



Fall 2020 Reopening Plan

Explorer West teachers and students are always prepared for an adventure, and that is certainly what the 2020-2021 school year will provide for us all. We look forward to the time when we will be able to resume full-time, on campus school, but we know that we won't be able to do so this fall. The threat of infection is too high in our area right now to risk the health and safety of our students and teachers. Instead, we have prepared three models for learning that we expect to move between this year, based on circumstances:

- Remote Learning: fully at home
- **Remote Plus Outdoor Learning:** on campus outdoors once a week
- Hybrid Learning: on campus two or three times a week

This document will outline each model. *Based on conditions in late July, we are planning to spend the first two months of the school year in **Remote Plus Outdoor Learning**.*

This plan has students on campus one day a week, in small groups with a limited number of teachers, entirely outdoors. We anticipate staying with this model at least through October; in mid-October we will reassess for November and beyond. More details about the model are outlined below, along with some information about the other models we will likely move through before this pandemic is behind us.

While this is certainly not what any of us had imagined, and we all wish our students could simply be together and enjoy the Explorer West Middle School experience of the pre-pandemic world, *we are excited* to be ready to offer a program that preserves *so much* of what we value most, and is able to bring some students and teachers together safely. So much has changed since March. But here's what hasn't changed:

- Talented and dedicated teachers, willing and able to go the extra mile to connect with students and bring out the best in them;
- Challenging and engaging academics and arts, with many hands-on learning opportunities;
- An Outdoor Education program that builds skills, confidence, and connection;
- A strong and vibrant school culture and community.

Read on to learn about our reopening model, our alternate models, and our Orientation program in early September. **We are also offering a "Virtual Town Hall" on Wednesday, Aug. 5, at 1pm**, to gather as a community to answer questions and discuss our plans. Look for the Zoom link next week.

Remote Plus Outdoor Learning - our fall reopening model

Four days of Remote Learning per week, plus one on-campus day of outdoor instruction.

- *Key features:*
 - **Each grade level spends one day a week on campus together, entirely outdoors** (except for bathroom breaks).
 - 6th grade on campus Tuesdays
 - 7th grade on campus Wednesdays
 - 8th grade on campus Thursdays
 - During their weekly on-campus Outdoor Learning days, students will have in-person half-section instruction (group sizes of 7 to 9) in **Science, Drama, PE, and Outdoor Ed**, including some local outings. They will also have breaks to safely socialize outside, time for reading and other quiet activities, and opportunities to gather and reflect. Outdoor canopy tents will provide shade and some overhead weather protection, but students are expected to dress for any weather conditions (and remember, we have a Gear Library full of rain pants and jackets to supplement).
 - Materials that students may need at home for their other classes will be picked up these days.
 - Students who are not able to participate in our weekly on-campus days will either be “live-streamed” into classes, or provided with alternate activities and opportunities to connect with the teachers about their work, depending on circumstances. Families will also be able to pick up distributed materials.
 - The other four days are spent at home in our **structured Remote Learning program**, with a mix of synchronous and asynchronous classes, taught in full or half sections. Some additional details of our Remote Learning program are:
 - 8:30-3:30 schedule
 - 5 class periods a day
 - Each class is scheduled two or three times a week, in a combination of full- or half-section synchronous classes on Zoom, and one asynchronous session, with assignments and instructional materials (videos, texts, etc.) posted on Google Classroom. (Full section sizes are between 15 and 19 students; Half section sizes are between 7 and 9 students)
 - Built-in opportunities for students to connect with teachers and one another in formal and informal ways.
 - Weekly all-school assemblies via Zoom.
 - **On-Campus Work Space:** We will be providing a limited number of spots on campus each day (maximum 18) for students to participate in our Remote Learning program in a supervised space at school. This program is designed to

support families and students for whom childcare is most essential, or who have significant barriers to learning at home, and there is no fee. Information about how to apply for a spot will be shared in August.

- **After Care:** A limited number of after care spots will be available for a fee for students who are participating in our On-Campus Work Space program, and for all students on the days they are on campus. Information about how to apply for a spot will be shared in August.

