

Maryland's Largest School District

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

*Expanding Opportunity and Unleashing Potential*

Montgomery County  
Public Schools (MCPS)

# Fall 2023 Reopening Guide

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The Fall 2023 Recovery Guide is an annually published working document. Changes to policies and procedures will continue to be made as guidance is updated from expert organizations and government agencies including the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and Maryland Department of Health (MDH), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

# Letter From the Superintendent of Schools

Dear Parents, Guardians, Students, and Staff:

I am pleased to share the Montgomery County Public Schools' (MCPS) Fall 2023 Reopening Guide. This guide provides a comprehensive update on the district's continuation of in-person instruction, five days per week for all students. The guide also summarizes the district's current COVID-19 operational guidance determined in collaboration with state and local health officials.

This guidance aligns with the pillars of the district's strategic plan:

- Academic Excellence,
- Well-Being and Family Engagement, and
- Professional and Operational Excellence.

Each decision we make about how we are working to support an environment that is successful in providing excellent teaching and learning must reflect these goals. Through this work, we will advance our students along pathways that leave them college, career, and community ready upon graduation.

In order for students to reach high levels of academic performance and fulfill their potential, they must have the physical, social, and psychological supports. MCPS continues to make investments in this area, including, improved allocation of psychological services to schools and increased access to mental health programs across the county. As the pandemic has shown us, we know that students perform better academically when they are healthy in body, mind, and spirit.

None of this would be possible without the committed staff throughout our school system – Our teachers are the backbone of our educational system, and over the past couple of years they have risen to the occasion and showed that they care for our students. So too have the visionary administrators who lead our individual schools and the support staff provided critical wraparound services and support for our students and communities.

While we are fortunate that the COVID-19 virus is no longer a public health emergency, we must remain vigilant as we continue in-person instruction. Core health strategies such as staying home when sick and ventilation/indoor air quality enhancements remain essential in fighting COVID-19 as well as other respiratory infections.

We look forward to continuing our momentum in the year ahead, inspired by what we learned during the pandemic and stronger because of the resiliency that sustained us through its tumult.

In partnership,

Monifa B. McKnight, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

# Ensuring Equity for All



MCPS' core principle of equity is embedded throughout the district's planning and decision-making. The following Evidence of Equity questions informed the district's planning efforts.

## Whom does this practice/decision serve or neglect?

- » Which racial/ethnic groups are *currently* most advantaged and most disadvantaged by the practice or decision?
- » How are they affected differently?

## Whose voices are dominating or lacking from the conversation?

- » Who is missing and how can they be engaged?
- » How have they been informed, meaningfully involved, and authentically represented in the development of this practice/decision?

## What adverse impacts or unintended consequences could result from this decision?

- » Which racial/ethnic groups could be negatively affected?
- » How could adverse impacts be prevented and what provisions will be changed or added to ensure positive impacts on racial equity and outcomes?

## What steps are in place for ongoing data collection and reflection of the outcomes?

- » What data points are we using and not using in this decision?
- » How will results and outcomes be documented and communicated to all stakeholders?

## How diverse are the stakeholders leading the implementation?

- » Are diverse identities and perspectives (racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic, education level, roles/positions) represented and informing the implementation of the practice or decision?



# Ensuring Equity for All (cont)

## Antiracist Systems Audit

On May 11, 2023 the Antiracist System Action was presented to the Board of Education and community. The action plan was created in partnership with community members and a variety of offices. The plan outlines actionable deliverables for each of the six domains examined in the audit. The action plan can be found on the website.

<https://www2.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/antiracist/action-plan/>



MCPS leadership continues to address the findings and recommendations by participating in professional learning focused on antiracist leadership. Last year we established the Antiracist District-Wide Implementation Team. This 60-member team has developed tools and resources to support students, staff and families.



## Culturally Responsive Family Engagement

All principals have received professional development on family and community engagement through the school improvement process and have received resources, support and coaching on anti-racist and culturally appropriate ways to engage parents and caregivers. These resources include:

- A step-by-step planning guide that provides guiding questions, considerations and examples to plan for effective family engagement and communication
- Professional development modules with expectations to ensure on-going parent engagement within the school-improvement process
- Support for writing clear communication and developing culturally proficient mediums to engage a diverse community



Additionally, ongoing, community engagement professional development for school leaders will be deployed for 2023-2024 through a menu of differentiated options tailored for needs of individual communities.



# Operations, Logistics and Safety



## Bell Times

MCPS schools will maintain their normal, pre-pandemic bell times for the 2023-2024 school year.

GRADE LEVEL	TIME	LENGTH OF DAY
High School	7:45 a.m.-2:30 p.m.	6 hours, 45 minutes
Middle School	8:15 a.m.-3:00 p.m.	6 hours, 45 minutes
Elementary School Tier 1	9:00 a.m.-3:25 p.m.	6 hours, 25 minutes
Elementary School Tier 2	9:25 a.m.-3:50 p.m.	6 hours, 25 minutes

## Student and Staff Safety and Security

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) is committed to providing the safety of all persons on MCPS property and creating and maintaining safe, peaceful schools and workplaces where students and staff can do their best work, achieve, and thrive. Mental health and well-being supports continue to be a priority in schools, as we work with multiple community stakeholder groups and the Department of Health and Human Services to provide services to address students' needs for social-emotional and health support. We continue to collaborating with our law enforcement partners, including the Community Engagement Officer (CEO) program, to promote safe, inclusive, and positive learning environments for our students. The MCPS Office of Systemwide Safety and Emergency Management continues to emphasize safety and emergency preparedness in their work with school staff, students, and communities.

## Safe Transportation of Students

MCPS Department of Transportation is committed to providing safe, reliable, and equitable access to transportation so all students may achieve educational success and academic excellence.

Normal transportation routes and capacity will continue for the 2023-2024 school year. Families have been notified of the bus routes for their assigned school. This information may also be found on the MCPS website at <https://www2.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/transportation/busroutes/> and by selecting the school from the menu to view the bus routes.

