

Unofficial Guide to the First Year at WJ

High school can be daunting for parents, too. During high school, our kids will be taking personal responsibility for their education, recreation, and social lives. At the same time, many of our kids become a lot less communicative. Sometimes it may feel like we have no idea what is going on at school. This guide is put together by former WJ parents and the Counseling Advisory Committee (CAC) of the WJ PTSA and is meant to help answer a few of the many questions you're likely to have. We hope you find it helpful.

How do I find out what's happening at school?

- ❖ **WJ Website:** <https://www2.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/wjhs/>
- ❖ See the School calendar
 - Link to Teachers' email addresses
 - Get Bell Schedules, Bus Schedules, Athletic Schedules and much more
 - Use the **site map** on the WJ homepage to find your topic if it is not readily clear how to navigate the website.
- ❖ **WJ PTSA Bulletin Board:** [WJ PTSA Listserv](#) (for info on how to subscribe)
 - Get up-to-the-minute information from the school and the PTSA
 - Find out about important WJ events like Grade Level Meetings, PTSA Meetings, Booster Club Meetings, volunteer opportunities, advocacy opportunities, and more.



What time does school start and end?

- ❖ The regular school day begins at 7:45 am and ends at 2:30 pm. See this link to Bell Schedules for more information: [WJ Bell Schedules](#)
- ❖ Students attend **Home Room** only on special days of the year such as the first day of the semester, and for report card distribution.

How is the school year structured?

- ❖ Students typically take seven classes per semester. Each semester has two marking periods. Halfway through each marking period, students will receive interim reports of their academic progress. Semester grades are generally determined by the grades from each of the two marking periods. The grades from the first semester and the second semester are separate and not averaged for one grade. A student may have a different teacher for the same subject from one semester to the next.
- ❖ **Report Cards** are distributed through the Homeroom after the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd marking periods. Final report cards are mailed home a couple weeks after school ends.

What is Open Lunch?

Everyone in the school eats at the same time: 11:05 am - 12:00 PM (on a normal day). This is a great time for students to see teachers, hold and attend club meetings, catch up on homework, and socialize. Students (with the permission of their parents) are allowed to leave the campus to buy lunch. The school has worked with the store owners of the neighboring shopping center to assure that this time runs smoothly. As a result, this tradition has been continued for many years.





What if I have a question about my child's bus?
MCPS Bus Depot at 301-469-1070

How do I find out about school closings or delays?

TV and Radio: Local Stations: Tune in to local TV and radio stations for information.

- ❖ MCPS Web: Home page <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org>
- ❖ Email: QuickNotes: Weather-related messages are sent in 6 languages (English, Chinese, French, Korean, Spanish, and Vietnamese) If you are subscribed to the WJ Bulletin Board you get the English version of QuickNotes automatically. To receive QuickNotes in other languages, visit: <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/info/quicknotes>
- ❖ Text and Email: Alert MCPS
<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/info/emergency/sources/alertmcps>
- ❖ Text and Web: Twitter <http://twitter.com/mcps>
- ❖ Telephone Information Line: 301-279-3673
- ❖ **Telephone: Ask MCPS: 301-309-6277.** Staff takes calls from 8 am to 6 pm, Mondays through Fridays, in English and Spanish.



What about Community Service?

- ❖ Every child must complete at least 75 hours of community service in order to graduate. Thirty of these hours are earned in middle school through in-school activities.
- ❖ More information can be found linked from this page on the WJ website:
<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/wjhs/ssl/> .

What about the Booster Club and the PTSA?

The Booster Club and PTSA are the major parent groups that support this school.

- ❖ The Booster Club supports all extra-curricular activities, not just sports. Funds are received from membership and fundraising efforts to support these activities. The Booster Club encourages parents to attend meetings as well as get involved through their volunteer program. You can find more information on the WJ website under "Parents" or by contacting the president at president@wjboosterclub.com.
- ❖ The PTSA and its committees work with parents and administrators to advocate for quality education in the WJ cluster, and to provide relevant programming for parents. Meeting schedules and other pertinent information can be found on the WJ website. You can find more information on the WJ website under "Parents" or by contacting the PTSA president by email at walterjohnsonptsapresident@gmail.com

Both the WJ Booster Club and the WJ PTSA welcome, encourage, and need parent participation!