REMOTE + OUTDOOR LEARNING Weekly Schedule			
	6TH	7TH	8TH
MONDAY	REMOTE	REMOTE	REMOTE
TUESDAY	ON CAMPUS	REMOTE	REMOTE
WEDNESDAY	REMOTE	ON CAMPUS	REMOTE
THURSDAY	REMOTE	REMOTE	ON CAMPUS
FRIDAY	REMOTE	REMOTE	REMOTE

REMOTE + OUTDOOR LEARNING SAMPLE SCHOOL SCHEDULE	
8:30	WELCOME CIRCLE
9:00	OUTDOOR ED
10:00	BREAK
10:15	PE
11:15	LUNCH
12:15	PAUSE TIME/CHECK-INS
12:45	SCIENCE
1:45	BREAK
2:00	DRAMA
3:10	DISMISSAL

REMOTE + OUTDOOR LEARNING SAMPLE REMOTE SCHEDULE	
8:30	HOMEROOM
8:45	MATH
9:45	MUSIC
10:45	LATIN
11:45	LUNCH
12:45	SOCIAL STUDIES
1:45	ENGLISH
2:45	STUDY HALL
3:30	DISMISSAL
	SYNCHRONOUS CLASS
	ASYNCHRONOUS CLASS

Alternative Models

While we will start the year in Remote Plus Outdoor Learning, we do not anticipate staying with that model for the full year. Based on changing King County virus levels and trends, county and state guidelines and/or mandates, staffing, and our experience with teaching and learning outdoors, we need to be prepared to spend either more *or less* time on campus. For that reason, we have robust plans in place for a full Remote Learning program, and a Hybrid Learning program with students at school two or three days a week. We designed these models to allow us to move between them somewhat fluidly when necessary. Here is a little more information about each:

Remote Learning:

Students work from home every day in a structured, interactive, and creative remote learning program.

- ***Key features:***
 - 5 days a week, 8:30-3:30. Students at home every day.
 - 5 class periods most days; one day a week of flexible, special programming.
 - Classes scheduled two or three times a week, as a combination of full- or half-section synchronous classes on Zoom, and one asynchronous session, with assignments and instructional materials (videos, texts, etc.) posted on Google Classroom. (Full section sizes are between 15 and 19 students; Half section sizes are between 7 and 9 students.)
 - Outdoor Education lessons will be taught weekly and integrated with PE.
 - Built-in opportunities for students to connect with teachers and one another in formal and informal ways.
 - Weekly all-school assemblies via Zoom.

- On-Campus Work Space would be available for students most in need, provided it is allowable per state and county mandates.

- ***Why would we choose this model?*** We would use the Remote Learning model if we were compelled to do so by state or county order, or if we did not have adequate available staffing to support either our Remote Plus Outdoor Learning model, or our Hybrid Learning Model. We may also need to shift to this model for any short interval following a COVID infection within our community, *as directed by King County Public Health.*

Hybrid Learning:

Students are at school two or three days a week, and at home two or three days a week.

- *Key features:*
 - 8:30-3:30 schedule every day.
 - Students are on campus either Mondays and Tuesdays, or Thursdays and Fridays. Division of students will ensure that siblings can attend on the same days.
 - Wednesdays are a “flex day,” generally alternating between the other four scheduled days, but occasionally set aside for Outdoor Education, conferences, or other unique opportunities.
 - When students are at home, they meet with teachers remotely in full sections (15-19 students). When they are at school, they meet with teachers in half sections (7-10 students), often outdoors.
 - Each class is scheduled two or three times a week (combination of in-person and remote).

- Students who are not able to participate in on-campus days will either be “live-streamed” into classes, or provided with alternate activities and opportunities to connect with the teachers about their work, depending on circumstances.

- On-Campus Work Space will be available for students most in need (limited spots)

- After Care will be available.

- *Why would we choose this model?* We expect to be able to use our Hybrid Learning model as state and county mandates allow, if COVID-19 risks are low and getting lower in our community and in our region, and if we have staffing in place to support the plan.

What about a full return to campus? When the time comes that a full return looks like it could become a viable option, we will release more details about how the school day may be different than before COVID-19 (for example, how we would manage distancing and other health and safety protocols that would still be in effect).

HYBRID LEARNING

CAMPUS OPEN

WHEN

- Lower COVID-19 risk
- As State and County Mandates/ Guidelines allow
- As Staffing allows

SPECIFICS

- Students at home: 2-3 days a week
- Students at school: 2-3 days a week
- On-campus days are indoors and outdoors
- Small Groups for on-campus classes
- Attend each class 2-3 times a week

**Fully Remote Schedule Available*

REMOTE + OUTDOOR LEARNING

OUTDOOR CAMPUS OPEN

WHEN

- As State and County Guidelines allow
- As staffing allows

SPECIFICS

- Students at home: 4 days a week
- Students at school: 1 day a week
- On-campus days are **fully outdoors**
- On-campus day rotates by grade level
- On-campus classes include Science, Drama, PE, and Outdoor Ed classes
- 5 class periods a day
- Small Groups for on-campus classes
- Covered teaching areas for weather protection

**Fully Remote Schedule Available*

REMOTE LEARNING

CAMPUS CLOSED

WHEN

- COVID-19 risks are too high in our community
- Under State or County order
- Insufficient in-person staffing

SPECIFICS

- Students at home: 5 days a week
- Balance of synchronous and asynchronous classes
- Opportunities for small group instruction
- 5 class periods most days
- Weekly all-school assemblies via ZOOM.

