

Prolonged STATE OF EMERGENCY Plan



Updated April 2026

Overview

The Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) Prolonged State of Emergency Virtual Education Plan was created during the spring of the 2023-2024 school year to meet the Maryland State Department of Education requirements of emergency planning under the Senate Bill 610 and to create a sustainable plan for instruction and community support in the event of a closure that prevents in-person instruction in HCPS school buildings. This plan was reviewed and updated in April 2026. The overarching goal of this plan is to provide guidance for HCPS employees, students and their families so in the event of a prolonged closure, school services that are vital to the health, growth, and well-being of HCPS students and their families are uninterrupted to the greatest extent possible.

This plan was created in conjunction and collaboration with leaders and offices across the school system, including but not limited to:

- The Office of Accountability
- The Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
- The Office of Special Education
- The Food and Nutrition Office
- Human Resources
- The Office of Student Support Services
- The Office of Innovation in Learning
- The Communications Office

Leaning on experiences from the 2020 closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these offices contributed their valuable time, expertise, and perspectives to create a plan to support the school system and the community members of Harford County. In addition, throughout the drafting of this plan, input and feedback was sought and received from the following stakeholder groups:

- The Presidents of APSASHC, HCEA, and AFSCME
- The 2022 Teacher of the Year Finalists (the Communi-Team)
- The 2023 Teacher of the Year Finalists (the Summit Squad)
- HCPS Senior Staff
- Content Supervisors
- Teacher Specialists
- Instructional Coaches
- Harford County Government, including the County Executive and Director of Administration
- Board of Education of Harford County President

A special thank you to these groups who were invaluable in providing insights to this plan and will be instrumental in the implementation should HCPS need to respond to a prolonged state of emergency. HCPS remains committed to its mission, vision, and values during normal times as well as during an emergency. Therefore, guiding the tenets of this plan are:

HCPS believes every student will attain academic and personal success in a safe and caring environment that honors the diversity of our students and staff. As the school system moves to a virtual learning environment, we will:

- Align every program, practice, decision, or action to provide educational equity.
- Provide all students and their families with a differentiated approach to access resources so all students achieve personalized success.
- Provide all students the opportunity to attain academic and personal success that respects the diversity of our students and staff.

This plan embraces these values and goals and aims to continue the high-quality services of HCPS throughout the closure. To that end, this plan represents the HCPS goal to maintain regular operations to the greatest extent possible.

If a prolonged state of emergency is called by the Governor of Maryland, HCPS will move to an entirely virtual instructional delivery model. Students and staff will maintain their current learning/teaching hours but do so from a remote location. HCPS will utilize existing tools, including Canvas and Microsoft, to deliver all instruction, assess student progress, communicate with students and families, and maintain grade level and course integrity.

During the entirety of the closure, students will engage in synchronous instruction daily during regular operating hours. Students will follow their established daily school schedule for the duration of the closure, Monday through Friday. Teachers and/or students who have limited Wi-Fi accessibility will be provided with an HCPS hotspot so they may engage in this virtual, synchronous instruction.

FLEXIBILITY OF PLAN

This plan may be adjusted as necessary to fit the specific needs of the school(s) affected and the specific circumstances of the emergency. In addition, if a prolonged closure impacts all HCPS for more than three (3) consecutive weeks, synchronous instruction time will be adjusted to allow more opportunities for teacher planning, teacher collaboration, teacher professional development, and individual student support through structures such as teacher office hours. HCPS will utilize the expertise of the administrators, teachers, and families accessing virtual instruction through Swan Creek School in the eLearning Blended Virtual Program to create a sustainable daily schedule that allows for full implementation of the existing curriculum delivered in a long-term, supportive, virtual environment.

Staffing & Personnel Assignment

The overarching goal of HCPS during a prolonged closure will be to continue providing high quality instruction and services to the community. To meet this goal, all HCPS employees will continue their work, modified to accommodate the conditions of the emergency, for the duration of the closure.

INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF

At the direction of the Superintendent, all instructional staff will be expected to work their normal duty day unless given further direction by their supervisor. Administrators, teachers, counselors, psychologists, specialists, related service providers, Educational Support Professionals, and all others connected to student instruction will maintain their existing daily schedule and tasks. These tasks will be conducted from a safe location outside of HCPS buildings unless directed otherwise by their supervisor. If an employee is unavailable to work on one of these identified days, they will need to submit a leave request with the appropriate supervisor.

