



## **2020-2021 Sixth Grade Learning Models FAQs**

To provide clarity and inform your decision making for the year, we have compiled a list of FAQs about the sixth grade Walden@Home student learning experience as well as other questions that were addressed at the August 25 roundtable.

### **How will the cohort structure work in 6th grade?**

Utilizing the guidelines provided by public health, all students are divided into cohort groups of 10-12 for instruction. Sixth grade will have two cohorts.

Depending on the mode of learning that you select for the year, Walden@Home or Enhanced Hybrid, your child will be placed in an online cohort within one of these two groups.

### **Within this structure, how does remote learning work for Walden@Home students?**

Following the Walden@Home schedule, students will participate in a mix of live lessons, known as synchronous learning, and self-directed independent work, also referred to as asynchronous learning. During synchronous learning, students will be on a live lesson with Ella, Jordan, or a specialty teacher to receive instruction. These lessons will be provided via Zoom when all students are learning remotely, and from the classroom when Enhanced Hybrid students are on campus, with the @Home students streaming into the live classes.

Walden@Home students will spend roughly 60% of their time in synchronous learning each day. This includes whole-group and small-group sessions with their teacher or working collaboratively with other Walden@Home students. Teachers will also check in with students regarding their social emotional wellness and help establish personal connections amongst Walden@Home students.

Similar to a classroom experience, the teacher will regularly communicate with the Walden@Home cohort to check for understanding, assign group tasks, answer additional questions, or provide clarity about expectations. The remaining time will be spent completing assignments asynchronously, accessing pre-recorded content or independent learning tasks.

Additionally, sixth grade Walden@Home students will have one time per week during synchronous online office hours where learners and their families can meet to discuss progress and outstanding questions or concerns.

### **If Walden moves to the yellow zone and Enhanced Hybrid students return to campus, what impact will this have on the Walden@Home students?**

If a return to campus transition is possible, advanced notice will be provided. During this transition, Walden@Home students will engage in pre-assigned and recorded asynchronous learning activities for one week to allow for in-person students to learn protocols and establish routines for on-campus learning. Walden@Home students will continue to follow the Walden@Home schedule asynchronously and will also receive an online check-in from their teacher.

### **What will the Walden@Home daily schedule look like?**

You can access the general Walden@Home schedule [here](#). A detailed schedule specific to sixth grade will be forthcoming in the beginning of the school year.

School will begin at 8:30 a.m. and end at 3:00 p.m.

The daily schedule features four blocks of synchronous instruction, as well as a dedicated independent work time. During asynchronous times, Walden@Home students will engage in independent and self-directed activities to support the synchronous instruction provided by their teacher. This schedule will remain the same when the Enhanced Hybrid cohorts return to school.

### **Will the Walden@Home students have opportunities to interact with the Hybrid students of their cohort?**

Walden@Home and Hybrid students will interact regularly for a daily morning and closing meeting. During these teacher-directed activities, rites of passage such as mentoring, class assemblies, matriculation, and inquiry project will be planned and discussed collectively to include both groups. During academic blocks of synchronous instruction, Walden@Home students will be positioned at the front of the room so they can easily hear and see Ella and Jordan. For collaborative activities (such as turn-and-talks or break-out groups), Walden@Home students will interact with each other and will not be in groups with Hybrid students. Partnerships and small groups will take place within the Walden@Home cohort structure. When the live synchronous teaching is over, interaction with hybrid students will be limited; Walden@Home students will work independently or collaborate with other Walden@Home students.

### **Will Walden@Home students interact with hybrid students during social times such as lunch or recess?**

Like a mixed-grade Ponderers' lunchtime on campus, Walden@Home students will have the option to join the other 4th-6<sup>th</sup> grade Walden@Home cohorts for virtual social lunches.

### **Will Walden@Home students be able to participate in outdoor education?**

We are currently waiting on guidance from our partners at the Teton Science Schools about this. We will keep you updated as information becomes available.

### **How will you ensure that 6<sup>th</sup> graders have a cohesive class experience?**

The students will conduct their studies in two separate models and in separate cohorts, however the rites of passage that have become the hallmark of the sixth grade experience — mentorship, inquiry project, assembly leadership, guild week, mural/t-shirt design, faculty vs. sixth grade games, and graduation—will be approached creatively to build cohesion amongst the group. Building on the momentum from last spring's remote learning experience, Ella and Jordan will facilitate these dialogues during the "everybody" morning and afternoon meetings, and also use Microsoft Classroom and Flipgrid to query contributions and ideas from all members of the class to foster collective decision making.

