



Superintendent Communiqué

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Lead with respect, trust and courage.
Ensure an equitable, collaborative
and inclusive culture.
Enable all to achieve success.

MIDLAND PUBLIC SCHOOL FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (& ANSWERS) REGARDING BACK TO SCHOOL

As you know, in the July 13, 2020 Superintendent Communiqué, MPS released a “high-level” document that announced some Back-to-School information for the 2020-21 school year given Midland’s current Phase 4 COVID-19 status. The health and wellbeing of our students, staff and families is the District’s primary focus as we plan for our schools’ reopening. We understand student and teacher interactions are vital to the learning process and the need for parents/guardians to work outside the home and the role our schools play in that scenario. Below are some Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) we have received over the past week or so and the District’s responses. I hope you find the answers helpful. Don’t hesitate to reach out to my office via MPSConnect if we can be of assistance.

What delivery of instruction models will MPS offer to students and parents in 2020-21 if Midland remains in Phase 4 of the Governor’s re-opening plan?

- ◆ **5-day week in-school, face-to-face traditional instruction model**
For those who would like their child to attend school 5-days/week.
- ◆ **Hybrid MPS Virtual Academy/face-to-face course selection model for middle & high school (MS/HS) students**
MS/HS students may choose from courses in the MPS Virtual Academy instruction model (some courses will be MPS teacher-led models and some courses will be from Edgenuity with an MPS teacher mentor) and/or face-to-face courses in MPS classrooms. The staffing and course catalogs are being developed and further details will be released in early August. (This delivery of instruction will be referred to as MS/HS Hybrid model.)
- ◆ **MPS Virtual Academy instruction model**
All instruction will be completed remotely. It is our goal and we are actively working to have an MPS teacher provide this instruction with our newly-adopted Learning Management System—CANVAS. Depending on the demand and MPS teacher interest, MPS will use MPS-trained teaching staff members with a proven and successful virtual learning program to provide the instruction for the MPS Virtual Academy. The blend of MPS teachers and Edgenuity courseware will be used if we are not able to provide an MPS teacher course or elementary grade level.

IMPORTANT NOTE: **SEMESTER-LONG COMMITMENT**

- ◇ **Whether your family chooses traditional 5-days/week face-to-face instruction, the MS/HS Hybrid model, or the MPS Virtual Academy, the delivery of instruction method choice will be a **SEMESTER-LONG COMMITMENT** for your child.**

MPSConnect is a convenient communications tool for you to connect with me. Every message comes to my desktop. Either I or another MPS staff member will do all we can to reply to your message within the next work day.
<https://www.midlandps.org/content2/706> — Michael E. Sharrow, Superintendent

Are schools required by the Michigan Dept. of Education to provide 180 days/1,098 hours of instruction as past years?

- ◆ Yes—at this time there has been no change to the days/minutes requirement.
- ◆ MPS Virtual Academy students will be required to meet these requirements days/minutes of instruction as well.

What about students with Special Needs and students with IEP's?

- ◆ We will work closely with families of special needs students using their IEP team to determine the procedures and needs on an individual student-by-student basis.

FAQ REGARDING IN-SCHOOL, FACE-TO-FACE INSTRUCTION**If we have to transition from in-school, face-to-face instruction to remote learning, will it be different than last spring?**

- ◆ Yes. MPS purchased a Learning Management System to assist our teaching staff in creating and delivering courses and content in a more robust, organized and user-friendly format. We have provided initial staff professional development with follow-up help sessions to assist staff with the goal of having several weeks of lessons prepared for in-school and remote learning.
- ◆ The requirements for virtual learning participation, rigor and grading will be the same as in-school learning. At this time, MDE attendance and reporting requirements remain as rigorous as in-school.

How will children and staff keep up with instruction if quarantined for a number of days?

- ◆ It is the District's plan to continue to provide instruction remotely if a teacher, student, classroom is quarantined but feeling well enough to participate. Each individual situation will require its own set of conditions.

