

Walter Johnson High School

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Office of the Principal

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Dear Walter Johnson Students and Parents/Guardians:

I hope everyone has had the chance to rest and spend some quality time with family and friends this summer. Enjoy these precious summer days as the school bell will ring soon and your energy, enthusiasm, and commitment will be an integral part of success for this coming school year. I am truly looking forward to the first day of the 2023-2024 school year on August 28, 2023. Students will receive class schedules in their Homeroom at 7:45 a.m. on the first day. **The class schedule they receive that morning is the only schedule that should be used for classes this semester.** Students may be able to view their schedules on StudentVue prior to the first day of school, but we make changes in order to balance our class sizes up until the first day of school. This is why it is very important that they use the homeroom schedule distributed on August 28th. Posters with the locations of each Homeroom will be posted in the hallways and online along with other important information such as bus schedules at: www.walterjohnson.com. Students should bring basic school supplies, a notebook, paper, a pencil, and a pen, on the first day, and teachers will let them know if there is anything else needed. Lockers are distributed on request. We are excited to welcome our new and returning Wildcats!

All of us want our students to have a successful year. Two of the most important things about success in high school are safety and student attendance. If students feel safe, then they are available for learning. And, students cannot learn if they are not present. Last year, we began requiring all students to show their school ID in order to enter the building. This year, we are asking all staff and students to wear their identification at all times while in the building. This is a change to increase our safety in the building. Students will need to wear their IDs from the very first day of the school year. They will be distributed during Homeroom to new students and returning students should bring their IDs, lanyards and ID holders with them on the first day. We will continue to enforce this safety protocol for this school year and beyond. All students will be required to display their ID to enter the building at the beginning of the day and when they return from lunch, then keep it visible at all times while in the building. If a student loses their ID they need to come to the main office for a replacement and there will be a \$5.00 fee. Additionally, at 7:45 a.m. all doors are locked and no door should be opened or propped open for anyone after they are shut. Everyone needs to enter through the main office when the doors are secured. All guests need to check in at the main office and show their ID to get a pass for entry. Please emphasize to your students that it is important that we all play a role in keeping the building safe. We appreciate your support.

Our bell schedule for the year remains the same as last year and can be found [here](#). Regular attendance is one of the most important factors in student academic success. Therefore, attendance and getting to classes on time are both equally important. We have 5 minutes passing time between classes, and it is critical that students move purposely to their classes and return from lunch in plenty of time to get to their classes without being marked tardy. The learning takes place in our classrooms and not in the halls. We are going to be very adamant regarding students being in classes on time and if there is a pattern of excessive absences and tardies, then a meeting with school administration will be scheduled to develop an attendance intervention plan. This will help to get attendance back on track. Additionally, last year we had many students being dropped off late in the mornings. I am asking all families to please get your children to school on time. Classes begin at 7:45 a.m. and our campus is large. Please allow time to safely drop off your child in one of the loops either in the front or back of the school. Please do not stop in the road to let children off as this is very dangerous and holds up traffic. We appreciate your support to help assure everyone is in class on time and ready to learn!

Our school offers Open Lunch to all of our students. This is a wonderful policy to offer our students, but with this privilege comes a great amount of responsibility. Open Lunch means students are allowed to leave the campus to purchase their lunches. The one-hour lunch between the end of 4th period and the beginning of 5th period has proved to be beneficial for both staff and students. Last year we did make one change regarding our neighboring establishments at Georgetown Square and Wildwood Shopping Center. We instituted the “Pay and Go” system so students can still get food off campus in those locations, but they cannot stay to eat their food at those establishments. We are just too large a school to allow so many students to gather, because it causes many disruptions for the other customers in the community. We will provide more seating in the outdoor areas of the campus for students and are also looking into additional activities for them to participate in on campus. Students may eat in the courtyards, in the halls, in classrooms, the cafeteria, and most of the other outdoor areas on campus. We will continue to use this system and periodically review the policy throughout the next school year.

As always, our seniors will lead the way this coming school year and we look forward to welcoming back the Class of 2024! We will host our annual Senior Cookout and Shed Painting on Thursday, August 24th at 5 p.m. outside near the baseball field. This year, we will also welcome the Freshmen Class of 2027. We hope to see all of our new students and families at the New Student Family Cookout on Wednesday, August 23rd at 6 p.m. in front of the school in the bus loop. If you are a leader in one of our clubs or other extracurricular programs, please remember that you should have a table at the New Student Cookout. **Please reach out to your sponsors to assure that you have space to advertise your clubs.** This is an important evening to highlight one of the best ways a student can become involved at school. Our clubs welcome everyone and offer great variety to appeal to a wide number of interests. Additionally, do not forget that fall sports begin with tryouts on August 9th. The necessary forms for athletics are available online under the “Athletics” tab at www.walterjohnson.com along with a lot more valuable information. I hope that many of you are going to get involved with one of our outstanding athletic teams and/or clubs. The key to a great high school experience is getting involved!

Finally, I hope to see all of our families at our many school events this year. We have athletic contests, plays, musicals, instrumental and choral concerts, art shows, informational parent meetings and much more! Please take some time to enjoy events with your family or to watch your children perform. This is a wonderful way for parents to get involved. Enclosed and online, please see the Important Dates document. Back-to-School Night is Thursday, September 7th. This is a wonderful time to meet your children’s teachers and see our amazing school.

Don’t forget to join our Booster Club, PTSA or donate to the WJ Education Foundation. All three of these groups contribute greatly to our programs here at WJ. More information about how to join is found at our website online under the “Parent” tab. The WJ Parent Listserv is also another way to be included in communication from parent groups and the school. Directions for joining the WJ listserv are online. Please read the included document as they have important information regarding dates for upcoming events, counseling assignments, and how to sign up for ParentVue on Synergy. We also have an online system for paying for our various events here at school called, School Cash Online. Directions for signing up are enclosed. We hope to see you here on campus enjoying our many community activities.

Finally, as mentioned in previous communication, I am honored to have Ms. Nicole Morgan as our principal intern for this school year. As Ms. Morgan steps into her internship role you may expect important communication coming from her desk on a regular basis. She will also be very visible at our many events. There will be times when she is present at an event and I may not be there. Please know this is a very important piece of her internship training and critical to her gaining the skills needed as a future principal. We both appreciate your support!

Thich Nhat Hanh once stated, "The present moment is filled with joy and happiness. If you are attentive, you will see it." Enjoy the rest of your summer and I wish everyone a fabulous 2023 – 2024 school year.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Baker
Principal