

**NOVEMBER 17 2020**

**UNOFFICIAL NOTES:**

**11/17/2020 MCPS BOE MEETING  
“WORK SESSION: OPENING SCHOOLS IN  
RECOVERY OF EDUCATION”**

# **MODERATELY MOCO**

**BY JUNE TRAI COFF**

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# **11/17/20 MCPS BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING - "WORK SESSION: OPENING SCHOOLS IN RECOVERY OF EDUCATION"**

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## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Dr. Smith discussed Governor Hogan's press conference that was occurring at the same time. He said he would color his remarks today in the context of this press conference which was causing him angst. He said no one knows the future, he needs to think about the safety of all in the community, and **MCPS would not be making commitments today.**

**He said that he understands there are competing interests and different perspectives and opinions about reopening schools.** He gave an analogy of needing air, water, food, shelter, and care, but some needs come before others.

**He said that he works for the Board of Education and is meeting with local and state officials, including superintendents and health officers, on regular calls. He said he has a sense of urgency in these collaborations.**

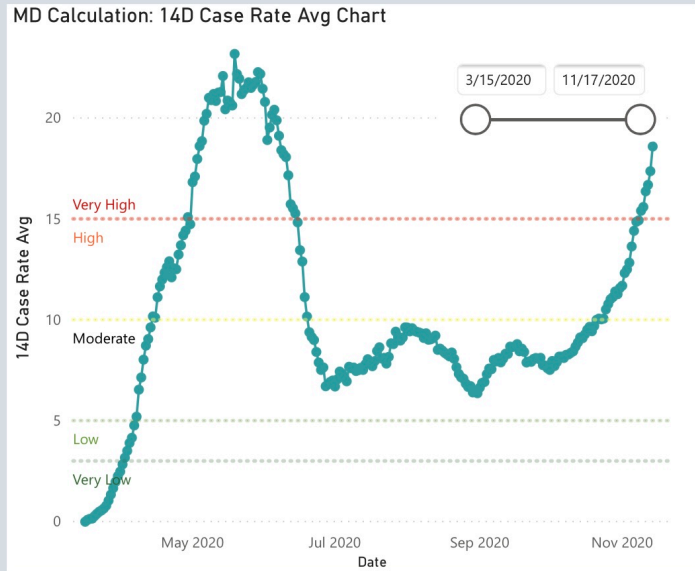
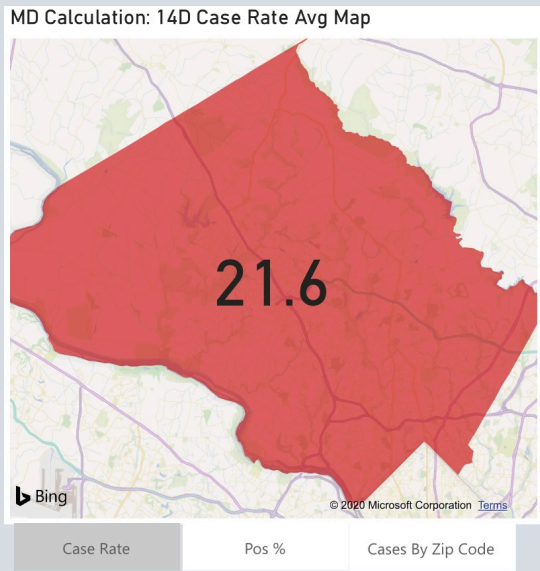
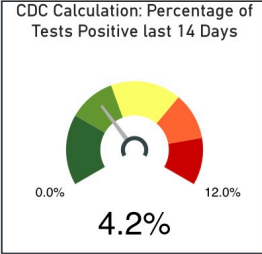
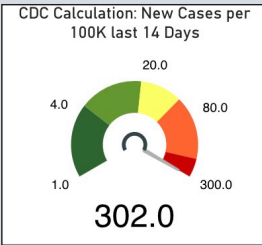
Dr. Smith discussed the **upcoming December 3 meeting** and said **perhaps there would be a recommendation for the schools to open and perhaps there would be a recommendation that the schools need more time.**

Dr. McKnight said the meeting today would focus on the different instructional models and acknowledged the need to be adaptable and flexible. She reiterated that virtual learning will remain an option.