What is the Counseling Advisory Committee (CAC)?

The Counseling Advisory Committee (CAC) is a PTSA committee that works with the Counseling Services Department and the WJ Administration to increase communication among parents, students, and the school. The CAC sponsors several forums each year for Counseling Services: the freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior class meetings; and college forums addressing the college application/admission process. Meeting descriptions can be found on the CAC page of the WJ website under "Parents."

https://www2.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/wjhs/parents/guidance_events/

What is the Walter Johnson High School Education Foundation?

The Walter Johnson High School Education Foundation, Inc. ("Foundation") was formed in the spring of 2006 by alumni, parents and members of the WJ community to support educational programs, projects and activities at WJ – starting with the modernization of the school. The Foundation's initial focus has been on raising funds for unbudgeted equipment to enhance the WJ modernization. In addition to purchasing video and audio equipment for the auditorium and funding a language lab, the Foundation also provides grants for staff development and is exploring opportunities to increase the involvement of parents, alumni and businesses in Walter Johnson High School. Information about the Foundation, including meeting schedules and contact information, is at <http://www.wjedfoundation.org/>.

When is Back to School Night?

Back to School Night is held at the beginning of the fall semester and is publicized on the school website and PTSA listserv.

What about driving my student to school?

Student drop-off and pick-up takes place in the front of the building on Rock Spring Drive. Detailed information is available on the WJ Website. Select "About Us" at the top of the page and then "Useful Links". School officials caution parents to use the designated areas and not to drop students on the streets, for safety reasons. Regardless, drive with care because students pop out of cars – just about anywhere near the school – and accidents are narrowly avoided every day.



What about contacting a teacher?

If you have a question or concern, you should contact your child's teacher by e-mail or telephone. Most teachers express a preference for one method or the other, usually at back-to-school night or on the class syllabus. The WJ administration expects teachers to respond to questions from parents within one day, absent unusual circumstances. If you have difficulty reaching a teacher, contact the resource teacher (i.e., the department head) for the particular department in which the class is taught, using the same procedures for contacting the teacher. If you are unable to reach the resource teacher or still have unresolved questions, contact the assistant principal who is responsible for supervising the particular department. The list of assistant principals and their departmental responsibilities can be found in the "Administration" section of the WJ web. Email addresses for all WJ staff can be found on the WJ website using the home page link listed under "Directories". The format for teacher email addresses is almost always `firstname_lastname@mcpsmd.org`

What about the Counseling Office?

The WJ counselors are available to students by appointment during the school week and without appointments on Monday thru Friday during the following times:

7:25 am – 7:45 am

11:00 am - 12:00 pm

2:30 pm – 2:50 pm

Counselors are assigned to students alphabetically by last name. The counselor assignments can be found on the website under the Students, Counseling Department, and Counselor Assignments. Counselors work part-time throughout the summer.

[Counselor Assignments](#)

What about tutors?

- ❖ The tutoring information is available on the website under the WJ Student Support, Counseling & Related Services. [WJHS Tutoring](#)
- ❖ As indicated, the various honor society chapters (e.g., National Honor Society, Science Honor Society, Math Honor Society, etc.) provide free tutoring to students and students are encouraged to take advantage of these programs.

What about Class News?

- ❖ The WJ website has information specific to each class. You can find information about your student's class and the various clubs at WJ by clicking the Student Activities on the homepage then Student Governances.

What is the Academic Support Center (ASC)?

The WJ ASC provides assistance to students with special needs. The ASC includes:

- ❖ the Aspergers program that provides rigorous instruction across the academic areas while providing accommodations and needed social skills supports
- ❖ the GT/LD program that provides rigorous instruction in the students' area of strength, while providing accommodations in the areas of skill that are affected by their disability.
- ❖ the Learning and Academic Disabilities program that may include components of self-contained classes, co-taught general education classes, and/or supported classes.
- ❖ the learning for independence program that teaches functional life skills and basic academics to students with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities and/or multiple disabilities; and
- ❖ the resource program that ensures access, to the greatest extent possible, to the MCPS General Education Program of Studies and/or to the MCPS Fundamental Life Skills

Specific information, including staff contacts, can be found at

www.walterjohnson.com/depts/ASC

Does my student have to take Physical Education?

