



# THE WESTWOOD SCHOOL

# *Let's Move Forward Together*

With Nimble Response Today, Tomorrow & Beyond

## FAQ

### Frequently Asked Questions

From a live online session 4/28/2020 (<https://vimeo.com/user96749490>)

Updated 5/01/2020

Thank you to the families who joined me for our live online events, **Let's Move Forward Together**. We thought you might be interested in the great questions asked during the session.

Ending the school year on a positive note is important to each of us. We are making every effort to make this happen. Stay tuned as we work together to make cherished memories.

Feel free to reach out to me, your student's teacher or our faculty with additional questions and feedback.

Sincerely,  
Heather Lourcey

### Click the following topics to go directly to the related FAQs

#### > General Questions for All Grade Levels

- Parent Communication
- The Westwood Classroom & Google Classroom
- Schedules • Calendars • End of School
- Tuition & Insurance for 2020-2021 School Year
- Ways to Support the Community
- Summer 2020
- Resuming In-Person Classes & Activities

#### > Toddler & PreK Questions

#### > Elementary Questions

#### > Upper School Questions

# FAQ

## Frequently Asked Questions

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## General Questions for All Grade Levels

### Parent Communication

- **Can we have another meeting like this before the fall semester?**

Yes, great idea. We'll make it happen.

### The Westwood Classroom & Google Classroom

- **Is there additional material on Google Classroom not on the Vimeo channel?**

Yes. While we initially posted videos on Vimeo, we are now posting everything to Google Classroom. You will also find supplemental info in Google Classroom that is not on the Vimeo channel.

Vimeo only provides the Vimeo lesson itself. If you need additional help with Google Classroom, please contact your child's teacher directly. They are happy to help you.

- **Can Google Classroom lessons be organized by age?**

Our teachers are working on that

- **Have we thought about year-round school?**

We believe we should all be learning all the time – this is core to Westwood's community. Balance between work and play is also an important aspect of Westwood's Montessori/IB approach to nurturing the whole child.

We've made the lessons and resources available in your child's Google Classroom. We encourage you and your child to log in and work with these lessons all summer long.

While the idea of year-round school is discussed in academic circles, it's not one we have seriously considered at this point because it does not align with our Montessori/IB approach.

- **How will the kids be graded during the COVID-19 situation?**

Our approach to grading during the COVID-19 situation is "do no harm."

This means if your student's performance during Spring 2019 will help their grades, it will be counted. However, if their Spring 2019 performance is not so great, it will not be counted. We decided to build this period of grace into the grading system because we understand students are different in the way they've adjusted to online learning and the COVID-19 situation. Along with the grace period, we've made several important assumptions:

- Children are continuing to work and learn at home
- This period of time will not have a massive long-term effect on them.

[Click here](#) to see Westwood's Middle & Upper School 2019 – 2020 "Do No Harm" Grading Policy.

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### Schedules • Calendars • End of School

- **Would it be possible for parents to get a calendar with the upcoming week's information on Sundays?**

Teachers are online and we are taking notes to obtain your feedback. We will see what we can do to figure this out if it helps our families.

- **Will the end of school year calendar be the same?**

The end of the school year \*will\* change and it won't look exactly the same. For example, we are moving Parent/Teacher conferences to enable us to teach until the end of the school year.

Thank you for your patience as we work through the changes. We will be in touch soon. The official final day of school is May 22nd and graduation for seniors is still May 26th.

- **Just to be sure, there is no more class in the building this term?**

This is true. There will be no more class on either of the Westwood campuses this term. We are following the rules and guidance provided by the Texas Governor - no school will resume in class sessions for this school year.

### Tuition & Insurance for 2020-2021 School Year

Please contact us today, if for any reason you will not be returning to Westwood in Fall 2020. Heather Lourcey ([hsourcey@westwoodschool.org](mailto:hsourcey@westwoodschool.org)), Debra Giorgini ([dgiorgini@westwoodschool.org](mailto:dgiorgini@westwoodschool.org)) or Janet Cardona ([jcardona@westwoodschool.org](mailto:jcardona@westwoodschool.org)).

- **Should we be concerned about our ability to return to Westwood due to job loss, furlough or another situation related to COVID-19?**

We are making every attempt to assist as many families as we can in this time of crisis. If you need help now, please reach out to

Heather Lourcey ([hsourcey@westwoodschool.org](mailto:hsourcey@westwoodschool.org))  
Debra Giorgini ([dgiorgini@westwoodschool.org](mailto:dgiorgini@westwoodschool.org)) or  
Janet Cardona ([jcardona@westwoodschool.org](mailto:jcardona@westwoodschool.org))

Some parents purchase tuition insurance to help ease concerns about future job loss or other situations that could impact their ability to meet 2020-2021 tuition. [Click here](#) for details.

