

NOVEMBER 06, 2020

UNOFFICIAL NOTES:

**11/06/2020 MCPS BOE MEETING
OPENING SCHOOLS IN RECOVERY OF
EDUCATION: STUDENT PROGRESS – UPDATE**

MODERATELY MOCO

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MODERATELY MOCO**

11/6/20 MCPS BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING – “OPENING SCHOOLS IN RECOVERY OF EDUCATION: STUDENT PROGRESS – UPDATE”

INTRODUCTION

Ms. Evans started the meeting by saying that **a hybrid return would begin in January if the county lifts the COVID-19 restrictions on schools.**

Dr. Smith summarized that the **BOE directed MCPS to come back with a plan for return to school at the end of the first marking period.** He said the staff worked a tremendous amount and thanked them. And he wanted to remind everyone that **“we didn’t choose this” (COVID-19 situation).**

Smith said the discussion today **would be about the next step of return, if health metrics allow.** He also said **MCPS was collaborating with the state and learning about delivery models from other school districts around the nation.**

There will be **upcoming meetings on Nov 10, Nov 17, Dec 3, and the first week of January with more discussion about return to school.**

Today’s meeting is about the framework, timeline, and metrics.

Dr. McKnight said if health metrics allow, small groups of students would return first, and then students in the hybrid model for families wanting it would begin returning in second semester. She said the design teams had many stakeholders. **There will be a request for feedback at the end of this meeting. Link is on the website**

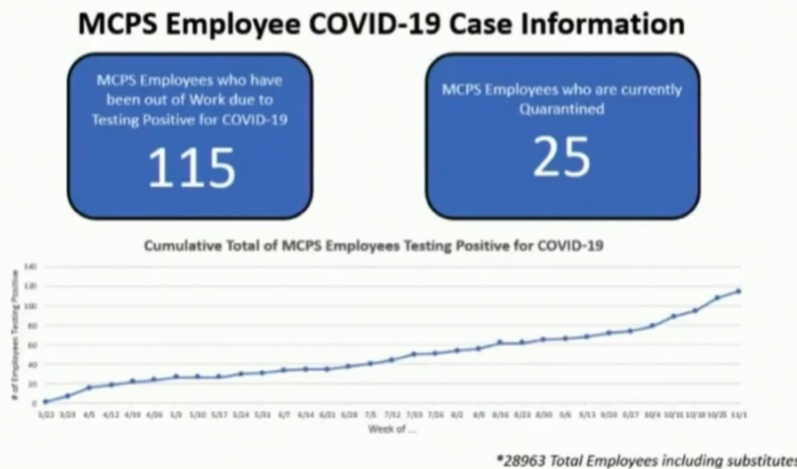
METRICS

Mr. Derek Turner showed the Montgomery County COVID-19 dashboard and pointed out the two primary indicators.

Currently, new confirmed cases are **14.8, high-risk category, (compared to 11.9 on Oct 27); percent test positivity rate is 3.3%, low-risk category, (compared to 3.1% on Oct 27).**

He showed that the data by zip code, and **pointed out that some zip codes have more than 25 cases per week, others have fewer than 4 cases per week, and there are differences from Oct 27 (the last BOE meeting). He also said 115 MCPS employees have tested positive for COVID-19; currently there are 25 employees in quarantine.**

Staff Testing Positive/MCPS Dashboard



He then showed updated metrics that have information added about the Maryland calculations and CDC calculations (as compared to the metrics presented at the Oct 27 meeting). Also, orange boxes have been added which mean an accelerated return would be possible if there were a downward trend. Finally, he mentioned that there would be a reassessment if case rates increase more than 2 per 100,000 or percent positivity increases more than 1.5% in 2 weeks.

Mr. Turner stated if these metrics are met, then special populations of students could return on January 12, 2021, and larger groups of students could return on February 1, 2021.

