

**JANUARY 12 2021**

**UNOFFICIAL NOTES:**

**1/12/21 MCPS BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING -  
"OPENING SCHOOLS IN RECOVERY OF  
EDUCATION"**

# **MODERATELY MOCO**

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# 1/12/21 MCPS BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING - "OPENING SCHOOLS IN RECOVERY OF EDUCATION"

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## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Dr. Smith made introductory remarks. He said he reads every email. There are many perspectives. There is no agreement on science. He is criticized both ways. People use science how they want. His grandchildren live in some of the 44 states that are currently open. They have different experiences with schools opening and closing and he doesn't want to generalize with other states.

Everyone is working to the best of their ability to get students back as soon as they can.

2021 has challenges and opportunities. We have learned so much in 10 months. He feels anxiety, concern, and fear for the most important institutions in our country. He thinks about setting a model for our children based on equity, trust, and care. He wants us to be united around the school budget. He cares about the community and hopes it is thriving long after he is gone. The actions today will affect the community.

Reopening schools is a complex and difficult situation. MCPS has been planning for a long time. Their job is to serve the children of Montgomery County. He understands the frustration. BoE and staff are committed regardless of decisions today. No one has lived through these circumstances before.

### HE CLARIFIED THAT MCPS MAKES RECOMMENDATION. THE BOE MAKES THE DECISIONS.

Dr. McKnight expressed deep appreciation for staff. She said there are different opinions on a difficult topic. MCPS is in the business of education and trying to improve every week. Virtual learning will be the core learning going forward. They have identified students who are struggling the most and need additional support (tutoring).

## METRICS

Mr. Turner reiterated the thresholds that were revised in December 2020 are case rates of 15/100K and 5% test positivity. They are at 44/100K and 7.5%

today. 281 employees have tested positive for COVID-19 since spring and 43 are currently quarantined. Phase 1B vaccinations, which include educators, will begin in late January. There will be updates to staff in the coming weeks regarding vaccines.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Dr. Smith said they looked at recommendations and opinions. The county has not reached thresholds and vaccines are not in place. He recommended March 15 as the date for opening with the phases of return according to the earlier plan.

They are working with the state to look at metrics for individual schools partly based on vaccinations of frontline workers in the schools. They are evaluating the school calendar and spring break.

## Q AND A

Ms. O'Neill said there are million different opinions. She never anticipated a year of closure. The vaccine is the path forward, but children may not be vaccinated until 2022. She wants to make sure staff are vaccinated quickly, as vaccination of Fairfax County educators is beginning on Saturday.

She acknowledges the learning loss of special education students in particular. It is easy to offer opinions but hard to take responsibility for health and safety which is the top priority.

The closure is not because of the teacher union. She has received obnoxious emails that are not from MCPS employees. People take information from social media to prove points and don't listen to each other.

Ms. Harris asked 3 questions from the teacher perspective.

- Plans for building access for teachers to go back to prepare
- Professional collaborative opportunities to learn from those who taught in person

- A clear standardized document to outline infection control measures to be provided to the community

Dr. Smith said information to the community would be provided 3 to 4 weeks before the return to school. Many teachers are in classrooms now and buildings are accessible. The week before March 15 (or return date) teachers could access buildings to being preparing for opening. MCPS is in a consortium with large school districts, they talk weekly, and have information from them.

He said it is a monumental task to open buildings.

Ms. Smondrowski asked if we wait until March 15, could all students be brought back instead of being phased in. Also, could staff go back on March 1 and teach virtually from their classrooms to get used to protocols. Finally, would the return be 5 days per week.

Dr. Smith said as the dates of return change (Feb 1 vs March 15), the information changes. The priority order of students will be the same, the question is how quickly to accelerate return. Masks and distance will be in place. He said teachers coming in on March 1 is not productive because of the space and rooms (?) needed.

Dr. Smith again recommended delaying return to March 15, 2021 if metrics are met or if guidance from the state is adjusted based on vaccines. He also mentioned potential adjustments to the school calendar.

### **THE BOARD WOULD MEET ON FEBRUARY 23 TO DECIDE ON THE MARCH 15 RETURN.**

Ms. Silvestre asked for the clarification of “or” for the metrics/health guidance. Ultimately the decision is up to the BoE. Dr. Smith said 15/100K case rates may be too restrictive if 100% staff in a building have completed vaccination. He acknowledged that Dr. Salmon said metrics from the state are just guidance.

Ms. Wolff asked do 100% of returning staff need to be vaccinated because some will not want to be. Dr. Smith said the goal is to populate the schools with those who took the vaccine. Ms. Wolff mentioned the possibility of some employees wanting to come back without taking the vaccine.