Orientation, Sept. 1-11

To launch this unique school year, we are putting together plans to provide two consecutive days of on-campus outdoor programming for each grade level, provided this is still allowable by state and county mandate. This program will feature a staggered start, beginning with 6th grade, and will also provide opportunities for Explorer West families to meet up in local parks and build connections with families they live closest to. The goals of our Orientation program will be to have fun together, to create and strengthen community, to begin the process of learning to be together safely under these new conditions, and to introduce new tools and procedures for in-person and remote learning. *Tentative schedule:*

- **6th grade:**
 - Tuesday, Sept. 1, and Wednesday, Sept. 2: Full days outdoors on campus with most of our faculty.
 - Thursday, Sept. 3, and Friday, Sept. 4: Synchronous, remote programming in the mornings at home; optional, school-hosted family meet-ups in local parks in the afternoons.
 - Sept. 5-8: Extra-long Labor Day Weekend
 - Wednesday, Sept. 9 through Friday, Sept. 11: Modified Remote Learning schedule at home.
 - Monday, Sept. 14: Regular schedule begins.

- **7th grade:**
 - Thursday, Sept. 3, and Friday, Sept. 4: Full days outdoors on campus with most of our faculty
 - Tuesday, Sept. 8 and Wednesday, Sept. 9: Synchronous, remote programming in the mornings at home; optional, school-hosted family meet-ups in local parks in the afternoons.
 - Thursday, Sept. 10 and Friday, Sept. 11: Modified Remote Learning schedule at home.
 - Monday, Sept. 14: Regular schedule begins.

- **8th grade:**
 - Tuesday, Sept. 8, and Wednesday, Sept. 9: Full days outdoors on campus with most of our faculty
 - Thursday, Sept. 10 Modified Remote Learning schedule at home.
 - Friday, Sept. 11: Modified Remote Learning schedule at home in the morning; optional, school-hosted family meet-ups in local parks in the afternoon.
 - Monday, Sept. 14: Regular schedule begins.

Please note: We are simultaneously putting plans together for a fully remote Orientation, in case a state or county mandate prevents us from gathering in person.

Student Support

We at Explorer West pride ourselves in the close and productive relationships we form with students and families. Those relationships help us bring out the best in each of our students, and support their success in flexible and creative ways. Last spring, we learned quickly that supporting students academically and emotionally in a remote learning environment requires a new set of tools and strategies. We have been researching best practices and participating in professional development opportunities this summer, and have made some changes to our Remote Learning program to reflect what we've learned. We have made sure our Remote Plus Outdoor Learning *and* Hybrid Learning models reflect these changes as well.

- **Built-in small-group instruction:** During Remote Plus Outdoor Learning and Hybrid Learning, any in-person instruction will happen in half-sections of 7-9 students, driven by the need for smaller cohorts to minimize risk of virus transmission. During Remote Learning and Remote Plus Outdoor Learning, many of the remote synchronous classes will *also* be held with half sections.

- **Built-in time for individual and small-group focused check-ins:** During Remote Learning and Remote Plus Outdoor Learning, each class will have one Asynchronous session. Teachers will often use this time to schedule individual or small-group work for focused academic support.

- **Advisory Program:** While our mixed-grade advisory program has been a hallmark of Explorer West, due to the importance of creating smaller “pods” of students with a minimized mixing between them, and some of the other logistical challenges that come with remote and hybrid learning, we need to press pause on the mixed-grade program this year and find different ways to build relationships and community across grade levels. Instead, we are reconceiving our advisory program for the year so that cohorts of same-grade students are matched with a consistent faculty member for ongoing academic and social-emotional support.
- **Study Hall:** Two or three times a week, synchronous 30-minute Study Halls will be held at the end of the day with advisors, so that teachers can work with students on planners and organization, and help track and support students’ academic performance and needs.

