

NOVEMBER 12 2020

UNOFFICIAL NOTES:

**11/12/2020 MCPS COMMUNITY VIRTUAL
CONVERSATION**

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PARTICIPANTS:

Derek Turner, Chief, Engagement, Innovation and Operations

Essie McGuire, Associate, Superintendent for Operations

Dr Donna Redmond Jones, Director, Learning, Achievement and Administrations

Janet Wilson, Chief, Teaching and Learning

Scott Murphy, Director College and Career Readiness and Districtwide Programs

Sarah Sirgo, Director, Learning, Achievement and Administrations

Kevin Lowndes, Associate Superintendent Office of Special Education

Peter Moran, Director of Learning, Achievement and Administrations

Jennifer Webster, Director of Learning, Achievement and Administrations

Derek Turner: Received hundreds of questions. Health metrics matrix created in conjunction with local health officials and looked at schools across the country levels for reopening. Hogan held a press conference to talk about the increase in our rates. Look at covid dashboard on MCPS website. 14 day rate is 233.6 is well out of the window for returning to in person instructions. We will only return when it is safe to do so.

Jones: It is very important to return the survey and note that it IS a selection. We are not seeking to gauge interest, because we need to plan. How many parents want to return drives our planning for instructional, locations, and transportation. Read the attached materials – Parent Guide to know what considerations to think about. It is a personal decision and you can make an individualized decision for each student in your household.

WHY NOW ARE WE RELEASING THIS PLAN WHEN THE RATES ARE GOING UP?

McGuire: We are mindful of the metrics but we also need to plan so that when the metrics improve that we are ready to go.

Wilson: We started this type of planning in the summertime. During that entire time, we have been planning behind the scenes for a variety of delivery options and doing a lot of design work for how we would phase in our students and how to prioritize them. Students in primary grades, 6th graders and 9th graders who are going through a transition and not met their teachers yet, were considered first. And for high schoolers we are monitoring their grades and know they need to be on track for graduation.

Only IF we hit the metrics can we start the return.

WHERE DID WE COME UP WITH THIS METRICS MATRIX?

McGuire: We have worked closely with Dr. Gayles and Dr Stoddard and the county public health team and appreciate their advice, consultation and perspective. We are working with the range of metrics that are in place at the local, state and federal level. All are in similar places. It reflects the state and CDC range of parameters.

Health Metric Matrix for a Safe Phased-in Return to In-Person Instruction

14-Day Raw Average of New Cases		< 52	52-105	105 -157	> 157
14-Day Average New Case Rate* (MD Calculation Model)		< 5	5-10	10-15	> 15
14-Day Average New Case Rate* (CDC Calculation Model)		< 70	70 - 140	140 - 209	> 209
14-Day Average Test Positivity Rate <5%	Student Special Populations	Expanded in-person	Limited in-person	Consider minimal in-person	Virtual
	Group 1	In-person	Consider in-person	Virtual	Virtual
	Group 2	In-person following Group 1	Virtual **	Virtual	Virtual
	Group 3	In-person following Group 2	Virtual **	Virtual	Virtual

* Per 100,000 Residents. The models are calculated using a population estimate of 1.05 million residents in Montgomery County