## METRICS

Mr. Turner gave an update of the current metrics on the MCPS dashboard. The case rate is at **19.1 per 100K** which is above the threshold for reopening, and the **percent positivity is at 5%** which is exactly at the threshold for reopening. **He said 136 employees have tested positive for COVID-19 since March; 17 of them are currently in quarantine.**

School Reopening Benchmarks



COVID Positive Staff Cases Reported

**136**

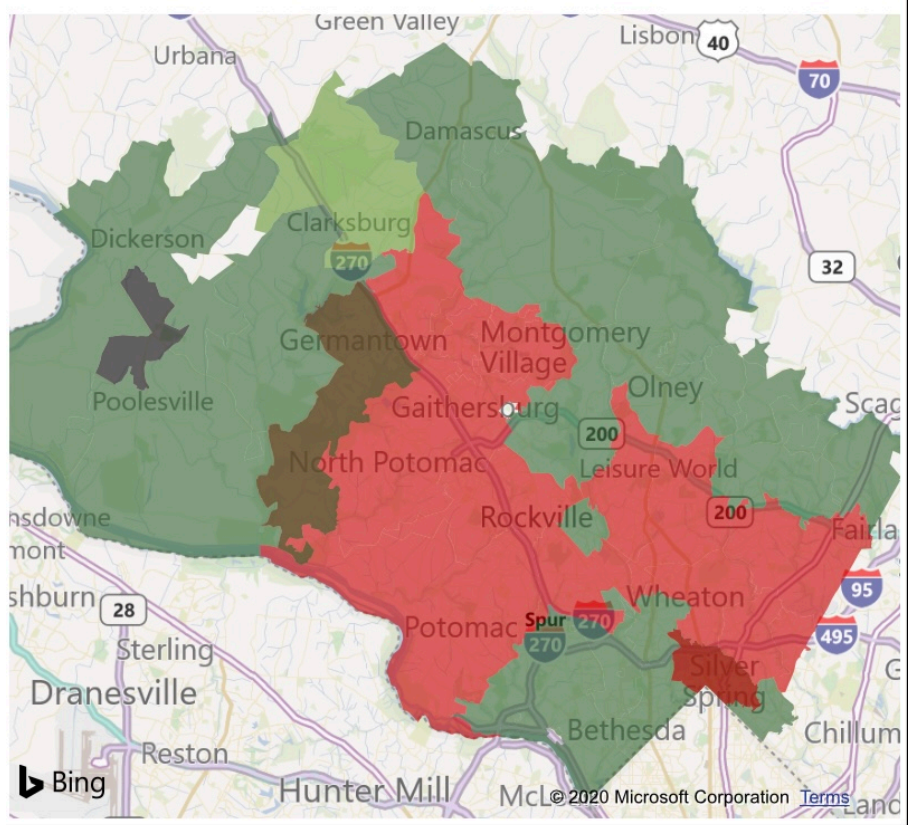
COVID Positive Staff Currently Quarantined

**17**

Montgomery County Public Schools



Total Cases last 14 Days by ZIP



Case Rate | Pos % | Cases By Zip Code

## Q & A FOR METRICS

Ms. O'Neill discussed **New York City schools using a threshold of 3% test positivity and asked if it was a universal threshold that MCPS should be using.** Mr. Turner said the **baseline is 5% in Maryland.**

**Ms. Slivestre said schools are essential and are not the primary places of COVID-19 transmission.** She pointed out the **governor placing restrictions on bars** because of their role in the spread of the virus. She also discussed **evidence from schools open throughout the country regarding them not being the cause of transmission of virus because they are taking safety precautions.**

Mr. Turner responded that **MCPS adjusted their metrics table to color code the 5-10 cases/100K as orange (accelerate the return to school for some groups).** He also said school systems are part of the community and MCPS follows local guidance.

Ms. Smondrowski said **school is essential, and evidence has shown schools are not superspreaders of the virus.** She noted the virus will be with us for a long time. **She has not heard of problems in the learning hubs and asked if MCPS is monitoring what is happening in the hubs as a reference.** Mr. Turner responded that MCPS monitors the science. **There have been a small number of COVID-19 cases in the school buildings (within the hubs and within MCPS staff).**