Health and Safety Practices

We will operate the campus with the following practices to care for the health and well-being of our community:

- **Reporting and Screening**
 - Everyone who comes to the Explorer West campus will submit a screening survey (online report) regarding current day health, confirming absence of any COVID-19 symptoms and known exposures.
 - Temperature verification at least once a day on campus. Any student or adult with a temperature of 100.4 or higher will not be allowed to remain at school.
- **Masks:**
 - Masks worn at all times while indoors and while in outdoor classes, unless there is a medical exemption.
 - Mask breaks may be taken outdoors when adequate distance can be assured.
 - Masks should be 3-layer cloth, or disposable surgical masks. The school will supply masks as a backup in the event anyone does not have an appropriate mask.
 - Students should have an extra mask in their backpacks. Reusable masks should be laundered regularly and disposable masks should be replaced daily.
- **School Day Procedures**
 - Upon arrival at school, students will report directly to their outdoor classroom areas to drop off their belongings, and then will proceed to designated handwashing stations (outdoors or in the building) to wash their hands.
 - All students and teachers will also wash hands before and after eating, after using the restroom, and as needed throughout the day; hand sanitizer will also be available to supplement hand washing.
 - All students should use their own materials to prevent sharing.
 - Campus access is limited to faculty, staff, and students.

- **Group Sizes and Distancing**
 - Students will be organized in small groups of 7-9 students, and will stay with their groups for the duration of the school day.
 - Proper distancing (six feet) will be allocated and enforced.
 - Outdoor class areas will be set up with overhead tents for limited weather protection, and areas will be separated from one another.

- **In the Event of Illness**
 - If a student develops symptoms at school, they will be isolated in a designated room and Parents/Guardians will be called for immediate pickup.
 - Faculty/Staff with symptoms will be sent home immediately.
 - Current guidelines from WA State OSPI for returning to school after suspected COVID infection:
 - At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery - defined as no fever without the use of medications and improvement in respiratory signs like cough and shortness of breath; **AND**
 - At least 10 days have passed since symptoms started; **OR**
 - At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery **AND** a health care provider has certified **IN WRITING** that there is no suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19.
 - If someone believes they have had close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19, but they have no symptoms, they should watch their health for signs of fever, cough, shortness of breath, and other symptoms during the 14 days following close contact with the COVID-19 patient. *They should not come to school for 14 days.*

Building Safety Practices

In addition to preparing outdoor class areas, the school has performed work inside the building to enhance safety when we are ready to hold classes indoors, including:

- Upgrading HVAC unit filters to a MERV-11 level, deep cleaning HVAC units with an antiviral cleaning. Each classroom has its own HVAC unit, which only exchanges air between that room and outdoors.
- Upgrading cleaning materials and equipment to include HEPA vacuum filters and cleaning and disinfecting protocols set forth by the CDC and Department of Health.
- Additional technology to allow for teacher voice amplification and projection.
- Plans for coordinating traffic at entrances and exits and within the building to reduce congestion.
- Nightly janitorial service will ensure disinfection and sanitation of all frequently-touched surfaces.
- Carpets will be vacuumed with high-grade HEPA-filter vacuum cleaner
- Intraday sanitation will be performed as needed.

This is a summary list of our health and safety practices, and building safety practices. We will release more detailed documentation of health and safety practices, including building safety, as we get closer to the opening of school.

Additional guidance can be found here:

[OSPI School Reopening Guidelines](#)

[CDC “Considerations for School”](#)

More information

Chromebooks

Explorer West will continue to supply Chromebooks for student use. Rather than sharing Chromebooks interchangeably, each student will be assigned their own Chromebook for the year for use when at school during Hybrid Learning. Students will *not* need to use Chromebooks at school on their on-campus day during Remote Plus Outdoor Learning. **Any student who would benefit from bringing their Chromebook home for use during Remote Learning is welcome to do so.** An updated Technology Use Agreement will be sent home later in August, and Chromebooks can be picked up during Orientation.

Athletics

The Cascade Middle School League, our intramural sports organization, has canceled its fall season of competition. We will not be hosting teams or practices in the fall, though Terra will continue to teach many sports skills during PE class. We will update you about plans for the winter and spring seasons as we learn more.