Will students and staff who have a fever of 100.4 or higher be restricted from school activities?

- ◆ Yes. Students/Staff will be required to be symptom-free with their temperature below 100.4 for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications before returning to school activities (per CDC guidance dated 07/20/2020).

What will social distancing in classrooms look like?

- ◆ Smaller class sizes (due to some families choosing MPS Virtual Academy or the MS/HS Hybrid model).
- ◆ Non-essential classroom furniture will be moved out of classrooms.
- ◆ Student desks and/or tables will be equipped with transparent shields.
- ◆ Grade K-5 students will be strongly encouraged and we strongly recommend face masks.
- ◆ Grade 6-12 students will be required to wear a face mask.
- ◆ All staff members will be required to wear a face mask.
- ◆ To the best of our ability, student seating will be assigned, facing one direction and spaced as far apart as room dimension and furnishings/seating allows. It is our goal to achieve the 6-foot recommendation but knowing this will not be possible in all cases.

How will social distancing be accomplished in hallways, passing times, bathrooms, etc.

- ◆ Students will be sent directly to their classrooms when school entrances are opened at a set time determined by their school.
- ◆ Passing time in the secondary buildings will be staggered, time shortened to avoid congestion in the hallways. Students will be limited to going to their lockers before school, lunchtime and after school. Students will be released in the afternoon by classroom and must exit the building within minutes (# of minutes yet to be determined).
- ◆ Bathrooms will post a capacity limit to assist in social distancing.
- ◆ Elementary buildings will enter school and go directly to classrooms.
- ◆ Elementary transitioning will be limited, however, when necessary, students will be supervised by staff members.
- ◆ Elementary World Language, Art, Music Classes and Auxiliary Teachers/Staff will go to the students' classrooms.
- ◆ Elementary lockers where located in corridors/hallways will not be used.

Will elementary students participate in recess?

- ◆ Yes. The playgrounds will be divided into sections and each classroom will be restricted to a section in order to prevent co-mingling of classes or grade levels. Masks will be strongly encouraged to be worn outside on school property by all.

What will PE, Athletics, Band and Choir look like this school year?

- ◆ We expect PE, Band and Choir classes will meet outside as much as possible.
- ◆ There is a high likelihood that locker rooms will not be available.
- ◆ Music theory instruction can be delivered inside. The delivery of instruction to students whose instruments can be played with a face covering, can be held inside (for instance string instruments). However, vocal music and instruments that cannot be played with a face covering will most likely be practiced/performed outside.
- ◆ At this time, MHSAA plans to proceed with fall athletics. In the next few weeks, Midland Public Schools will make its decision on athletic participation and protocols.

What is the procedure/length of quarantine if a student/staff member tests positive for COVID-19?

- ◆ If an individual has a positive test with symptoms, return to school is allowed after at least ten days since symptoms first appeared AND at least 24 hours with no fever without fever-reducing medication AND symptoms have improved.
- ◆ If there was a positive test with no symptoms, return to school is allowed after ten days have passed since test.

Note: a healthcare provider may require a longer time period. The District will review each individual case and communicate with the student/staff member.

What is the procedure if a student/staff member shows signs of being sick while at school? The student/staff member ...

- ◆ will be moved to a quarantine room and sent home as soon as possible.
- ◆ will be encouraged to have a COVID-19 test
- ◆ cannot return to school until a negative test or is 24-hours symptom free without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- ◆ Someone in direct contact with a positive-tested individual must be quarantined for 24 hours (w/o fever-reducing medications) or is able to produce a negative test.
- ◆ Someone who interacts with a person who has been contact-traced is not excluded or required to test.

How will disinfecting and sanitization be adjusted for COVID?