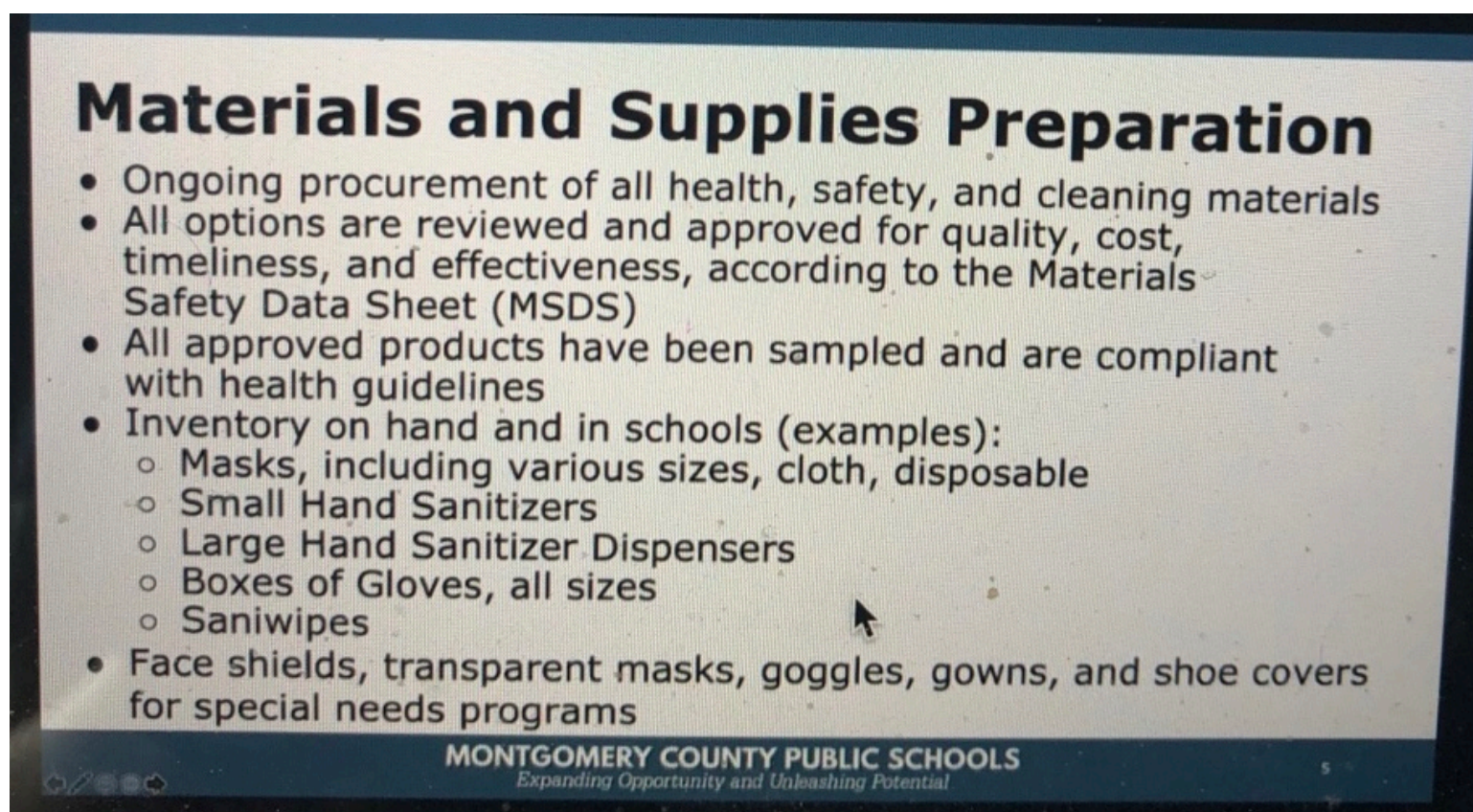
**Ms. O'Neill said schools are essential but noted that schools in other states have had to close as cases in the community increased.**

Ms. Smondrowski asked if there would be temperature checks in schools when they open. Dr. Smith said there is work going on in the state. **There would not be widespread COVID-19 testing in schools.** Ms. McGuire said the **state guidance is that temperature checks are useful but can be done at home.**

## OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ms. McGuire said **operational preparations are in progress, training and guidance materials are being prepared for staff, and the system is being positioned to respond to community health conditions.**

She discussed the **procurement of health and safety materials** (see the figure below). She noted there is a robust inventory and active ongoing purchasing, including special supplies for special education students and their teachers.



Ms. McGuire said **the safety office is testing the quality, cost, and effectiveness of supplies.** There will be a status report of the air quality work in December.

Ms. McGuire then presented the **10 schools selected to be the regional model schools for building setup and preparation** (see figure below). There are **3 elementary, 4 middle, and 3 high schools.**

# Building Preparation: School Setup

School Administrators were provided guidance and parameters toward preparing their buildings.

- Convene a small planning team
  - Plan the placement of signs, order signs and arrange at least 2 classrooms
  - Use the **COVID 5-PILLARS READINESS CHECKLIST** to assist
- We selected these 10 schools to set up completely as physically distanced models for other schools to visit and learn from
- Continuing development of training and resource materials for principals, curriculum staff, building services, and other core functions

Regional Model Schools Set up in process		
AREA 1	AREA 2	AREA 3
Bel Pre ES	Strawberry Knoll ES	Oak View ES
Pyle MS	Farquhar MS	Parkland MS
Richard Montgomery HS	Lakelands Park MS	Damascus HS
	Walter Johnson HS	

# Transportation

**Initial operating assumptions** based on **one student** in every other bus seat:

- In line with CDC recommendations
- Results in physical distance of approximately six feet
- Consistent with messaging of six feet physical distance in buildings
- Limits capacity of bus to **11 students**, or just less than 25 percent of normal practical capacity
- **Reduced capacity** could limit ability to provide transportation to all students at all levels



Vast majority of districts using **one student in each bus seat**:

- Every district in Maryland and Fairfax County using this method (or loading buses more densely)
- Potential conflicting **messaging** between physical distancing on bus and in buildings
- Limits **capacity of bus at 22 students**, just less than 50 percent of normal practical capacity
- **Increased ability** to provide transportation to all students at all levels

Ms. McGuire discussed transportation. **She mentioned using a capacity of 22 students per bus (1 per seat), consistent with standard practices (see figure below).**

She also reiterated safety practices to be used (see figure below).