The Montgomery County Safe Routes to School Program, <https://www2.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/saferoutes/>, continues to offer resources that aim to significantly improve safety for students who walk and bike to school, as well as resources for promoting school bus safety, at the bus stop, during loading and unloading, and during the bus ride.



# Food and Nutrition Services



The MCPS Department of Food and Nutrition Services (DFNS) will continue with regular meal services during the 2023–2024 school year.

## Important to Note

**Students in Maryland who qualify for reduced-price meals will not be charged for breakfast or lunch meals.**

## Breakfast

**Regular Price: \$1.30;  
Reduced Price: No Cost**

## Lunch

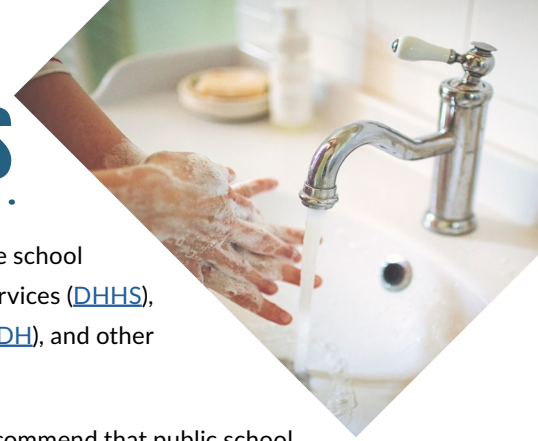
**Regular Price: \$2.55 (Elementary),  
\$2.80 (Middle and High);  
Reduced Price All Levels: No Cost**

Free and Reduced-price Meals System (FARMS) applications have been updated for the new school year, and are now available online at [www.MySchoolApps.com](http://www.MySchoolApps.com); this is the preferred application method. All interested families must reapply each school year. All children use their MCPS ID number or barcode at the register to ensure confidentiality is maintained and no child is overtly identified as receiving free or reduced-price meals.

MCPS will be providing free breakfast and lunch at 57 schools in the 2023–2024 school year via the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). Additional information will be shared with the selected participating schools.



# Health and Safety Procedures



MCPS is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for our staff and students. The school system receives guidance from the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services ([DHHS](#)), the Maryland State Department of Education ([MSDE](#)), the Maryland Department of Health ([MDH](#)), and other agencies who have regulations that apply to our school and work environments.

Regarding COVID-19 and other respiratory infections, [joint guidance from MDH and MSDE](#) recommend that public school systems work with their local health department on following [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's \(CDC's\) Operational Guidance for K-12 Schools and Early Care and Education Programs](#). Montgomery County DHHS serves as our local health authority and operates our school-based health services. MCPS works closely with DHHS on population health strategy and to ensure a comprehensive, community-based approach to the well-being of our public school students, their families, and our staff members.

Everyday prevention strategies are the foundation of our health and safety approach. Practiced consistently, these common-sense measures promote health and prevent the spread of illness. Depending on local illness trends, additional measures may be temporarily recommended or required at the classroom, activity, or school levels.

## Core Health Strategies



### Vaccination

Certain immunizations are [required for school](#) attendance, determined as by the state health department, and are monitored by school-based staff. MCPS strongly recommends eligible students and staff members remain current on all [CDC recommended immunizations](#) that protect against infectious disease, including the COVID-19 and seasonal influenza vaccines.



### Healthy Habits

Good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette help prevent the spread of respiratory and other types of infections. Regular hand-washing will be supported and reinforced throughout the year, especially during key times such as before and after meals, or after using the restroom. Schools will ensure adequate hand-washing supplies and maintain hand sanitizer stations in strategic locations. "[Respiratory etiquette](#)" means covering the mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, then promptly throwing the tissue in the trash and washing your hands. If a tissue is unavailable, coughing into your sleeve or elbow is better than using your hands.



### Staying Home When Sick

Staying home when sick helps the body recover and prevent the spreading of infections to others. Students, staff members, volunteers, and visitors who are acutely ill are expected to stay home when sick or leave the building to rest or receive further care if they develop symptoms while in the school building. Symptoms of acute illness include fever, frequent diarrhea or vomiting, or severe respiratory or other symptoms that interfere with the ability to work or learn. For certain infections (e.g., head lice, chicken pox, strep throat), local and state health departments may give specific guidance for when to return to school.



### Cleaning

Building service staff continue to follow [established and expanded protocols for cleaning and disinfection](#) of school and work areas, with more frequent attention to high-contact areas such as door handles, sink handles and other surfaces that are touched frequently. Students will not be permitted to handle disinfecting/sanitizing wipes or other hazardous cleaning agents approved for staff use. Non-approved home cleaning products should not be used in MCPS buildings.



# Health and Safety (cont.)



## Ventilation and Indoor Air Quality

MCPS continues to follow guidance from The American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning Engineers ([ASHRAE](#)), the [CDC](#), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ([EPA](#)) to optimize ventilation and indoor air quality for health and safety. Measures have included complete evaluation of all school HVAC systems, upgrading and replacing HVAC filters, extending HVAC run times, and installing portable air cleaners in strategic spaces. More information on [these expanded and ongoing measures](#) and the work of the [MCPS Indoor Air Quality Team](#) can be found on the MCPS website.

## Additional Measures to Prevent the Spread of Illness

### Face Coverings

Per MSDE, local school districts may decide how to use [well-fitting face coverings](#) to maintain safe, in-person learning. At MCPS, masks continue to be voluntary except as required by [CDC COVID-19 guidelines for isolation](#), for individuals who become sick at school or are returning after the minimum 5-day isolation period. Masks may be temporarily recommended or required in local outbreaks of respiratory illness. Health rooms and school-based health clinics may have different requirements specified by DHHS. Regardless of community levels of respiratory illness, individuals are supported in voluntary mask wear to protect their own or others' health. Alternative or additional actions will be recommended when individuals cannot safely mask due to young age or a health condition.

### Outbreak Measures

MCPS and School Health Services staff monitor possible outbreaks of contagious illness at school-based on attendance data, local infectious disease trends, and public health guidance. If an outbreak is confirmed, schools follow DHHS guidance to implement measures to manage and detect new cases, prevent further transmission, and communicate health information to staff and families.