** If numbers are trending toward 5 then consideration for hybrid in-person can be accelerated

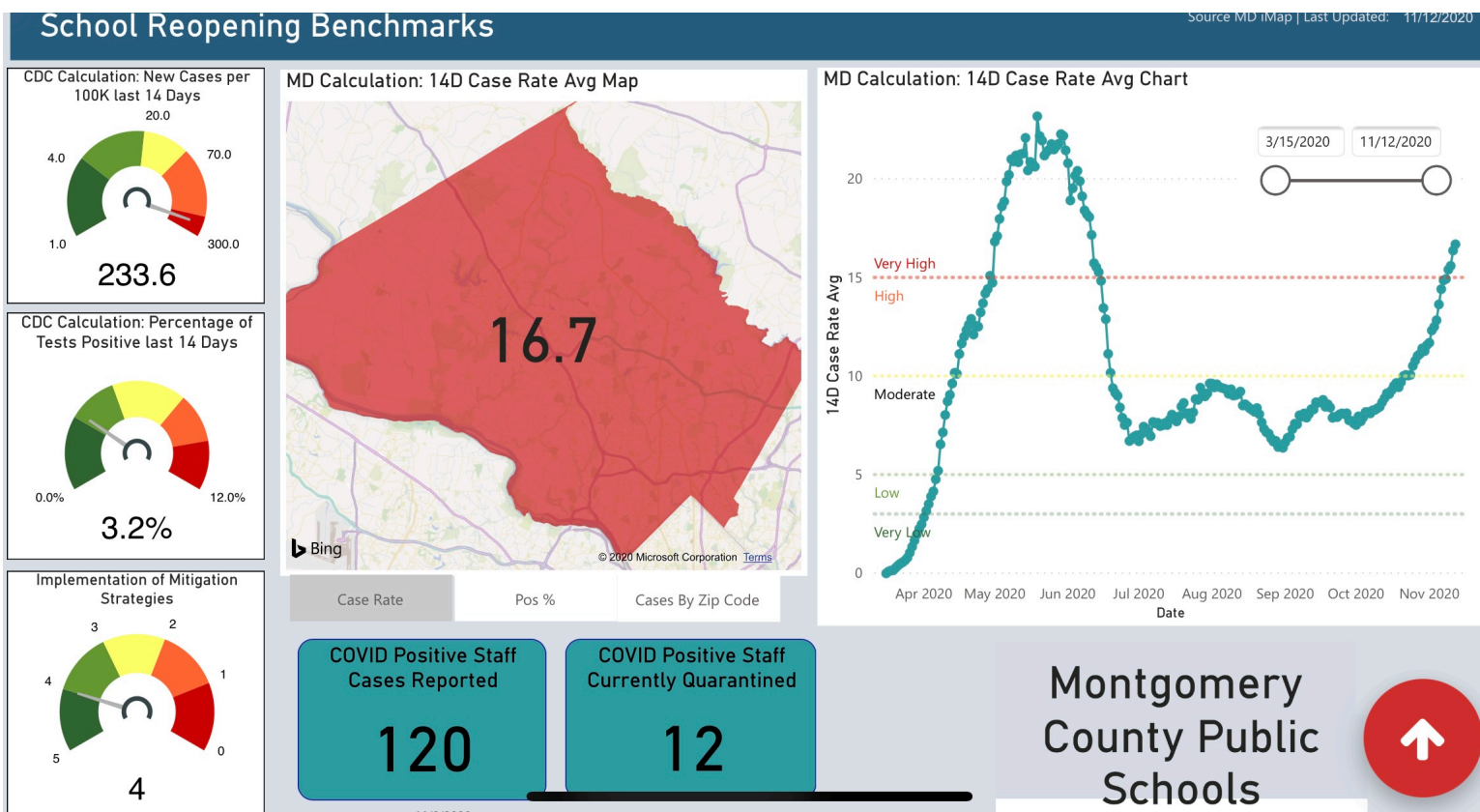
Reassess if new case rate increases by 2 per 100k or if positivity rate increases by 1.5% within 2 weeks

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Expanding Opportunity and Unleashing Potential

Turner: Looking at matrix on website -Look at actual number of new cases in the top line. In middle row, 14 day new case rate as calculated in MD and MoCo. Then 14 day case rate as calculated by CDC. They are different “but I am not a medical doctor and I did not come up with these”

CURRENT SCHOOL DASHBOARD:



ARE WE BEING TOO STRICT? IS EVERYONE ELSE IN THE STATE AND LOCALLY OPENING UP EARLIER?

Turner: We are in the middle. There are jurisdictions that have not opened yet or ones that were open and are now closed. We all are using the best information based on our own local community and density. I appreciate everyone’s feedback and we will continue to look at these numbers. We have to wait until it is safe.