- ◆ The District has purchased machines that can sanitize with a fogging fluid and eliminate the COVID particles within seconds.
- ◆ Hand sanitization stations are located in every classroom. Students will receive training with best sanitizing practice. Hand sanitization will occur on a schedule.
- ◆ Cleaning desks and desk shields will occur hourly at the secondary level and at every transition in the elementary level.
- ◆ Water fountains will be shut off and water bottle filling locations have been purchased.
- ◆ All buses have been treated so COVID cannot exist on its surfaces and will be sanitized after every bus run.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7W9-8E5620U>
- ◆ Air sanitization and increased filtering will be added in large spaces.

How will health screens occur?

- ◆ Employees will provide daily health screenings at home prior to leaving for school.
- ◆ All parents will be requested to perform health screenings daily on their child(ren).
- ◆ When arriving at an MPS school or facility, temperature screening will occur at multiple entrances with temperature scanners.
- ◆ Staggered release and entrance times will be used as much as possible to reduce congregating.

Will K-5 students be required to wear masks in the classroom?

- ◆ The Governor's Executive Order does not require students in elementary classrooms to wear face masks unless they co-mingle with other classes for an extended period of time (10 minutes).
- ◆ MPS parents will be asked to encourage their elementary child(ren) to follow the model of the teacher by wearing a mask.

Will MPS provide face coverings?

- ◆ MPS has purchased one washable face covering for every student and staff member. Disposable masks will also be used if needed. Students/staff may also provide their own face coverings if desired (inappropriate messaging/images not permitted).

Can students/staff refuse to wear a face covering and/or have a medical exemption?

- ◆ When students/staff are in school, participating in face-to-face instruction, compliance with the Governor's Executive Order regarding face coverings is required.
- ◆ A medical exemption for a student will be determined through a formal IEP or 504 process.
- ◆ Staff medical exemption will be reviewed by the MPS Human Resources Department.

Will teachers be able to be heard clearly by students when wearing a face covering?

- ◆ MPS has installed classroom sound systems in all of our K-8 classrooms. Unfortunately, our high schools will not receive this technology until summer of 2021. Sound system use will be required and will allow staff to speak at a lower volume and be heard clearly.

When can students and staff have a break from wearing a face covering?

- ◆ MPS is attempting to plan for “mask free breaks.” These would require a classroom to be outside with social distancing.

How will students be served breakfast & lunch during Phase 4?

- ◆ All elementary students will receive their breakfast and lunch in the classroom.
- ◆ MPS will be purchasing equipment to provide breakfast and lunch more efficiently in the classroom as well as an electronic purchase platform.
- ◆ Middle and High School students will receive meals in a grab & go style. Some seating allowing for social distancing in large spaces such as cafeterias, media centers, gyms or large open spaces will be available.
- ◆ Virtually enrolled students who participate in free/reduced meals will be required to pick up these meals at a location yet to be determined on the exterior of the building.

Will visitors be allowed at school?

- ◆ MPS will not allow visitors at schools. Parents who wish to come to our school offices will be required to call and setup an appointment prior to arriving.

Will before and after school care be available for the 2020-21 school year?

- ◆ MPS partners with Quality Time (Greater Midland Community Center), Campfire and The Rock to assist parents with before and after school care. These opportunities will continue with all MPS COVID-19 protocols being followed.

Will student clubs and other after-school activities be allowed?

- ◆ MPS does not expect to allow after-school clubs and student activities to occur during Phase 4 in person.
- ◆ Clubs may meet virtually.

What will transportation look like this school year?

- ◆ MPS is encouraging all **parents to strongly consider** providing their **own means** of transportation.
- ◆ Parents **will be required** to wait until their K-5 student has passed their temperature scan before being transported by an MPS bus in the morning.
- ◆ Parents are strongly encouraged to wait for their Grade 6-12 student until scanned and/or provide clear directions to their child to return home if a failed scan occurs. MPS will attempt to contact parents.
- ◆ All bus drivers and students will be required to wear face masks at all times on the bus.
- ◆ All windows on the bus will remain open or partially open on the buses at all times.
- ◆ All students from the same family will ride in the same bus seat. (Up to 2-3 students per seat)
- ◆ All other students will be assigned a seat with one student per seat being the goal if possible.