NON-INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF

At the direction of the Superintendent, all employees will be expected to work and/or be available for work during a prolonged state of emergency. Employees will receive further direction from their immediate supervisor as to the duty expectations on these identified days. Duties may take place at identified locations or remotely depending on the nature of the work and the emergency conditions. If an employee is unavailable to work on one of these identified days, they will need to submit a leave request with the appropriate supervisor.

If a prolonged closure is called by the Governor, the first day of the closure will suspend services to students, families and the community in order for instructional and non-instructional staff to plan and prepare. Instructional staff will be expected to use this first day to gather resources and plan for virtual, synchronous instruction. Non-instructional staff will be



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expected to work with their Supervisor to prepare for the resuming of services on the second day of the closure.

Instructional staff in specialized programs, including regional Special Education programs, will receive additional support and guidance from their Supervisor/Coordinator on this planning and preparation day to ensure continuity of services for students.

Following the one day of planning and preparation, students will resume their normal daily schedule remotely, via Canvas and Microsoft Teams. Information about additional services such as meal pick up, health and wellness resources, technology support, etc. will be communicated to students and families.



Student Instruction

Content Supervisors, Teacher Specialists, and Instructional Coaches will support teachers and other instructional staff throughout the closure in order to maintain the high quality of instruction that occurs throughout HCPS. These support personnel will be available for content related questions and assistance in translating in-person learning experiences to virtual ones.

OVERVIEW OF INSTRUCTION

Teachers will:

- Continue to implement the existing curriculum and standards, with necessary modifications made to support virtual instruction.
- Utilize Canvas Modules to curate resources and facilitate learning experiences, including collaborative work and student assignments.
- Utilize a Microsoft Teams virtual meeting to engage students in synchronous instruction.
- Include strategies to encourage active student participation.
- Follow established pacing recommendations to the greatest degree possible.
- Make every effort to ensure that students have the necessary curriculum supplies and technology resources to continue instruction.
- Prepare a list of materials students will need for the duration of the closure.

DELIVERING VIRTUAL (SYNCHRONOUS) INSTRUCTION

- All synchronous virtual instruction will be delivered using Canvas and Microsoft Teams.
- Teachers will continue to use Teacher Access Center (TAC) to take daily attendance. Teachers will use Canvas tools as well as Microsoft Teams to accurately identify student attendance before entering into TAC.
- Teachers will communicate with families and school administration any concerns regarding student attendance and/or active participation in a timely manner so students may receive support in accessing, participating, and succeeding in virtual instruction during the closure.

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BEST PRACTICES FOR SYNCHRONOUS INSTRUCTION

Throughout the closure necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers learned many best practices for synchronous instruction. Since the return to in-person learning, Content Offices and the Office of Innovation in Learning have continued to build the capacity of all teachers to utilize Canvas as a Learning Management System and leverage the affordances of each student having a Chrome Book and/or laptop. Teachers will continue those best practices including, but not limited to:

- Balance direct instruction with student engagement by providing opportunities for interaction:
- Use the chat and breakout rooms.
- Consider the use of third-party tools integrated into Canvas such as Padlet, Nearpod, and 365 Forms to “see” student work.
- Allow processing time/think time.
- Provide off camera time for students to read, explore, listen to a video/podcast, or engage with physical materials while maintaining access to the teacher.
- Maintain student-teacher connections throughout homeroom and lessons.



PREPARING FOR A CLOSURE

In order for employees and the community to be prepared for a prolonged closure and to adopt the mindset necessary to make a shift to respond to a prolonged state of emergency, teachers are asked to consider reflecting on the following questions and to work with their students and families periodically to preview what instruction and services may look like should an emergency occur.

Teachers are encouraged to consider these guiding questions as they anticipate the potential of a prolonged closure. Should a prolonged closure be called, teachers may use these questions to make decisions about what to take with them from their classrooms/offices so they are prepared in the event that schools are inaccessible for the duration of the closure.

- What am I planning on teaching over the next 14-x days?
- What lesson pieces do I already have that will work virtually as they are?
- What lesson pieces will I need to modify to fit a virtual environment?
- Which co-teachers do I need to meet with to discuss continuation of services?
- What physical resources do I need to take home with me?
 - To use for my planning
 - To use for my record keeping
 - To use for my teaching/presenting/modeling
- What physical resources do students need to take home with them?
What resources could I direct my students to access virtually?
Consider these digital resources.
- How can I reassure my students at this time?
How can I check in on their well-being throughout the day?
- What do I need help/support in doing? Who will I reach out to?

Teachers are encouraged to talk with their students about the practices around virtual teaching should a prolonged state of emergency be called.