WHEN IS MCPS GOING TO GIVE NOTICE ABOUT THE START DATE WHEN WE HIT A THRESHOLD?

Wilson: We have to constantly monitor the number and in consultation with our local health department, we have to be ready to pivot back out to virtual.

Our planning will take place through December and we hope in early January, parents will be notified of the schedules and transportation. It will be a very cautious phase-in. We don't know what it will take to phase in students in this model.

McGuire: We will take the information from parents in the survey and match up with the logistics of buildings and buses. We will line up a structure and operational schedule that works for staff, students and families and operations. All contingent on how the health information moves forward. We will be watching that carefully but will continue our planning.

Turner: It is important to keep in mind the health conditions. *You can see that just in the last two weeks we have gone from being well within the threshold of us being able to bring small groups back to well beyond the thresholds.* And a threshold to be able to keep them there and not bring them in, bring them out.

IF THE HEALTH METRICS ARE NOT MET BUT WE HAVE A VACCINE WILL YOU REEVALUATE?

We have not thought of that. We know that is not happening immediately or at least *not in this school year.* We won't have it [vaccine] distributed to all of our community members, IF we find that is an option we will reevaluate.

WHAT IS THE METRIC FOR RETURNING ALL STUDENTS FULL TIME?

Turner: If we see a vaccine we want to bring as many students back as possible. But virtual is going to be part of who we are for a long time. It is helpful for some students who are learning well in the virtual environment.

HOW DO I KNOW WHAT GROUP I AM IN FOR THE PHASED IN RETURN?

Moran: Phase 1 is specific special ed programs [etc.].... We will see how successful it is before turning to Phase 2.

It is driven by the number of parents who select to return. The results could lead to students returning two days a week or for a A/B week schedule. We need flexibility and cooperation especially in transportation. Because of reduced capacity of buses, it is going to result in extended commutes. We may need to look at staggered bell times.

Lowndes: We looked at which students needed the most supports to be able to access virtual learning – technology support, instructional supports and behavior supports. **The first groups will be: K-12 autism program, extensions program, school community based program and special schools.** They need the most support with adults where they get direct support from teachers and paraeducators.

Murphy: We are also bringing in our **career technology in the first group – construction, automotive, health care, etc.** **12th graders who are preparing for industry certifications, licenses, special ed career programs and internships.**

HOW WILL MCPS DEAL WITH SNOW DAYS IN THE VIRTUAL WORLD?

McGuire: Virtual is going to allow us to continue to **move ahead with instructions on what would have been a snow day.** So we don't have to worry about extending ourselves in the summer, which is a positive. We are fortunate to be able to lean into our abilities to support virtual learning and maintain instruction on any inclement weather days. We will still consider the roadways for those who have to be in the buildings.

WILL SIBLINGS BE ABLE TO GO TO SCHOOL ON THE SAME DAYS?

Webster: The decision about student schedules depends on the parent preference survey and will be decided on the school level. We will make every attempt to make things as convenient as possible, without making any promises.

HOW WILL WE ENSURE THAT KIDS KEEP THEIR MASKS ON?

Sirgo: We will approach mask wearing as a matter of wellness and not as a disciplinary matter. Office of student support and family engagement, counselors, school psychologists, etc will use it as a teachable moment. Especially for youngest learners and those with disabilities, etc we will talk about it as a wellness issue not a referral to the office, just reminding them about commitments and habits that will keep us all safe. Also just by the amount of time that we have been living with this pandemic, our students know and understand their part in this.

Murphy: During SAT given three times and with hundreds of students there, there was not one instance of a student not wearing a mask. I have to give our students and proctors credit that it happened successfully.

Lowndes: For those **students that are not able to wear masks** (special populations in Phase 1) **we bought additional PPE for staff that will be working with those students.** We are currently working with those students **even in the virtual world to start teaching being able to keep a mask on.** We are very excited about students who may already know the importance of it, but we know there are some in this population who cannot.

Wilson: We need parents help that **this is good citizenship.** Our students will have that sense of responsibility.

Why are we prioritizing our special education students to come back when some of them are the most at risk?

