

July 16, 2020

Dear Harford County Public Schools Community,

Last week, Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) released the Draft Recovery Plan for opening the 2020-2021 school year and presented the plan publicly at the July 13 Board of Education meeting. Since the release of the plan, community stakeholders provided extensive feedback with the majority of messages falling into two distinct groups: (1) those who support opening schools to in-person learning, and (2) those who support a fully distance-learning environment due to safety concerns.

There is general agreement that safe, in-person learning would be the first preference, but the current conditions make it impossible for large groups of students to be in school at one time. Based on this feedback, we determined the hybrid model in the Draft Recovery Plan does not allow our students and staff to adequately practice social distancing, and it creates an insurmountable logistical challenge for parents in many cases. Additionally, due to several health and safety concerns, many of our educators may not be able to be present for an in-person model which would have impacted our ability to provide adequate supervision and instruction.

Subsequently, HCPS will be implementing a modified plan that relies exclusively on virtual learning while providing opportunities for students who need a safe, supervised place during the school day. All instruction during the first semester will be virtual. Chromebooks will be provided for all students in grades K-8, and Windows-based laptops will be provided for all students in grades 9-12. All teachers will receive a Windows-based laptop. HCPS is currently undertaking trials of cellular hotspots throughout the county, to provide Internet access to all students. In addition, we are making dramatic upgrades to our curriculum and professional development to ensure virtual instruction is more interactive and engaging than during the Spring of 2020.

To address the needs of students who require a safe place to spend the school day, we are offering a limited number of spaces in *HCPS Learning Support Centers* at each of our schools where students will be supervised by an HCPS employee and have reliable access to the Internet. While attending the *HCPS Learning Support Centers*, students will receive virtual instruction from their teacher working from a remote location. These students will have access to bus transportation and Food and Nutrition services.

Next week, we will send an Intentions Survey to all families asking who will be interested in having their children attend *HCPS Learning Support Centers* in the Fall. Prior to finalizing this plan, HCPS will have to weigh demand for attending the *HCPS Learning Support Centers* against our capacity to staff them safely. An infographic with additional details about the *HCPS Virtual Learning* and the *HCPS Learning Support Centers* is attached to this message.

This evening, HCPS is hosting a *Parent Academy Town Hall* to provide an opportunity for parents and community members to engage in a more robust conversation about the details of this plan. Please join us from 5:30-6:30 p.m. on-line. You can access the event at [this link](#).

Our ultimate goal is for every student to return to in-person learning as soon as safety allows. We have been fortunate that Harford County has experienced the lowest infection rate among the large counties in Maryland. Our county leadership has done an excellent job balancing safety considerations with efforts to incrementally return the community to more “normal” activities. We believe this plan is consistent with that approach and we will continue seeking ways to incrementally provide additional in-person experiences, particularly for our students with the greatest learning needs.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S Bulson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Sean Bulson, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools



100%

VIRTUAL LEARNING

FALL 2020



For the health and safety of Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) students and staff, the 2020-2021 school year will begin with 100% virtual learning. HCPS Leadership is working diligently to prepare robust curricula and daily learning schedules for live virtual instruction between teacher and student, independent learning, and physical/emotional wellness.

VIRTUAL LEARNING

Virtual learning will continue from September 8, 2020 through January 22, 2021 (first semester). HCPS will review conditions and guidance from state and local health departments in November 2020 for a possible extension.

HCPS students will learn through a synchronous schedule which allows teachers and students to work together at the same time. Parents/Guardians can expect:

- Significant differences from Spring 2020.
- A robust curricula with deliberate attention to student engagement, personalized learning, and physical and emotional wellness.
- Specific times for student-teacher interaction through direct instruction and independent learning.
- An orientation for tools, resources, and curriculum to assist with supporting students at home.

HCPS LEARNING SUPPORT CENTERS

To ensure all students have a safe environment with adequate access to the internet, HCPS will provide opportunities for some students to attend HCPS Learning Support Centers across the county to participate in virtual instruction.

Instruction will be delivered remotely by certified educators. HCPS staff will supervise students in Learning Support Centers while students engage in virtual instruction. Parents/Guardians can expect:

- Social distancing guidelines and face coverings required in accordance with state and local health department guidance.
- Learning Support Centers open on all school days.
- Modified meal service and transportation
- Assignment to Learning Support Center may be different from assigned school due to volume of requests.



PARENT
ACADEMY

Join us for a Parent Academy LIVE Virtual Town Hall event, Thursday, July 16, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. for an in-depth discussion of the 2020-2021 school year.