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

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

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NOV. 6 METRICS ABOVE AND OCT. 27 METRICS BELOW

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

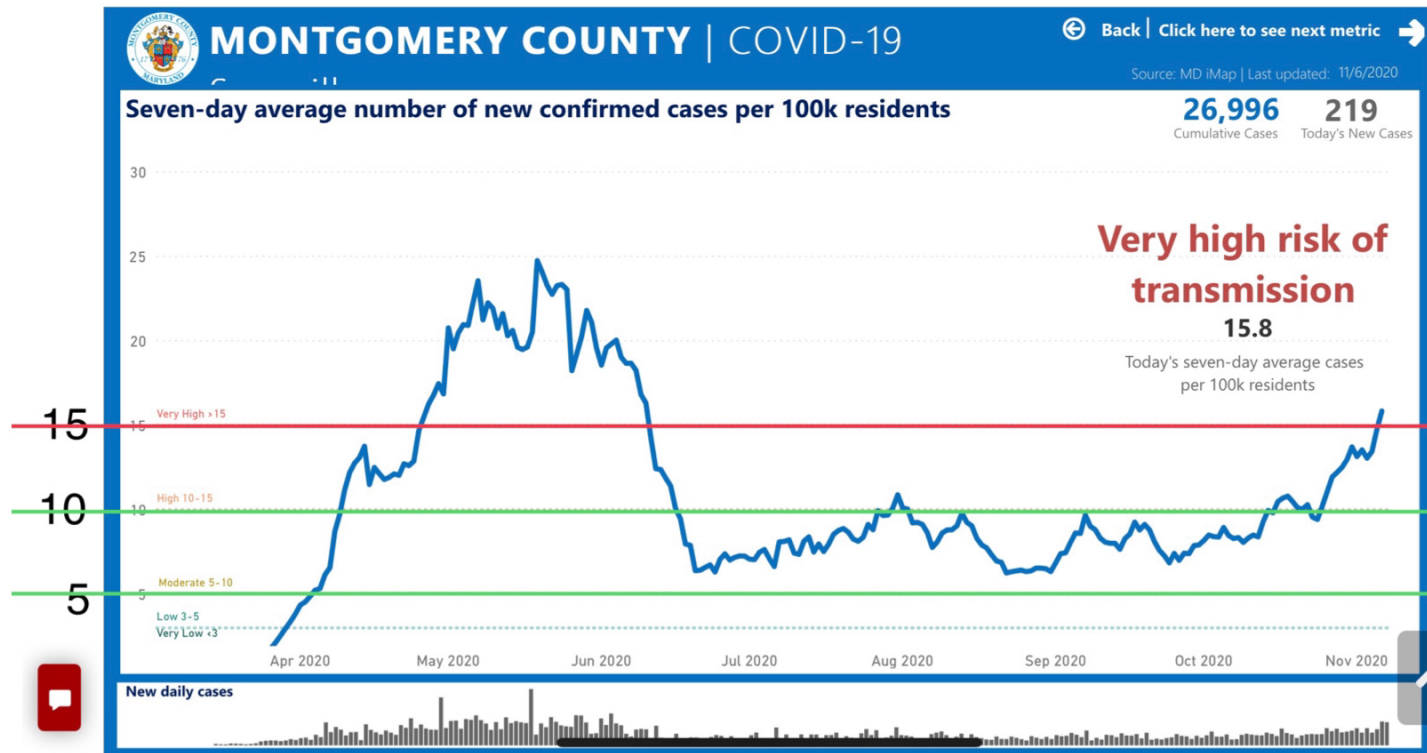
- MCPS is committed to the safety of our students and staff and the continued academic progress of our students
- This matrix for phased-in return to in-person instruction is based on CDC guidelines and informed by county health officials

14-Day Average New Case Rate per/100K Residents		<5	5-10	>10	
14-Day Average Test Positivity Rate <5%	Student Special Populations	Expanded hybrid in-person	Limited hybrid in-person	Consider minimal hybrid in-person (10-15)	Virtual
	Group 1	Hybrid in-person	Consider hybrid in-person	Virtual	Virtual
	Group 2	Hybrid in-person following Group 1	Virtual	Virtual	Virtual
	Group 3	Hybrid in-person following Group 2	Virtual	Virtual	Virtual

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HERE IS MONTGOMERY COUNTIES DASHBOARD FOR COVID WITH THE 5, 10, AND 15 LINES HIGHLIGHTED SINCE THE PANDEMIC BEGAN (TAKEN 11/06/2020)



SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

Ms. Essie McGuire then discussed operational and safety considerations in three areas: **core safety protocols, positive case responses, and building preparation.** The core protocols for safety include limited capacity, health screening protocol, face coverings, hand sanitizer, and six feet physical distancing.

