

# Questions related to SCES Reopening\*

*\*List as of Feb. 24, 2021 - 1 PM*

Questions asked by three or more people are highlighted below.

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## **ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL/TRANSPORTATION**

- What are the arrival and dismissal procedures?
  - How will pick up and drop off times be orchestrated to minimize exposure?
  - How early will the school open to accept walkers/drop-offs? What will the students' experience be between drop-off and the beginning of the school day?
- What plans have been put in place for transportation?
  - Is there an expectation that the busses will have fewer kids to make it easier for them to social distance?
  - How many students per bus?
  - Mask wearing requirements?
  - Will there be more buses?
  - How are buses being cleaned?

## BEFORE AND AFTER CARE

- Will the before care and after care program be running on in-person days?
- How do you sign-up for before and after care?

## BUILDING SAFETY

- What changes and/or renovations are being made to the SCES classrooms to meet the COVID safety requirements?

### HVAC

- Has the HVAC system been repaired or replaced in the last year? If not, when was it last replaced or repaired?
- Please provide the results of the assessment ensuring parents can rely on the system not to break down on especially hot or cold days, when opening windows for increased ventilation is not possible. More details are better, given the following questions we have received:
  - a) Do all classrooms use the centralized system for both heating and cooling?
  - b) Are there any that rely on local heating such as radiators?
  - c) Has the centralized HVAC system been set to incorporate maximum outdoor airflow for ventilation? Does the system meet current ASHRAE 62 minimum requirements for ventilation in the classrooms? Outdoor air ventilation rate for breathing zones =  $(10 \text{ cfm} \times \text{room capacity}) + (0.12 \text{ cfm} \times \text{room square footage})$  (see page 17 of ASHRAE guidance)
  - d) Has any testing been performed to confirm the ventilation rate in each classroom?
  - e) Have MERV 13+ filters been installed? Has the air flow rate been confirmed to meet requirements?
  - f) Have air purifiers been added to the classrooms? What is the clean air delivery rate as configured?
    - Who then will be responsible for ensuring they are working and are maintained?
  - g) Does the nurse's room meet ASHRAE requirements? (10 air changes/hour, exhaust directly to outdoors, no re-circulation, negative pressure) (page 22 of ASHRAE guidance)
- If additional measures need to be in place, please provide the plan and timeline for implementation.

## CHROMEBOOKS

- Will children be expected to bring their Chromebooks every day?
  - If so, are there sufficient outlets for charging as needed?
- Our children's chrome books do not stay charged for the full day. How will in-person students charge their laptops?
- When can parents expect to return laptops and revert to non-screen based instruction for the kids (specifically for the younger age group)?
- Does the in-person experience allow students to turn in work with pencil and paper?
  - Will students be required to use Kami for assignments in-person?

## CLASSROOM SETUP

- What will the technology look like for teachers trying to teach to in-class and remote students at the same time?
  - Does the school have sufficient internet connections to support this amount of virtual learning?
  - What support are teachers receiving for hybrid classrooms?
  - Have extra cameras and large video screens been installed?
  - How will the teacher successfully tune into live children in front of them, and the rest on camera?
  - Has the school tested whether students will hear significant delay between the teacher in person and through their laptops?
- What are the **specific** criteria / guidelines / scientific data that is being used by SCES to determine the number of students per classroom/per level)? Is SCES taking into consideration the most recent recommendations published by specialized authorities (e.g. the American Academy of Pediatrics<sup>1</sup>, the Harvard School of Public Health<sup>2</sup> or any others?). Links below for reference.
- Do all classrooms have windows?
- Do classroom windows open?
  - Can they be kept open for ventilation if weather allows?
- Is MCPS buying CO2 monitors for enclosed classrooms so that air flow can be measured?
- Has SCES admin thought about outdoor classrooms or tents?