Students are required to take one year (two semesters) of physical education. There is no required uniform.

What about Textbooks?

Books are assigned in most classes. In some cases, the teachers have an extra set for classroom use. This means that the student can keep their books at home for the entire semester. Books must be promptly returned to teachers on the final exam day.

What about Standardized Tests?

- ❖ **PSAT:** These tests are administered at WJ in mid-October and usually taken during the first three years of high school. The scores from junior year are used to determine eligibility for National Merit Scholarships. Montgomery County Public Schools pays for all sophomores in the county to take the test. Juniors need to pay the fee to take the test. If financial aid is needed, contact your student's counselor. Freshman take a practice version of the PSAT at no cost.
- ❖ **SAT/ACT:** These tests have scheduled administrations at WJ and other locations but registration for the tests is online through their respective websites. Students are encouraged to register for these tests as early as possible as seats at WJ frequently fill-up. Information and links for both ACT and SAT registration can be reached from the WJ web under the College and Career Center and ACT & SAT Information.
- ❖ **Practice SAT/ACT Exams:** The CAC annually hosts practice versions of the ACT and SAT twice a year. Each mock exam is offered once in the fall and in the spring, each for a nominal fee.
- ❖ **Advanced Placement (AP):** AP exams are given at Walter Johnson in May as the culminating activity for AP courses. Students who receive passing scores on these exams may receive credit at the colleges they attend. Registration for AP exams is through WJ. Information about the WJ AP program is available on the home page under Programs at the top of the homepage and then Advanced Placement on the side.



What about Standardized Test Accommodations?

Students who require testing accommodations must go through a certification process to receive their accommodations on standardized tests. Having testing accommodations at school does not necessarily guarantee that a student will receive accommodations from the College Board or the ACT. Students who need accommodations should begin the certification for standardized tests as early in their high school careers as possible by working with their counselors. Information about testing accommodations is online under College and Career Center and then on the ACT and SAT Information page.

What about clubs and sports?

- ❖ **Sports:** There are three sports seasons. The fall sports begin practicing mid-August, typically during the second week of August, and are usually completed in October. The winter sports begin November 15 and extend into February. The spring sports begin March 1 and are completed in May. Students must be academically eligible to participate in school sports and every student that participates must have an annual physical, and register to try out. More information will be sent by the WJ Athletic Director and the teams' coaches. A full listing of all sports and the paperwork necessary to participate is available on the WJ website under Athletics.
- ❖ **Sports Awards Night:** This event occurs at the end of each sporting season. An evening assembly is held for the athletes and their parents. Awards are given for each team and special recognitions are made. At the conclusion, the athletes and their parents convene in rooms assigned by the sports team to have a smaller celebration. Parents are strongly encouraged to attend.
- ❖ **Clubs:** There are many different clubs for your child to join at WJ. There is no specific deadline for joining, and they usually meet once a week either after school or during lunch. This is a great opportunity for involvement and to meet other students. For a complete list of clubs click Student Activities on the homepage and then Clubs on the list.



Note: Students must be academically eligible to participate in extracurricular activities.



What about Graduation Day?

Graduation dates and times are selected by schools based on numbers drawn by principals in the "graduation date lottery", and will be announced once finalized. School is typically closed for undergraduates on graduation day since teachers are invited to attend the ceremony. Some undergraduate students, most notably music students, participate in the graduation ceremony so they should not assume they have graduation day off without first checking with their music teachers.

What about parties?

Despite what your teen tells you, parents do call each other if a child has been invited to a party to make sure that there will be an adequate number of chaperones. Parents often feel embarrassed about this, but a call could alert another parent to a party they did not expect.



What if I have other questions?

Check out the WJ website – it is FULL of important information.

- ❖ Come to a PTSA meeting (generally the third Tuesday of the month; 7:00 p.m.; Media Center)
- ❖ Attend a grade level **CAC Parent meeting** to learn from WJ administrators and other WJ parents
- ❖ Contact your child's guidance counselor
- ❖ Ask someone in the main office
- ❖ **Join the WJ Bulletin Board (Listserv):** from the email address where you want to receive the WJ postings, send a blank email to wjptsa+subscribe@groups.io and you should be added to the group.

Revised 8/2023