There will be **training for the staff and public released on November 11, 2020.** There will be a COVID-19 employee portal with training and resources. **MCPS is working with principals on PPE distribution including cloth masks, disposable masks, hand sanitizer at entrance doors and in each classroom, sanitizing wipes, and gloves.** Additionally, there will be face shields, goggles, gowns, and shoe covers for special needs program as necessary.

If there is a confirmed positive COVID-19 case in an MCPS facility, then the steps in the figure below will be taken (and are being taken currently).

Positive COVID Case Response

Existing Process

If there is a confirmed positive case in an MCPS facility now with staff members in the building:

- **Notify Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)** for report and consultation
- Conduct **contact tracing** internally regarding MCPS staff members' interactions
- Notify other employees as needed per public health guidelines; **protect employee privacy**
- **Determine extent** of area or if facility closure is required
- **Clean and disinfect** as needed

Positive COVID Case Response (continued)

Training and Information

Support for employees to understand the process when an employee has symptoms or has tested positive for COVID-19.

Resource materials available November 11:

- Process maps for employees and supervisors
- Public-facing materials
- Supervisor training
- Follow-up Q&A sessions
- Template communications

- Schools will convene small planning teams between now and January to plan classroom arrangement and signage.
- Signage will be provided to schools equitably. Schools were given a readiness checklist.
- Also, 10 schools were identified to be set up completely as physically distanced models beginning on November 9.
- These schools will serve as regional models for other schools to visit and learn best practices.

VENTILATION AND FILTRATION

Mr. Seth Adams said that the MCPS HVAC systems have been designed to meet the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, Air Conditioning Engineers standards. MCPS staff have been upgrading the filters and adjusting controls to increase efficiency. Portable air cleaners will be placed where needed to supplement ventilation and filtration.

The team completed system evaluations and tested portable air cleaners. They found some were too loud to be used in classrooms. They also purchased filters in the summer to build inventory. The next steps are forming teams in individual school buildings and clusters. They are initiating mitigation work at the schools identified for the model school setup starting November 9.

The goal is for teams to complete coming to and evaluating every classroom in 25 schools per week. The schedule and status of each school will be updated every 2 weeks on the MCPS Department of Facilities Management webpage.

He noted that there may be cooler temperatures in buildings, but temperature is not an indicator of a functioning system; ventilation and filtration are separate from temperature.

Q AND A FROM BOE FOR THIS PORTION

Mr. Asante and Ms. Wolff asked about the health screening protocols. Mr. Asante asked if they would involve temperature checks and Ms. Wolff asked about whether the parent provides information about health questions. Ms. **McGuire said temperatures and the screening questions would be provided by parents. Ms. Wolff questioned if that was reliable.** Ms. McGuire said that is the recommended approach and COMAR regulations require health services and an isolation room at every school.

Ms. Smondrowski asked if companies would be brought in to help with ventilation work. **Mr. Adams said yes, there would be contracts with professionals for cleaning and equipment work.**

Ms. Dixon asked which **10 schools would be the regional models.** Ms. **McGuire said they will announce that next week.**

Ms. O'Neill asked about rumors that teachers would need to provide their own PPE and that there would only be 3 hand sanitizer dispensers per school. **Ms. McGuire said MCPS is continuing to procure PPE and there is a robust inventory of over 500,000 face coverings currently on hand. There is a range of sanitizers, and automated dispensers are placed at entrances.**

Ms. Silvestre asked about why the MD and CDC metrics calculations differ. Mr. Turner said that was related to 7 vs. 14 day averages and tried to calculate a quick example. Ms. Silvestre asked if the metrics chart could be simpler and more straightforward for the public.

Ms. Smondrowski referenced a graphic being received in emails and circulated on social media about differences between metrics in counties in MD. She asked why MCPS was so different. (I am speculating that she meant the table below).

Mr. Turner suggested there was cherry picking of the data for the chart, and Dr. McKnight said the metrics for MCPS reflect Montgomery County.

Return to In-Person Instruction

Dr. Moran discussed key points learned from other school systems throughout the country, including the importance of social-emotional well-being, reconnecting classroom communities, and teacher teams for a class. He emphasized that “one size fits all” strategies have been less successful. MCPS will prioritize keeping students learning in their home school, with their current teacher, and with their current classmates. Parent preferences for in-person learning will drive the models used.