- **Can I still purchase tuition insurance – even if we paid in full and declined it?**

Yes, you can purchase tuition insurance through the first day of school, August 18, 2020. [Click here](#) for details on tuition insurance for the 2020-2021 school year.

### Ways to Support the Community

- **As parents, is there anything we can do to help the staff and faculty?**

Thank you very much for asking. We appreciate your patience and support. We'll certainly keep you posted on anything you can do to help our team.

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- **Would you consider setting up a fund we can give to in order to support folks who may need help with tuition due to COVID-19 circumstances?**

Thank you for your gracious suggestion. Currently, we are taking requests for financial aid related to COVID-19 on an as needed. Please contact Heather Lourcey (hlourcey@westwoodschool.org), if you are interested in giving to the Let's Move Forward Together Scholarship Fund we've established for this purpose or to other Westwood scholarship funds.

We always welcome your donations to establish scholarships and to our annual giving fund. [Click here](#) to learn more about Westwood's Annual Giving Fund.

## Summer 2020

- **Are we considering having any time made up over the summer or are we considering having the year done?**

As far as the school year, we are calling it done once the school year is finished on May 22. We're not worried about where your child is academically, and we don't want anyone else to be worried. Kids are so resilient. The things they are learning at home are just as important as things they learn in the classroom. We're discussing doing some academic activities in the summer. We will send info about Parent/Teacher conferences soon.

- **Will we have any summer classes in the building?**

Let's answer this in 2 parts: 1) Summer camps 2) Academic summer classes

### Summer Camp

Yes, we are going to find a way to have summer camp in some form. If we are not cleared to open our physical school, we are planning for an online summer program – like what we are doing now.

There is a good chance we will be able to open in some capacity this summer. It will probably look different from our past summer programs to meet requirements set by the authorities. For example, initially it could be a blend of online & on site. Then, on site once we are cleared by the authorities to completely open.

### Summer Academic Classes

We are discussing this option. No student will be required to attend academic summer school if it is offered. Please speak with your child's teacher if you are concerned about your child's academics and are interested in them attending an academic summer camp.

We encourage our families to keep learning in the summer. For example, have fun, read every day and continue with math facts especially into the middle school years. Kids need to know math facts like the back of their hand, so they are ready for advanced Mathematics.

Consider downloading some sort of foreign language game for them (i.e. Spanish, Mandarin). And, there's nothing wrong with a good workbook.

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- **Will Google Classroom & Vimeos be available through the summer after the school year has ended?**

Yes, and the Montessori Learning at Home boxes will be available. We are also planning to have some sort of online lessons & meet-ups

- **Are we still having summer camp?**

Yes, we are going to find a way to have summer camp in some form. If we are not cleared to open our physical school, we are planning for an online summer program – like what we are doing now.

There is a good chance we will be able to open in some capacity this summer. It will probably look different from our past summer programs to meet requirements set by the authorities. For example, initially it could be a blend of online & onsite. Then, on-site once we are cleared by the authorities to completely open.

- **Will there be academic classes this summer? Will students HAVE to attend academic summer school? Or will we test to see if they need to attend?**

We are discussing having academic classes. No student will be required to attend academic summer school if it is offered. Please speak with your child's teacher if you are concerned about your child's academics and are interested in them attending an academic summer camp.

We encourage our families to keep learning in the summer. For example, have fun, read every day, and continue with math facts especially in elementary and into the middle school years. Kids need to know math facts like the back of their hand, so they are ready for advanced Mathematics.

Consider downloading some sort of foreign language game for them (i.e. Spanish, Mandarin). And, there's nothing wrong with a good workbook.

- **When will we decide for fall about opening Westwood's physical location?**

We will follow the direction of the Governor of Texas and local authorities. If schools are given the OK to open physical facilities, then Westwood will start on August 18.

We are 100% ready once we are given the OK from government officials. We will follow every guideline when we open. Otherwise, we will continue following and refining our online learning format.

## Resuming In-Person Classes & Activities

The safety and well-being of our students and community members is our primary concern. We are following the rules set by the Texas governor and local authorities. Once we are given the OK to open, we will begin in-person classes based on the guideline provided by government.

Westwood's small school size enables us to be more responsive to keep students safe and move quickly to act in the best interest of our community.

