SMCPS Safe Return to School Plan
Addendum
February 2021

Introduction

In the Summer of 2020, a planning team consisting of over 90 stakeholders developed the St. Mary's County Public Schools (SMCPS) Safe Return to School Plan that described specific procedures and outlined the process by which students would return to school. This plan was governed by the COVID-19 Guidance for Maryland Schools published by the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), which set forth specific health metrics to determine when schools should have in-person, hybrid, or virtual learning. On January 21, 2021, the Governor's office and MSDE released a new document, Maryland School Reopening Guidance. This new guidance puts forth the expectation of in-person instruction, without reference to specific health metrics.

The SMCPS Safe Return to School Plan is thorough in its approach describing the phased-in approach to transition from virtual to hybrid and in-person learning. The plan describes what instruction looks like in each phase, and the health and safety protocols for our buildings, buses, and classrooms. For a brief period in the Fall of 2020, SMCPS began the implementation of phased-in reopening of school for hybrid instruction, with the completion of Phase 1 and 2. However, declining community health data reflecting the rapid spread of COVID-19 required the return to all virtual learning.

In January 2021, in working with the St. Mary's County Health Department (SMCHD) and in conjunction with the State of Maryland's rollout of vaccines, SMCPS coordinated vaccination clinics for SMCPS staff members who chose to be vaccinated against COVID-19. This process was a major step forward in safely reopening schools. Additionally, recent reports from the CDC provide evidence that schools can safely reopen when precautions for health and safety are implemented. These include these 5 key mitigation strategies, which are evident in the SMCPS Plan:

- Consistent and correct use of masks
- Social distancing to the largest extent possible
- Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette
- Cleaning and disinfection
- Contact tracing in collaboration with local health department

The SMCPS Safe Return to School Plan was developed in collaboration with the SMCHD and addresses the measures recommended by the CDC and best practices for health and safety.

With several months of new information and a continued review of research there may be some elements of the plan that evolve based on new understandings or experiences. Adaptability is key to moving forward.

The SMCPS phased approach to return for hybrid in-person instruction in 2021 is as follows:

- **Phase 1**, which includes students in **special programs** (i.e., SAIL and COMPASS), return on **Monday, February 8, 2021.**
- **Phase 2**, which includes students in **Head Start, Pre-K, K, and Grades 1, 6, 9, and 12**, return on **Tuesday, February 16, 2021.** *All Head Start and Pre-K classes will follow an AM/PM schedule for social distancing purposes.*
- **Phase 3**, which includes students in **all remaining grades**, return on **Monday, March 1, 2021**.
  Students in special programs and Head Start or PreK will return with a regular schedule for in-person instruction, Monday-Thursday. All other students will follow a hybrid (A-Day/B-Day) schedule when they return.

Additional Elements and Adjustments to the SMCPS Safe Return to School Plan

Scheduling:

System-wide, the following hours are in place to guide schools with student schedules. In some cases, schools (or teachers) have adapted these to include more synchronous time; however, the times below reflect the minimum hours for synchronous instruction. The times below do not reflect the full student schedule, which also has time embedded in the day for lunch or wellness breaks.

	Synchronous			**Asynchronous**				
	Hours Per Day	Days Per Week	**Total Hours Per Week**	Hours Per Day	Days Per Week	**Total Hours Per Week**	**TOTAL Hours per Week**	Notes
PreK-2	1.5	5	6.5	1	5	6	12	*Additional teacher office hours on Fridays*
K-2	3.75	5	18.75	2	5	10	28.75	*Additional teacher office hours on Fridays*
Gr 3-5	3.75	5	18.75	2	5	10	28.75	*Additional teacher office hours on Fridays*
Gr 6-8	3.65	5	18.25	2	5	10	28.25	*Additional teacher office hours on Fridays*
Gr 9-12	3.75	5	18.75	2	5	10	28.75	*Additional teacher office hours on Fridays*

Instruction

- All activities shared in our initial plan are in place. Additionally, we have added these additional components/supports:
    - Made the following adjustments to our LMS content as described in these documents: Schoology Builds Quarter 1 vs. Quarter 2 and Schoology Builds Quarter 2 vs. Quarter 3
    - Used both general and grant funds to establish virtual tutoring in all requesting schools.
    - Provided an additional pathway of instruction for students grades 6-12 and hired a virtual teacher to support schools and fully virtual students utilizing content on the Edgenuity platform.
    - Continue to review, purchase and use LMS enhancements such as Whiteboard.chat; Nearpod; and EdPuzzle
    - Trained Literacy Interventionist Teaching Assistants and Instructional Resource Teachers on the PASI assessment, part of the research-based intervention program the 95% Group, using Kirwan TSI Funding
    - SMCPS signed up for, and was accepted, for the University of Maryland's Innovative Virtual Teaching Academy. 53 teachers will take part in this training.
    - Amendments have been made to the Title II, IV, and Kirwan TSI grants to better support our teachers and students during this pandemic.

Services for Students

- All activities shared in our initial plan are in place. Links to updated guidance have been added.

Transportation

- In response to parent concerns about safe transport of young students, rather than loading the bus from back to front, students will board the bus and walk to their assigned seats.
- When unloading at the school, students should exit the bus as directed by the school administrator.

Maintenance

- All strategies and data points related to ventilation and filtering recommendations have been completed.

Operations

- Communal use shared spaces such as cafeterias, gyms, media centers, etc. may be open with staggered use, frequent cleaning of high touch surfaces, and at least daily disinfection.

Food and Nutrition Services

- Students have the opportunity to receive free meals on days they attend in-person.
- Meal pickup options remain in place at each school site Monday, Wednesday, Friday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Friday meal pickup will include meals for Saturday and Sunday.
- While on a hybrid schedule, students will have the option to take a meal home at the end of each in-person day for the following virtual day.