- Will SCES make use of the outdoor classroom for gardening projects and other outside learning like has been done historically?
- For kindergarteners, what classrooms will be utilized?
  - Will the classroom bathrooms be available?
- Will the classrooms be decorated appropriately for their learning level (like French words on the walls for French Immersion), or they are just empty rooms?
- Are there enough classrooms for each grade to have two each (one with teacher and one with monitor)?
- The most recent Scientific studies suggest putting kids at higher risk of catching COVID (I.e. who have existing health issues) in the corners of the room instead of the middle. Will Sligo Creek be doing this?
- Can we "see" what the safety set-up will look like?
  - Will there be a video or some sort of by-appointment tour of how the school will look for in-person instruction? (my children are especially interested in seeing how it would look, and we would appreciate any and all opportunities to help them with their expectations for in-person school.)

## HFA

- What will the 4th and 5th grade HFA program look like?
  - Teacher in room or monitor?
  - How many kids per class?
  - What kind of integration with gen ed?

## INSTRUCTIONAL MODEL / PROCESS

- What model will SCES be using? (e.g. direct instruction, simultaneous instruction, support instruction, virtual only) It's crucial to our decision-making to understand the model you are planning.
  - Will students in a classroom with a teacher be logging into Zoom on their Chromebooks and wearing headphones or will they be directly interacting with and responding to the teacher? (i.e. is the classroom experience with one's own teacher zoom-based or direct instruction?)
- Mr. Rand's email of 2/22 states that in-person students will have 'engagement with staff outside of non-core instructional time' while

virtual learners 'will be guided on the expectations for the remainder of the day.'

- **What does this mean in practice?**
- What are the school's plans to ensure **equitable access to the teacher between in person and virtual learners?**
- **Will parents be provided a list of teachers who will be teaching in the classroom (vs. those who have opted to continue teaching from home)?**
  - If yes, will parents be provided this information prior to March 2?
- Will some students have a different teacher as of March 15?
  - Some parents/caregivers strongly oppose asking the children to change teachers.
- Will teachers be able to take turns to be with children in the classroom one week and with children in the overflow rooms the next?
- **If your child is in a class that alternates between being with the teacher and being with a monitor in another room, could you choose to keep your child home during the weeks when they would not be with the teacher? **\*\* have heard this question at least 10 times\*\*****
- For kids in grades K-2, is the in-person schedule full day?
- How will the A/B groups be chosen?
  - Will any other student groups be on an A/B schedule?
  - Who will decide which children are in the classroom with their teacher and which children are in the 'overflow' room?
  - Will families be able to swap A/B assignments for their children with another family (presuming the same grade/class) to ensure alignment of A/B among children in one family or in one group/pod that is managing childcare together?
- We would like to know the proportion of students currently signed up for virtual/in-person specifically in our child's class so we can evaluate potential crowding and concerns about our child being the only one left virtual.
- **If we chose not to go in person now, can we opt for in-person later,**
  - For instance in April/May when it is warmer?
  - We have a vulnerable household member. Can we start virtual but transition to in-person once that person is vaccinated at some unknown date?
- **How will you transition kindergarteners who have never been to school?**
  - What special support will kindergarteners have if they don't go back in person now and first grade is their first time in a school building?
  - Will parents be able to walk kindergartners into the classroom since it would be their first time in the school?

- Will students need to bring headphones or will the school supply headphones?
- What are the best practices that SCES will incorporate from the experiences of other schools in the DMV Area that have been providing in-person classes during the fall and winter?
- What has been the experience for learning via monitors in classroom for younger students eg. kindergarten and full immersion programs?
- For kindergarteners in particular, who have never been to this school or in school with their peers, what is the transition strategy for this year and into next year?
  - Might the school consider keeping kindergarteners within their same class group for next year (when entering first grade) to help with the transition back to school?
- What type of interaction will be permitted between children in the classroom?
  - Now, for example, there is no conversation between children in the Zoom classroom unless they are in a breakout room. What will interpersonal interaction look like in the return to school reality?
- In general, how is being back in school under these plans better for children than being at home?
- Is the school making evidence-based decisions?
- If your child starts in person and it is not working out, can you switch back to virtual?
- Our second-grader currently does his writing work with pencil and paper. (We print out his assignments; he completes them on paper; then we take a picture and upload them onto his Google drive for him to add to Kami.) Does the in-person experience allow for him to continue to do his work with pencil paper?
- Will children be required to wear a mask AND headphones in class in any of the models?
- We understand in-person students will have to take a number of standardized tests that will not be given to the virtual students.
  - How much time will be spent on these tests?
  - When will they be given?
  - What will the virtual students (and students who are in-person but in the “virtual for the week” group) do during that time?