- **What criteria will you use to determine when it is safe to re-open?**

We will follow the rulings of the Texas governor, the Dallas County judge and other officials. There will be restrictions when we open-up like how many students in a class,

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how many at a table, etc.

- **What are Westwood's plans to open in the fall in case the situation persists?**

We are ready to continue with our virtual learning until we return to the classroom. We believe 2020-2021 will be a fluid year. It will be uncertain. My feeling is we will be able to be in the physical classroom at least part of the time. We will be outside the physical classroom at least part of the time. We are ready to move back & forth as needed.

- **What is the in-person vs online decision based on?**

The safety and well-being of our students and community members is primary concern. We are following the rules set by the Texas governor and local authorities. Once we are given the OK to open, we will begin in-person classes based on the guideline provided by government.

Our small school size enables us to be more responsive to keep students safe and move quickly to act in the best interest of our community.

There are other factors we will consider and plan for as we make decisions on behalf of individual students and the community. For example,

- We want students to experience as many in-person classes and activities as possible
- What we will do when community members become ill. This will probably look different than it has for Westwood in the past.

If you don't feel comfortable with your student coming to school, please keep them home and we'll work with your family to make arrangements. For example, we'll ensure they get the lessons, materials and one-on-one time they may need with the teacher.

## Toddler & PreK Questions

- **Are we going to have Montessori boxes each week?**

Yes, the next Montessori Learning at Home Boxes will be available for pickup on Mondays through the rest of the school year. We appreciate your patience as we work through return and pickup logistics.

- **Should we return the previous Montessori Home Learning boxes?**

Yes. Please clean each item and the box itself before you return them for a new box. We will be cleaning them as well before sending them home with another family. There are 5 total Montessori Learning at Home boxes for each age. In a perfect world, one lesson might come before another lesson. However, we moved quickly to put these together and thought it better to get them to you rather than waiting to put them in order.

- **Will there be individualized packets for PreK?**

We can look into incorporating a packet to supplement our online learning. We sent packets home initially. Only about 10% of the parents picked them up. It's been difficult to tell how well received they were because we didn't have a way to track the number of families who downloaded and printed the packets.

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My feeling is the Montessori boxes are more valuable than a packet because they contain the concrete lessons. My kids loved workbooks in the summer, however. They would get out their packet & workbook because it made them feel adult & important.

**• What is the plan for virtual in elementary?**

We are up and running with Google Classroom – that was our initial challenge.

Of course, our plan is to be in the physical classroom based on rulings from civil authorities. When and if we must transition to virtual classroom, our plan includes

- Incorporating both live group lessons + discussion along with taped video lessons. Of course, we love live because of the interaction. Videos are also good because they are always there and accessible.
- Providing packets and Montessori concrete materials to supplement the virtual learning experience
- Continuing with Google Classroom as our platform

**• As everyone gets adjusted to virtual, will there be more one-on-one interactive lessons with the teacher?**

Of course, we all want to have as much time with the child as possible. And, we are trying to balance between how much time the teacher can spend with each child. Another consideration is how much time the child can spend in front of a screen and helping parents because it can be hard on them trying to manage this aspect.

Balancing videos and live teacher to student interaction is important. We've also discovered the importance of student interaction with each other.

**• Will there be an increase in the number of live classes?**

Yes. We will look into recording these live lessons so they can be archived.

**• If in-class instruction is not able to resume for PreK, or we are forced to reclose due to a second wave, will the tuition be reduced?**

Whether online or onsite, the value Westwood provides to our families is based on our Montessori approach – the way we teach, the curriculum and the community support we provide to families. Our challenge as a community is making sure teachers get paid as well as making our rent and other ongoing expenses. Therefore, we will not reduce tuition.

Tuition insurance is an option if you have these types of concerns. It will be available until the first day of the 2020-2021 school year. [Click here](#) for details.

**• Can we check out the work our child would otherwise be doing at school?**

Depends on what it is...some are too small or too large or need a teacher's direction. This is one of the things we learned with creating the Learning at Home boxes for PreK. For example, the trinomial cube will never go in a Montessori box because it's so expensive. We might be able to find an alternative - for example, copy, cut it out and send it home.

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### Elementary Questions

#### • **How will the kids be graded during the COVID-19 situation?**

Our approach to grading during the COVID-19 situation is “do no harm.”

This means if your student’s performance during Spring 2019 will help their grades, it will be counted. However, if their Spring 2019 performance is not so great, it will not be counted. We decided to build this period of grace into the grading system because we understand students are different in the way they’ve adjusted to online learning and the COVID-19 situation. Along with the grace period, we’ve made several important assumptions:

- Children are continuing to work and learn at home
- This period of time will not have a massive long-term effect on them.