# Health and Safety (cont.)

## COVID-19 Response

COVID-19 specific measures are described below. More information can be found on the [MCPS](#) and [Montgomery County COVID-19 Information Portals](#).



### Home Test Kits for Screening

Screening for COVID-19 using a home test kit may be required or recommended in certain situations, depending on local COVID-19 trends. These include school-based outbreaks, before overnight school-sponsored trips, or before returning from a scheduled break. In these situations, schools and worksites will distribute test kits and communicate testing expectations.



### Possible Symptoms of COVID-19 at School or Work

Students with [possible symptoms of COVID-19](#) at school will no longer be routinely tested in health rooms. Health room staff may distribute home test kits at their discretion. Staff or students with mild symptoms may be asked to mask for the rest of the school day. Individuals with fever or more severe symptoms who will be leaving school or work will be asked to wear a mask until they leave the building.



### Confirmed COVID-19 Cases in Students or Staff

If a student or MCPS staff member is diagnosed with COVID-19, they should follow [isolation and masking precautions](#) as recommended by the CDC, which currently includes at least 5 days of home isolation. They should follow local procedures for reporting a school or work absence and specify that the absence is due to COVID-19. Staff and students no longer need to self-report cases online to MCPS.



### Possible Exposure to COVID-19

Quarantine is no longer recommended for individuals with close contact exposure to COVID-19 if they have no symptoms and can follow other [CDC recommendations for exposed persons](#). Staff and students' families will be notified if they are at increased risk of COVID-19 due to an outbreak in their classroom or school. This notification will include any temporary measures required to prevent further local spread of infection, like masking, testing, or modification of activities.



### COVID-19 Outbreaks and Contact Tracing

MCPS will collaborate with DHHS to support outbreak investigation and follow local and state guidance for managing and reporting COVID-19 outbreaks in schools. Contact tracing will not be routinely conducted for every case or outbreak of COVID-19. If an outbreak is suspected, MCPS submits case and exposure data to DHHS. This required data is kept confidential and may be used for contact tracing as determined by the health department.



# What to Expect:

# Curriculum and Instruction



## Plan for Instructional Success

MCPS' core purpose is to provide a strong academic program that helps all students to thrive in their futures. During the 2023-2024 school year, MCPS will continue addressing learning disruption and implementing support plans to ensure all students perform on level. The district has developed multi-year plans to ensure all students can access and receive support for any pandemic-related missed content. Guidance, support and professional learning will allow teachers to build a solid foundation focused on missed or condensed instruction. As teachers plan lessons, they will focus on addressing core standards and student needs in alignment with the Pre-K-12 Maryland College and Career Ready Standards (MCCRS) and State Standards.

Time is included in the instructional schedules for intervention and support at the elementary and secondary levels.

### Math Recovery Plan

The MCPS Mathematics Program is designed to challenge students of all levels. The goal is for students to successfully complete Algebra 1 in Grades 7, 8, or 9, as appropriate, and be prepared for higher-level mathematics in high school, including Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) classes. Adjustments are being made to the plan to address missed content due to the pandemic.

#### What are the Guiding Principles of the Mathematics Recovery Plan?

- Five days of math instruction is delivered each week.
- Grade-level students engage in grade-level content.
- Learning focuses on the major work of the grade and adds back supporting/additional work.

To view the plan, please [click here](#).

### Elementary and Secondary Literacy Recovery Plans

- » [Elementary ELA Plan](#)
- » [Secondary ELA Plan](#)

### Curriculum and College and Career Readiness

- » [Curriculum](#)
- » [Career Readiness](#)
- » [Dual Enrollment](#)



# What to Expect: Curriculum and Instruction (cont.)



## Instructional Response Plan

MCPS will continue to implement an instructional response plan to address missed instruction caused by the pandemic. Performance data has shown growth and progress, though in some areas, the progress was uneven. The data showed:

- Growth and progress since the return to in-person learning in literacy in grades 3, 6, and 9
- Literacy gains across many subgroups including English Language Learners and students with disabilities
- Progress in math was uneven particularly in grades 6 and 9
- Grade 3 students in math showed progress in learning core Grade 3 math content.
- The early literacy skills of our youngest learners have improved but gaps still exist

As part of our instructional response plan to address a continued focus on grade level learning, we are:

### » **Focusing on literacy and math**

We know that progress was slowed for many of our students due to the pandemic, and while growth was shown during the last school year, gaps remain for many students and student groups. As a result, we are remaining focused on high-quality literacy and mathematics instruction to continue our progress. In Elementary English Language Arts (ELA), MCPS has identified key skills that are the building blocks of literacy and adjusted the schedule to provide more time for teaching them. New resources and professional development give schools the knowledge and tools they need to support our youngest students. Across ELA and Mathematics, MCPS is increasing efforts to ensure we reach all students, including working with English Language Development specialists to meet the needs of Emerging Multilingual Learners. In addition, teachers are learning anti-racist

and anti-bias classroom strategies to ensure students feel welcomed and engaged in their classrooms.

### » **Teaching at grade level and addressing learning gaps as needed**

We are moving forward with grade-level content while also assessing essential prior learning in order to support new learning. By moving forward with grade-level instruction, we can prevent students from falling further behind. To support teachers and school leaders, we have provided guidance on essential concepts and skills, appropriate pacing of learning, opportunities for enrichment for those ready for more, and supports for learners who need additional review and instruction.

### » **Monitoring student learning and adjusting instruction**

To teach on grade level while addressing potential knowledge gaps, teachers need to know what their students know and can do and use that information to adjust daily instruction. Though we are all familiar with assessments of learning that measure student learning periodically, such as unit tests and Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) testing, MCPS is helping teachers increase their use of assessments for learning using assessment tools available in literacy and mathematics. This means teachers will give students tasks designed to let them know when they need to address learning from the previous year and which students need additional support for grade-level concepts and skills on a regular basis. This ongoing monitoring and adjusting will ensure instruction will be based on student learning needs so that all of our students perform at or above grade level in literacy and math.