He gave a timeline of:

- December: assessment centers
- January: discrete special education phase-in, CTE students
- February: semester 2 phase in

MCPS Reopening Metrics* Compared to Other Nearby School Systems

	1 - 5 per 100K	5-10 per 100K	10-15 per 100K	> 15 per 100K
Maryland State Guidelines	Expanded In Person	Hybrid or Partially In Person		Limited In Person
Washington, DC Guidelines (DCPS)	Expanded In Person	Hybrid or Partially In Person		Limited In Person
Virginia State Guidelines	Expanded In Person	Hybrid or Partially In Person		Limited In Person
Montgomery County Metrics (MCPS)	Hybrid In Person	Limited In Person	Virtual**	Virtual
Anne Arundel Metrics (AAPS)	Hybrid In Person	Hybrid In Person	Limited In Person	Virtual
Arlington, VA Metrics (APS)	Expanded In Person	Hybrid In Person	Limited In Person	Virtual
Howard County Metrics (HCPS)	Hybrid In Person	Hybrid In Person	Limited In Person	Limited In Person
Frederick County Metrics (FCPS)	Expanded In Person	Hybrid or Partially In Person		Limited In Person
Baltimore County Metrics (BCPS)	Expanded In Person	Hybrid or Partially In Person		Limited In Person
Carroll County Metrics (CCPS)	Expanded In Person	Hybrid or Partially In Person		Limited In Person
Washington County Metrics (WCPS)	Expanded In Person	Hybrid or Partially In Person		Limited In Person
Fairfax County Metrics (FCPS)	Expanded In Person	Hybrid or Partially In Person		Limited In Person
Prince Georges County (PGCPS)	No Metrics Published as of 11/1/20			

Return to School Status:

CCPS: Oct - all returned
 WCPS: Sept. Special Groups/PK; Oct. Grade K
 AAPS: Nov. 16 Special Groups; Nov. 30 Grade 1-2
 FCPS: Nov. 16 Special Groups; Nov. 30 Grade 1-2
 DCPS: Nov. 9 Special Groups; Nov. 16 Grade PK-2; Nov. 31 Grade 3-5
 BCPS: Nov. 16 Special Groups
 Arlington County VA: Nov. 4 Special Groups
 MCPS: No target dates published

*Assumes <5% Positivity Rate
 **Consider minimal hybrid in person for special groups

The special education assessment centers will be launched in December at Hallie Wells Middle School, Sligo Middle School, and Julius West Middle School. Appointments may be scheduled on weekdays and weekends.

The Phase-in schedule for special education students in January is in the figure below (assuming metrics allow).

Phase-in Schedule: **Special Education**

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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Dr. Moran discussed considerations for students with special needs, including PPE to address unique needs of students, staff PPE going above and beyond that of other staff, cohorts to limit the number of students and staff moving between classes, consultation with the Crisis Prevention Institute about behavior issues, and professional development.

CTE students would return in January as indicated in the figure below.

Proposed CTE January Startup

- Construction
- Automotive
- Cosmetology
- Restaurant Management
- Student-built House Construction
- Internship Experiences Resume

Peter Moran
 Director of Learning, Achievement and Administration
 Office of Teaching, Learning and Schools

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THE LARGER, BROADER GROUP OF STUDENTS WOULD BE PHASED IN BEGINNING FEBRUARY 1 ACCORDING TO THE FIGURE BELOW. THE YOUNGEST GRADES AT EACH LEVEL WOULD RETURN FIRST.

Recommended Group Phasing Sequence Semester 2

Level	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 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	Grade 9 Specific Special Education Programs* CTE Students Continued* (Grade 12 priority students)	Grade 10	Grade 11 Grade 12

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Dr. Redmond Jones discussed recruitment of additional teachers, for example retirees, December graduates, substitute teachers with a

Bachelor's degree, current paraeducators, and prospective employees outside of Maryland to support virtual instruction.

A PARENT PREFERENCE SURVEY WILL BE SENT NEXT WEEK.

- It is a global registration to select in-person or virtual learning.
- The registration is by child – families can make different selections for different children.
- A change from in-person to full virtual learning can be made at any time.
- A change from full virtual to in-person learning would be based on availability.
- A student can participate in athletics or extracurricular activities in person regardless of which model chosen.
- There will be an attempt to maintain the same teacher(s) for a student if logistics allow.
- The survey will be open from **November 11 until December 3, 2020.**

The responses will determine transportation, school locations and instructional delivery.

