

FEBRUARY 9 2021

UNOFFICIAL NOTES:

**2/9/21 MCPS BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING -
"OPENING SCHOOLS IN RECOVERY OF
EDUCATION"**

MODERATELY MOCO

BY JUNE TRAIKOFF

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Ms. Wolff said the next BoE meeting will be on Feb 23 and they will meet in person (or a hybrid version).

Dr. Smith said there are a vast array of perspectives and interests in the county. He gave a brief history of the past year, starting with Governor Hogan and Dr. Salmon making an announcement on March 12, 2020 that schools would close because of COVID-19, being only the second state in the country to do this.

He mentioned the unprecedented summer programming with 80,000 slots that were half filled. They are planning for this summer. He then said that different states had a variety of ways to measure the impact of COVID-19. The state provided metrics as a guide at the end of August. We didn't know when vaccine would be available. Now as we move forward, we need to focus on what we know now and learn from the experiences of other schools that have been open.

Dr. Smith said staffing and student experiences were considerations. It is not accurate that teachers will be at home with low paid monitors in school or that no students will have in person instruction. What will happen is evolving and depends on BoE decisions. And there is/will be updated information from Gov. Hogan, President Biden, CDC, state superintendent, and state health director.

Dr. McKnight said they deeply value the experience students have in person. The learning and well-being of students is important, as well as supporting the staff. She gave an overview of the presentations today – metrics (Mr. Turner), instructional model (Dr. Wilson), and calendar (Ms. McGuire).

METRICS

Mr. Turner presented the current case rates of 23.8/100K and 4.8% test positivity and noted these are the lowest rates since late November (these are down from the January 28 numbers of 35.1/100K and 6.1%).

He said MCPS will use the mitigation methods of masks, distance, and hand washing. Additionally, they will implement a COVID-19 testing protocol based on guidance from the Rockefeller Foundation. Vaccinations will provide another precaution and safety measure, and they are moving quickly with county partners.

INSTRUCTIONAL MODELS

Dr. Wilson said the March 1 return plan is for small groups of students. March 15 is a larger phase in. 60% of students selected virtual (including non-respondents) and 40% selected in person. Considerations for different models include grade levels, course content, needs and numbers of students, and staffing. There is a right place for each approach to work. She said there is great value of in person instruction.

Dr. Lowndes discussed the March 1 return of special education students, those that need the most intense support. He said there will be 500 students in 68 schools and all staff need to come back. Enhanced PPE was provided. Students would be in school Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. Wednesday would be virtual learning. Some related services may continue in a virtual format, but he knows things like physical therapy do not work well virtually.

Dr. Hazel discussed CTE students. They will prioritize return of juniors and seniors in 5 programs. Edison runs on an AM/PM schedule while the other schools are full day. Most of the teachers will be at the school in person, but some classes (especially non-CTE courses) may be virtual with the students viewing them while in the school building. They will expand to add more programs returning by March 15.

Dr. Koutsos and Dr. Morris discussed some terminology and rotations. Dr. Koutsos said they are using a data-driven approach, with multivariable systems of equations, and customized solutions for the school communities. He said the return “no later than” dates could happen sooner.

Dr. Morris discussed the rotations and that differences in frequency depend on the staffing and student rate of return. Middle school and some elementary grades have a weekly A/B rotation.

There will be information showing FARMS information at schools on the MCPS website, recovery tab (?) so that you can find your school.

Dr. Lowndes discussed special education students in general classes. They would follow the same schedule as the general classes, but students not making progress on their IEPs could come in on extra days. Grades 7-11 would be back in phase 1.2.

Dr. Dyson discussed instructional experiences. She gave an example of a class with 24 students, 5 remaining virtual, 19 in person (divided into a room with 10 students and a room with 9 students). Students may be strategically grouped

by needs or into small groups for services or enrichment. Principals were instructed to describe the services and supports being provided.

There could be teachers and co-teachers and direct instruction from a variety of staff. Videos of examples were shown. Specific information will be provided from each school.

Q AND A

Dr. O'Neill said there is misunderstanding in the community, could they quantify the amount of meaningful in person instruction.

Dr. McKnight said students will have direct instruction. Dr. Wilson said schools are creatively designing and connecting students across space.

Teachers with skills for simultaneous instruction can do it, as referenced in the public testimony. There is direct teaching to virtual students. Students may log on in school, but they have staff there. A teacher in person may have students in 2 rooms in the school building for distancing, the teachers could go between rooms. Direct instruction is schedule and lesson dependent.

There will be orientation packets for schools. Dr. Dyson said there are drop in sessions with MCPS for principals.

Ms. O'Neill said not to make assumptions about which students are struggling. There are many children struggling now who weren't before March 2020. Dr. Smith said he is concerned about students across all 208 schools and wants more money to support all schools.

Ms. Evans thanked everyone and asked if the models could change after the phase in. Dr. Smith said this is a transitional program. Dr. Smith said they will use the most up to date protocols. As vaccines increase and community spread decreases, more students will return to buildings. He said the vote today is to bring students back appropriately and it will be shifted and adjusted moving forward.

Ms. Wolff asked about the capacity of students per room and the current metric. Dr. Smith said they are using 6 feet with face coverings, masks, and hand washing.

Ms. Smondrowski stressed the importance of being clear and specific with the community. She asked if there would be a camera in the classroom, if the teacher rotates daily between classrooms, why Wednesdays were still virtual, and could the phase ins be in shorter windows. She would like all students in by April 16 (the end of the third marking period).