**Transportation (continued)**

Core safety practices will be implemented in any operational model

Cleaning, masks, hand sanitizer—

- Each bus will be **disinfected** with a high-power sprayer following each day of use
- **High-touch areas** of the bus will be disinfected by bus staff between loads of students
- **Hand sanitizer** will be available for bus staff and students
- Bus staff and students will be required to wear **face coverings**
- Face coverings used by students with special needs will be case-by-case, in collaboration with school/program staff
- Bus staff will conduct **health self-assessment** each day before reporting to work

Essie McGuire  
Associate Superintendent  
Operations

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## Q & A FOR SUPPLIES, BUILDINGS AND TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Dixon asked about the supply of masks at schools. **Ms. McGuire said there would be multiple masks available for every student and staff member as well as disposable ones for visitors.** Ms. Dixon liked that idea and noted that Wegmans provides masks for shoppers that don't have one.

Ms. O'Neill asked if the **parent preference survey had a question about transportation.** **Ms. McGuire said yes, and there would be a seat assignment for students.** Ms. O'Neill provided a suggestion about a practice at a private school – students have a lanyard that connects to their mask.



Mr. Asante asked if there was anecdotal information about **how bus drivers are managing compliance with safety rules on buses**. Ms. McGuire said people are having **good experiences**.

Ms. Wolff asked about parents attesting that their children are healthy and if there is a comparison with comparable sized districts regarding temperature checks. **Ms. McGuire said many systems are relying on parent attestation. Dr. Smith said temperature checks are hard to do consistently and reliably.** He said if parents don't attest, then the student **should not be able to come to school.** **He said this has not been a problem in other districts.**

Ms. Smondrowski asked if there was flexibility with the parent preference survey or if families were locked in to their choice. **Dr. Smith said it is more difficult to change from virtual to in person or to come back from private or homeschool to in-person school.** Dr. Smith also said the limited mixing of cohorts is easier to implement in elementary schools than in secondary schools.

## **PARENT PREFERENCE SURVEY**

Dr. Redmond Jones said **21,934 responses had been received on 10/12/20.** She gave an update of current numbers.

- **35,216 RESPONSES**
- **15,953 SELECTED VIRTUAL ONLY**
- **19,263 SELECTED PARTIAL IN PERSON**

Principals receive updated reports every Tuesday and Friday. The reports contain information about the number of students who selected each option and who haven't responded.

## **Q & A FOR SURVEY SECTION**

Ms. O'Neill said the **terminology of "survey" doesn't convey that this an election of an option.** She has heard from **families who moved to**

**homeschooling or private school that cannot respond because they don't have a student ID.**

Dr. Redmond Jones said there is a draft survey in progress for those students. Mr. Turner said the word **“survey” confused parents**, but the parent guide explains this. **Also, phone calls and postcards will be coming.**

**Ms. Wolff asked if communication about the survey could be shared with TV stations.** Dr. Wilson noted that the information is being provided to principals twice a week so they can begin planning. Well-being and academic teams are engaged.

Ms. Silvestre noted that **busy working parents don't watch board meetings** and asked if the family guide is the best source of information for them. Dr. Redmond Jones said the family guide and the town hall meeting were good sources. **Ms. Silvestre suggested consolidating the town hall meeting into a promo or creating a frequently asked questions (FAQ) document.** She said people don't have time for 2-hour videos.

**Dr. McKnight said an email blast is sent after each meeting.** Ms. Evans noted she gets text messages from MCPS. **Mr. Asante asked if the metrics table could be put in the survey.**

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Dr. Lowndes gave an update on **special education plans and services.** He noted that there are **10 classes set up at Wells, West, and Sligo middle schools for special education student assessments.** They are open until 7 PM on weekdays and are open on weekends. Snack and stipends (?) are provided.

He discussed the phase-in schedule for students beginning on Jan 12 (if health metrics allow). The phase 1 students are those that have the most difficult time with distance learning. He also clarified that the students being phased in are

# Update: Special Education Assessment Centers

- Visited all schools with principals and facilities
- Safety protocols have been established at each school
- Working with OHRD on filling positions and posting openings
- Division of Food & Nutrition Services is providing snacks

Kevin Lowndes  
Associate Superintendent  
Office of Special Education

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those that are in self-contained classes with special education teachers. It is not special education students who are in general classes.

## Phase-in Schedule: Special Education (Updates)

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
K-12 Autism Program	Select Pre-K Programs	Asperger's Program
Extensions Program	Learning for Independence	Elementary Learning Centers
School Community-based	Bridge Program	Social Emotional Special Education Services
Special Schools		

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There will be consistent classroom cohorts of 2 classes, he gave an example of a class having 6 students, 1 teacher, and 2 paraeducators. There would be a limited amount of other specialists coming in, and specials such as PE or art would be provided remotely whenever possible. See figures below for additional considerations.