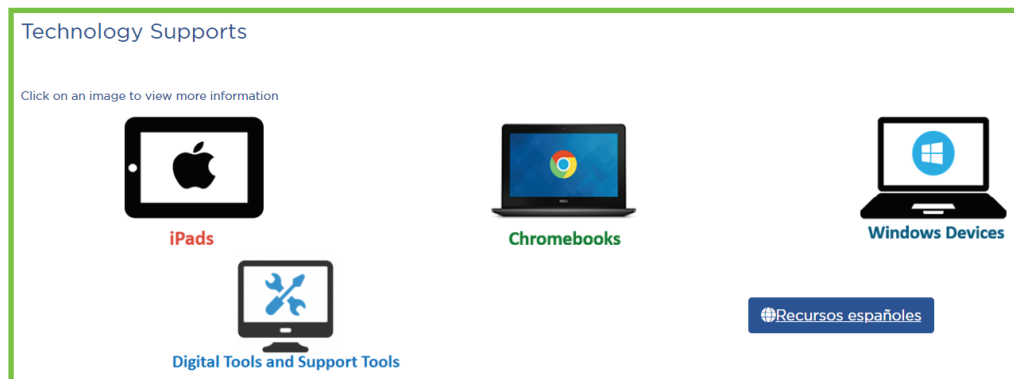
Teachers are encouraged to use Canvas as an instructional tool in alignment with district Canvas priorities in daily instruction so teachers and students can transition to virtual teaching and learning quickly and efficiently in the event of a prolonged state of emergency. Alignment to the district Canvas priorities also provides a consistent approach to each teacher's instructional design in Canvas to further support students and families.

Students and families should have a general sense of what to expect should there be a prolonged closure. If a closure is actually called, teachers should talk to their students and

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families about the following (as appropriate for age):

- With your students, establish your norms for virtual learning.
 - *Consider communication and digital sharing procedures and practices such as hand raising, use of the chat, attendance, participation, using Canvas, submitting assignments, digital Citizenship, etc.*
 - *Explain to students how they should message you (email or Canvas).*
 - *Talk to students about the ideal set-up for learning at home (as possible, a hard writing surface, supportive chair, good lighting, quiet environment, etc.).*
- Show students where to access the Teams meeting link for your class via the Canvas homepage.
- Review daily schedule.
- Attend to specific social emotional needs as appropriate.
- Assist with ensuring students have all necessary materials and devices to take home with them, reminding them that they may not be able to return to the classroom at all during the closure.
- Share with all families the **Technology Supports** site resources and contact information for family technology support.



The Technology Supports linked above are available to the public on hcps.org. This site includes many links to help regarding the hardware students will be accessing as well as the platforms and tools used to deliver instruction. This site can be fully translated to Spanish with the click of one button.

Student Assessment & Learning Support

Students will continue to be assessed both formatively and summatively by their teachers throughout the year, including during a prolonged closure. Content supervisors and content office coordinators have embedded assessments within their curriculum for teachers to use to identify student learning gaps. These assessments, as well as their corresponding professional development, have been designed to support teachers in diagnosing student learning gaps and making instructional decisions to address those gaps. Formative assessment strategies include, but are not limited to, observations of students, virtual representations, student feedback, summaries, self-assessments, and short quizzes. These assessments provide valuable information to teachers so that instructional adjustments can be made to meet the needs of students. As appropriate, these assessments identify students in need of formal intervention programs in use throughout the district such as Read 180 or in need of supplemental instruction through tools such as DreamBox and iStation.

Teachers at all levels will also administer reading and mathematics diagnostic assessments using i-Ready. i-Ready assessments are delivered entirely online. The diagnostic assessments can be delivered in the fall, winter, and spring and will pinpoint students' strengths and weaknesses. For reading, students will receive data based on the following domains: phonics and phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and comprehension skills. In mathematics, students will receive data regarding the following domains: numbers and operations, algebra and algebraic thinking, measurement and data, and geometry.

The reading diagnostic assessment will provide teachers with an overall scale score and grade level equivalency in the domains listed above. In addition, students will receive a Lexile so that appropriate text can be provided to them. In mathematics, teachers will also receive an overall scale score and grade level equivalency in the domains listed above. Quantiles will also be provided for students. In addition, teachers can access a standards report that indicates the progress that students have made in mastering the standards at the grade level.

In most courses at all levels, students complete an online benchmark, unit, topic, or performance-based assessment that will inform the teacher of the student's mastery of the standards measured.

