

School Operations During COVID

1. What steps are we taking to ensure clear, concise, consistent, and accurate communication is being conveyed regarding continuity of learning plans?

FCPS Plan to Support Students Absent due to COVID-19:

FCPS teachers are loading assignments, videos, notes, etc. onto our Schoology Learning Management System. In addition, all schools are offering tutoring programs for students who may need additional in person or virtual support. Students in quarantine may access tutoring services. Finally, specialists, academic support staff, and counselors are offering virtual office hours to support students with their assignments. When a teacher or whole class is quarantined, virtual instruction will be provided.

Communication Plans:

When systemic communication needs arise, the Superintendent's Cabinet established a sequence of notifying principals, notifying all staff, and then notifying the community on key topics.

Most recently, the opening plan on the FCPS website has been updated to clarify the FCPS plan for supporting students who are absent due to COVID. In addition, a video was crafted in partnership with the Public Affairs Department, Student Services Department, and System Accountability and School Administration Department to provide parents another form of media to understand the plan.

School principals take the lead communicating their school specific plans to their community via Find Out First Newsletters, One Call Now, phone calls, and community events. They also inform their staff through weekly communications and meetings.

There is variability within each school's plan as they consider staff electing to contribute to the tutoring program, staff availability within the school day to provide virtual check-ins with students, and age appropriate support for students.

2. We request a staffing update; how many tutors, how many staff for contact tracing; how many staff out for quarantine, exposure, positives?

Tutors:

Each school has offered school-based staff to participate in paid tutoring opportunities for their school based plans. These opportunities were offered to teachers first. Fourteen (14%) of schools have no teachers who have signed up. Sixty-four (64%) have only a few teachers who have signed up, and twenty-two (22%) have some teachers signed up.

Additional plans are in place to expand tutoring availability and include the following:

- Solicit other non-school based staff who may wish to be paid to tutor students
- Hire tutors outside of FCPS (job description awaiting posting)
- Contract with 24/7 tutoring vendor

Contact Tracing/Staff:

The System Accountability and School Administration Department is standing up a central call center to support principals with communications involved with the contact tracing process. At

this time 12 retirees are interested and a schedule will be drafted to coordinate appropriate coverage.

Staff Positives:

From the start of the school year, 19 staff members have tested positive for COVID-19.

Staff Absences for COVID:

FCPS is not currently collecting staff absence codes specific to COVID-19, however, staff quarantine numbers are being collected through the contact tracing process. These data will be reported to the Board of Education via the Superintendent's weekly updates beginning Friday, September 10, 2021.

3. What is the status of tutoring contracting, including use of ESSER funds, etc.?

Staff will be recommending approval of a contract by the Board of Education at the September 8, 2021 work session, Item 1.05. Funding details are provided therein.

In special education, contracted services are used for special education staff in the Blended Virtual Program. ESSER funds for special education will also be utilized to provide recovery/compensatory services in circumstances where existing FCPS staff are not willing or able to provide these services.

4. What are the specific, clear plans for serving students with IEPs?

When students are fully present in school, whether in person or through the Blended Virtual Program, students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) will receive services as indicated in each student's plan. Due to the pandemic, some students with IEPs this past school year did not receive all services. As such, school-based IEP Teams are meeting with families to determine the services to be made up through recovery/compensatory services.

If students with IEPs are required to quarantine, and are marked absent from school, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), does not require services to be rendered. Services will resume when the student returns to school. In the event the student is well enough to access learning while in quarantine, and students are marked present, virtual tutoring and/or IEP services will be coordinated with families through the student's case manager. The IDEA requires missed IEP services to be made up when a student is marked present and services on the IEP are not delivered. Services rendered during quarantine are dependent upon a student's health and stamina to access the services during their quarantine.

5. Attendance -- what are the systemic SOPs??

Systemic direction is to mark students absent related to COVID-19 using the appropriate code.

FCPS was the first school system in Maryland to open for the 2021-22 school year and no guidance has been provided to Local School Systems on provisions for marking students present when absent due to COVID-19. Dr. Alban, FCPS Superintendent, communicated with

the state superintendent to inform him that this provision was necessary based on our data trends in the first weeks of school.

