



# Safe & Smart RESTART

EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES

## WE'VE MISSED YOU

*A message from Michael Flynn, COO*

Educators believe in the power of the classroom. We know that exciting opportunities for learning happen when students, regardless of age or ability, are challenged. We've seen their confidence blossom when they are surrounded and supported by teachers and classmates. We never grow tired of seeing the wonder in students' eyes when they accomplish something they didn't know they were capable of doing.

There is no single word that describes these past months, but it was that thought of the transformative power of the classroom that we focused on during the challenging days. It is what motivates us to make plans for our diverse learners and our diverse learning environments that will be effective and adaptable.

When we were ordered to close schools, we had to change nearly everything we did in what was literally an instant. We had no time to prepare for such an abrupt and monumental change, no time to prepare our children and our families. Together, we have met the challenges and we are confident that we are prepared and ready to meet the challenges to come. We are here, stronger than ever, thanks to the grace, professionalism, initiative, intelligence, support, flexibility and patience of our students, staff, parents and community partners. We look forward to continuing our work together.

Please stay safe.

## Western Suffolk BOCES Shares the Re-Opening of Schools Plan

After months of collaboration, research and preparation, Western Suffolk BOCES has shared our agency's plan for the re-opening of schools this September. Our Safe & Smart Restart plan has been developed with two primary goals. The first is to protect the health and safety of our students, families and staff. The second is to provide the best instructional program possible, a program that is responsive to potential modifications that may be necessitated due to the ongoing pandemic as well as to individual concerns.

The Western Suffolk BOCES re-opening plan can be reviewed at [wsboces.org/restart](http://wsboces.org/restart).

"After extensive preparations and painstaking review of all guidance by health professionals and leading agencies, we are prepared to bring students and staff back into our buildings safely," said Michael Flynn, Chief Operating Officer. "The Safe & Smart Restart Plan outlines the safety measures that will be in place so that families and staff will know what to expect when they return."

The Safe & Smart Restart plan was intentionally designed to adapt to change, whether those changes be issued by the New York State Department of Education or dictated by a shift in COVID-19 infection rate or some-

thing else as yet unforeseen. Any updates to the plan will be posted to our Safe & Smart Restart web page.

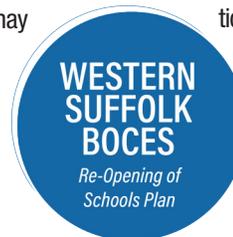
As you review our plan, you will note, among other important information, what is to be expected with regard to facial coverings, social distancing, symptom screenings and disinfection practices. The plan reinforces the importance of these health and safety practices and we will prioritize reminders of those practices throughout the year.

Since we first learned about COVID-19, Western Suffolk BOCES has taken care to listen to the concerns of our families, staff and component districts. As we developed and

continue to assess whether adjustments are needed, we will continue to work the Re-opening of Schools Committee, which is comprised of administrators, teachers, nurses, allied health staff, paraprofessionals and parents.

We invite everyone in the Western Suffolk BOCES community to review our plan. If you have questions, please share them via email to [restart@wsboces.org](mailto:restart@wsboces.org) and we will do our best to answer them.

Thank you for your support and cooperation. Together, we can enjoy a safe and smart restart to the school year at Western Suffolk BOCES and Wilson Tech.



# *School Heroes Wear Masks*

To protect the health and safety of everyone in our school buildings and offices, face coverings must be worn by all students, staff, and visitors when they are in shared and public spaces, with the exception of those unable to tolerate a face covering due to a medical or mental condition or disability.

As outlined in the Western Suffolk BOCES Re-Opening of Schools plan, proper face coverings include disposal masks or cloth masks, as long as they completely cover the mouth and nose. Please be aware that the CDC does not consider plastic face shields alone to be acceptable face coverings.

Students and staff may choose to utilize their own personal face covering. Students and staff who do not have an appropriate face covering upon arrival to school, will be provided with one.

To keep everyone safe, remember to:

- Wash your hands before putting on your mask
- Put it over your nose and mouth and secure it under your chin
- Try to fit it snugly against the sides of your face
- Make sure you can breathe easily
- Don't put the mask around your neck or up on your forehead
- If you touch your mask, wash your hands or use hand sanitizer to disinfect

## **Help your child feel comfortable**

For some of our students, wearing

masks is a new experience and one that might make them uncomfortable or nervous. To help them get ready for the first day of school, consider the following:

**Be a Mask Model:** Children model adult they see their parents wearing masks, the more they will. Consider having some fun with masks by making some for favorite stuffed animals, dolls or superheroes.

**Take the Time, Practice:** Set aside mask-wearing time each day, and increase it a little bit every day. Try wearing masks during reading time, or while watching a favorite television show. Engage in conversation while wearing masks so everyone grows accustomed to talking while wearing them.

**Get in the Game:** Children learn a great deal from playing games, such as "Behind the Mask." Children can wear their masks and change their facial expression to smiles, frowns, etc. and the other players have to guess the expression. Or, consider awarding points for length of time wearing the mask, with a reward of an extra book at bedtime.

**Keep the Distance:** Social distancing is also important and it is helpful to remind children to keep the distance while wearing a mask.



## **Keep Connected!**

Western Suffolk BOCES will be sharing information throughout this school year in a variety of ways, including phone calls, texts, emails, this newsletter and website posts. To keep up with the latest news, please update your contact information.

If you have changed your phone number or not yet shared your preferred email address, please visit [wsboces.org/restart](https://wsboces.org/restart) today to submit the changes. Thank you.