### **What are you hearing from other schools about the matriculation process for 7<sup>th</sup> grade?**

If you have not already done so, please sign up for a matriculation meeting with Billy, Danica, and Terra. During this time, we review details of the process and assist in building a personalized application process for your child and family. We will also share insights about tours, shadow days, interviews and testing requirements as well as the preparation that Walden will do with students to set them up for a successful matriculation.

### **Will there be ERB testing this year? If so, will this be used as a criterium in admissions for middle/high school?**

We are currently researching the available options for ERB testing and considering how or if it will be administered. Middle schools have indicated that they will not be looking for ERB scores as a part of an official transcript as many schools were not able to take them last spring.

### **What if only a very small number of 6<sup>th</sup> grade families choose the at-home option- how will you form dynamic discussion and learning groups?**

We recognize that this can be a possibility and will be responsive to creating a dynamic experience for both Enhanced Hybrid and Walden@Home students.

### **Please describe the decision-making process for hybrid classes to move to in-person instruction.**

Walden will follow the guidance and restrictions put in place by local, state and federal public health authorities. Walden remains committed to carefully monitoring and responding to new information about COVID-19 and its impacts. Keeping the child at the center, we have developed an informed approach that considers the impacts of crisis and the response to changes that are necessary for children and families to thrive under the current circumstances.

Please refer to the slides in the Campus Reopening section in our 6<sup>th</sup> grade presentation and visit the FAQs on our [Progressing in Community webpage](#) for information about Walden's approach to the waiver process.

### **Ponderers**

Students in the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> grades, in both Enhanced Hybrid and Walden@Home cohorts, will participate virtually in Walden's tradition of mix-aged Ponderers' groups. Ponderers will meet once a week and participate in activities, reflection, and discussion around topics such as SEL, conflict resolution, friendship, team building, social justice, and current events. Ponderers will have a social lunch schedule and participate in virtual events throughout the year.

### **Deep-Time Fridays**

For Walden@Home students all year and while the entire class is remote, Fridays will be a flexible day for collaborative project work, virtual field trips, independent hands-on projects, and catching up on work from the week. In compliance with public health requirements, students in the Enhanced Hybrid cohort model will participate in walking field trips, outdoor learning in nearby parks, and in-school project work on Fridays.

## **Can online students become hybrid students and vice versa, since there won't be separate cohorts?**

No, students cannot switch learning models over the course of the year. The reason for the yearlong commitment to one model is grounded in pedagogy and safety for all Walden students. This commitment does not change because of the unique cohort structure of the sixth grade. While there will be intentional moments for class cohesion, we also recognize that students' learning and life experience in the Walden@Home and Enhanced Hybrid models inevitably will be different. The impacts of uprooting cohort consistency for a child are a practice we do not endorse. The cohort structure allows children to establish bonds and create a learning community within the selected model that nurtures wonder, curiosity, and empathy. During this time, we believe it is critical to involve and uphold student and family decisions to feel safe and respected.

Creating the conditions for effective instruction rests in paying explicit attention to students' safety and well-being. At Walden, we have taught children from an early age that we establish this through developing mutual trust. School is a central part of a child's world, and especially during times of uncertainty, trusting relationships with peers, teachers, and administrators at Walden are foundational to their experience. In this time in children's development that is marked with change, confusion, and uncertainty, we know that clear boundaries, predictability, support, and unchanging standards and expectations are necessary to create the synergy and cohesion that are essential for a successful year of learning. To provide clarity for this approach, Walden has intentionally outlined the decision-making protocols, processes, and re-entry points for every family.

Maintaining our commitment to equity and honoring each individual, we affirm and recognize the complicated choices that families are facing in the present reality of the pandemic. We also realize that every story is personal. We have provided an equitable opportunity for each family to choose a learning model based on their child's and family's needs, and to build a trusting partnership with teachers, administrators, and other families. This model ensures that each child will be seen and celebrated while providing the opportunity to build community and construct knowledge with peers in a similar circumstance. The developmental stage our sixth graders are in already requires them to cope with unprecedented changes, both physical and emotional. We maintain that offering a consistent year-long learning model grounded in predictability and support will create the conditions students need to thrive, establish personal agency, and feel empowered to navigate these changes.