

MARCH 11 2021

UNOFFICIAL NOTES:

**3/11/21 MCPS BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING -
"OPENING SCHOOLS IN RECOVERY OF
EDUCATION"**

MODERATELY MOCO

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3/11/21 MCPS BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING - "OPENING SCHOOLS IN RECOVERY OF EDUCATION" - PARTIAL

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FULL SLIDES

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Five board members were in person (Wolff, Evans, O’Neill, Silvestre, Harris). Three board members called in from home (Smondrowski, Docca, Asante). Dr. Smith attended from home.

It was announced that Dr. McKnight will be the interim superintendent until June 30, 2022.

Dr. Smith noted the diversity of perspectives in the public comments. He disagreed with the testimony comment regarding settling on a plan because MCPS must respond to changes regarding COVID-19 guidance. He noted how

much more is known than 1 year ago, when Ohio was the first state to announce school closures and Maryland was the second a few hours later. He recalled talking with Dr. Salmon that day about preparing to use spring break days as makeup days. Much is changing, and now, preparation for fall 2021 is beginning. The plan is for it to look like a regular school year. Dr. Smith hopes for clarification from the state or federal government about requirements for 3 feet or 6 feet of distance between students.

Dr. Smith also noted that Montgomery College and civic centers will be used as equity hubs.

Dr. McKnight gave an overview of topics, including:

- March 1 return of CTE and special education students
- Vaccines to staff
- Travel and quarantine
- Lessons learned from March 1 return
- MSDE assessments
- Graduation

*note that accelerated timeline for return was also briefly discussed

METRICS

Mr. Turner presented the current case rates (as of last Friday) of 10.2/100K and 2.9% test positivity (down from the previous Feb 9 meeting – 12.2/100K and 3.3% test positivity). Also, CDC models project numbers to continue to decline.

VACCINATIONS

Dr. Nixon said that 25,319 staff member names were submitted to their partners at Johns Hopkins and the county DHHS for vaccinations. These include teachers, substitute teachers, classroom monitors, and support staff such as cafeteria workers, bus drivers, and custodial professionals. 11,811 have fully completed both doses.

TRAVEL

Ms. McGuire noted changing CDC and state guidance. There is now a less strict travel “advisory” outside of neighboring states (DC, VA, DE, PA, WV). COVID-19 tests and quarantine while waiting for results is recommended but not required.

She also noted that all bus routes will be running on 3/15.

Q AND A

Ms. Smondrowski asked if there were adequate amounts of PPE and if central office staff have walked through the schools and proactively provided support. Ms. McGuire said yes, and they are helping principals. Ms. Smondrowski noted that the Wilson Wims school video was very well done.

Mr. Asante asked if the number of staff vaccinated includes those vaccinated outside of the Hopkins partnership. Dr. Nixon said yes, the number includes vaccines received outside of the MCPS partnerships. The outside vaccines are self-reported voluntarily by employees via survey.

Ms. O’Neill asked about the number of employees that declined the vaccine and possibly making a PSA. Dr. Nixon said of the 25,319 staff members, initially 1,289 responded to a survey question that they did not want help from MCPS to secure a vaccine. The remaining 24K names were sent to Hopkins and DHHS for arranging and scheduling appointments.

Ms. Harris asked how many staff have received the first dose of vaccine. Dr. Nixon will find out.

Ms. Harris also noted the positive, can-do attitude in the Wilson Wims video.

She noted the difference between cleaning (soap and water are good enough for COVID-19) and disinfecting high touch surfaces (this should not be done in spaces where kids are because of the chemicals). She discouraged hygiene

theater. Mr. Adams noted MCPS follows the green seal on cleaning products, uses sprayers in the evenings for more efficient disinfecting, and discourages people from bringing in their own cleaning products. MCPS has plenty, and the chemicals are approved. Ms. McGuire said the warehouse is full.

NEXT PORTIONS (NOTES ARE INCOMPLETE).

Two principals (Sarah Starr at Longview and Annette Ffolkes at Roscoe Nix discussed their experiences with the March 1 opening. Both were very positive.

Dr. Lynch talked about compensatory FAPE services and an extended school year.

There was some discussion about ESOL students and spring(?) assessments.

There was much discussion about graduation and prom. From surveys to parents and seniors, the outdoor graduation at football stadiums was preferred, then traditional venues like DAR, UMBC, and then virtual ceremonies (where there was little interest).

Traditional indoor proms will not happen, but there was discussion about a possible outdoor unity day for seniors.

ACCELERATED TIMELINE FOR RETURN TO SCHOOL

The April 6 return date was moved to Thursday April 8 due to potential spring break travel and people getting COVID-19 testing. The last group returning on April 26 will be moved up to April 19, the first day of the 4th marking period.

Grades 7-11 could return together instead of in the planned groups of grades 8, 9, 11 followed by 7, 10.

Acceleration of Student Return and Post Spring Break Phase-in Recommendations

- The Board of Education has asked MCPS to explore options to accelerate the safe return of students to in-person learning
- If we see success with the March 15 student return, we believe that we can combine phases 2.1 and 2.2 to complete the phase-in by April 19, the first day of the 4th marking period
- Additionally, while we are urging students and staff not to travel, we know some have delayed essential travel
- To mitigate the transmission of COVID-19 in schools upon return from spring break, we are transitioning Tuesday, April 6 from an in-person day to a virtual learning day and keeping Wednesday, April 7 as a virtual day
- In-person students scheduled to return on April 6 will return to buildings on Thursday, April 8

FALL 2021

The expectation is for 5-day per cent week typical school with a full return. Masks and hand washing may still be in place.

Expectations for Fall 2021

- It is expected that continued improvements in public health conditions, increases in vaccinations, and relaxation of restrictions will allow for more students in-person, more resumption of typical in-person activities and instruction.
- We will continue to work closely with our local, state, and national public health colleagues to follow recommended risk mitigation and safety and health practices while welcoming staff, students, and families back to school buildings.
- We are exploring the concept of a “virtual academy” reflecting and building on the successes that some students have experienced with virtual learning, and acknowledging that some families will choose or require virtual learning for many reasons.