## Guidance for Alternate Learning Opportunities Classrooms: Consistent Classroom Cohorts

- Consistent classroom cohorts are an important health and safety model when student characteristics limit mask wearing and social distancing.
- This model has implications for location and method of related services, specials and program specialist support to limit staff movement in and out of cohorts.
- This model should be consistently implemented in similar programs across school buildings.

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## Phase 1 Related Services: Remote with In-class Facilitation

**Health and Safety:** Emphasis on the greatest reduction in risk of transmission in cohort community, potential primary contacts, and need for quarantine across multiple cohorts/schools if positive test.

**Service Delivery:** Requires additional technology to promote effective service delivery (e.g., large-group webcam, student document camera with Chromebook) and professional development on best practices for effective facilitation by cohort staff. Critical needs (e.g., equipment fitting) which cannot be addressed through remote services may require periodic pull-out or plug-in services within cohort (i.e., not more than every 2 weeks)

**Administrative Considerations:** Scheduling for in-class facilitation of services would be integrated into cohort master schedule. Related services provider schedule for other school and program services may impact scheduling flexibility.

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Many of these programs are **located in buildings that have already been adapted for these discrete programs**. Other districts have noted approximately 60% of these students choosing to come back in person.

## **Q & A FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Ms. Silvestre asked what would happen with the special education assessments in December if metrics don't improve, and for instance, depend on a vaccine being distributed. **Dr. Lowndes said they can do informal assessments to determine if students qualify for special education services. Other districts have hired outside firms to give formalized assessments virtually.**

Ms. Wollf asked if the virtual assessments have been validated. Dr. Lowndes said they are looking into it. Dr. Smith said they are evaluating the effectiveness and cost of testing.

Ms. Silvestre asked what would happen if schools can't open all year because of metrics. Dr. Smith said MCPS would come back to the BOE with another projected date.

## **SAT UPDATE**

Dr. Murphy gave an update on the number of students that took the SAT and said MCPS learned from the implementation of health and safety protocols. Dr. McKnight said there will be a communication this week about the status of the December 5 SAT.

See chart below for more details

# SAT Update

- Health and safety protocols, PPE, Lessons Learned
- Coordination with Operations and Instruction
- Applauding the work of coordinators and proctors

SAT Testing Date	# of MCPS Students
September 26, 2020	1,088
October 3, 2020	1,647
November 7, 2020	1,328 (Preliminary)

- **Upcoming Testing Dates:**
  - SAT December 5, 2020
  - ACT December 12, 2020
  - PSAT January 21, 2021

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## INSTRUCTIONAL MODELS

Dr. Murphy and Dr. Moran discussed updates on virtual learning and plans for return to in person learning.

Dr. Murphy said there have been concerns about the schedule and pacing of classes, particularly at the secondary level in math, AP, and IB courses. There may be adjustments made in the second semester, such as to math and English classes.

There are more immediate changes being considered for Marking Period 2 such as:

- **GRADING AND REPORTING – NOT COUNTING THE MCPS PROGRESS CHECK ASSESSMENT AS 10% OF THE GRADE**
- **REDUCING THE NUMBER OF GRADED ASSIGNMENTS DUE TO CONCERNS ABOUT EXCESSIVE WORKLOAD**
- **FLEXIBILITY WITH DEADLINES AND CONSIDERING THE 0 VS 50% RULE FOR WORK NOT COMPLETED**

# Updates on Virtual Learning MP2

## ELEMENTARY LEVEL

- Adjustments to elementary school schedule

## SECONDARY LEVEL

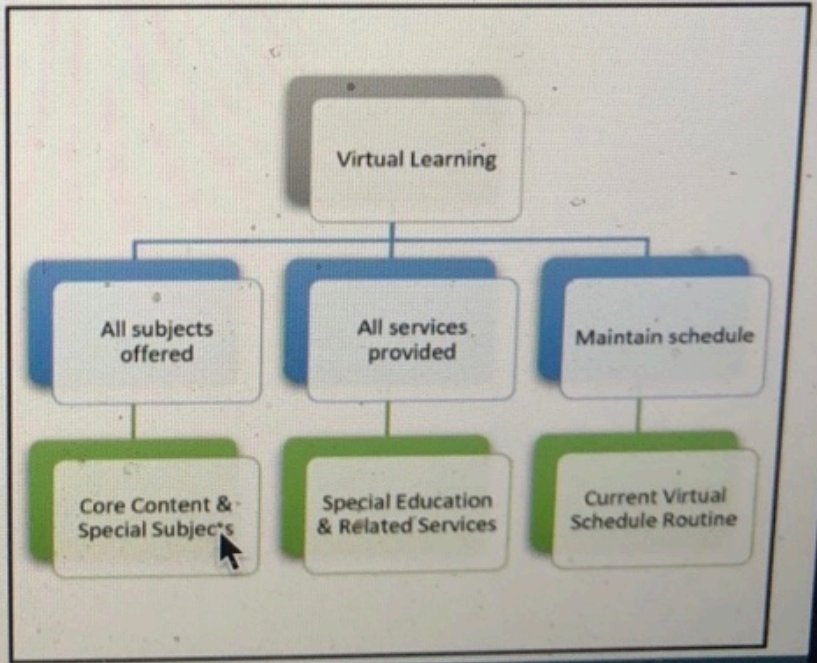
- Content, assessments, pacing
- Gathering input on secondary school schedule
- Adjustments to grading and reporting guidance
- District assessments