# What to Expect: Curriculum and Instruction (cont.)



## » Ensuring all of our schools have a common focus and the support they need

All schools will continue to address learning in literacy and math and prioritize well-being and school climate to ensure students are on grade-level or higher for literacy and math by the end of the school year. Schools will work with their director of school support and well-being and their teams to develop School Improvement Plans, monitor their work, and provide support and learning to staff to achieve these goals.

## » Providing system wide training

MCPS has identified three key areas for professional learning in literacy and math for teachers, school leaders, and central office leaders. To support elementary literacy, professional learning focuses on the shift to structured literacy that emphasizes foundational skills. At the secondary level, enhancing literacy across all content areas is the focus. Professional learning around math at the elementary and secondary levels will examine best practices for planning grounded in deep understanding of mathematical content. The system will ensure that teachers, school leaders, and central office staff all receive this training. As a result of this work, we expect that MCPS K-12 students will perform at or above grade-level in literacy and mathematics, and curriculum and instruction will be of the highest-quality and based on student learning needs.



# Interventions



Students who do not demonstrate proficiency with grade-level standards receive intervention support.

Evidence-based interventions used include:

LITERACY INTERVENTION	GRADE LEVELS SERVED
<b>Orton Gillingham (OG):</b> Provides explicit, systematic and multi-sensory methodologies that can be implemented as a Tier III reading intervention for students who require intensive remediation in phonological awareness, phonics, decoding and encoding.	Elementary, Middle and High School
<b>Really Great Reading (RGR):</b> Provides explicit, systematic and cumulative Tier III reading interventions for students who require intensive remediation in the areas of phonological awareness, phonics, decoding and encoding. There are three RGR interventions available for students: Countdown, Blast and HD Word.	Elementary, Middle
<b>iReady Reading:</b> Provides an explicit and systematic Tier III intervention for students who require intensive remediation in comprehension.	Elementary
<b>System 44:</b> Addresses basic literacy skills	Middle and High School
<b>Read 180 :</b> Addresses basic reading skills that will build a comprehensive understanding and reading for meaning.	Middle and High School
<b>iLit:</b> Additional literacy supports for ESOL students in Grade 4, 5, middle and high school	Elementary, Middle and High School
MATH INTERVENTION	GRADE LEVELS SERVED
<b>iReady Math:</b> Provides an explicit and systematic Tier III intervention for students who require intensive remediation in math.	Elementary
<b>Math 180:</b> Addresses basic math skills to prepare for Algebra 1 readiness	Middle and High School

The intervention data collected for assessment and data analytics will be used to inform each student's evaluation plan at the end of each intervention. The evaluation plan will be provided to teachers and parents. Diagnostic data with daily progress reports will be included in the evaluation plan. In addition, MCPS will use the intervention data, along with multiple measures and anecdotal data, to evaluate the impact and efficiency of the approved intervention programs to support students. Intervention attendance and usage will be used to measure success.

**Saturday School** MCPS students may access additional academic support through Saturday School, provided by the George B. Thomas Learning Academy.



# What to Expect: Special Education

The Office of Special Education will continue the implementation of Early Interventions and Special Education Services in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR), and MSDE guidance.

Early intervention and special education services will be provided to students from birth to age 21. For students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), specially designed instruction and related services will be delivered according to what is documented in the student's IEP. The district has developed processes to meet the special education mandates of federal and state law. These mandates include timelines and documentation associated with assessments, IEP team meetings and the delivery of specially designed instruction and related services. All students will receive the full implementation of services as outlined in their IEP or Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP). IEP teams will follow all legal procedures to implement services and/or convene required IFSP/IEP meetings if changes to these documents are necessary after a data review.

Instructional and/or assistive technologies required for students with disabilities will be provided. Professional learning and job-embedded coaching opportunities will be provided for general education, special education and English Language Development (ELD) teachers, paraeducators, related service providers, and administrators. These opportunities will address specially designed instruction, Tier III evidence-based reading, writing, and mathematics interventions, behavioral and social emotional supports and strategies, and instructional/assistive technology.

## Infants and Toddlers

The Montgomery County Infants and Toddlers Program (MCITP) provides services in person in the home or other natural environment. Parents/guardians may opt to receive services virtually to meet their needs.

## Child Find

Screening and evaluations for students ages 3-5 are conducted in person. Virtual screenings may be offered in special circumstances. Screening and assessment measures may include an extensive parent/guardian interview, a preschool teacher questionnaire, informal developmental activities and other documents. Standardized measures, including parent/guardian rating scales, are administered virtually and/or in person given the parameters of each assessment and the individual needs of the student. Direct observations of the student in their home or childcare environment are conducted when recommended and feasible. Assessment results are shared with families through an IEP initial eligibility meeting. An IEP is developed, if appropriate, for the child to receive special education services to prepare them for kindergarten.

Screening and evaluations for students in Grades K-12 and/or through age 21 are conducted in person. Standardized measures including parent/guardian rating scales are



# Special Education (cont.)

Evaluations conducted by occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech/language pathologists and other related service providers will, in most circumstances, be conducted in person. Evaluations may include parent/guardian interviews, student observations and standardized measures as appropriate.

## Service Delivery

MCPS continues to provide services to students in the least restrictive environment. School teams are encouraged to consider the range of educational opportunities offered to all students with a continued emphasis on maximizing opportunities for students with disabilities to learn and make progress with their non-disabled peers and participate in the school community.

## Compensatory/Recovery Services

Students previously found eligible for Compensatory/Recovery Services whose services will not be completed by the end of summer 2023 school year will continue to receive their identified services through the 2023-2024 school year.

## IEP Implementation in Emergency Conditions

Specially designed instruction and related services for students with disabilities will be implemented in accordance with decisions documented in the IEP Planning for Emergency Conditions sections in the student's IEP. MCPS has provided school teams with the MSDE Technical Assistance Bulletin: [Special Education – Learning Continuity Plan – Requirement Ensuring Continuity of](#)

[Special Education Services during Emergency School Closures.](#)

## Section 504 Plans

All students with [Section 504 Plans](#) will receive their documented accommodations. The Section 504 Plan case manager will coordinate virtual or in person Section 504 Plan meetings at least one time per school year to review and revise the Section 504 Plan as needed or upon parent/guardian request.