The district assessment calendar is created annually with the assessment, grade level(s), and purpose of the assessment. It is published on our website at hcps.org.

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PREKINDERGARTEN STUDENTS

Students in Prekindergarten will be provided with learning activities through the Office of Early Childhood. These activities will be posted to the hcps.org website to be utilized by families throughout the closure. Recommendations on time spent each day per learning activity will also be shared on this site. Teachers will communicate with families of Prekindergarten students via email.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

All HCPS schools follow Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504, and the Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). HCPS is committed to providing the highest level of education and support to ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to the same opportunities as their non-disabled peers, including the provision of a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

During an extended school closure, to the greatest extent possible, students with disabilities will receive specially designed instruction and related services in accordance with the frequency and duration identified in each student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). Special education and related services will be implemented virtually in accordance with the IEP Planning for Emergency Conditions sections of each IEP, which outlines the agreed upon supports, accommodations, and services that will be delivered in the event of an extended school closure.

Specially designed instruction, as well as accommodations, supplementary aids, and supports outlined in the student's IEP, will be delivered by special and general education teachers and paraeducators who are assigned instructional duties during normal operations. Inclusion helpers may attend virtual sessions with an identified student for the purpose of delivering accommodations and supplementary aides in accordance with the student's IEP. All synchronous virtual instruction will be delivered using Canvas and Microsoft Teams.

On-going progress monitoring, including formative and summative assessments, will be conducted within the virtual environment and reported to parents using the established progress reporting requirements. When schools resume normal operations, IEP teams will consider the impact of the school closure on each child. If there is evidence of a decline in a student's skills and/or a lack of progress, an IEP meeting will be scheduled to review/revise the IEP and to determine whether compensatory services are needed.

Accommodations for students with disabilities who have a 504 Plan will be delivered within the virtual classroom. General education teachers as well as paraeducators who are assigned to deliver instruction and/or accommodations during normal operations are responsible for the implementation of accommodations during synchronous virtual instruction.

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

English Language Learners (ELLs) will continue to receive academic support from their ELL teachers. This support will be individualized to meet the needs of the student based upon the WIDA assessment data that has been recorded, previous classroom performance and teacher input. ELL teachers will continue to provide academic support to students in each content area.

Additionally, ELL teachers will provide support with the student's English proficiency in the areas of reading, writing, listening, and speaking by providing suggested learning activities for the ELL students according to appropriate learning bands.

ELL teachers will plan and work with the content teachers so that online lessons and paper learning activities are designed for student success. ELL teachers will be available to support students and families each day, when school is in session, either by Microsoft Teams, Canvas, or email.

GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS

HCPS will continue to provide services to students who work with a gifted and talented resource teacher at the elementary level. Gifted and Talented (GT) Resource Teachers will collaborate with their co-teachers to develop personalized synchronous content for the students they serve. Additionally, students who work in smaller groups with a GT Resource Teacher will have opportunities for virtual, synchronous instruction with that teacher.



Social & Emotional Support

School counselors will utilize a newly designed needs assessment that addresses both physical and mental health indicators. This addresses the needs of our students on a more systemic level and assists with the creation of a health initiative as part of our School Performance plans at every school. This tool provides additional data on the needs of our students across the system to identify and implement the appropriate Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 interventions that will provide the physical and mental health support needed for our students. Additionally, students have access to individual counseling; group counseling; wellness checks for students with acute health needs; home visits, phone calls, and letters to guardians of disengaged students; classroom counseling lessons; and face-to-face testing. An important part of our success in this area is the Student Support Teams (SST). School staff continue to use this process to identify individual student needs and design the appropriate interventions to be implemented throughout the school year. The Office of Health Services has completed the Child Anxiety Learning Modules (CALM) study to enhance the capacity of school nurses to reduce excessive anxiety in students. This initiative aligns with our North Star goals of producing Healthy and Employable students.

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

HCPS Student Support Services Staff will:

- Provide purposeful strategies and activities to support students as they return to in-person learning.
- Work to ensure that students have increased access to mental health supports and resources through our school-based staff and community partnerships.
- Provide support to students, including a vast resource of activities that support the social/emotional health of students, which is accessible to parents/guardians, students, and staff virtually.
- Provide specially designed instruction and support the implementation of accommodations and behavioral supports to address the unique needs of students with disabilities.

EMPLOYEE HEALTH

HCPS Student Support Services Staff will:

- Support staff mental health via emotional recovery activities.
- Provide resources, such as our HCPS Virtual Calming Room, located at start.hcps.org, which have been developed to provide ongoing tools for our staff, students, and families.