Ms. Smondrowski asked about the delay until March 15. What has been done and what is anticipated to change by then. Dr. Smith said it depends how quickly they accelerate students back in. If the vaccine doesn't change metrics, then why does receiving it matter (?).

Ms. Smondrowski said the learning hubs have been successful. How have they been doing it? Frontline workers for MCPS have had COVID-19 and are still there. Why can't we try to open schools? Dr. Smith said they will open on Feb 1 if the BoE tells them to do it.

Dr. McKnight said they will make adjustments on the student groups and timing of schedule in March.

Ms. O'Neill said the entire resolution should be shared with the community.

Ms. Silvestre suggested prioritizing vaccines on groups going back first to get them in school sooner. Dr. Smith said there are discussions with the state about the prioritization.

## **RESOLUTION – SCHOOL OPENING**

**THE BOE VOTED ON THE RESOLUTION TO DELAY THE OPENING OF SCHOOL UNTIL MARCH 15. 7 MEMBERS VOTED IN FAVOR. MS. SMONDROWSKI WAS THE ONLY MEMBER TO VOTE AGAINST THE RESOLUTION.**

## **SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNING AND SCHEDULES**

Dr. Murphy talked about what is working and not. There will be adjustments such as the winter MAP being optional. There will be options for lighter course loads.

## Adjustments Already in Place

- Adjustments to curriculum content, pacing, and number of lessons in mathematics and English
- Winter MAP administration changed from required to optional for all grade levels
- Reduction of required district assessments in mathematics and English
- Adjustments to Grading and Reporting Guidance
- Updates announced by College Board (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB)

## Additional Adjustments for Semester 2: School Schedules

- Overall structure of secondary virtual schedule remains in place (four class periods per day, Wednesdays)
  - Continuous improvement of virtual learning experience, rigor, preparation for future coursework
  - Explicit use of Wednesday for students who need support and other academic support times built into the schedule
  - Focused Outreach (Appointments) Services
  - Ongoing professional development, responding to student voice

## Additional Adjustments for Semester 2: Student Schedules and Course Load

### ABBREVIATED SCHEDULES (Reducing Number of Courses)

- Current state: Upper high school grades and extenuating circumstances
- **For Semester 2:** Students may request an abbreviated schedule to lighten course load:
  - Select a summer course from [summer course offerings](#) and remove the course from the schedule for S2
  - Revise the student's four-year graduation plan to identify courses that may be taken in future semesters
  - Remove an elective not required for graduation or may be taken in future semesters
- Elevate awareness of the option for Grades 6–12, not solely based on extenuating circumstances
- Case management approach through counselors and Well-Being Teams

## Additional Adjustments for Semester 2: Student Schedules and Course Load (continued)

### TAKING COURSES CREDIT/NO CREDIT (Pass/Fail)

- High school credit courses
- Not a wholesale change to grading policy
- Existing option to take a course credit/no credit (pass/fail), course-by-course basis, rarely used because of restrictions
- **Semester 2:**
  - Relax restrictions to allow more options/flexibility to take a course Credit/No Credit
  - Limit to two courses, not applicable for certain graduation requirements, select option at beginning of course
  - Case management approach through counselor and Well-Being Teams



## Additional Instructional Time and Tutoring

- Expansion of AP/IB course offerings at Saturday School, all major AP courses offered beginning in February
- Local school Saturday options for AP teachers/students
- AP “Live” exam preparation from College Board beginning in April
- Tutoring programs in local schools, focus on Algebra
- Looking ahead to Summer 2021

## CARES FUNDS

Ms. Hazel said there is \$13 million for tutoring. There are currently virtual before and after school enrichment programs.

They are partnering with Tutorme.com to provide tutoring services 7 days/ 24 hours a week as a free resource to students.

# Uses of CARES Act Grants Funds

- **Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (GEER)** grant funds investments in technology that will improve capacity to provide high quality, accessible distance education or remote learning with Chromebooks and internet devices.
- **Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief (ESSER)** grant funds access to interventions, special education services, assistive technology tools, and increased technology options for students with disabilities and purchase supplemental instructional materials and assessments to support the instruction of English for Speakers of Other Languages students during remote learning.
- **Broadband for Underserved Students** grant is being used for the acquisition of more than 15,000 MiFi devices for the district.
- **Technology** grant is being used to provide devices and wireless access to students who need such support to ensure that all students have equitable access to synchronous and asynchronous instruction and other learning opportunities.
- **Tutoring** grant supports activities for the learning loss associated with time away from direct instruction. MCPS schools have been offered tutoring opportunities in an online model for students, including that provided by MCPS summer school programs.
- **GEER Competitive Grant** is being used to implement professional development offered to MCPS stakeholders including district leadership, administrators, teachers, and paraprofessionals with the goal of maximizing student learning and instructional impact because of COVID-19.