Drs. Moran and Murphy discussed the plans for the in-person learning experience. The parent preference survey results will determine the instructional design. They will ask parents during parent conferences if they haven't responded. In-person learning will depend on metrics, staff availability, and space. Students who need in-person learning the most will be prioritized.

They reiterated the full virtual and partial in-person models. The in-person models include the support model, simultaneous instruction, and direct instruction. They noted a student could have more than one model in a day (eg, a secondary student in a building may have 2 classes in person with the simultaneous instruction model and 2 classes in the support model).

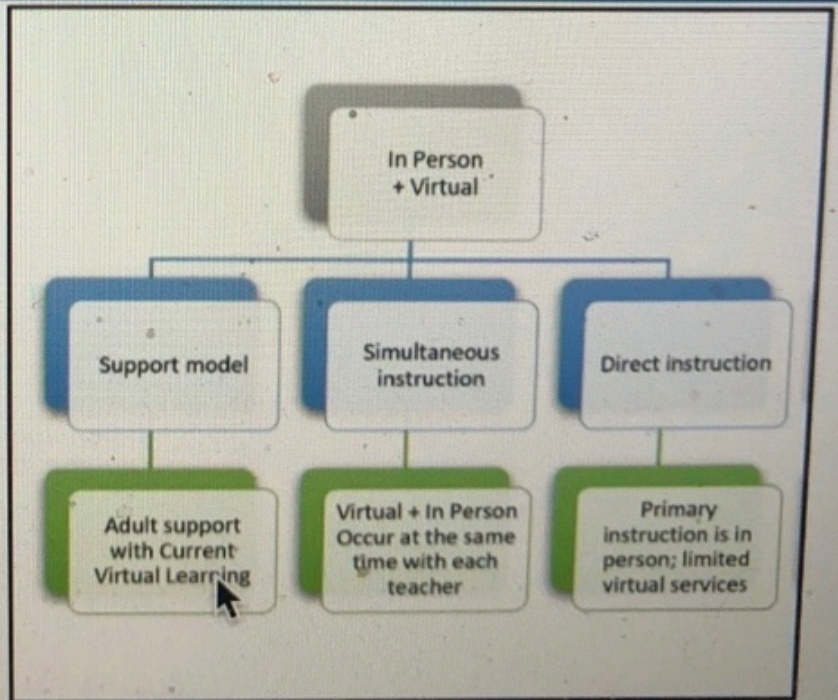
# Virtual Learning Experience

- Maintain current schedule and routine
- May have change in teacher assignment, based on potential teacher or staffing adjustments
- Maintain athletic/club/activity affiliations



# In Person + Virtual Learning Experience

- Supports virtual schedule experience
- Provides opportunities for real time interaction and support
- Efforts made to maintain teacher/student assignments
- Maintain athletic/club/activity affiliations



They showed the sequence of groups returning to school.



### Group Phasing Sequence Model Semester 2 (In-Person Parent/Guardian Preference Selection)

Level	Group 1 (February 1, 2021)	Group 2	Group 3
Elementary	Kindergarten/Grade 1 Specific Special Education Programs	Prekindergarten Grade 2 Grade 3	Grade 4 Grade 5
Middle	Grade 6 Specific Special Education Programs	Grade 7	Grade 8
High School	Not on Track for Graduation (Grades 12, 11, 10, 9) Specific Special Education Programs Grade 12 CTE Students Continued	Grade 11 Grade 12	Grade 9 Grade 10

They then showed examples of the instructional models for CTE students, AP courses, middle school students, and elementary school students.