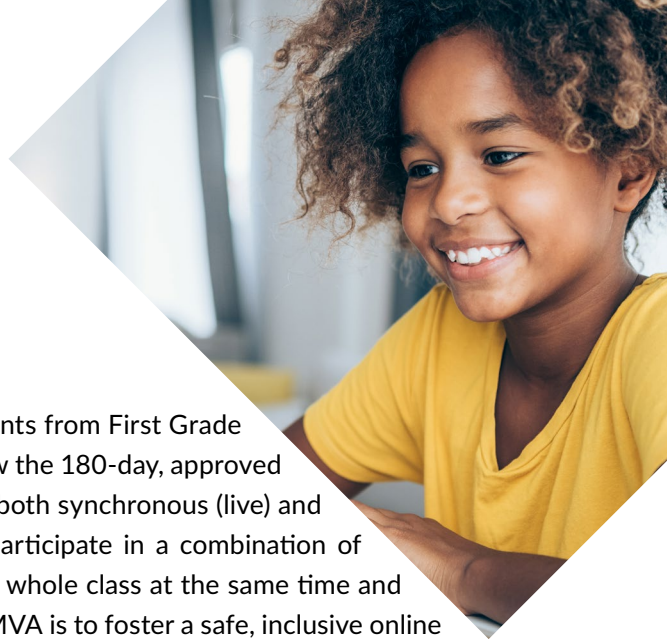
If you have questions regarding special education services, please contact the school principal and/or the Office of Special Education Services at 240-740-3900.





# What to Expect:

# MCPS Virtual Academy



For the 2023-2024 school year, the MCPS virtual program will serve students from First Grade through Grade 12 and will use a blended instructional model that will follow the 180-day, approved MCPS academic calendar year. A blended instructional model will include both synchronous (live) and asynchronous (independent) instruction. This means that students will participate in a combination of learning experiences—some instructional time will be teacher-led with the whole class at the same time and some will be dedicated to independent learning. The primary focus of the MVA is to foster a safe, inclusive online learning environment that meets the individual needs of all students in an academic setting where staff know their students' interests, and want to see them excel as learners. The program includes the following highlights:

- Traditional general education course offerings
- Accelerated and honors courses
- Clubs and extracurricular activities
- Engagement, support, quality content, and live instructional experiences where students can take advantage of expanded learning opportunities and experiences

Additionally, the MVA provides a unique opportunity for working high school students, those pursuing other out of school options, and those who want to take accelerated and advanced courses that may not be available in their home school.

Students will follow a specially designed bell schedule that adheres to COMAR regulations and supports online synchronous instruction. Live classes will occur daily, Monday through Friday, and the courses will align closely to the start and end times of in-person schools. Start and end times may be adjusted to accommodate the different levels of schooling and will maintain the same number of hours as the regular school programs. The daily schedule will be customized by level to include support and check-in periods to allow students the extra time and support from their classroom teachers on their academic needs. Student Service Learning (SSL) hours will be logged and documented as part of the student record, and the Virtual Academy will promote and embed opportunities for students to complete this requirement.

For students that require a digital learning opportunity due to physical or emotional conditions that prevent them from accessing instruction at their school of enrollment, MCPS has the Interim Instructional Services.

Additionally MCPS offers the Online Pathways to Graduation programs, for students needing to access required graduation coursework.

For more information on these programs, please visit:

- [Interim Instructional Services](#)
- [Online Pathways](#)



# Grading, Attendance, Engagement and Accountability



## Grading

For the 2023–2024 school year, MCPS will return to pre-pandemic grading policies and procedures outlined in [MCPS Regulation IKA-RA. Grading and Reporting](#).

Best practices include:

- Putting students first and grading with grace. Schools will provide students with multiple opportunities for reassessment and flexibility. MCPS is mindful of the extreme challenges students faced during the pandemic and will continue to face during the recovery period.
- Establishing recommended ranges of assignments each marking period.
- Ensuring consistent gradebook templates (90% All Tasks/Assessments, 10% Practice/Preparation) in almost all courses.
- Continued use of “50% Rule” and emphasizing expectations for two-way communication.
- Removing the required 10% category for district assessments in English, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and mathematics courses, and replacing it with an ungraded gradebook category.

MCPS will also return to pre-pandemic expectations for implementation of credit recovery, attendance intervention and grade modification.

## Accountability

### MCPS Evidence of Learning Framework

When evaluating student achievement, MCPS seeks to answer the following questions:

- Are children learning?
- Are they learning enough?
- How do we know?
- If not, why not?
- What are we going to do about it?

In order to gain a full picture of a student's progress, the district uses multiple measurements to assess how students are performing. These measures are in **classroom, district and external categories** that assess student learning.

CLASSROOM DATA	Report Card
DISTRICT ASSESSMENT	District Assessments directly aligned to curriculum standards in the classroom
EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT	State/National Assessments



# Grading, Attendance, Engagement and Accountability (cont.)



## Baseline and Student Outcome Data

The 2020-2021 Evidence of Learning Framework serves as our baseline data to understand where students are with literacy and mathematics. This Framework consists of a variety of English Language Arts and mathematics measures/assessments each assigned to one of three categories: classroom, district, or external. Below are the baseline data charts for elementary, middle, and high school with projected student outcomes disaggregated by race, service group, and gender.