Lowndes; Some of our students are not able to access the distance learning at home because they need so much support to access distance learning. We are setting up model classrooms to show parents and staff how to set this up.

WE ARE HEARING FROM COMMUNITY THAT THEY WANT TO KNOW THE PLAN FIRST BEFORE THEY COMMIT, BUT WE CAN'T MAKE A PLAN UNTIL WE HEAR FROM PARENTS?

WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS THAT MIGHT EVOLVE?

Moran: One of the things that we have learned from studying other school systems is that when they **rely on one model that causes a problem**. Our students are different and learn different content and in different ways.

1) ACADEMIC SUPPORT MODEL:

- **STUDENTS COME IN TO SCHOOL AND REVIVE SUPPORT FROM TEACHER OR PARAEDUCATOR AND THEY WOULD BE IN A CLASSROOM DISTANCED AND SUPERVISED WHILE IN A VIRTUAL CLASSROOM.**

2) SIMULTANEOUS LEARNING:

- **A TEACHER TEACHING IN PERSON STUDENTS WHILE STUDENTS ARE ALSO VIRTUAL FROM HOME. INEQUALITY OF ATTENTION SO WE WILL PROVIDE TWO TEACHERS. THIS MODEL REQUIRES ADDITIONAL STAFFING - ONE TEACHER MAY BE AT HOME GIVING ATTENTION TO THOSE ON VIRTUAL. ONE GROUP MAY WATCH A PRE RECORDED LESSON WHILE THE SECOND GIVES INSTRUCTION.**

3) DIRECT INSTRUCTIONAL MODEL:

- **STUDENTS COME INTO THE CLASSROOM AS TRADITIONAL. THAT WILL BE THE MODEL USED FOR SPECIAL ED POPULATIONS.**

TOPIC OF PARENTS WHO HAVE LEFT MCPS

Wilson: Schools will reach out to families who have not responded to the survey. We will have to default those we cannot reach to the virtual model.

Jones: If you left MCPS to go to a private school and are interested in providing preference, a survey will also be distributed to you. Those who are homeschooled, they still have a student ID so it will be via email. Other families will get a mailing.

CAN WE USE OUTDOOR SPACES TO TEACH?

Webster: Teachers always have the option of taking students outside, but to rely on it as a designated teaching space is too unpredictable to use it every day

HOW DO PARENTS MAKE THE SWITCH FROM WHAT THEY SELECTED?

The complexity of the planning based on the parent data set and that we can rely on it. We all want to do our best to accommodate a learning match, so when a family needs to make a switch, there will be a process generated through the principal. Virtual is the easier one to switch into because there are not capacity issues. It is always our goal to support the needs that our students have.

DO I GET TO KEEP MY SAME TEACHER?

Webster: As we design schedules at the school level, we are going to prioritize not disturbing. We know relationships have been built and maintaining those is ideal. However not seeing results of survey or knowing numbers of staff availability, it is hard to make those promises right now. Our priority is to have as much continuity as possible.

McGuire: Our building capacity is important to keep distance to limit spread and exposure. That means we will have fewer people in each building. That leaves us with no more than a 50% capacity. About 12, 10-15 students, per classroom. It will be specific to each space.

QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS HVAC NEEDS:

McGuire: We are engaged in thorough work to evaluate each school individually in the coming weeks. The health and HVAC industry have come up with standards for how HVAC should operate in schools. **We are improving our filters and will operate our systems differently to increase circulation and bringing in air into the buildings from outside more and more frequently. So we may experience lower temperatures. Where we need to we will add portable air filter systems.**

WILL WE MAKE IT MANDATORY TO MAKE STAFF AND STUDENTS TO GET COVID TESTS OR VACCINES?

Turner: We cannot mandate that adults get medical tests.

McGuire: We don't have state guidance on this yet. We will continue to follow the existing vaccination requirements. And while flu vaccines are not required, they are very important, everyone encouraged to get it to keep us all healthy and as we return in person. There are not enough tests to be able to test every student every day. Practically it would not be possible. We are a very big system and we would not be able to do that at the scale that would make it reliable. We rely on parents and staff to self monitor symptoms. It requires all of us to look out for each other as a community.