Ms. McGuire discussed transportation. MCPS' initial assumptions were **1 student per every other bus seat**, with approximately 11 students (25% capacity) per bus. Based on the standards implemented by the vast majority of districts, including every district in Maryland and Fairfax County, there is **1 student per each seat** approximately (22 students, 50% capacity) per bus. Face coverings will be required on the bus, except for medical exceptions.

She noted examples in peer districts of opening every school location, specific locations based on demand, and a regional hub model. **The parent preference survey will determine how many school locations will need to reopen to serve in-person students.**

Q AND A FROM BOE FOR THIS PORTION

Mr. Asante suggested that grades 11 and 12 should be in the first phase back in high school. He asked about the timing of the second semester phase in, for example is it weekly? Dr. Webster said it was not yet known, and Dr. Wilson said it would depend on the number of students coming back. **He also asked about the length of employment for support staff being recruited. Dr. Redmond Jones said they will stay as long as there is need.**

Ms. Wolff asked if HHS was supplying nurses or if MCPS is hiring them. Ms. McGuire said they are working with HHS and looking into contracts and other approaches.

Ms. Dixon asked if dates could be set for the phases. **Dr. Smith reiterated that the timing could vary, but an estimate is a phase-in every 2 weeks.**

Dr. Docca asked if there would be **transportation to co-curricular activities** for students in full time virtual learning. **Dr. Smith said that is not known yet.** She also wanted to mention that the College Gardens classroom model was set up for elementary, middle, and high school examples.

Ms. O'Neill said she hopes COVID-19 doesn't take over and disrupt plans. She said some parents are disappointed that MCPS is not "flinging" the doors open for all students to return at once. She asked if the **groups in the hybrid models would be M/T or R/F with Wednesday for cleaning. Dr. Wilson said other districts have found a weekly model worked better.**

Ms. Silvestre reminded everyone that we need to keep the COVID-19 rates down. She also said to give parents all the information they need to decide on a model.

Ms. Smondrowski asked how to make sure everyone responds to the survey. Dr. Smith said it is required so that each student can be assigned.

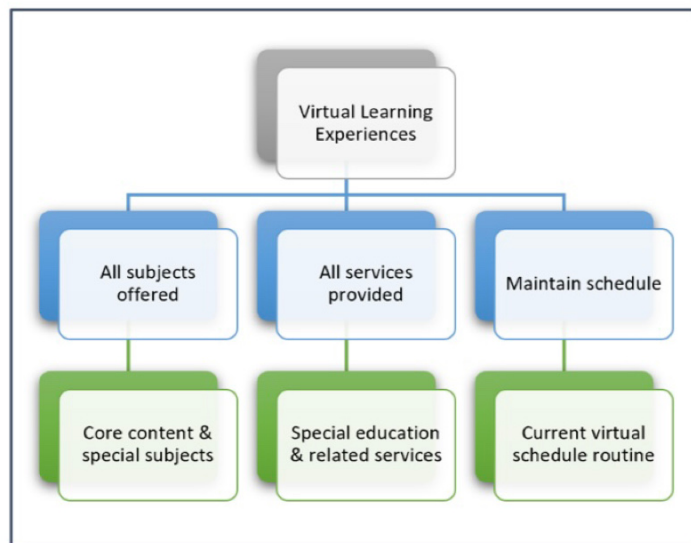
Ms. Smondrowski suggested a “flexible” option of entering a first choice, but being open to the other choice of learning model.

IN-PERSON LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Dr. Webster said the models will be discussed on November 17. She mentioned that the full virtual model will have the same schedule, routines, and services. Keeping students with their current teachers and classmates is a priority.

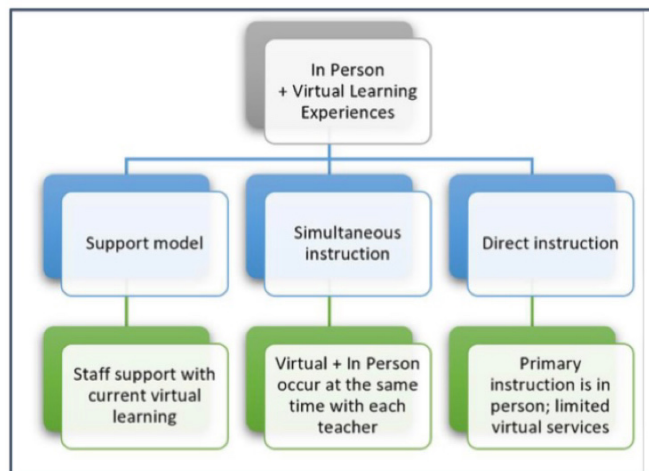
Virtual Learning Experience

- Maintain current schedule and routine
- Prioritize maintaining teacher assignment, considering 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 & support
- Efforts made to maintain teacher/student assignments
- Maintain athletic/club/activity affiliations



Keeping students with their teachers is also a priority for hybrid learning. She briefly discussed advantages and considerations for a small group support model, a simultaneous model, and direct instruction models.