## **LUNCH / RECESS / BREAKS**

- Please explain what recess will look like for in-person students.
  - Will it be once a day? Can they go outside more than once?

- How will recess look on inclement days? Will children be going outside no matter the weather?
- What will in-person students do during the 90-min lunch break?
  - Who will monitor them?
  - For FI, will it be French speaking staff?
- How will lunch work?
  - It strikes us that eating lunch will increase exposure unless extra precautions are in place.
  - Eating outside is 1000x safer than inside. Understanding no plan is foolproof, **we strongly advocate that SCES hold lunch outside as long as weather permits.**
  - What would be the backup plan for how lunch could be held inside if it is too cold or bad weather outside?
  - Will a teacher be with each class and ensure social distancing during lunch?
- What will in school breaks look like and what will the children who are in the classroom do during this time? (including “brain breaks”)

## MONITORS

- If monitors are used to split up large in-person French classes, will they speak French?
  - If we understand correctly and monitors are NOT required to speak French, how will the following be accomplished? According to MCPS, the “support to virtual” instruction model is as follows:
    - Students are physically in the building with access to school staff to support their learning.
    - Students receive supervision and **individualized support** to successfully access virtual learning.
    - While students are enrolled and engaged in a virtual class, **the support they receive will extend beyond just supervising their learning.**
- Will classroom monitors be qualified as instructors and properly screened to be around children?
  - Will classroom monitors be pulled from the substitute teacher pool? Hired new? College students?
  - How will they be trained?
  - Will they have knowledge of the curriculum?

- In the room with the monitor, are the children expected to wear headphones?

## SAFETY PROTOCOLS

- How will social distancing be enforced?
  - Is the school's expectation that a child will never be closer than 6 feet to anyone else? (will there be a rule of reasonableness, especially at recess, when enforcement is more challenging?)
- What are the PPE plans? (masks, hand sanitizer, etc.)
  - How will mask issues be resolved? (i.e., if kids aren't wearing them appropriately, is it a no tolerance policy or a warnings policy?)
- What are the cleaning schedules? (during the day, nightly, weekly, etc.)
  - What cleaning supplies will families have to provide to children who are returning to the classroom?
  - Will children be responsible for cleaning their desks daily?
- Will temperatures of children, staff and visitors be taken @ entry to school? Will there be a health questionnaire?
- Will there be COVID testing?
- What happens if a student or teacher gets sick at school? Is there a triage room? Who will care for them? Will other students in the classroom be dismissed?
- If a student or teacher becomes COVID positive, what protocol will the administration follow?
  - Will the school community be informed?
  - How will we be informed (letter, email, auto call?)
  - How will contact tracing be done, and who will be doing that?
  - What happens if a student tests positive for covid? A student's family member? A student's sibling (at SCES or at another school)? A teacher? A staff member?
- How will restroom use be orchestrated?
- How will student movement through the hallways be orchestrated?
- What are the plans for water fountains and student access to water during the school day?
- What are the expectations for families to disclose symptoms, testing, household exposure, etc. for students who are in-person?
  - What are the consequences for failing to adequately inform, potentially putting others at elevated risk or exposing them?
  - Who is the contact person?

- Will someone be handling weekend reporting? (I.e., If a family member's student is referred for and tests positive on the weekend, will we know ahead of time to keep our child home or will we be notified once staff starts their day on Monday?)
- Another elementary school is banning "ear savers" on masks and tie-behind-the-head straps on masks for safety reasons (i.e. strangulation threat). Is SCES going to issue mask regulations?
- Will students have in person interaction with adults or children other than those in their class?
  - Put differently, are there teachers or staff who will visit multiple classes (thereby breaking the "cohort" of the one teacher plus a class of students)?
- When an in-person student is ill (COVID-19 or otherwise), will they simply log in from home and attend virtually, returning to in-person when they have recovered?

