Vision for Reopening

Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) is committed to providing a high-quality education for all students that focuses on equity, raises the bar, closes gaps, and prepares each student for the future. Following the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent mandated closure of schools during the spring and summer of 2020, BCPS has created this reopening plan to ensure that the safety of our students, families, and staff is prioritized while seeking to maximize learning, as that is our core purpose.

Requirements

In accordance with *Maryland Together*, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) recovery plan for education, the following is a list of non-negotiables that each local school system must include in its recovery plan.

School systems must:

1. Publish their recovery plans by August 14, 2020;
2. Establish a Recovery Plan Stakeholder Group;
3. Ensure that the MD College and Career Readiness Standards are taught;
4. Determine where students are instructionally early in the school year;
5. Include the system’s equity plan in its recovery planning;
6. Develop a plan for monitoring and tracking attendance when students are engaged in distance learning;
7. Adhere to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act;
8. Follow procedures that are developed by MSDE, the Maryland Department of Health, and guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for an individual who tests positive for COVID-19;
9. Follow the safety protocols for collection of materials, cleaning of schools and facilities, daily cleaning, and nutrition as established by MSDE in collaboration with the Maryland Department of Health and CDC guidance;
10. Follow protocols for the safe transportation of students to and from school;
11. Develop a communication plan;
12. Utilize the COVID-19 Checklist in the development of the recovery plan; and
13. Align local decisions for the resumption of athletics with the *MPSSAA Roadmap Forward for Interscholastic Athletics*, MSDE, and local school system educational and health and safety decisions.
Resources and Stakeholder Input

The following documents, along with stakeholder input, informed the BCPS recovery plan. This plan was assembled in collaboration and consultation with the BCPS Design Team; BCPS Recovery Stakeholder Group; national, state, and school system leaders; and other educators and experts.

- *Maryland Together: Maryland’s Recovery Plan for Education*
- BCPS Fall Reopening Survey
- The BCPS Recovery Plan Stakeholder Group
- Sixteen (16) stakeholder input sessions, including input from:
  - AFSCME, BCPSOPE, CASE, ESPBC, and TABCO;
  - Superintendent’s Advisory Councils (Student, Parent, Teacher, Business, Principal);
  - Area Education Advisory Councils;
  - International Parent Leadership Academy (parents of students who are English Learners);
  - Special Education Citizens Advisory Council (SECAC);
  - Citizens Advisory Committee for Gifted and Talented Education (GTCAC);
  - NAACP; and
  - Parents, students, and staff from communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

BCPS Guiding Principles for Reopening Schools

As reopening planning began, BCPS developed guiding principles that serve as the lamppost against which our efforts are compared.

1. We will promote the health, welfare, and safety of our students, staff, and families while maximizing learning.
2. We will prioritize social-emotional learning and community building.
3. We will provide high-quality teaching and learning to all students.
4. We will mitigate educational inequities by utilizing structures and supports that respond to the conditions that impact our varied populations as informed by data.
5. We will provide additional supports and differential learning opportunities for the students who need them most. For example, students with interrupted access to education, students with disabilities, English learners, and students living in poverty.
6. We will provide our students and families with the resources that enable the varied populations to fully participate in and take advantage of our instructional model.

Given these guiding principles, the BCPS Reopening Plan is organized around the pillars of health, welfare, and safety; high-quality teaching and learning, social-emotional learning, and community building; and equity and additional supports.
COVID-19 in Baltimore County

Throughout the mandated closure of schools, Baltimore County, Maryland, has had the state’s third highest count of confirmed COVID-19 cases, outpaced only by Prince George’s and Montgomery counties. As of July 16, 2020, Baltimore County had more than 9,153 confirmed cases on COVID-19, with all areas and zip codes within the county experiencing positive COVID-19 cases.

The Start of School Year 2020-2021

The 2020-2021 school year will begin on Tuesday, September 8, 2020. Students will begin the school year engaging in virtual instruction, which will continue through the end of the first semester on January 29, 2021. Prior to the start of the school year, BCPS will provide school staff with a day to report to their classrooms to gather the necessary materials to teach and provide services from home. Additional opportunities to refresh materials and teaching supplies during the period of virtual instruction will be offered as conditions allow and as needed by school staff. Adults will be required to wear face coverings in all public areas while on BCPS property and adhere to health guidelines.

