

**JANUARY 28 2021**

**UNOFFICIAL NOTES:**

**1/28/21 MCPS BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING -  
"OPENING SCHOOLS IN RECOVERY OF  
EDUCATION"**

# **MODERATELY MOCO**

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# 1/28/21 MCPS BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING - "OPENING SCHOOLS IN RECOVERY OF EDUCATION"

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## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Dr. Smith said return to school is on everyone's minds. MCPS is making final plans for a March 15, 2021 opening based on the January 12 BoE meeting discussions. He is seeing what is possible with the governor. He is confident that everyone at this meeting wants students in schools.

Dr. McKnight said they are very much in the planning stages and adjusting for a March 1 date. They want a healthy and safe environment for students. Teachers are receiving COVID-19 vaccinations this week.

## METRICS

Mr. Turner presented the current case rates of 35.1/100K and 6.1% test positivity (down from the January 12 numbers of 44/100K and 7.5%). 312 employees have tested positive for COVID-19 since spring and 32 are currently quarantined.

The CDC projects further declines in cases in February. There is a positive trend of decreases in cases and increases of vaccines in Montgomery County (for MCPS staff and the general community). MCPS staff are being vaccinated through DHHS and JHU; there were communications on January 19 and January 25.

## SAFETY AND OPERATIONS

Ms. McGuire presented videos where 3 principals showed the preparations in their schools (Bel Pre Elementary, Farquhar Middle, and Damascus High). All followed the safety guidelines but made customizations for their schools. Some examples shown in the videos were PPE stations at entrances, labeled desks in a room, no lockers, individual desks with either a basket or a second desk for storage, lunch at desks, 1 student per seat on a bus, multiple entrances, staggered arrival, and no sharing of school supplies. Ms. McGuire acknowledged that socialization will look different.

## Q AND A

Ms. Smondrowski asked about concerns that the schools were not real school, but would be virtual learning with a proctor (like the learning hubs). Dr. Smith said they have explored a variety of strategies; no one strategy is being planned. The models selected will depend on grade level, subject, and developmental needs. Dr. Wilson reiterated the **3 models: direct, simultaneous, and support** (indirect). Schools are developing customized plans. They will have “building blocks” for the Feb 9 meeting. The timeline for the release of school plans is being adjusted. Dr. Smith said a message to families will come from their individual schools.

Ms. O’Neill said some principals are communicating plans and some aren’t. She asked about parents changing their mind on the survey. Dr. Smith said after Feb 9 there will be a communication, including an explanation of schools having distancing, masks, and sanitizer. The schools will recheck with families about affirming or changing their choice.

Ms. O'Neill mentioned some evolving guidance about double masks and asked about monitoring students. Dr. Smith and Ms. McGuire reiterated that attestation would be used. They are also working on adding testing as another tool.

Mr. Asante asked if there would be an in-person orientation for families to see the schools. Dr. Smith said it would be just for students and staff physically there. Also, there are an infinite number of details to work out.

Ms. Harris said the position should be "we are going to open," and not a defensive crouch. Virtual learning does not work for most students, and there is irreversible learning loss. She also said there were core CDC infection control measures that individual schools would determine how to operationalize. There should be a standalone communication of public health measures to families that has simplicity, clarity, and transparency.

She mentioned possibilities of scheduling changes (for the day) and calendar changes (for the school year). She asked about pre-entry testing for special education students. Ms. McGuire said there is a robust PPE inventory based on discussion with the Office of Special Education.

Ms. Silvestre said she has been waiting for this conversation and things are coming together.

Ms. Smondrowski asked if there would be a video made for each school. Dr. Smith said there will be more targeted information sent out near the March 15 opening date. MCPS has invested millions of dollars in HVAC filters.

Ms. O'Neill asked Dr. Smith to clarify there is no vote today, Governor Hogan has a March 1 date, and MCPS has a March 15 date.

Dr. Smith said the decision is ultimately with the BoE. He clarified:

- **THE FEB 1 START DATE WAS DELAYED BASED ON THE DECISION AT THE JAN 12 MEETING.**
- **MARCH 1 IS THE DATE TO RETURN SPECIAL EDUCATION AND CTE STUDENTS. THE PLAN FOR THIS WILL BE PRESENTED AT THE FEB 9 MEETING.**
- **MARCH 15 IS THE DATE FOR RETURN OF LARGER GENERAL POPULATIONS (WHOLE GRADE LEVELS). THE RECOMMENDATION OF HOW TO DO IT WILL BE PRESENTED AND VOTED ON AT THE FEB 23 MEETING. THERE WILL ALSO BE A CALENDAR RECOMMENDATION AT THIS MEETING.**

Ms. O'Neill said some teachers are in their classrooms virtually, but others will need some dedicated time to prepare the classrooms.

**Dr. Smith stated that August/Sept 2021 will look like regular school.**

There is no vaccine for children under age 18. (side note, the Pfizer vaccine is approved for age 16 and up). He reiterated that children will not be vaccinated. He said he speaks with Dr. Chan every Friday morning and will be speaking with her tomorrow. He said "School needs to open." MCPS also plans a robust summer program.

## **SPORTS**

Dr. Sullivan discussed fall sports resuming in person. Feb 27 is the target start date, with preparation on Feb 13 and registration on Jan 29. Students can participate whether they are virtual or in person students. Plans have been approved by DHHS and OEMHS.

He showed a video of check in, pod assignments, and bringing your own mask, towel, water bottle, and sanitizer.

AND IN THE SEMESTER AHEAD.  
TO BEGIN

## MCPS Athletics - Fall Season

### Overview

- Registration opens Friday, January 29, 2021 through ParentVue
- Information will be posted on the website, including physical information and safety protocols
- Target start date is February 27, 2021
- Activities outdoors - begin with conditioning, skills-based practices
- All students are academically eligible - may participate regardless of virtual or in-person instruction

### Guiding Principles

- Promoting our core values of equity and access
- Ensuring the gradual, safe return to in-person activities
- Providing ongoing communication regarding current operations, in alignment with state and local guidelines

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## Q AND A

Ms. O'Neill asked about the safety of indoor sports. Dr. Sullivan said there would be a maximum of 10 for indoor sports, and they are working on modifying girls volleyball to move it outside.

Ms. Evans said she is confident outdoor sports can be done. She asked about the deadline for physicals. Dr. Sullivan said the target date is Feb 27.

Ms. Harris asked about how to share the information and help students get physicals. Dr. Sullivan said there are programs in place to assist with physicals.

Ms. Smondrowski noted that there might not be enough time to get physicals from pediatrician offices.

Dr. Sullivan said that some sports will probably get to the competition phase. Dr. Smith reiterated that sports were cleared at the county level.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Dr. Smith said all board members are working to get students back on March 1 and March 15. There is initiation of real effort to bring kids back. Thousands of staff members are working on it. In person school is critically important for many and essential for some. There will be a virtual academy next year to meet the needs of students.