## Program Overview

<b>Grade Levels:</b> K-12	<b>Content Areas:</b> Reading Mathematics	<b>Group Size:</b> 1-6 students
<b>Target Population:</b> Priority to students that are reading below or significantly below grade level and need significant support in mathematics as determined by MAP data, teacher recommendation or other data points	<b>Duration:</b> 60-90 minutes per session 3-5 days per week *20 minutes of planning for every 60 minutes of instruction	<b>Staffing:</b> Schools select teachers based on number of students enrolled. Not to exceed 5 teachers per school

## Program Participation

	Elementary		Middle		High	
<b>No. of Schools</b>	87		33		16	
<b>Total Students</b>	1,074		409		221	
<b>FARMS</b>	739	69%	260	64%	134	33%
<b>LEP</b>	496	46%	153	37%	118	29%
<b>Special Ed</b>	137	13%	105	26%	62	15%
<b>African American</b>	318	30%	141	34%	48	12%
<b>Asian</b>	67	6%	29	7%	22	5%
<b>Caucasian</b>	107	10%	37	9%	17	4%
<b>Hispanic</b>	523	49%	186	45%	129	32%
<b>Multi-Racial</b>	35	3%	12	3%	2	0%
<b>American Indian</b>	3	0%				
<b>Hawaiian / PI</b>	1	0%				

## Moving Forward

- Session 2: January 4–February 26
  - All Session 1 schools are continuing in Session 2
  - Additional schools are implementing programs for Session 2
  - Schools have added additional tutors in order to meet the increased needs of students
- Session 3: March 1–April 20
- Central Office staff is providing continued professional learning for tutoring staff on using evidenced based interventions

## External Tutoring Partnership

**Tutorme.com** is an on-demand, online homework help service.

- Aligns with the MCPS curriculum, including knowledge of new MCPS curriculum tools being implemented now.
- We are working to have this in place by February 1.

### The service is:

- Available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day
- Available **as a free resource** to students in Grades 3 through Grade 12

### The service features:

- An online lesson space with a virtual whiteboard
- Text editor and chat space
- Audio/video chat
- Screen sharing to show specific examples of the schoolwork for which you are seeking support
- More than 300 subjects from math to science, social studies and languages

## WELLBEING

Dr. Reubens discussed an RFP and the recipient Jewish Social Services Agency. There is also a partnership with Howard County schools.

# Student Wellbeing Teams Update

Recently updated framework focuses on the pivot when students and staff return to schools, including:

- Coordinating intake meetings for students returning to school with pre-existing engagement or discipline concerns
- Connecting returning students and families with school system and community resources through warm hand-offs

## Student Wellbeing Teams Update (continued)

- Primary referral source for 10 schools supported by the Mental Health Request for Proposal awarded to Jewish Social Services Agency Address the disproportionality in student discipline
  - Collaborative problem solving to occur to address the root cause of student behavior
  - Promote restorative practices and disciplinary practices that do not remove students from school

## Q AND A

Mr. Asante asked about who initiates course load changes. Dr. Murphy said communications will be sent out and schools will reach out to individual students.

Ms. O'Neill said changes to course load and grading are important. She asked if there would be other grade changes. Mr. Murphy said no, they are focusing on implementing and monitoring now.

Ms. Evans thanked everyone.

Ms. Smondrowski asked about SSL hours. Dr. Smith said they asked the state to waive the requirement this year. Information will be sent out about SSL opportunities. Dr. Wilson said they added an SSL coordinator the graduation validation team.

Ms. Smondrowski asked about repeating grades, especially younger students. Dr. Smith said they are watching this.

Ms. Silvestre asked if tutoring is working and how to measure its effectiveness. Dr. Hazel said they will encourage using MAP even if it is not required. Ms. Silvestre asked if there is tutoring in person. Ms. Hazel said is online but might be in person when metrics allow.

Ms. O'Neill pointed out that the state requires 60 SSL hours for graduation; MCPS requires 75. MCPS also requires one more year of math than the state. Could MCPS requirements be made the same as the state? Dr. Smith said they are looking at the student data before the second semester.

Ms. Harris asked about listening to students about reducing class loads, dropping classes required for graduation, making more courses available for pass/fail or credit/no credit, not having a "W" on a transcript for Withdrawing, and communicating this to students. Dr. Murphy said options will be extended

to grades 6-10, requirements on certificate of merit classes will be relaxed, and this will be shared with the community this week.

Ms. Wolff asked about what needed to go to the policy committee. She said the policies belong to the BoE, the regs belong to MCPS.

Dr. Docca said students have 30 hours of SSL carried from middle school.