The simultaneous instruction model would have virtual and in-person instruction occurring simultaneously with the same teacher. Dr. Webster showed a video with a demonstration (link in website) of a lesson with a teacher and some students in the classroom and other students participating via Zoom.

The support model would have students in-person with staff onsite to assist with engagement. Students would still be observing their current virtual classes being taught by their teachers remotely. This model could provide targeted instructional support for specific groups, such as students with IEPs. (It seems to have some similarities with the learning hubs).

Dr. Moran mentioned Palm Beach County, Sarasota County, South Bend, and Maricopa County as examples of schools that have implemented simultaneous instruction, and MCPS is learning from them.

METRICS

Dr. Gayles mentioned the recent increase in cases and possible new restrictions. He said that everyone uses the same numbers, but there are different data structures which can make them more difficult to directly compare. He said the state of Maryland uses less restrictive metrics than CDC, and that CDC breaks down case rates differently. Maryland uses case rates from 5 to 15, while CDC breaks them down more into groupings such as 5 to 7 and 13 to 15 (he prefers the CDC groupings). Also, Maryland uses a 7-day average daily rate, while CDC uses case totals over 14 days. He believes the CDC calculation makes it easier to make comparisons across the country.

Q AND A FOR THIS PORTION

Ms. Smondrowski asked about differences between metrics used by MCPS and other districts. **Dr. Gayles said MCPS tries to match closely with other districts and that MCPS metrics look the same as other jurisdictions. It is not accurate that they differ.**

Dr. Docca and Ms. Dixon thanked Dr. Gayles. Ms. Dixon showed the Bethesda Magazine article with an interview with Dr. Gayles.

Ms. O'Neill said she has talked with the Montgomery County Medical Society and wanted Dr. Gayles to mention the **importance of getting a flu shot**. She said some people listening to this meeting don't believe the flu shot is necessary. Dr. Gayles said the flu shot is important. He pointed out that **schools must report COVID-19-like illnesses to the county, and flu symptoms are similar (eg, fever, chills). It then needs to be determined whether this person does have COVID-19 or another illness.** He also gave a reminder about hospital beds being filled by flu patients and COVID-19 patients. Dr. Smith said **once physical schools reopen, students cannot attend if they are not up to date with vaccinations.**

Ms. Silvestre wants restrictions put in place in other areas so that students can come back to schools. She asked why case rates instead of hospitalizations or deaths are the primary indicator used (a PTA member has asked her this). **Dr. Gayles said he does consider those metrics and the context of metrics. He said hospitalizations and deaths lag behind positive cases. He also said CDC uses three primary metrics – case rates, test positivity, and rate of transmission.**

Mr. Asante asked questions he had been hearing about the virus being more serious in the winter, such as if it is true that the lifespan of the virus increases in the winter. Dr. Gayles said it is cold outside so more people are together inside. Also, people may have caught other respiratory viruses in

the fall and have a weakened immune system. He also said lower humidity could enhance transmission of the virus.

Dr. Gayles discussed contact tracing. The county has used it in private schools. The health department does the contract tracing and then individualized decisions are made for the school and situation depending on the particular school.

Ms. O’Neill said there has been a nationwide increased in COVID-19 cases in children. She asked if there have been cases of **multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) in Montgomery County.** Dr. Gayles said that **early on there were a few cases in the national capital region, but there have been none in the past few months.**

Ms. Silvestre asked about countries is Europe shutting down but keeping schools open. Dr. Gayles said we don’t know if that is effective yet. He said there were mixed results in the summer with Israel being disastrous and Denmark being successful. Dr. Smith said Denmark had small numbers of students in schools while Israel opened freely.