Schools will maintain a bell schedule, and the amount of live instruction provided by teachers will increase as compared to what was provided during the Continuity of Learning this past spring. Schools will have flexibility in creating a bell schedule that maximizes learning based on student need. Students will receive live instruction from teachers every day between a minimum of 2 hours and up to 3.5 hours and will then have up to 3 hours of independent work. The delivery structure or instructional interval for the hours of live instruction will vary based upon the developmental age of the students, research on effective models for online instruction, and course enrollment. Student attendance will be recorded daily and teachers will follow traditional grading and reporting procedures for student work and assignments. Special education and related services will be provided in accordance with all applicable local, state, and federal regulations.

As the first semester ends, and if it is safe to do so, BCPS will implement a hybrid instructional approach for the second half of the school year. This hybrid approach will prioritize bringing identified and targeted students back for in-person instruction for a few days a week on a rotating basis while still offering parents the choice of a full-time virtual learning approach. This plan prioritizes the health, welfare, and safety of students and staff while maximizing learning for students given the prevalence of COVID-19 in Baltimore County. Details on the window of parent choice and identified students will follow.
The Decision on Virtual Learning

BCPS issued a public reopening survey after the end of the 2019-2020 school year. In addition to the 16 stakeholder input sessions, the public survey garnered over 52,000 responses from students, parents/caregivers, community members, and central office and school-based staff. The survey asked, among other considerations, for respondents to rank their preferred model of instruction to start the coming school year: 100% in-person instruction, a combination of in-person and virtual instruction, and 100% virtual instruction. There was not clear agreement among the model preferences of students, school-based staff, and parents/caregivers, so the BCPS Design Team continued to consider starting the 2020-2021 school year with a 100% in-person learning or a hybrid model of synchronous (live) and asynchronous (anytime) instruction.

As the team examined these models further, several implementation challenges detailed below emerged that reduced the feasibility of implementing each model. Therefore, the decision to begin the school year with 100% virtual instruction was made based on the rising COVID-19 infection rates as of July 16, 2020, and the medical models, which predict a second increase in COVID-19 infections after the start of the 2020-2021 school year. Reopening model preferences by stakeholder group and implementation challenges of in-person and hybrid instruction are shown below.

Reopening Model Preferences

Implementation Challenges to In-Person and Hybrid Instruction

Safety

- Enforcing compliance with social distancing and health guidelines
- Increasing risk of COVID-19 exposure
- Potential staffing challenges
Transportation

- Social distancing guidelines that reduce bus capacity to between 9-22 passengers
- On a typical day BCPS transports over 80,000 students to and from school
- At least 72% of parents said they would want their children to take the bus with social distancing rules

Meal Service

- Providing safe and efficient meal service without cafeteria utilization
High-Quality Teaching and Learning, Social-Emotional Learning, and Community Building

BCPS will institute enhancements to its virtual instructional approach in order to maximize teaching and learning. These enhancements are a product of the many lessons learned during the emergency school closure in the spring and feedback from students, parents, teachers, and administrators. Beginning in the fall of 2020, the virtual instructional approach will differ from the spring Continuity of Learning.

Virtual instruction will now: (1) contain strengthened alignment to MD College and Career Ready Standards; (2) include diagnostic curriculum tasks to determine unfinished student learning; (3) provide live instruction with teachers on the designated school days for every course; (4) include up to 3.5 hours of daily synchronous (live) teaching; and (5) include up to 3 hours of daily independent, asynchronous (anytime) learning, which may include additional small group instruction on a rotation.

Teachers will be on duty Monday through Friday with Wednesday held as a day for targeted student intervention, asynchronous (anytime) instruction, individual and collaborative planning, and professional learning. Teachers will take student attendance daily and will adhere to traditional grading and reporting procedures as outlined in the BCPS Grading and Reporting Procedures Manual.

Sample Teacher Week-at-a-Glance*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday and Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday and Friday</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AM</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>Live Individualized Student Support, Check-ins for Identified Students</td>
<td>Instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Live and Anytime)</td>
<td>(Live and Anytime)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lunch/Planning</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Lunch/Planning</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PM</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>Professional Learning, Meetings, Collaborative and Individual Planning</td>
<td>Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Live and Anytime)</td>
<td>(Live and Anytime)</td>
<td>(Live and Anytime)</td>
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*Actual time periods of classes, lunch, and planning time will vary based on the school bell schedule.
Sample Student Week-at-a-Glance**

