

Dear Westside Community,

Thank you for the warm welcome as your new principal! I am ecstatic to rejoin Westside High School, as my roots in education started at Westside—I began my career here as a first-year teacher, and fondly remember many Westside traditions such as the homecoming parade and ‘meeting one another at the wolf.’ Since my initial time at Westside, I have grown both personally and professionally; I am married to my husband of 8 years, Brian, and we have an exquisite 18-month old son, Rex. Professionally, I cultivated a dual-credit Futures magnet program at another high school in Houston ISD, as well as served as school principal. I am thrilled that my educational journey has brought me ‘home’ to be a Westside Wolf and to rejoin the pack!

One of my priorities as I rejoin the Wolf Pack is to be an investigative leader and learner. While some of my experiences as a teacher here over a decade ago may still ring true, I know that I must become reacquainted with what Westside looks and feels like today from the perspective of students, faculty and staff, and parents and the community. To that end, I will be publishing a formal entry plan to the community that will allow me to listen to the many voices at Westside, learn from all of you, and introduce myself. My focus will be to continue to learn from all stakeholders about our school, its strengths, and the challenges that may lie in our path in the future, and in doing so, build trust in one another so that we can determine what is working (and support it) and what is not (and change it). My entry plan activities will consist of interviews with groups of stakeholders and are intended as a mechanism to pause for reflection, and also as a way for us to learn to work together in order to determine where our goals lie as a community.

While no two school years are ever exactly the same, this year presents us with a unique set of circumstances instigated by the global pandemic. The start of the school year will begin virtually on September 8th, but it will not lack the elements that have always made Westside so special—the rich spirit of community, student camaraderie, and dedication of educators focused on unlocking the potential of every Westside student. Our team of teachers and administrators are working hard to ensure a successful transition between in-person classes and events to online, virtual platforms without compromising the ‘Westside Way’.

Flexibility and adaptability will continue to be key characteristics for all stakeholders this year as we continue to build on not only the firm foundation of our school’s twenty year history of excellence pre-COVID 19, but also the successes of the Spring semester marked by our rapid yet fluid transition to virtual learning. We will continue to leverage district systems and structures such as The HUB and Microsoft Teams to produce a blend of both live (synchronous) virtual classes and ‘flex’ (asynchronous) time where students are able to get teacher support and enrichment in small groups and one-on-one as well as work on independent assignments.

The Westside virtual daily schedule will be published soon, and, in the interim, we ask that all parents take the Parent Introduction to Virtual Learning Course found here: <https://www.houstonisd.org/Page/182808>. It will set expectations for a smooth virtual start to school on September 8th. We will settle for nothing less than achieving a dynamic virtual experience until it’s safe to be back in-person.

In the coming days, you can expect a published virtual daily schedule, as well as details surrounding our Wolf Camp for all freshmen on August 28th (virtual) and our Back to School Bash on September 3rd from 4-6pm (virtual). Laptop deployment and ID photos for our 9th graders is underway; details have been posted on our social media accounts as well as on our [school website](#).

I am energized to be here and ready to immerse myself in the work! I look forward to analyzing our history of success with you in order to work together to take Westside High School to the next level and I am eager to meet and build rapport with parents, students, and faculty.

Sincerely,

Keri Wittpenn

Principal