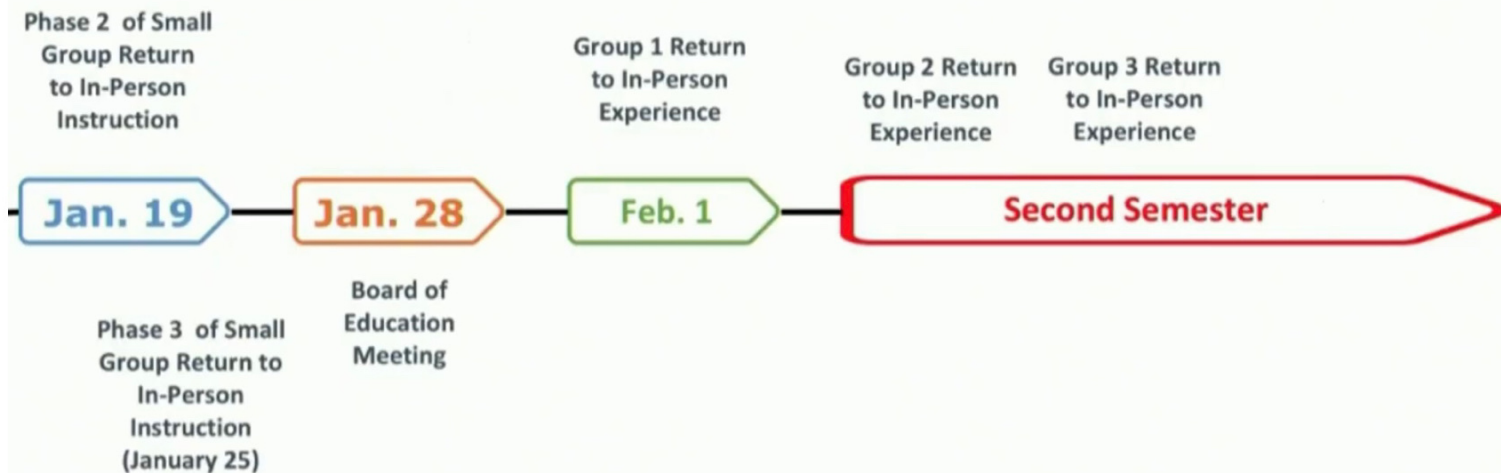
NEXT STEPS

Mr. Turner discussed the next steps, including the **November 10 meeting where the BOE will vote to approve the plan.**

Looking Ahead



Looking Ahead (continued)



THERE IS ALSO A FEEDBACK FORM, FAMILIES ARE ENCOURAGED TO SUBMIT FEEDBACK SOON. (LINK ON WEBSITE - BOTH LINKS BELOW GO SAME PLACE)

<https://mcpsweb.wufoo.com/forms/sqxm4s0v0jpf/>
www.MCPSSubmitFeedback.org

Q AND A FOR THIS PORTION

Ms. O’Neill said she heard feedback from other districts that simultaneous teaching of remote and in-person students is disastrous. It is extremely difficult. Is the technology sufficient? **Dr. Wilson said it may work for some groups, but it may not be recommended on a wide basis.** Dr. Moran said that other systems had committed entirely to it. But one size does not fit all. Principals are connected to their communities and know what will work for them. The simultaneous model was most successful with teams of teachers.

Ms. Hawkins said MCPS wants to use no-cost solutions that people are used to, like Chromebooks and Promethean boards. She acknowledged that low-cost solutions, such as the audio/visual equipment shown in the demonstration video may be needed.

Ms. Silvestre asked if both the support model and the simultaneous model would be used. Dr. Webster said it would depend on the results of the Parent Preferences survey. There would be school level decisions by people who know the students best.

Dr. McKnight said there have been conversations with Associations about how to phase in students. Association members are on the deliverables teams and are helping to determine the priority groups.

Mr. Asante asked about the proposed start date of in-person sports. Dr. Smith said it would be in the second week of January when the small groups of students return to school.

REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION FROM MCPS FOR THE NEXT MEETING:

- **Ms. Silvestre requested a chart made by MCPS comparing their metrics to other districts**
- **Ms. Smondrowski requested an update on the number of COVID-19 cases and actions taken at learning hubs/childcare centers**
- **Dr. Smith said they might not be able to obtain that information from private providers. He said he did not want to use anecdotal information or pick select information to support a position.**

DR. SMITH CONCLUDED BY SAYING HE IS EXCITED THAT WE TOOK THE FIRST STEP.