WOULD WE BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN OUR UNIVERSAL VIRTUAL SCHEDULE, IE, HIGH SCHOOLERS BELL TIMES BEING AT 9 AM?

McGuire: A lot depends on level of use of transportation. In a regular year, the reason we have staggered bell times is that we need all our buses at every level.

We don't have enough buses to be able to take every student to school at the same time. We will have to go back to staggered bell times if need be. We may have longer arrival and dismissal windows so that we can safely space that out.

HOW WILL THE PEP PROGRAM WORK IN AN IN-PERSON MODEL?

Lowndes: That is in Phase 2. It will be similar to Phase 1 programs where we have direct instruction with teacher and paraeducators.

HOW ARE WE SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH IEPS AND 504 IN A HYBRID MODEL?

Students with 504s are in general education classes, as are many special ed students, so would not be coming in for Phase 1. They continue to receive their special education services in virtual environment. When they come back in hybrid, they will receive those services in school.

IF WE RETURN TO IN-PERSON WILL THE PRIVATE DAYCARE PROGRAMS USING OUR BUILDINGS STILL BE OPERATING?

McGuire: We want to continue to work with the providers in our buildings and the before and after care providers. It will depend though on what the occupancy and capacity is of our buildings.

HOW WILL STUDENTS REMAIN SAFE WHILE THEY ARE EATING?

McGuire: We are working on risk minimization not risk elimination. **Students will have to take their masks off to eat.** Best practices we have reviewed is that **students will eat in their classrooms, still maintaining distance** from each other. We can also **make use of our larger spaces**, like using the cafeteria to allow kids to spread out.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL COMMENTS

Wilson: It is important to allow students that time for interaction in a safe space, which is an experience they are missing. **It is important to allow them to be outside and to allow them to run and play in some kind of controlled experience.**

Moran: It is essential that we talk about the **social emotional well being of our students, not just physical health.** It is essential that students connect with their peers and socialize. They have been impacted by being isolated. Each one of our instructional models is based on a **solid social emotional experience and creating a classroom experience** and allowing them to come back together to be kids. **It's a key piece of the plan for our return.**

HOW ARE WE KEEPING OUR CLASSROOMS CLEAN AND BUSES CLEAN?

McGuire: We have looked at those cleaning practices and health recommendations. Buses will be sprayed completely to be sanitized at the end of the day. In between routes, drivers will use hand cleaning on any seats that have been used. In classrooms, we anticipate additional focus on high touch areas – doorknob, desk surfaces. We will have a lot of cleaning materials viable in the classroom so that teachers and students can keep them sanitized during the day. We will rely on building services even more than we normally do – railings, bathrooms, other areas where people have touched surfaces.

HOW WILL MAGNET AND IMMERSION PROGRAMS WORK IN A HYBRID MODEL?

Murphy: If you are in a magnet, immersion or IB program, you will always maintain continuity in enrollment in those programs.

HOW WILL PARENTS BE INFORMED OF COVID CASES IN THEIR CHILDREN'S SCHOOL? WITHOUT VIOLATING PRIVACY OF STUDENT OR STAFF MEMBER?

McGuire: First we have to get accurate information as to the case and the exposure. We will work on notification with HHS and guided by public health colleagues. We will notify first those who have the most exposure, then the whole community while maintaining individual information.

IF WE DON'T MAKE IT ON JANUARY 12, WHAT IS THE PLAN?

McGuire: We will constantly assess if we meet the threshold. We want to be ready and flexible. We would not give up, but we will say now is not the time and look to when we can move forward.

IS THERE A DATE WE WOULD GIVE UP IF SAY IT IS MAY 29?

Wilson: I don't think we ever give up. **We can have a remarkable summer program again.** The impact to learning is exponential the longer this goes on. **We will extend learning time.**

Webster: If the metrics allow we can **keep trying to find ways to bring students together at the end of the year.**

ARE WE GOING TO KEEP WORKING TO IMPROVE THE VIRTUAL EXPERIENCE?