Outdoor Education

Sadly, we will not be able to take our traditional fall outdoor education trips this September to Fort Worden, Ross Lake, and Mt. Rainier. Instead, we are integrating Outdoor Ed into our school program by creating a weekly in-person class as part of our Remote Plus Outdoor Learning. *If we are compelled to adopt a fully Remote Program, Outdoor Ed will be taught remotely.* The objectives of the program stay the same: to promote comfort, confidence, and skill in the outdoors, to build each student’s appreciation for and sense of connection to our environment, and to provide opportunities for team building and leadership skill development. The Outdoor Ed program will be mainly taught by our PE teacher and Athletics Director Terra Yara, together with our Outdoor Education Coordinator Matt Kostle and some other trusted Outdoor Ed instructors within our community. There will be some integration with our PE program. Most OE classes will happen here on campus (outdoors), but we are also planning some local outings to walkable locations, and we may schedule days where we ask students to be dropped off or picked up from a nearby park.

How to Prepare for Reopening

Transitioning out of summer and into the new school year is always a project (adjusting sleep schedules -- yikes!!), and this year the project is especially large. There are few things your

family can think about now to help prepare for our Remote Plus Outdoor Learning reopening, and we will continue to be in touch with recommendations as we get closer. For now, our advice is to begin conversations about the plan, talk about the feelings that come up, grieve a little, and start getting practical. Make sure you have a reliable thermometer for temperature checks on the days you'll come to school, and a number of masks so you have some kids are very comfortable with, and spruce up your at-home work spaces.

Additional Background and Process Information

Planning for reopening began in the spring, and has involved three primary working groups:

- *The administrative team* (Barbara, Carol, Dawn, Alex)
- *A group of superhero teachers* who created and reworked different innovative scheduling models (Tara, Kristin, Jon, Terra, and Daniela)
- *The COVID Task Force*: Barbara, Carol, and EW trustees Carlos Basulto, Deirdre Coleman, Eric Eberhard, David King, and Jim Woeppel

These teams consulted with the full board of trustees and the full faculty and staff periodically, and sought counsel from public health and educational experts in our community. We also relied on the feedback we got from a survey of new and returning families in late June.

Our family survey made it clear to us that, as with any community, the Explorer West community represents a diverse range of needs, desires, circumstances, and opinions when it comes to reopening. This is as it should be! When considered as a group, however, some themes emerged. Collectively, some of the biggest priorities that our families identified were **student mental and emotional well being, academic progress, and social connection**. Families also identified the importance of health and safety for our community and the broader community, and student-teacher relationships. There were some areas of concern that were ranked lower overall, but for some members of our community, they were of the most critical importance. Childcare is a good example, and knowing that this need is a *high priority* for a small number of families helped us shape our plans. We were also guided by the qualitative feedback that families provided around what did *and did not* work for their families last spring during emergency remote learning, either at Explorer West or elsewhere.

Our team came up with our own values framework to help guide the planning of each reopening model, which you can read [here](#). In that document, we outline our intentions and the concrete steps needed to ensure that our commitment to **physical health and safety, social and emotional well being, equity and inclusion, and academic growth and success** are executed well.

We spent the first part of our summer focusing on preparing the school building for a return. We obtained new individual desks that lend themselves to classroom distancing, upgraded our HVAC systems, and worked out procedures for minimizing congestion in the building. While our earliest efforts were focused on a full, five-day return to campus, by July we recognized that this would not be the responsible choice for our school community. We shifted our energies to

developing the two models that brought students to campus regularly, either for one or two-three days a week, and provided a robust remote learning program at home on the remaining days. By late July, recognizing that the trends in viral prevalence and community transmission in King County were higher than we had anticipated they would be, **we decided on the Remote Plus Outdoor Learning model.**

Opportunities to Help

Several families have asked how they may be able to support the school during our reopening. Thank you! We may be asking for support in setting up our canopy tents, rolling whiteboards, and other outdoor classroom materials during Orientation and on Outdoor Learning days in the mornings, and getting everything tucked away again in the afternoons. We are also looking for help in organizing and hosting our optional family meet-ups in local parks during Orientation. We will undoubtedly find other ways to lean on our community as we get closer. Please indicate your interest on the [Reopening Family Feedback Form](#).

We want to hear from you!

You've read the plan, and we'd love to hear from you. Please fill out [this quick survey](#) to let us know your own plans for the fall, as well as any questions you have that will help us plan our Town Hall.

Thank you, Explorer West families, for helping us live our commitment to the core value of Personal and Community Responsibility, while still providing our students with the very highest quality educational experience. We are reimagining middle school, once again, and we're pretty excited about it.

We hope to see you at our Virtual Town Hall meeting on Wednesday, Aug. 5, at 1pm. Look for a Zoom link early next week.