### Example (CTE Automotive or Construction Program, includes CREA)

SUPPORT MODEL	SIMULTANEOUS INSTRUCTION	DIRECT INSTRUCTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some students indicate preference to remain all-virtual</li> <li>- Teachers continue with virtual schedule, from their classroom with specialized equipment, space, and lab</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All students attend virtual class periods</li> <li>- During breakouts and other non-class time, students apply skills and demonstrations with equipment, in labs and other specialized classrooms</li> <li>- Logging in-person skills hours/practical as needed, per program</li> <li>- Experienced paraeducators and others hired provide support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some students are at home virtual, 10 students are in the classroom</li> <li>- Full group instruction by teacher for both in-person and virtual students</li> <li>- Live demonstrations (recorded) in construction lab or auto shop while virtual students view</li> <li>- Paraeducator supports participation of the students in the virtual classroom</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All students in program indicate preference for in-person experiences</li> <li>- Direct instruction for class periods of specific program (typically double or triple period)</li> <li>- Students attend virtual classes for other classes with staff support</li> </ul>

## Example (AP Course)

SUPPORT MODEL	SIMULTANEOUS INSTRUCTION	DIRECT INSTRUCTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some students indicate preference to remain all-virtual, others in-person</li> <li>- Teachers continue with virtual schedule from their classroom</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some students are at home virtual, 10 students are in the classroom</li> <li>- Live instruction or lab demonstration for in-person students, while virtual students view</li> <li>- Paraeducator/other staff monitor the virtual/chat box; supports and encourages student participation in the class</li> <li>- Teacher alternates between student participation for those in person and those virtual</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All seniors in a specialized AP class indicate preference for in-person experiences (small class size)</li> <li>- Direct instruction provided on site for the AP class periods of specific program</li> <li>- Students attend virtual classes for other classes while also accessing additional supports</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Experienced staff/retirees and others hired provide in-person 1-1 or small group support to students</li> <li>- Additional time such as after-school or Saturday</li> </ul>		

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**Middle school students** may be grouped by a similar schedule, teacher, or need (eg, reading intervention). Additionally, in the example in the figure below, an English teacher may be in person while an ESOL teacher may be virtual. A teacher team would ensure equality of attention to in-person and remote students.

**Wednesday would be a cleaning day.**

## Example (Grade 6)

### Student Needs

- 24 Sixth Grade Students request to return for in person instructional experience
- 9 students receive ESOL Services
- 6 demonstrated significant needs as measured by the MAP diagnostic

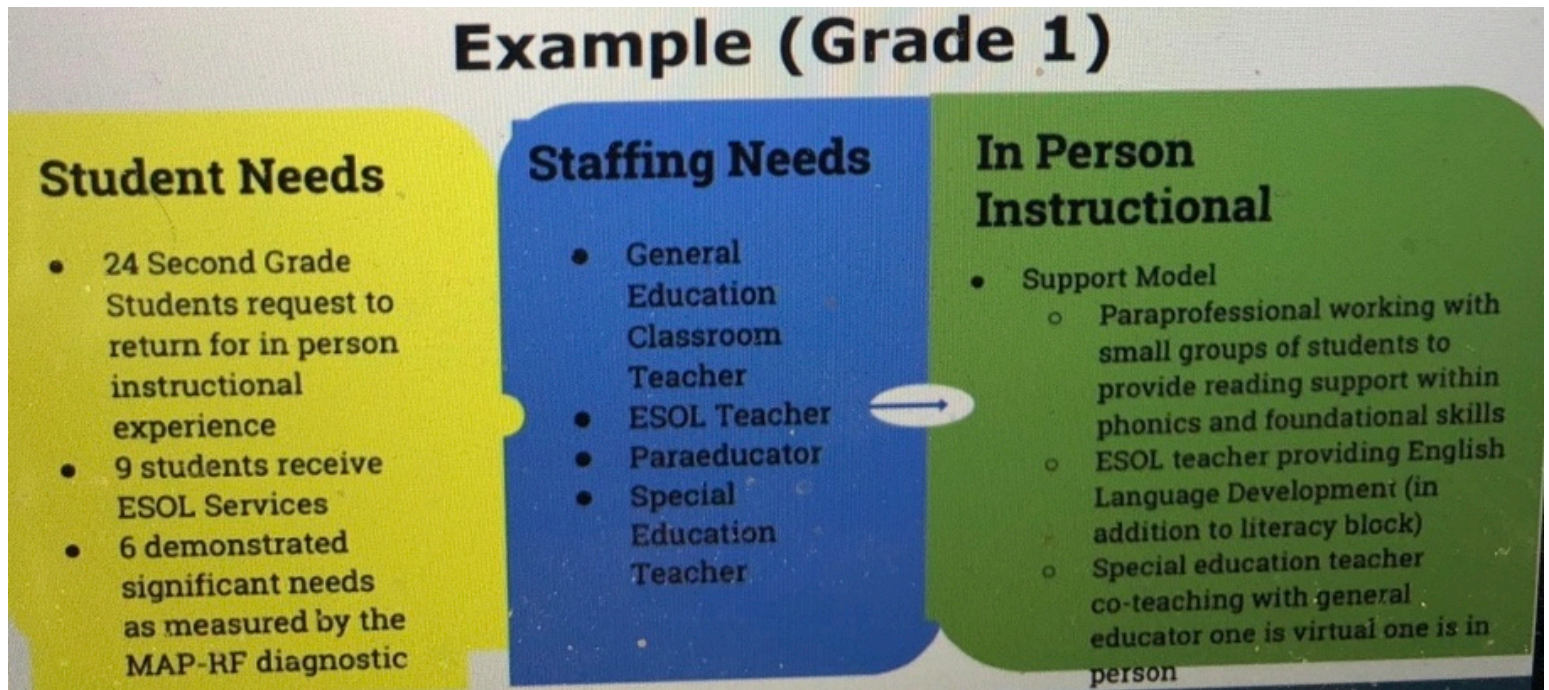
### Staffing Needs

- English Teacher
- ESOL Teacher
- Reading Intervention Support (Paraeducator)

