30 after the last class is over, who do we need to let know? Let Maria Moses for Middle School and Kevin Alexander for Upper School know your pick-up plans. You can set up a plan for the entire trimester, so you don’t have to call daily. Please contact Reena Marston, Receptionist, for unexpected absences or early departures through Attendance@northwestschool.org or at (206) 682-7309.

We notice on the Trimester 3 Schedule it says that the number of grade levels on campus is contingent on key health metrics in King County. Is there documentation anywhere that says what those metrics are and what values they need to be at?

We are using the CDC transmission guidance as our metric that uses the number 200/100,00 cases over the last 14 days in King County. It is a number we are watching closely to indicate if we can bring both the MS and US to campus starting the week of April 19th. The state is the ultimate authority, so we are also paying attention to phases in King County and if Governor Inslee changes the state’s mandate of schools following three-foot distancing back to six-foot distancing. If we can’t have all students on campus at once, we will continue with the Middle School on Monday and Tuesday, and Upper School on Thursday and Friday.