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CARE SOLACE

In conjunction with the Harford County Health Department, HCPS has now partnered with Care Solace, a mental health care coordination service. This free resource is available for HCPS students, staff, and their families through June 2024. Services provided by Care Solace include:

- Mental Health Support
- Substance Abuse Treatment

Care Solace is available 24 hours per day, seven days per week, in multiple languages. Users may connect to care services regardless of their insurance coverage. This service and robust resource is a result of stakeholder feedback and partnership with the Health Department strengthened due to COVID-19 collaborative governance.



Community Communication

Each time that the plan is updated and approved, it will be posted to hcps.org and a direct communication will be sent to all staff and families via normal communication channels including the HCPS 411 Update, the Superintendent’s Bulletin, the Parent Connection newsletter, and direct emailing.

AT THE START OF EACH SCHOOL YEAR

At the start of each school year, principals will share the updated plan with their faculties either during the pre-school professional development days or during a beginning of the year faculty meeting. Principals will explain the plan, curate questions as necessary for specific offices, and help teachers think through a preparation mindset.

At the start of each school year, principals will communicate with all students and families the plan and how to access and/or ask questions or request support.

THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL YEAR

Content offices and the Office of Innovation in Learning will continue to provide tools, resources, and professional development around instructional technology, maximizing Canvas, and curricular resources. This information will be communicated via the HCPS 411 Update, Department Chair meetings, librarians, systemwide content professional development, and other content specific newsletters.

COMMUNITY AWARENESS

In preparation for the possible implementation of the plan, we will utilize our regular means of communication to make the larger Harford County community aware of the creation of the plan in the following ways:

- HCPS Parent Academy Real Talk
- HCPS Website
- HCPS Social Media
- HCPS Mobile App
- Direct communication to families and staff members via phone, email, and text message

Technology

The HCPS Office of Technology may activate and deploy cellular hotspots as required. More than 600 hotspots are owned by HCPS and may be provided to families and/or staff members when they self identify the need. Other options may be locations where wifi is made available to HCPS staff and students.

If utilized, hotspots will be delivered to student and/or staff's home addresses by Pupil Personnel Workers.



Nutritional & Health Services

Department of Food and Nutrition Services (DFNS) will provide meals for students under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child Nutrition Programs. We will seek guidance from the MSDE Community and Nutrition branch to ensure applicable programming requirements are met and all potential waivers are utilized.

DFNS will develop and publish the menu, service model, times, and locations on www.hcpsmenus.com based on USDA requirements, current inventory, and product availability.

Program information will be disseminated to the community through coordination with the HCPS Communications Department.



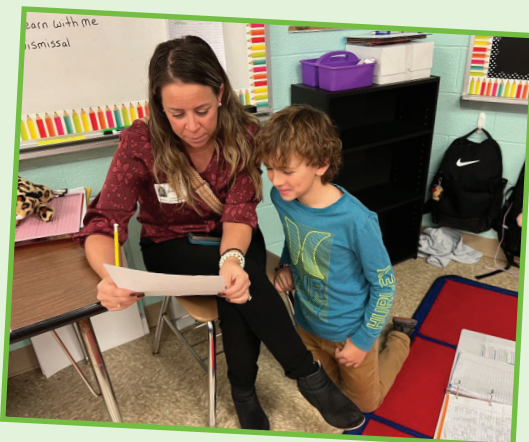
Return to In-Person Instruction

As needed, a Task Force comprised of Board of Education member(s), Harford County Government Official(s), school system leaders, and other community leaders may convene to prepare for possible prolonged states of emergency that will impact the county. Should a state of emergency be called, a Task Force will meet weekly in order to coordinate the school district response to the state of emergency and to help guide the implementation of the Prolonged State of Emergency Virtual Education Plan. This group will continue to convene weekly during the duration of the closure to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan in mitigating the educational impact on students and families. The final charge of this group will be to coordinate the rapid return to in-person learning upon the lifting of the state of emergency and supporting the school district's strategies for returning students to school buildings.

Once the building(s) is determined safe by federal, state, and/or local measure and members of our facilities department and the emergency shutdown is lifted, students and staff will be allowed to return to the buildings.

When students return to in-person instruction, teachers will consider the impact the closure had on each child using various methods such as student/family conferencing, formative assessment, and student assignments. If there is evidence of a learning gap, teachers will utilize appropriate methods to address these gaps including, but not limited to:

- Small group instruction to target areas of need
- The use of a formal intervention program
- Providing information about supplemental instruction and tutoring options to families
- Individualized classroom support





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