### Elementary School

	PERCENT MET EOL LITERACY	PROJECTION TO GOAL OF 90% BY 2025	PERCENT MET EOL MATHEMATICS	PROJECTION TO GOAL OF 90% BY 2025
Female	59.2	66.9	59.0	66.8
Male	53.4	62.6	59.5	67.1
Asian	77.6	80.7	83.4	85.1
Black or African American	51.1	60.8	50.2	60.2
Hispanic/Latino	33.4	47.6	37.0	50.3
White	76.4	79.8	80.8	83.1
All Other	70.2	75.2	72.5	76.9
Free and Reduced-price Meal System	32.9	47.2	35.3	49.0
Special Education	30.8	45.6	36.0	49.5
Limited English Proficient	31.1	45.8	36.8	50.1



# Grading, Attendance, Engagement and Accountability (cont.)



## Middle School

	PERCENT MET EOL LITERACY	PROJECTION TO GOAL OF 90% BY 2025	PERCENT MET EOL MATHEMATICS	PROJECTION TO GOAL OF 90% BY 2025
Female	73.6	77.7	60.0	67.5
Male	66.5	72.4	55.8	64.4
Asian	87.4	88.1	84.8	86.1
Black or African American	63.9	70.4	45.6	56.7
Hispanic/Latino	50.5	60.4	34.5	48.4
White	88.0	88.5	80.0	82.5
All Other	79.1	81.8	70.3	75.2
Free and Reduced-price Meal System	48.8	59.1	32.7	47.0
Special Education	53.3	62.5	31.4	46.1
Limited English Proficient	45.5	56.6	26.1	42.1



# Grading, Attendance, Engagement and Accountability (cont.)



## High School

	PERCENT MET EOL LITERACY	PROJECTION TO GOAL OF 90% BY 2025	PERCENT MET EOL MATHEMATICS	PROJECTION TO GOAL OF 90% BY 2025
Female	78.5	81.4	73.8	77.9
Male	70.3	75.2	65.3	71.5
Asian	89.8	89.9	88.7	89.0
Black or African American	69.6	74.7	62.2	69.2
Hispanic/Latino	54.7	63.5	48.9	59.2
White	90.0	90.0	86.3	87.2
All Other	83.0	84.8	76.7	80.0
Free and Reduced-price Meal System	55.1	63.8	48.8	59.1
Special Education	57.8	65.9	47.0	57.8
Limited English Proficient	38.3	51.2	36.2	49.7

To determine the impact of the learning that students may still need to acquire, various data points will be examined by student groups, including classroom data (i.e., grades), district-level data for assessments aligned to the curriculum, and standardized assessments.

Data will continue to be compared to grade-level peers as well as national data, where applicable, to identify differences in performance. An examination of Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Growth reading and mathematics results will be compared.



# Accountability (cont.)

## MCPS Evidence of Learning Framework (cont.)



The Evidence of Learning Framework consists of a variety of classroom, district, and external measures used to assess student learning. The framework uses a multiple measures approach that identifies accountability for student readiness and achievement. The framework's goal is to move away from a single measure to indicate whether a student is learning or how they can demonstrate their learning. A multiple measures approach increases the opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning and provides a more complete picture of what students know and are able to do. For students who do not demonstrate Evidence of Learning attainment, supports—such as tutoring and interventions—will be provided to enhance student learning and their success.

One aspect of the Evidence of Learning Framework that will be used to identify students in need of additional supports is the external measure of NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Growth assessments. The NWEA MAP Growth assessments allow for not only comparing to grade-level peers but also national peers. For the fall administration of an external measure, MAP Growth, the following metrics will be used for students in elementary through high school.

### September/October 2021 External Assessment Administration

LEVEL	LITERACY	MATHEMATICS	METRICS
Elementary School: Kindergarten – Grade 2	MAP Reading Fluency*	MAP-Primary	Performance at or above the 50th national percentile
Elementary School: Grade 3 – Grade 5	MAP Growth – Reading	MAP Growth – Mathematics	Performance at or above the 50th national percentile
Middle School	MAP Growth – Reading	MAP Growth – Mathematics	Performance at or above the 50th national percentile
High School	MAP Growth – Reading	MAP Growth – Mathematics	Performance at or above the 50th national percentile

\* Performance is measured for students meeting or exceeding the grade-level standard as designated by NWEA.



# Attendance

## Reporting Attendance

Attendance policies are described in MCPS Regulation JEA-RA Student Attendance. This includes the taking, recording and reporting of daily attendance, tardies, excused absences and unexcused absences. For elementary schools, attendance will be taken each day at the beginning of the school day. For secondary schools, attendance is taken each period and calculated to compute a daily attendance code.

Attendance is taken by teachers and recorded in Synergy, the student information system. This data is visible to parents through ParentVUE, the parent portal. When a student is marked absent, an automated ConnectEd call alerts the parent/guardian that the student is absent. This allows for quick intervention and escalation if needed. Daily attendance reports are run at the local school level so that leaders can review attendance patterns and identify students who may need support in attending school regularly. During the first three weeks of school, central office staff will also monitor attendance daily to identify students who have not returned to school and to plan outreach processes to families. A number of student-level and aggregate reports at the school and district level are used to monitor attendance and provide quick intervention as needed.

The [Attendance Monitoring and Interventions Operations Guide](#) provides an explanation of the process coordinated by Student and Family Support and Engagement and the Office of Special Education to provide specific outreach and implement targeted interventions for students with consistent attendance and engagement concerns.

## Well-Being Teams

During the 2022-2023 school year, all schools evolved their Student Well-Being Teams to address students who had difficulty attending or engaging with school, students who experienced social-emotional difficulties, and students and families in need of school system and community resources. Key members of the Student Well-Being Teams are school administrators, school counselors, pupil personnel workers (PPWs), social workers, school psychologists, parent community coordinators (PCCs), and Emergent Multilingual Therapeutic Counselors (ETCs). Student

Well-Being Teams analyze data, conduct root cause analyses, and implement targeted interventions.

MCPS has created a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) platform in Synergy. The MTSS platform will enable schools, and the district to monitor and evaluate the interventions implemented for students in the areas of social-emotional support, behavioral support, and attendance. Student Well-Being Team members in all 210 schools were trained on the MTSS platform in the fall of 2022. The platform had a soft rollout during the second semester of the 2022-2023 school year. Summer professional learning occurred in advance of a full MTSS platform rollout for the start of the 2023-2024 school year. An operations manual was distributed to schools to ensure consistent implementation of Student Well Being Teams across the district.



