

TJ Cross-Country Welcome Letter

Dear Thomas Jefferson High School Athletes & Parents,

Welcome to the 2021 Cross-Country Program! My name is Jessica Popper, and I am truly looking forward to an amazing upcoming Cross-Country season. This will be my third year as head cross-country coach, and I currently teach history and psychology at TJ. I was both a cross-country and track runner throughout all of high school, and I still enjoy running (and occasionally competing) today! I'd also like to introduce our assistant coach, Marianna Barclay. Marianna is a former Color Guard coach, a history teacher at TJ, and a certified personal trainer!

Cross-country is a sport that emphasizes sportsmanship, teamwork, and a good work ethic. Students who participate are expected to meet these high ideals and become positive leaders and role models for others to follow. In addition to exhibiting exemplary behavior at all times, cross-country runners (like all TJ athletes) must maintain **scholastic eligibility** throughout the season. Any athlete with more than one "F" is ineligible to participate in competitions.

The cross-country season begins on August 9, 2021. From 8/9-8/13 we will have morning practices, and in the following weeks we will practice from 3:05-4:30pm. Our practices consist of runs of different lengths on the track and through the school neighborhoods. All athletes are expected to attend practice everyday (unless they are ill or have communicated with me otherwise). Athletes who do not attend practice regularly will not be permitted to compete in meets. Meets will be held throughout the week and occasionally on the weekends.

A few key things that are critical to your success as a Cross-Country runner:

1. SUMMER TRAINING!

The main goal in the summer is to safely accumulate as much mileage as possible in order to increase your aerobic fitness and avoid injury in the fall. You should also incorporate speed workouts, cross-training, hill workouts, and strength training into your weekly routine. **You must be dedicated to running this summer in order to be successful in the fall season!**

I will occasionally organize optional group runs/workouts throughout the summer and I encourage athletes to meet up and run with one another as well. Running with your teammates is a fun way to hold each other accountable for summer training and to get to know each other before the season starts. **Please use the attached running log to track your summer mileage--and don't forget to stretch before and after you workout!**

2. HYDRATION

Drink lots and lots of water. Summer is obviously hot, plus water keeps your metabolism churning. When the fall season begins you should carry a water bottle with you throughout the school day as well. Avoid sugary drinks and soda!

3. NUTRITION

Steer clear of junk food like pizza, chips, coffee, candy bars, and fast food. Instead, try to focus on a diet of vegetables full of minerals and vitamins, complex carbohydrates found in fruits and grains, and lean protein.

4. RUNNING SHOES

Cross country is a sport, and, like any sport, equipment matters. Athletes should own a pair of quality **running shoes** to wear during summer training and fall practices. Runners may choose to purchase a pair of running spikes for competitions.

Should you have any questions about Cross-Country please feel free to contact me via e-mail (jessica_popper@dpsk12.org; however, I cannot guarantee that I will check my school email on a regular basis throughout the summer. I will also use Remind to communicate with athletes and parents throughout the summer/fall season. **Please download the Remind app and text @tjxco2021 to the number 81010** to ensure you don't miss important announcements.

We can't wait to share our passion for running and to get to know each of you this fall. Go Spartans!

Sincerely,

Jessica Popper & Marianna Barclay