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Monday and Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday and Friday</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AM</strong></td>
<td>AM Classes with Teachers, Independent Work</td>
<td>Individualized Support, Teacher Check-ins*</td>
<td>AM Classes with Teachers, Independent Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lunch/Recess/Break</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Lunch/Recess/Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PM</strong></td>
<td>PM Classes with Teachers, Independent Work</td>
<td>Independent Work</td>
<td>PM Classes with Teachers, Independent Work</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

** Actual time periods of classes, lunch, and independent work time will vary based on the student’s schedule.**

Daily Learning Expectations

Each day, elementary students will have an opportunity to:

- Receive live, virtual instruction from their teacher for between 2 and 3.5 hours each day, 4 days each week.
- Join their classmates for class meetings and social-emotional learning.
- Engage in small groups for instruction as needed.
- Work independently on assignments and projects.
- Take movement breaks and screen breaks throughout the day.
- Have lunch and playtime independently and with family.
- Participate in special area class instruction in art, music, library, and physical education.

Each day, middle or high school students will have an opportunity to:

- Receive live, virtual instruction in all of their courses for a total of 3.5 hours each day, 4 days each week.
- Engage in small groups for instruction as needed.
- Request individual support from their school counselor.
- Work independently on assignments and projects.
- Take movement, lunch, and screen breaks throughout the day.
Social-Emotional Learning

In addition to our enhanced instructional approach, BCPS will emphasize social-emotional learning (SEL) and community-building for students, staff, and families. Every effort will be made to reconnect, heal, and build as staff and students convene in virtual spaces. Research and guidance into the reopening of schools stresses the importance of SEL instruction, SEL supports, and community building. To support reopening, the Department of Social-Emotional Supports is developing additional strategies, support documents, and recommendations/guidance in the following areas for student and staff well-being.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Well-Being</th>
<th>Staff Well-Being</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Use universal strategies to identify student concerns and needs.</td>
<td>● Support staff’s social-emotional well-being, mental health, and overall wellness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Provide a system of supports and interventions for student social-emotional well-being, mental health, and overall wellness.</td>
<td>● Support school leaders and central office-based leaders.</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Continue student and family outreach and support.</td>
<td>● Expand the Culture of Care initiative and Mind Over Matters campaign.</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Offer professional learning for related services providers to address student social-emotional well-being.</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Expand the Culture of Care initiative and Mind Over Matters campaign.</td>
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Safety and Security

To promote the safety and security of any staff working at school sites, visitors to school buildings will be restricted during virtual learning, and visits will be on an appointment-only basis. Emergency plans and procedures are under review to determine the necessary frequency of safety drills during virtual instruction.

Food and Nutrition Services

BCPS recognizes that meal provision is an essential support to many of our students. Mobile Meal sites will be available for all students to pick up meals, as they were this past spring. Food and Nutrition team members will wear face coverings and gloves to keep safe, and social distancing will be maintained as meals are distributed. In addition, all food items will be wrapped and bagged appropriately, and distribution areas (tables, carts) will be sanitized frequently throughout meal service.
Athletics and Extra-Curricular Activities

Sports conditioning and extra-curricular activities may continue virtually, if possible. Based on student and adult safety, and the current prevalence of COVID-19, the start of the athletic season will be postponed while instruction is virtual and until it is safe to conduct all the various facets of organized team sports (e.g., group practice, equipment sharing, use of locker room facilities, etc.). COMAR waivers allow each school system to determine the start and end dates of each sport season and, as such, the Office of Athletics is working to reimagine how interscholastic athletics may proceed. Additional details and information will be forthcoming.
Equity, Resources, and Additional Supports

Educational equity involves providing each student what he, she, or they need in order to assist them in reaching their potential and preparing them for college and/or careers. BCPS will continue to provide the technological resources and additional supports to students who need these supports the most. Among those students whose needs demand equity are our students who are disproportionately impacted by structural inequities, students with disabilities, English learners, students who are living in and experiencing poverty, and students with limited to no educational engagement during the Continuity of Learning this past spring. Additional consideration may also be given to students at the transitional grade levels: Kindergarten, Grade 6, and Grade 9.

Technology

BCPS will continue to provide technology and resources to students and families in order to enable their full participation in our instructional program. Chromebook distribution will continue in Grades K-12 until a 1:1 student to device ratio is achieved. BCPS will continue to provide mobile hot spots for students without home Internet connectivity. Additionally, BCPS will purchase Bluetooth headsets and web-cameras for teachers in order to improve their ability to deliver instruction virtually. Paraeducators will also be provided with devices so that they may support virtual instruction.