Ms. Smondrowski asked if there could be parent education efforts to coach parents on how to tutor and support students academically. Dr. Reubens said they are adding meetings.

## **STAFFING**

Dr. Nixon discussed ADA requests. She noted that some accommodations are for physical in person classroom, not just telework. Staff can request ADA at any time.

# **Staffing Considerations**

- Students for in-person vs. virtual experiences
- Staff members approved for ADA accommodations
- Determination of which staff will work in-building, virtual, or concurrent
- School's instructional model that is best matched to the needs of the school
- Assignment based on the selection of the instructional model

# Accommodations Request Snapshot

- Currently: More than 3,700 ADA requests
  - Elementary School: 1,787
  - Middle School: 673
  - High School: 901
  - Special Schools: 49
  - Central Services: 367
- Determinations following ADA, EEOC, and CDC COVID risk guidance
- Coordination with ERSC addressing leave, retirements, and resignations

## SPORTS

Dr. Sullivan said 16,500 students participated in virtual athletics. MCPS requests an extension of academic eligibility requirements being waived through the first semester of next year, there are public comments.

## Policy IQD - Academic Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities

### Previous Board of Education Action

- On May 12, 2020, the Board suspended Policy IQD, which establishes the academic eligibility standards for secondary students' participation in extracurricular activities (including athletics), through the first semester of the 2020–2021 school year

### Rationale

- Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students' grade point averages
- Recognition that participation in athletics and extracurricular activities allows students the opportunity to receive additional support that promotes their mental, physical, and social-emotional well-being

# Policy IQD - Academic Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities (continued)

## Requested Action

- Extend the suspension of Policy IQD through the second semester of the 2020–2021 school year
- This action would allow for all students to be academically eligible for extracurricular activities (including athletics) for the remainder of the 2020–2021 school year and during the first marking period of the 2021–2022 school year
- Note: Policy IQD is currently being reviewed and public comments are being submitted

## Q AND A

Ms. O’Neill said she talked with principals concerned about the logistics of returning to schools. Parents don’t know that kids might not have the same teacher. Some elementary schools requested 80% return. There might not be enough paraeducators for teachers to have lunch. Dr. Smith is working on staffing and communication. He mentioned some schools have opened and had to close due to staffing or COVID outbreaks.

Dr. Nixon mentioned hiring monitors for classes for supervisory issues. Staffing needs for instruction models will be case by case by individual schools.

Ms. O’Neill mentioned a rapid rate of breathing by students and PE class and safety. The PE teacher could teach virtually instead of in person.



Mr. Asante asked about support for student-athletes for college recruitment. Dr. Sullivan said there is a presentation today at 3 PM.

Ms. Silvestre asked if teachers will teach live and online at the same time. Dr. Smith said yes for specialized high school classes.

Ms. Silvestre asked about winter sports. Dr. Sullivan said they might return later in the semester.

Dr. Docca suggested that there should be a staff member totally in charge of reopening and fully dedicated to that only.

## **RESOLUTION – ACADEMIC ELIGIBILITY**

**THE BOARD VOTED ON THE RESOLUTION TO EXTEND THE WAIVER FOR ACADEMIC ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS THROUGH THE FIRST SEMESTER OF 2021-2022. ALL 8 MEMBERS VOTED IN FAVOR.**

## **LINKS**

Link to full Resolution on Delay Opening Schools:

[https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/mcpsmd/Board.nsf/files/BX9FLK66B363/\\$file/](https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/mcpsmd/Board.nsf/files/BX9FLK66B363/$file/)

[05.01%20ADOPTED%20Delay%20Opening%20Schools%20210112.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/mcpsmd/Board.nsf/files/BX9FLK66B363/$file/05.01%20ADOPTED%20Delay%20Opening%20Schools%20210112.pdf)

Link to full Resolution on Academic Eligibility:

[https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/mcpsmd/Board.nsf/files/BX9FUA68D6CF/\\$file/](https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/mcpsmd/Board.nsf/files/BX9FUA68D6CF/$file/)

[05.01%20ADOPTED%20Extension%20Academic%20Eligibility%20Suspension%20210112.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/mcpsmd/Board.nsf/files/BX9FUA68D6CF/$file/05.01%20ADOPTED%20Extension%20Academic%20Eligibility%20Suspension%20210112.pdf)

Link to Full Slides:

[https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/mcpsmd/Board.nsf/files/BX8KMY529AC7/\\$file/](https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/mcpsmd/Board.nsf/files/BX8KMY529AC7/$file/)

[Opening%20Schls%20Recovery%20Ed%20210112%20PPT.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/mcpsmd/Board.nsf/files/BX8KMY529AC7/$file/Opening%20Schls%20Recovery%20Ed%20210112%20PPT.pdf)