After Labor Day, FCPS will be implementing a new Local Standard Operating Procedure to address student absences related to COVID-19. Meetings were held with administrators the week of August 30th to review the plan. Previous absent codes may be changed to present using the new Local Standard Operating Procedure.

For any student who must quarantine or isolate due to the guidance from the MDHD COVID Protocol, a letter from Dr. Brookmeyer, local health officer, indicates these students would be best served under the Home Hospital Provision of the annotated code of Maryland (COMAR). With this in place, a student will be marked present using code "PCT" (Present Covid Tutoring) if:

- The student completes asynchronous work assigned during the absence period.
- The student participates in 6 hours of instruction (per week) which could include instructional videos, Google Meets, etc.).

A student will be marked absent if the student does not complete assignments or participate in virtual support. School staff will consult with families of students with disabilities to determine access to tutoring and/or IEP services.

6. What are the provisions for technology access (Chromebooks & WiFi) during quarantine -- how/when/where?

All secondary students are assigned Chromebooks. When an elementary student requires access to a Chromebook, one is signed out to a student for the duration of their absence. School administrators arrange pick up at the school site. This requires coordination with an assigned User Support Specialist and the student's family.

A finite number of hotspots are available for students without internet access when absent due to COVID-19. The request process is managed through the SolarWinds ticketing system accessible to school points of contact.

7. Please confirm procedure for vaccinated students and exposure -- they don't have to quarantine at all?

Vaccinated, asymptomatic close contacts do not need to be quarantined. If they develop symptoms, then they will need to be isolated for 10 days.

Unvaccinated, asymptomatic close contacts have to be quarantined. The length is variable based on if a COVID-19 test is negative and the individual can appropriately wear a face covering.

- Day 8 Return - Shortened 7 day quarantine if individual is asymptomatic and has received a negative COVID-19 test result on day five or later
- Day 11 Return - Shortened 10 day quarantine if the individual is asymptomatic and can appropriately wear a face covering

- Day 15 Return - Full 14 day quarantine for any close contact that cannot appropriately wear a facial covering (young children and/or mask exemption students)

8. What is our status regarding bus drivers, teachers, support staff, substitutes -- needs, hiring

Certificated Staff Vacancy Data

[1.0 full-time equivalency (FTE)]: 112 total, including the following:

- 13 SLPs
- 6 School Counselors
- 4 Math Specialists
- 3 Advanced Academic Specialists
- 2 Reading Intervention Teachers
- 1 Math/Reading Intervention Teacher
- 1 Literary Specialist
- 1 Program Specialist

There are 78 school-based vacancies, including the Blended Virtual Program.

Of the 78 vacancies, the following positions are currently filled by Long-Term Substitutes:

- Tech Ed, Windsor Knolls MS
- World Language, Tuscarora HS
- English, Middletown HS (2nd Semester)
- Art, Grades 4-8, Frederick Classical Charter School (.05 FTE)
- Art, Glade ES (0.4 FTE)
- Art, Butterfly Ridge (.06 FTE)
- Art, Monocacy MS

Support Staff Vacancy Data (Benefited)

- SEIAs: 86
- Instructional Assistants: 30
- Custodians: 29
- Bus Drivers: 24
- Sign Language Interpreters: 15
- Secretaries: 15
- Maintenance: 10
- User Support Specialists: 9
- Food Service Workers: 9
- Singletons (Single vacancies such as Accountant, Data Integration Specialist, etc.): 126

9. Vaccination of staff discussion?

The Board directed the Superintendent to work with Dr. Brookmyer to implement a screening testing program for non-vaccinated staff. There are meetings with 2 vendors being held this week and based on their staff availability, we would like to begin the screening testing during the week of September 20th.

10. How are we meeting high quality learning objectives for students on quarantine? Can they join Google Meets/listening to recorded sessions?

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Additionally, to upgrade instructional resources available for elementary students and to create a more consistent systemic response, a plan has been developed to crowdsource lessons which include instructional videos for all content areas and all grade levels using the talent of our own FCPS teachers. Central staff will support the coordination and organization of these efforts. Standard aligned lessons and instructional videos will be shared with all teachers across the system to support students in quarantine.