## Virtual Academy Attendance

Synchronous instruction is provided every day to students in the Virtual Academy. Students are expected to attend class every day. Attendance is taken daily in accordance with MCPS policy and in alignment with in-person instruction. Elementary teachers take attendance once a day in the morning, and secondary teachers take attendance at the beginning of each class period. Secondary period-by-period attendance is aggregated to compute a daily attendance record which is logged in Synergy, the student information system. The Virtual Academy has two well-being teams, one at the elementary level and one at the secondary level. These teams meet weekly and analyze attendance and engagement data on all students. They identify students who need additional outreach and develop processes and plans for supporting students. All PPWs support the students in the Virtual Academy. Because students are still enrolled in their home school, counseling staff at the virtual academy partners with counseling staff at the home school to provide coordinated support and services.



# Supports for Students, Staff and Families



MCPS recognizes that the pandemic has affected academic and social and emotional well being of students, staff, and families. MCPS will continue to reunite students with the positive social and emotional experiences that in-person learning offers.

MCPS continues to engage students, families and parents through the Community Navigator initiative, visiting neighborhoods and community spaces to provide information, resources and targeted support to families. MCPS has also partnered with county agencies to offer events in the community to share resources and highlight ways that students, parents and families can connect to learning, social and health resources. MCPS hired and staffed a 1.0 social worker for each high school. These social workers serve as key component of the Student Well-Being Team. ([See the Communications Plan here](#)).

## Students

MCPS will continue to address the physical, social and psychological needs of students, families and staff through district- and school-based programs and initiatives. The Be Well 365 recovery plan provides steps for schools to take to address community and staff concerns on a range of topics. Social-emotional learning (SEL) lessons will be conducted as standalone and integrated throughout Kindergarten through Grade 12 lessons.

## Staff

MCPS is committed to the physical, social, and psychological well-being of its more than 24,000 employees. The [MCPS Employee Wellness Program](#) within the Employee and Retiree Service Center (ERSC) offers many health education opportunities and programs for employees, and support navigating employee health benefits. The [Employee Assistance Program](#) has expanded its staff and continues to provide services, resources, and support to employees and their families through counseling sessions, consultations, video messages, [newsletters](#), and wellness [workshops](#) on a variety of topics to promote well-being. Additionally, schools and offices continue to prioritize staff wellness along with students, with additional resources and wellness events.

## Parents and Families

MCPS will continue to provide parents/guardians with the resources, tools and information they need to help their child(ren) succeed. Support staff are available to assist families with connections to the school system and community resources, including food, housing, and physical and mental health. Families can reach out to the school counselor, school psychologist, PPW, ESOL transition counselor (ETC) or PCC at their school for more information or assistance. Parents can access a variety of trainings, workshops and recorded video sessions on a number of topics, including social-emotional wellness, distance learning strategies and supports, maintaining positive parent-child relationships and navigating the technology.

### PARENT ACADEMY

[www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/parentacademy/](http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/parentacademy/)

### WAYMAKING SERIES ON MENTAL HEALTH

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLkZwAghwrSylvlgVR CWXjpi14iBWRK0Lwl>

### MINDFULNESS MOMENTS

[www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLkZwAghwrSytgj1re\\_2Sr8Dt8poZCHgP5](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLkZwAghwrSytgj1re_2Sr8Dt8poZCHgP5)





# Community Engagement and Communications



## District Strategic Initiatives Implementation Team

MCPS received meaningful and ongoing stakeholder engagement in the reopening and recovery process, facilitated by the responsible offices. Stakeholder groups include parent and community organizations, employee associations, and school and cross-office staff. Stakeholder groups that provided input on the work in the Fall 2023 reopening plan include:

- » Curriculum Advisory Assembly and subject area committees
- » Accelerated and Enriched Instruction Feedback Council
- » Attendance Work Group
- » Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee
- » COVID-19 Operations Advisory Team

The MCPS Office of Communications is responsible for developing, administering and monitoring the effectiveness of communications and outreach for the Return to School Plan. The responsible individual for that office is Christopher Cram, Director of Communications.

The office can be reached in the following ways:

Director email: [christopher\\_c\\_cram@mcpsmd.org](mailto:christopher_c_cram@mcpsmd.org)

Office email: [pio@mcpsmd.org](mailto:pio@mcpsmd.org) or [AskMCPS@mcpsmd.org](mailto:AskMCPS@mcpsmd.org)

Office phone: 240-740-2837

AskMCPS phone 240-740-3000 | Spanish Hotline: 240-740-2845



# Technology

Schools have a choice in implementing either a one-to-one model or a cart model for student technology. Most of our secondary schools have adopted the one-to-one model, in which students are assigned a Chromebook and case. They will be expected to carry it from school to home each day. This device will be used at school and home to complete instructional tasks.

In the cart model, sets of Chromebooks are kept in each classroom for use during the school day. Most of our elementary schools have adopted this model. Students who attend these schools who need access to a Chromebook at home can check one out at no cost and leave it at home for use during the school year.

## In-Person

MCPS schools expect to be fully in person for the upcoming school year. For students with extenuating circumstances, applying to and attending the Montgomery Virtual Academy is an option, as well as applying for Interim Instructional Services. All students will use Chromebooks as their primary device for instruction. MCPS Google accounts are provided to all staff and students. In addition to online applications and curriculum, MCPS uses the Canvas Learning Management System for teachers to create online course repositories that can include course materials, assignments, discussion threads, quizzes and more. The MCPS network can support all student and staff devices, so instruction and assessment should be seamless.

## Virtual

If a shift to virtual instruction is necessary, all students will have access to a Chromebook at home. The same

technology resources, including online subscriptions to Nearpod and Zoom, will be used to ensure a seamless transition to virtual instruction. Canvas will be used as the primary course repository.

## Canvas

During in-person instruction, the Canvas platform can be used by teachers to house course materials, including notes, presentations, videos, assignments, calendars, quizzes and more. These courses may or may not include all classroom work, as teachers are able to use many online and physical resources to prepare high-quality instructional tasks. The Canvas platform is similar to a course folder or binder and is one resource that teachers and students have available to them.

In cases of short absences, Canvas platform resources will be used to support continuation of student learning.

## Staffing

Each school identifies available staff to support instruction. At the elementary level, this includes reading specialists, staff development teachers, paraeducators, classroom teachers, administrators and others. At the secondary level, content teachers support instruction.