Will MPS be using signage and reminders to reinforce procedures?

- ◆ MPS has purchased signage/marketing taping to assist students/staff with safety protocol messaging and reminders.
- ◆ Daily safety messages will be delivered to students and staff.

What will occur if we are moved to Stage 3 before school starts?

- ◆ MPS has been preparing procedures for technology hand-out and teachers using our new Learning Management System (CANVAS) to provide a more robust, rigorous remote-learning model should the Governor return Midland to Stage 3.

MPS VIRTUAL ACADEMY QUESTIONS/ANSWERS

What is the link to register my child for the MPS Virtual Academy?

- ◆ <https://forms.gle/WgNey3xJ2VA4JdTLA>

Is there a deadline to enroll in the MPS Virtual Academy?

- ◆ Yes. MPS will be developing schedules on August 7, 2020. Students not enrolled by August 7 could jeopardize their participation.

When does my MPS Virtual Academy decision become final?

- ◆ August 7th. We are closing registration and considering all registrations final. At that point, we have to make staffing decisions that cannot be changed until the semester ends. There is no guarantee that after this staffing process there will be any room to move between instructional models. We will allow switching between models at semester break.

Will grades be issued in the MPS Virtual Academy?

- ◆ Yes. Grades will be issued just as they are in the 5-day face-to-face in-school model.

If we enroll in the MPS Virtual Academy, when can we transition back to in-school face-to-face learning?

- ◆ Enrolling in the MPS Virtual Academy will require a semester-long commitment. This commitment is needed to provide a proper sequence for students to successfully transition as well as allows MPS to provide appropriate staffing levels for in-school and virtual learning in the first semester as well as second semester.

Will the online course list offered by the Virtual Academy match with current MPS courses?

- ◆ We have a wide variety of online courses that align to most of the District courses. We hope to have many courses developed by our own teachers to match many of our courses especially courses we do not have matches for online. Our vendor courses also offer many courses we do not offer in our traditional classrooms, so options may be available!

What are the options for course-levels?

- ◆ Any course developed by our teachers will have the same point level when taken in the MPS Virtual Academy. Our online vendor courses offer standard college prep level courses (.2), Honors courses in many of the core subjects (.4), and AP courses (.4). These course levels are determined by their related MPS course. There are no .3 level courses in our online vendor course catalog.

Will Secondary MPS Virtual Academy students be allowed to participate in face-to-face classes?

- ◆ The MS/HS Hybrid instruction model will provide increased choice and flexibility. Students enrolled in the MPS Virtual Academy may participate in a combination of virtual courses and select courses in the face-to-face setting. Families will need to provide their own transportation for students attending the in-school courses. In the coming weeks, students enrolled in the Virtual Academy will receive additional information about this flexible option and scheduling process.

Can students still attend the Greater Michigan Construction Academy as a MPS Virtual School student?

- ◆ Yes, following the same process and requirements in place for the MS/HS Hybrid model.

Will there be meaningful progress assessments and testing?

- ◆ In all online courses, there will be meaningful assessments, quizzes, tests and exams. Depending on the course structure, some assessments will receive immediate feedback, while other assessments that need the teacher to grade it will receive feedback within 24 hours.

How will MPS Virtual Academy students do their standardized testing (PSAT) in the fall and spring?

- ◆ Presently, these state/national tests are required to be taken in the school setting.

MPS VIRTUAL ACADEMY QUESTIONS/ANSWERS

Why are spaces limited? If there is a greater need/demand than spots in the academy, how are those spaces allocated?

- ◆ Our initial registration gives us the ability to determine staffing for the MPS Virtual Academy, MS/HS Hybrid and Traditional models, which is somewhat flexible at this time. However, once we have determined the staffing needs for each, the ability to add students to any instructional model is limited. Once staffing is set, enrollment will be based on available seats.