### In Person Instructional

- Simultaneous Instruction
  - Mon/Tues 12 students (Group A) are in person while 12 students (Group B) are virtual
  - They switch for Thur/Friday

**Elementary school students** could be grouped according to the example below. In the support model, paraprofessional, ESOL, and special education teachers would be onsite to support students who are receiving instruction virtually.



Dr. Nixon discussed staffing considerations and teacher recruitment efforts. There may be conditional certification of substitute teachers with bachelor's degrees.

## Q & A FOR INSTRUCTIONAL MODELS

Ms. Smondrowski asked if the choice of models is dependent on space. Dr. Moran said they are trying to keep student and teacher matches. Ms. Smondrowski also said she had heard concerns from parents about the platforms being used (Canvas and ParentVue?) and communications.

Ms. O'Neill mentioned concerns about the workload for high school students, the pacing of AP/IB courses, and if the current schedule was adequate. She is concerned that we are 2 months from January and have an unanticipated spike. She is reading a book about the 1918 flu pandemic and is concerned about unrealistic expectations.

Dr. Docca said it is ambitious to mix in-person and virtual learning at the secondary level.

Ms. Silvestre asked if the issues with the secondary level pacing and grading were because students were learning more material on their own. Dr. Murphy said yes, it is due to a reduction in instruction time and more asynchronous learning of AP/IB material. The second semester may have adjustments to pacing, assessments, and the schedule.

Dr. McKnight said meaningful support students receive in the in-person environment is different from the virtual environment. Some students need more support in the virtual environment.

Dr. Wilson said that AP and IB courses are not structured for virtual learning. They have also heard from middle school principals about concerns with math classes in the virtual environment.

**Mr. Asante asked if students could be moved to a different school. Dr. Smith said MCPS will probably not open all 208 school buildings.**

Mr. Asante asked if models are chosen by the student or by need. **Dr. Smith said there could likely be different models for different classes for the same student.** Principals know their students. Dr. McKnight said a consideration is what courses are more beneficial to be taught in-person. Dr. Smith said we will be dealing with disruptions to education for the next 2 to 3 years.

**Ms. Dixon said hypotheticals aren't useful. MCPS is a large school district. We need to be flexible. She prays the vaccine prospects work out.**

**Ms. O'Neill said we have a worldwide educational catastrophe. People who opened schools whiplashed and closed them.**

## COMMUNICATIONS, ATHLETICS, AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**Mr. Turner reminded everyone of the parent preference survey and the feedback form. MCPS wants to make thoughtful data-driven decisions.**

The parent preference survey is due **Dec 3**. The feedback form is ongoing ([www.mcpssubmitfeedback.org](http://www.mcpssubmitfeedback.org))

Dr. Sullivan discussed athletics. Virtual athletics is going well. 10,000 high school students and 2,000 middle school students participated in fall and winter virtual sports.

He is talking with all 24 districts in MD every week, as well as communicating with districts in northern Virginia.

**THERE WILL BE AN INCREMENTAL RETURN TO ACTIVITIES (CONDITIONING, PRACTICES). THERE WILL BE REIMAGINED DIVISIONS AND SCHEDULES WITH COMPETITIONS IN THE SAME GEOGRAPHIC AREA.**

Dr. Cherry discussed extracurricular activities. 1,630 extracurricular activities were moved to all virtual. There are challenges with virtual field trips outside the MCPS platform, for example, the MD association of student councils meeting, debate tournaments, and quiz bowls.

They will expand to have an Extracurricular Activities Administrator in each school. They are talking with other districts about best practices.

## Q & A FOR COMMUNICATIONS, ATHLETICS, AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Ms. Dixon asked if the SMOB convention is maintaining the same schedule, since we usually know candidates at this time of year. Dr. Cherry said there will be a **SMOB 101 presented on November 19 by 3 former SMOBs and 2 former SMOB candidates**. There are plans in place for 2 nominating convention options (either in person or virtual) and 2 election options (online in

school or online virtually). **Elections will be in April** so that there is a transition between SMOBs.

Ms. Silvestre said the reopening plan was excellent and solid. Safety and health come first. **She requested hearing about improvements to the online model at future meetings.** She also said to think about the small number of students where virtual learning doesn't work, such as the heartbreaking examples of elementary school students off the grid. **She said to think about what we can do for those groups of students who are not learning.**

Ms. Smondrowski noted that **some students that did not need support in the classroom need it for virtual learning.**