All schools have established rotating staff schedules to ensure all instructional blocks are covered throughout the day. Elementary schools have the option of utilizing a cluster model in which staff may support students from multiple schools.

## Special Education

In addition to the technology tools provided to MCPS students, students eligible for special education and related services are provided with low- and/or high-tech assistive technology devices and services as determined by the IEP team.



# Extracurricular Activities and Athletics



## Interscholastic Athletics

The MCPS interscholastic athletics program continues to operate in person, in alignment with MCPS procedures and protocols for COVID-19 safety and per the recommendations of the Student-Athlete Medical Advisory Committee for MCPS Athletics. Student-athletes, staff members, spectators and all stakeholders are expected to follow the procedures and protocols outlined in the most current version of the Return to R.A.I.S.E. strategic plan. This plan aligns with guidelines released by the CDC, MSDE, the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association and Montgomery County. The [Health and Safety page of the MCPS Athletics website](#) includes the latest information regarding the program operations and is updated as needed.

## Extracurricular Activities and Fine Arts

The MCPS extracurricular and fine arts program continues to operate in person.

Students, staff, and guests are encouraged to follow mitigation strategies to ensure the health of all participants while engaging in extracurricular activities.

Recommendations from the Student-Athlete Medical Advisory Committee are applied to the extracurricular and fine arts program as appropriate.

Students will earn credit towards earning the MCPS Certificate of Student Engagement.



# 2023-2024 School Year Calendar

## 2023–2024 Traditional School Calendar<sup>+</sup>

Montgomery County Public Schools

2023	
July 4	Independence Day—Schools and offices closed
August 21, 22, 23, 24, 25	Professional days for teachers
August 28	First day of school for students
September 4	Labor Day—Schools and offices closed
September 22	Early release day for students
September 25	Non-Instructional Day—No school for students and teachers
October 9	Professional day for all staff; no school for students
November 1*	Grading and Planning for the end of term; no school for students
November 20 and 21	Early release days for students
November 22	Systemwide Closure—Schools and offices closed
November 23 and 24	Thanksgiving—Schools and offices closed
December 25	Holiday—Schools and offices closed
December 26, 27, 28, 29	Winter Break—No school for students and teachers
December 28 and 29	Systemwide Closures—Schools and offices closed
2024	
January 1	New Year's Day—Schools and offices closed
January 2	Non-Instructional Day—No school for students and teachers
January 15	Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day—Schools and offices closed
January 29*	Grading and Planning for the end of term; no school for students
February 19	Presidents' Day—Schools and offices closed
March 1	Early release day for students
March 25*, 26*, 27, 28	Spring Break—No school for students and teachers
March 27 and 28	Systemwide Closure—Schools and offices closed
March 29 and April 1	Holidays—Schools and offices closed
April 10*	Grading and Planning for the end of term; no school for students
April 22*	Professional day for teachers; no school for students
May 14	Primary Election Day—School and offices closed
May 27	Memorial Day—Schools and offices closed
June 13	Last day of school for students; early release day for students
June 14*	Grading and Planning for the end of term
June 19	Systemwide Closure—Schools and offices closed

\*If the school year is disrupted by emergencies and schools are closed three or more days, dates identified as possible make-up instructional days include: November 1, 2023; January 29, March 25-26, April 10, April 22, June 14 and June 17–18, 2024.

<sup>+</sup>This list of dates does not apply to Arcola and Roscoe R. Nix elementary schools, which will follow the 2023–2024 Innovative School Year Calendar.

# 2023-2024 Innovative School Year Calendar

2023–2024 Innovative School Year Calendar<sup>+</sup>

Montgomery County Public Schools

2023	
July 4	Independence Day—Schools and offices closed
July 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	No school for students and teachers
July 10	First day of school for students
July 28	Early release day for students
August 11	Early release day for students
August 14-18	No school for students and teachers
August 21-25	No school for students and teachers
September 1	Early release day for students
September 4	Labor Day—Schools and offices closed
September 22	Early release day for students
September 25	Non-Instructional Day—No school for students and teachers
October 5 and 6	Early release days for students
October 9	Professional day for all staff; no school for students
October 31	Early release day for students
November 1*	Grading and Planning for the end of term; no school for students
November 20 and 21	Early release days for students
November 22	Systemwide Closure—Schools and offices closed
November 23 and 24	Thanksgiving—Schools and offices closed
December 22	Early release day for students
December 25	Holiday—Schools and offices closed
December 26, 27, 28, 29	Winter Break—No school for students and teachers
December 28 and 29	Systemwide Closures—Schools and offices closed
2024	
January 1	New Year's Day—Schools and offices closed
January 2	Non-Instructional Day—No school for students and teachers
January 15	Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day—Schools and offices closed
January 26	Early release day for students
January 29*	Grading and Planning for the end of term; no school for students
February 19	Presidents' Day—Schools and offices closed
March 1	Early release day for students
March 22	Early release day for students
March 25*, 26*, 27, 28	Spring Break—No school for students and teachers
March 27 and 28	Systemwide Closures—Schools and offices closed
March 29 and April 1	Holidays—Schools and offices closed
April 9	Early release day for students
April 10*	Grading and Planning for the end of term; no school for students
April 22*	Professional day for teachers; no school for students
May 14	Primary Election Day—Schools and offices closed
May 24	Early release day for students
May 27	Memorial Day—Schools and offices closed
June 12	Early release day for students
June 13	Last day of school for students; early release day for students
June 14*	Grading and Planning for the end of term
June 19	Systemwide Closure—Schools and offices closed

\*If the school year is disrupted by emergencies and schools are closed three or more days, dates identified as possible make-up instructional days include: November 1, 2023; January 29, March 25–26, April 10, April 22, June 14, and June 17–18, 2024.

<sup>+</sup>This list of dates applies only to Arcola and Roscoe R. Nix elementary schools.



# Submit Feedback

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Your comments and feedback are important and continue to help inform our planning. Please visit [www.mcpssubmitfeedback.org](http://www.mcpssubmitfeedback.org) to provide feedback on our reopening plan throughout the year.

Please be aware that this plan will be updated upon CDC guidance.