How often will face-to-face virtual meetings occur between students and teachers? Will that be outside of the daily class time or in addition?

- ◆ There will be a minimum of a weekly contact between the teacher and students, which is a Best Practice and required by the State of Michigan. Students who need additional help will be able to schedule time with the teacher each week. When this will occur will be determined by the teacher and students.

If a student chooses MPS Virtual Academy now, but schools never reopen for face-to-face in the fall, do the students automatically join their previously assigned teachers on CANVAS?

- ◆ Students will remain where they were enrolled for the remainder of the semester as staffing numbers are already set.

If we start the school year with MPS Virtual Academy, but then the District's face-to-face instruction shuts down, can students switch to CANVAS and be with student's previously assigned classroom teachers?

- ◆ No. There will be at least a semester commitment to the MPS Virtual Academy option. Staffing, pupil accounting and other factors do not permit us to be as fluid as families may desire but we will work hard to meet the needs of our students and families.

Will the students be able to continue cross-grade math in the MPS Virtual Academy?

- ◆ Yes

Can MPS Virtual Academy students participate in extracurricular activities and sports?

- ◆ Yes. Virtual Academy students remain enrolled in their home school and have chosen to receive instruction virtually.

For MPS Virtual Academy students who are qualified to receive free/reduced breakfast/lunch how will they get their meals?

- ◆ Families will be able to pick up these meals at a set location yet to be determined on the exterior of the building.

If my child participates in the MPS Virtual Academy, will he/she/they be considered an MPS-enrolled student in their present school, including as a Schools of Choice student?

- ◆ Yes. Enrolling in the MPS Virtual Academy is simply choosing a delivery of instruction method. Your child will remain actively enrolled in their present school. All records, conferences and contacts remain with your currently-enrolled school.

MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONS/ANSWERS

Will Open Houses and Parent/Teacher Conferences be held?

- ◆ We expect Open Houses and Parent/Teacher Conferences will be held virtually while we remain in Stage 4.

What will occur if we are moved to Stage 3 before school starts?

- ◆ MPS has been preparing procedures for technology hand-out and teachers using our new Learning Management System (CANVAS) to provide a more robust, rigorous remote-learning model should the Governor return Midland to Stage 3.

MPS STUDENT/STAFF WELLBEING

What is MPS doing to ensure the social emotional wellbeing of students this fall?

- ◆ MPS is committed to creating supportive and responsive learning climates to ensure our students can thrive. We will be paying close attention to the social emotional needs of our students and intentionally setting up environments that foster belonging and community as well as emotional safety and support. Social Emotional Learning skills will be integrated into teaching practices. To supplement our internal counseling services and support, we will continue to enhance our community partnerships so we can provide mental health support to students. In addition, we will regularly share resources and tools for our students and families. Understanding the individual dynamics and needs of our students and their families, it is essential that we keep open lines of communication between school and home as we work together to support our students.

What is MPS doing to ensure the social emotional wellbeing of staff as they return to school?

- ◆ The social emotional wellbeing of our staff and students is at the forefront of our planning. We will provide resources for our staff including self care, resilience, and wellbeing strategies and supports. Our district is implementing an Adult Wellbeing Team to organize and support these efforts. All staff also have access to our Employee Assistance Program at any time.

*We know these are unprecedented, uncertain times and we are all fearful with the beginning of the new school year looming. Do we have all of the answers, probably not. However, please know it is not for the lack of doing our utmost to give our families choices and information based on what we know **today**.*

In early August, Midland Public Schools will release our formal return to school plan that we are required to submit to the Michigan Department of Education by August 15, 2020.

Please stay tuned. Your child's school will share information in the coming weeks and my office will continue to keep the lines of communication as open as possible. It is our pledge to you to be as transparent as possible as we embark on the 2020-21 school year together.

— Michael E. Sharrow. Superintendent