FCPS has not implemented concurrent teaching for quarantined students using Google Meet this school year, though virtual instruction has been available in some situations. According to teachers and leaders, while listening in on a Google Meet may be appropriate for some age groups, it may not be appropriate for others. A variety of considerations would need to be explored. For special education related services, students can access telehealth services (speech language, therapy, etc.) outlined in the IEP through either Google Meet or our approved telehealth platform.

11. Options for lunchtime spacing? Do we have better, more creative solutions?

School leaders have been very creative with lunchtime set up. Some schools have expanded the number of lunch shifts that are run to decrease the number of students on each shift. Some schools have utilized stage space, hallway space, or additional classroom space to create more opportunities for students to have proper spacing at lunchtime or to respond to individual student needs. Staff availability and school facilities impact lunch arrangements.

Staff has also examined the potential use of tents to support lunch shifts. However, there are a number of challenges associated with their use on school grounds. The most pressing problem is the lack of availability for tents, and a local vendor has indicated at least a 16-week delay in delivery. Tent placement is also problematic because many of the locations that could be used are primarily hard surface play spaces or parking lots, which limits the use of school grounds for other instructional needs. Large tents would require significant anchoring and are subject to damage from wind, snow, and rain events – it's likely that the tent coverings will need to be detached and stored in anticipation of a major storm event. The use of large tents would also require daily movement of equipment in and out of the building by custodians to support meal service. Installing tents for a prolonged period is likely to trigger permitting and life safety requirements associated with "permanent" facilities. FCPS is only aware of one LEA using small tents to support food distribution. The use of large tents to support lunch needs does not appear to be a solution that other LEAs are pursuing either, and does not seem practical at this time.

12. What is being done for students to ensure real-time access to instruction?

See #10

13. What is in place to ensure students remain in-step with their classroom instruction upon their return from quarantine?

See #10

14. At what threshold would a whole class move to remote learning?

When an entire class has been quarantined or a teacher has been quarantined or asked to isolate, virtual instruction has been provided.

15. Under what circumstances would a teacher move to remote teaching?

When a teacher has been quarantined or asked to isolate and is well enough to teach remotely, the teacher can use a code to request a “substitute” to supervise the students in the classroom while the teacher teaches remotely.

16. What planning has taken place to ensure FCPS is as responsive as practical when COVID transmission rates fluctuate to a point where parental decision making may change between in person and virtual and vice versa? If it is the will of the Board, how can we create more spots in the virtual school for students on the waiting list?

FCPS does have a few contingency positions available to consider more spots on the waitlist for the Blended Virtual Program; however, we prioritized the contingency positions for enrollment growth in our schools first.

If the Board wishes to create additional positions for the Blended Virtual Program, then budget reallocations would need to occur to add positions to the budget. It is not clear that ESSER funds would be approved for virtual teaching positions, but that is an option that could be discussed as well.

Once positions are created, then hopefully, there would be applicants to fill the vacancies.

17. What is the most responsive FCPS can be in updating the FCPS Dashboard? How do we include quarantine data?

FCPS is pleased to have responded to stakeholder feedback and will now update the dashboard with positive cases two times per week. This will ensure timely information, while also maintaining accuracy. Quarantine data is not always related to COVID cases in schools, but can also be related to exposure outside of school settings; therefore, attributing quarantine

data to schools can be problematic. Therefore, the systemic quarantine data will be provided in the Weekly Update to the Board.

18. Where are we with COVID testing on school sites? What direction are we heading?

FCPS in collaboration with the FCHD has enrolled in the Maryland Testing program. FCPS FCHS will meet with two vendors this week to finalize our plan. It is our hope that FCPS can begin screening unvaccinated staff members by the week of September 20th or September 27th.

We will also ask the vendors about potentially expanding to the diagnostic testing of students with symptoms as well.

If the Board wishes to expand the screening test to include students, then staff can proceed with gathering that information once direction has been given by the Board.