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

- What will happen with special education services for kids with IEPs?
  - What specifically will stay the same and what specifically will be different?
  - How will in-person and remote special education groups work? How many kids will be in a pull out group for in-person learning? Will there still be push-in in person services?
  - How will virtual PT sessions work for individual children in the school?
    - Will they be pulled out of the classroom to a separate space? Or remain in the classroom?
- Will any special education providers be in the classrooms with kids?

## **SPECIALS/SPECIALISTS**

- How will specials work once the school reopens?
  - Will students have PE in the gym?
  - How will PE be accomplished while maintaining distance if students are required to stay in their classrooms and maintain the 6' distance?

- Will students sing during music class?
- Will students change classrooms for specials?
- Will specials be hybrid or virtual?
- Will there be art supplies for art class?
- How will the reading specialist facilitate meeting with the students?
- Will the media center be open?
- Will the nurse's office be open for students (and not just for COVID-related issues)?
- Will the counselor be on-site and available for children needing extra support adjusting to this version of school?
- How will instrumental music work?

## TEACHERS

- When and how will we be informed whether our child's homeroom teacher will be teaching in the building or virtually from another location?
- How does the SCES staff feel about the reopening plans?
  - Have any expressed concerns? If yes, what is the nature of their concerns?
- What assistance will there be to help in-person teachers attend to virtual students?
  - Will the virtual students be broadcast on a large screen so the teacher can easily see if they need help?
  - Will classroom monitors be helping with virtual students?
- Will clear masks be provided to language teachers? All teachers?
- Will some students have a different teacher as of March 15?
  - Some parents/caregivers strongly oppose asking the children to change teachers.
- If a teacher needs to quarantine due to an exposure (at school or otherwise) will the class be taught by a different educator/sub in person? Or will the class be all virtual during that period?
- What teachers/ adults will be in the room with my child? When will I know this information and if not their current teacher, when I will be given their contact information?

## VACCINATION

- What is the plan for vaccinating teachers and staff?
- What percentage of SCES staff has been vaccinated?
- Will we be informed whether or not our child's teacher has been vaccinated?
- Are teachers on their own to seek out vaccinations, or is SCES/MCPS helping with this?
- Will there be adults in the building who are not fully vaccinated (i.e., two weeks after their last vaccine dose?)
- How may reopening plans and arrangements change, if at all, as more teachers get vaccinated? Teachers are already prioritized and, despite having challenges getting vaccine appointments, many are already vaccinated. It seems likely, therefore, that most/all teachers could be vaccinated by April. What effect will this have on reopening plans--particularly expediting them?

## REFERENCES

### <sup>1</sup>**American Academy of Pediatrics / Physical Distancing Measures**

<https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>

“Physical distance between desks should follow current public health guidance, and desks should be placed at least 3 feet apart and ideally 6 feet apart. In many jurisdictions, cloth face coverings are mandatory for children in public settings, including schools. Schools should weigh the benefits of strict adherence to a 6-feet spacing rule between students with the potential downside if remote learning is the only alternative. Further, while these guidelines support the concept of cohorting, strict adherence to a specific size of student groups (eg, 10 per classroom, 15 per classroom, etc) should be discouraged, because the size of cohorts will vary depending on many factors specific to individual schools and even individual classrooms.”

### <sup>2</sup>**Harvard School of Public Health / Healthy Schools: Risk Reduction Strategies for Reopening (page 28)**

<https://schools.forhealth.org/risk-reduction-strategies-for-reopening-schools/download/>

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#### *Risk Reduction Strategies for Reopening Schools*

“Schools should maximize physical distancing and aim for six feet of distance between people. However, due to the high risks associated with school closures and data showing that three-foot distancing can be effective when masks are worn and community spread is low, six-foot distancing should not be used as a bright line cutoff. Three feet is acceptable in the classroom for times that generate lower levels of emissions (e.g. normal talking). This recommendation factors in the lower risk of kids contracting COVID-19 (especially young kids), their lower risk of severe outcomes, and evidence that suggests lower risk of transmitting the virus.” (Report, page 28)