Sirgo: Yes. We continue to study the experiences our students are having and identify if there are solutions inside the schedule.

Murphy: the pressure on secondary students re exams, we have to continue to be **responsive to pacing in instruction, grading, reporting.** We need to keep making adjustments as we go in this virtual model. It is hard on students.

WHAT HEALTH ACCOMMODATIONS DO WE HAVE IN PLACE FOR OUR STAFF? AND WHAT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IS IN PLACE FOR THEM?

McGuire: We are purchasing **so many safety supplies, face covering, cleaning supplies for the buildings.** We have a robust inventory. We have a website where staff can go to indicate that they have health concerns and it has information about accommodations and leave. We will be evaluating those on case by case basis.

Moran: We have learned by studying other school districts that those who prepared and had a **robust professional development plan have succeeded.** Those that **directed teachers to return without a lot of guidance have suffered.** School leadership and instruction is going to look different. We will collect feedback from staff after the first Phase.

Lowndes: We have worked on **intense training for de-escalation and social distancing with students that might need restraint.** Many of our students

coming back will need personal care and hygiene support [talking about special populations]. **We are doing professional development on how to do that safely, prior to students coming back.**

WILL TEACHERS HAVE TIME TO GO BACK AND SET THEIR CLASSROOM UP BEFORE THEY ARE ASKED TO RETURN FOR IN PERSON INSTRUCTION?

Moran: Giving teachers time to prepare is critical for this to be successful. We will be using technology in innovative ways and teachers need time to get in and learn it before going live.

Wilson: that will be critically important in the teaming models – they need time to plan for those first weeks of instruction in particular for a simultaneous model. Teachers will have time to orient to a new setting.

Lowndes: Teachers and principals will be able to see what a safe setup looks like in model buildings. And there will be central office support to help teachers set up their classrooms.

WE WILL TRY TO ANSWER MORE QUESTIONS ONLINE.

ATTEND THE NOVEMBER 17 PRESENTATION.

WRAPUP:

Lowndes: We are working very hard to make the environment safe for students and staff. We have done a lot of research into what other districts have done. We are doing everything we can to provide the most safe environment. It is inherently a risk when you come back into buildings.

Moran: We are not chasing perfection. We are just trying to make progress and take care of our kids and their social emotional and community feeling and allow them to talk. It is going to be a challenging transition and we need to reconnect. On behalf of all of us on this call and all teachers and paraeducators, we are excited to see the kids again and just be together.

Murphy: Hats off to our teachers and principals and staff for doing the hard work and making this happen.

Jones: We want to plan the best model for you. And whether parents are selecting all virtual or in person we want to put together the best high quality program and we rely on everyone doing the survey.

Sirgo: Choose what is best for you. Many of us are also parents, and MCPS parents. We are extremely committed to making sure that families feel they have choice and we are able to match what is best for you with what we can offer. We appreciate your grace and understanding in fluidity in what we offer.

Webster: This has been a time of uncertainty. Each time we make a plan we have to adjust it. We have to take it one step at a time and take a careful step and be clear in our communication about that. We acknowledge and appreciate all the adjusting everyone has done

McGuire: We are all in this together and are all working to support our families, our community and our schools and staff. We have to think about everything differently, and all for the first time.

Wilson: Whether a parent checks virtual or in person, we are committed to continuous improvement in both models. I hear from parents on ways all virtual it is working for their children. They say that it has been a positive experience for their children, and that they want to continue it next year even when covid goes away. I invite parents to reach out to schools when there is any need because we have wellbeing teams and academic teams who can offer that support. In both of the choices, that social emotional component and the concerns there are paramount to us. We want to work with families to make sure students are well and ready to learn.

TURNER: IF THEN ELSE. IF WE REACH THE METRICS THEN WE AN HAVE IN PERSON OR ELSE WE WILL CONTINUE MORE VIRTUAL