Dr. Smith said Wednesday is for cleaning. There are dozens of support staff in schools, such as for restroom breaks and bus arrivals. Research and experiences have changed over time. There is lots more information about moving forward.

Dr. Wilson said whether art, music, and PE would be virtual depends on the building.

Dr. Docca asked for clarification on the slide showing the example of the 24 students (5 virtual, 10 in person and 9 in person). Would the teacher be on camera for all students at once? Dr. Smith said there might be more than one teacher.

Ms. Harris said MCPS is not trailblazing and is learning from other schools. She asked when parents would get information about their specific schools and students. Dr. Smith said that can't be released until the board decision.

Ms. Silvestre asked for an example slide for schools/classes with the majority of students virtual. Would that be the simultaneous model? Dr. Smith said no. Dr. McKnight said they will talk more about virtual learning at the next meeting.

Ms. O'Neill said teachers are concerned about simultaneous instruction. She talked with a parent with children in private school. It worked well, but the teacher had a microphone and camera. Has MCPS purchased microphones and cameras? Do students carry their chromebooks home every day?

Mr. Turner said the technology team is getting tools. Headphones will be provided for classes. Students will bring their chromebooks to and from school, the school will have extras.

Dr. Wilson said many teachers have expressed an interest in simultaneous instruction. It depends on the age of students, course content, and what level of support the teacher would need. The key is staffing.

TIMELINE/SCHEDULE

Dr. Koutsos talked about the timeline for the next steps and when information would be communicated to families. Virtual orientations would be presented by March 15, probably between March 1-12. Families should directly contact their school to request a change from virtual to in person or from in person to virtual learning. There is no form to fill out.

Ms. McGuire discussed calendar adjustments for accommodating 3 days of staff preparation. Spring break remains as it was. March 8 will have no school for students. March 9-10 will be asynchronous learning for students.

Ms. McGuire presented the bell time and bus schedules. The virtual and in person schedule are aligned.

Q AND A

Ms. Smondrowski confirmed that communication will be for the March 15 group and subsequent groups.

Ms. Evans thought it was not a good idea to allow families to make changes in their selection for in person or virtual because of staffing plans.

Ms. Silvestre asked about models and projections for COVID-19 case rates in March. Mr. Turner said the CDC models show approaching 15/100K and declining.

Mr. Asante asked about the support period for secondary school. Dr. Koutsos said it depends if the support period is tied to 8th period or homeroom.

Wednesdays can also be used. Dr. McKnight said principals will do this at the school level.

Ms. Harris asked about how public health guidance would be communicated and what would happen if some students (non-responders to survey) just show up on March 15. Dr. McKnight said there will be a community effort.

Ms. Harris asked how non-compliance (eg, mask wearing) would be addressed. Dr. Smith said it would be the same way as any non-compliance. You can't have someone in the space not following protocols.

Ms. O'Neill asked how students that just show up will be addressed. Dr. Smith said they won't turn anyone away but they may need a few days to make adjustments. He thinks they will be able to serve everyone who wants to come.

Ms. Smondrowski thought the default for non-response should be in person (instead of virtual) for planning purposes. She asked if background checks and compliance training would be given to classroom monitors. Dr. Smith said yes, the same rules are followed. She asked what teachers remaining in the virtual model would be doing during the 3-day training period. Dr. Smith said they will be planning with their schools.

Dr. Smith said many other school systems across the country are using these models. You can't say they won't work. Ms. Smondrowski confirmed supplies would not be shared between students. Ms. Smondrowski asked about

extracurricular clubs and theater and arts. Dr. Smith said those are the next challenges. Dr. Wilson said they would be discussed at the next meeting.

Ms. Smondrowski asked about AP exams. Dr. Smith said they are working with the college board. Dr. Wilson said there will be Saturday programs.

Ms. Harris asked about the environmental health standards for air quality. Dr. Smith said they would give another update at the next meeting. They follow the national standards of the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE).

Ms. Silvestre asked to have more details about seniors at risk of not graduating at the next meeting.

Mr. Asante asked about increasing bandwidth in schools. Mr. Turner said they are upgrading buildings with more wifi access points.

Ms. Smondrowski asked for more information on supports for special education students at the next meeting and for communication about summer school.

Ms. Wolff asked how substitute teachers would be handled. Dr. Smith said it would be the same way as now.

RESOLUTION

Dr. Smith read a resolution that included opening schools for small groups on March 1, returning grade level cohorts on March 15, and making March 8 a professional development day.

[https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/mcpsmd/Board.nsf/files/BY3U9B7AEE76/\\$file/ADOPTED%20In-Person%20Learning%20210209.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/mcpsmd/Board.nsf/files/BY3U9B7AEE76/$file/ADOPTED%20In-Person%20Learning%20210209.pdf)

Ms. O'Neill (?) made a motion, Ms. Harris seconded it. Ms. Smondrowski clarified that she wants all students back before the 4th grading period begins.

The board voted unanimously in favor of the resolution.

FULL SLIDES

[https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/mcpsmd/Board.nsf/files/BY4JLJ4DAB56/\\$file/Opening%20Schls%20Recovery%20Ed%20210209%20PPT.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/mcpsmd/Board.nsf/files/BY4JLJ4DAB56/$file/Opening%20Schls%20Recovery%20Ed%20210209%20PPT.pdf)