Additional Supports for Students Who Need Them Most

Additional small group instruction/support sessions will be provided to identified students in order to meet their need for additional academic or social-emotional support. This will occur on Wednesday mornings. Moreover, each school will provide extended learning opportunities that are site-based, and occur either before school, after school, and/or on weekends. These extended learning opportunities may include one-on-one and/or small group instructional support from teachers and paraeducators.

Family Supports and Communication

BCPS will support families and staff in planning for virtual learning through both traditional and new outreach strategies. While clear information on www.bcps.org will continue to be a priority, staff will reach out to families with a back-to-school campaign using multiple and ongoing strategies including automated messages, informational events, and by providing practical tips through Parent University, TV and radio, and through parent networks. These supports will include virtual learning tips, access to learning materials including technology, tech support, and family health education (e.g., COVID-19, mental health).
BCPS will welcome students and staff back by celebrating the first week of school and launching a social media campaign focused on what students and staff are learning. In preparation for phasing in hybrid learning at some grade levels, outreach will focus on helping parents make an informed choice between continuing with 100% virtual learning and opting for a mix of in-person and virtual lessons. We will also help families prepare for new routines and expectations at school, including checking for symptoms at home, social distancing, and wearing face coverings on BCPS property. Throughout the coming months, BCPS will seek opportunities for students to promote healthy messages and habits.

**Key Dates**

**September 8, 2020 – First Day of School:** Virtual learning will begin for all students, K-12, and end on January 29, 2021.

**December 1-18, 2020:** BCPS will survey families. If safe to do so, families will have the option to continue virtual learning or to opt into hybrid instruction for the remainder of the school year.

**February – June 2021:** If it is safe to do so, BCPS will implement a hybrid instructional model with in-person and virtual learning. Full-time virtual learning will remain an option for parents.
Appendix A: COVID-19 Mitigation Strategies

The following section contains information regarding the various measures BCPS will take to promote safety and mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

Mitigation Strategies

BCPS will implement mitigation strategies to disrupt and prevent the spread of COVID-19. Strategies include staff screening for symptoms at home and prior to working, social distancing (face coverings and six-foot distance), and reduction or elimination of shared items.

Screen for Symptoms at Home and Prior to Working

- Employees will complete the COVID-19 Employee Expectations and Acknowledgement Form, asserting that they are:
  - Fever and symptom free.
  - Not under quarantine or isolation order.
  - Not awaiting test results.
- Ongoing staff education
- Immediate isolation and exclusion of staff with symptoms

Six-Foot Distance

- Limited number of persons in building enables consistent adherence to six-foot social distancing
- Closed communal lunch rooms
- Closed or limited occupancy of meeting rooms
- Limited occupancy in rest rooms
- Required appointments for all visitors

Face Coverings

- Required at all times in public areas of the building
- Breaks permitted if more than six feet apart.

Shared Items

- Reduce or eliminate shared items
- Establish procedures for cleaning of shared items between use (e.g., copier, fax, etc.)

Facility Cleaning, Sanitization, and Organization

BCPS will implement more frequent and high-impact cleaning and sanitization practices in accordance with Baltimore County Department of Health (BCDH) and CDC guidelines. Hand sanitizer stations will be provided in school lobbies. Frequently touched surfaces will be cleaned mid-day, and every Wednesday high-impact cleaning of the school will occur. Schools will be examined for proper ventilation and adequate nursing suite space to include the ability to isolate and quarantine individuals during the work day. BCPS will evaluate social distancing products (e.g., signage and placards, etc.) for purchase by schools.
Responding to Positive COVID-19 Cases

In the event that a staff member tests positive for COVID-19, the following procedures will be followed:

1. Staff member will be required to notify principal/supervisor of positive test or quarantine due to exposure.

2. Schools/offices notify Office of Health Services, which will identify and notify close contacts immediately.

3. Office of Health Services will consult with Baltimore County Department of Health (BCDH).

4. Office of Health Services will notify entire facility (school or building staff) of confirmed case by next work day.

5. School cleaning and closing decision (if indicated) based on BCDH guidance.

6. Persons who test positive will isolate at home for minimum of 10 days including 3 days symptom-free.

7. Close contacts will quarantine for 14 days.

Aspects of this plan may be adjusted as conditions warrant. Please check www.bcps.org for updates on the reopening of schools for 2020-2021 school year.