[Click here](#) to see Westwood’s Middle & Upper School 2019 – 2020 “Do No Harm” Grading Policy.

#### • **How do we know that they are on par with their peers not only at Westwood but compared to other students in private and public schools?**

Westwood’s curriculum has always been ahead of other schools. The teachers have done an evaluation of curriculum presented over the past 5 weeks and found that the vast majority of regular spring curriculum has been delivered. If your child has been working at home, they should be on target.

Important changes for Spring 2019 include:

- Progress Reports for this period will not be like they have been in the past
- Regular Grade Achievement testing will not be conducted this spring but will be administered when school begins in the fall.

If you are concerned about your child, please contact your child’s teacher to discuss your concerns. We want to do all we can to help any child who may be struggling.

#### • **What about Move-Up Ceremonies and Graduation?**

Yes, we are moving forward with plans for these special Westwood traditions including "Move Up" ceremonies for kindergartners, 3rd graders, 6th graders & 8th graders. We're also working on making graduation special and memorable for our seniors. We'll be in touch with details very soon.

#### • **What grade level will be doing the Biography project?**

Yes, we will do this year’s Biography project and fun-filled fair online.

We plan to keep the Biography project and as many of our Westwood traditions as possible even when we must go online. One example of a treasured tradition is the Biography project & fair our 2nd grade students work on each. Each student chooses a person they want to learn about. They study their “person” and share what they’ve learned during a class Biography Fair. Leading up to the fair, they write a paper and create an information board about their “person.”

#### • **Will we get a summer reading list/math packet?**

Yes, absolutely. You will receive a summer reading list and a math packet like in the past. We encourage you to supplement these materials and guide your students to

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complete these during the summer. For example, I had to help my boys pace themselves to get their work done during the summer. They tended to wait until the very last minute.

- **Can we borrow/check out Montessori materials? Who do we ask about borrowing Montessori materials?**

Yes, some of the materials will be available for you to borrow (check-out). We encourage you to first talk to your child's teacher to determine what your child might need.

Please keep in mind some Montessori materials may not be available for check out for a variety of reasons. For example, they have too many pieces, are exceptionally large or need a teacher presentation. We will do our best to make as many materials as possible available on loan or figure out an alternative.

- **Can we have another meeting like this before the fall semester?**

Yes, great idea. We'll make it happen.

## Upper School Questions

- **Are there plans in the works for making graduation and end-of year events (like award ceremonies) memorable for the seniors?**

Yes, plans are in the works including a virtual awards ceremonies. We are working with senior parents to finalize plans. Stay tuned for updates on all end-of-the-year events. We'll share with our entire community as soon as possible.

- **Will there be finals? How will finals work and how will final grades look like?**

Yes, finals will be on May 18, 19 and 20. Each teacher will design the finals format for their class -- so there will be a variety of formats (in "class" all together, a paper, etc.)

Teachers will grade finals as they usually do. Then, follow a "do no harm" approach for final grades. If the students spring grades help their GPA, they will be added in. If the grades do not help the student, the student will receive a "pass" and their GPA will not be affected. [Click here](#) for the official spring 2020 grade policy.

- **What is the grading/evaluation plan for High School? When can we anticipate those discussions with our High School kids?**

Our upper school students are currently working on their self-evaluations. They should be ready to share them the week of May 4.

- **Will L&L teachers be sending home summer reading lists as well as general suggested books for the kids?**

Yes

- **Any word from TAPPS about the start of the Fall – sports, music, etc.?**

No word from TAPPS currently. We are moving forward as normal with plans to start practices for volleyball and soccer on August 3rd -- assuming we are cleared to do so by state & local authorities.

- **Will there be some college counselor events happening over the summer?**

Yes, Ms. Moore will be offering individual through the end of June to kids if they wish

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to have it.

Important Note: We encourage Juniors to consider who they will ask for letters of recommendation (Juniors need to do this). We recommend asking in person. However, given the current COVID-19 situation, we suggest they call and follow up with a letter to the person they are asking for a recommendation. Then, sometime in the summer write a note - something like "thanks so much for agreeing to write my recommendation. I hope you are having a great summer."

- **Will there be more counseling over the summer?**

Yes. The 1st week of August, we will also offer a camp with a specialist who can help the kids begin working on their college essays and applications.

You and your student may also want to take some of the online tours being given by many of the colleges.