

MEMORANDUM

October 1, 2020

TO: Education and Culture Committee

FROM: Nicole Rodriguez-Hernandez, Legislative Analyst
Craig Howard, Deputy Director
Vivian Yao, Legislative Analyst

SUBJECT: Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Recovery/Reopening Update

PURPOSE: Receive update and have discussion, no action required

Expected Participants:

- Shebra Evans, President, Board of Education
- Dr. Jack Smith, Superintendent, MCPS
- Dr. Monifa McKnight, Deputy Superintendent, MCPS
- Dr. Henry Johnson, Chief of Staff, MCPS
- Dr. Janet Wilson, Chief of Teaching, Learning, and Schools, MCPS
- Derek Turner, Chief of Engagement, Innovation, and Operations, MCPS

During the FY21 budget approval process, Councilmember Rice, Chair of the Education & Culture (E&C) Committee indicated that, once Committee meetings resumed, he would schedule a series of meetings with Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) to discuss budget and policy issues that: 1) result from the COVID-19 health crisis; and/or 2) would typically have been discussed as part of Committee budget worksessions.

On June 22, the E&C Committee held their first meeting in this series and received an update on MCPS' recovery of education plan for summer 2020 and the 2020-2021 school year. Council staff also presented a short summary on the status and contents of Kirwan Commission state legislation.

Today's briefing focuses on the virtual reopening of schools. MCPS' presentation can be found on ©1-15. For the discussion, Council staff requested that MCPS provide information on three specific areas listed below:

1. MCPS' recovery and reopening education plan;
2. Summary of MCPS' CARES Act funding; and
3. Community and school-based learning hubs.

A. Recovery/Reopening Schools Update

Since the closure of Maryland public schools on March 16 due to the COVID-19 health pandemic, MCPS has quickly adapted and addressed the unpredictable and evolving needs of their students and families, staff, and the community. In particular, MCPS developed new methods to provide student instruction and deliver wrap-around services. The culmination of the school system's efforts is described in MCPS' *Recovery of Education Guide for the Fall Semester*. On August 25, the Board unanimously approved the guide (first reviewed on August 6) which established the specifics for a virtual learning model for the start of the 2020-2021 school year. Students began the new school year virtually on August 31.

MCPS' memorandum provides the details and specifics that will be discussed in their presentation ©16-34. It is important to note that frameworks and policies outlined in the memorandum and guide are subject to adjustments as the school year continues and health conditions change.

1. MCPS Fall Recovery Plan (©16)

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) required each school district to prepare a recovery plan and framework to return to in-person, in-building instruction, as health conditions permit. Key components of MCPS' plan include: excellence and equity; flexible learning structures; technological and wellness resources; and professional development/training for staff, families, and students. The Board approved the full plan on August 25 and MSDE approved the plan on September 22.

2. Reopening Schools Plan (©17)

On September 25, MCPS formally provided the legally required 45-day minimum notice to their three employee associations to begin planning and bargaining conversations related to the potential return to in-person learning. However, the notice is not an indication that students will return for in-person learning at the end of the 45-day period. MCPS notes they will begin a phased transition back to in-person learning as health and safety conditions allow. MCPS' recovery plan highlights standard safety protocols including, but not limited to:

- PPE for students and staff
- Regular hand washing/sanitizing
- Physical distancing requirements
- Contact tracing

The memorandum also references the metrics for the return to in-person learning released by the State and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

3. Supporting Teaching, Learning, and Activities (©23-26)

MCPS' memorandum addresses the change in existing wrap-around services and activities as well as describes new services for the school community.

Staff Professional Development. In addition to professional development for instructional staff, MCPS has provided trainings for school-based staff on enrollment, attendance, and withdrawal activities due to new changes related to COVID-19 and remote learning/working.

Social-Emotional and Physical Wellness. Students are now able to participate in general social-emotional learning lessons throughout the year as well as direct crisis intervention support through psychoeducational lessons. In addition, the Office of Student and Family Support and Engagement continues to address concerns regarding food availability, social-emotional well-being, medical needs, academic or behavioral supports, and online learning.

Parental Support & Services. As most students are learning at home, communication and support with parents is imperative. MCPS has launched: 1) a parent portal with access to student information (ParentVue); and 2) a parent webinar series focused on aspects of virtual learning. MCPS uses Parent Community Coordinators to communicate with and support families.

Food Services & Transportation. As of September 25, over 424,000 meals have been provided at 74 school sites and five bus sites. Free meals are available to all youth 18 and younger. MCPS students 18 and older can receive pick-up meals with a student ID. Meal service resumed for in-school daycare locations. Additionally, MCPS distributes triple meals (three breakfasts and three lunches) to students every Friday (beginning on September 18).

MCPS' Department of Transportation (DOT) employees distribute meals, weekend food bags, and fresh produce to families and community organizations via the school bus fleet. DOT employees have also helped distribute technology, curriculum materials and student belongings.

Student Athletics. MCPS developed the Return to R.A.I.S.E. Strategic Plan to guide the safe return to interscholastic athletics. MCPS remains in Phase 1 which focuses on virtual instruction and at-home skill-building or conditioning. While in-person athletics have been cancelled for the Fall semester, the memorandum notes two athletic season options from the State: 1) the Two-Semester Plan; and 2) the October 7 restart plan.

4. Opening of School Data (©8-10)

MCPS has designed and is implementing a three-tiered student engagement monitoring program that utilizes multiple data sources and staff to meet student and family needs. MCPS' memorandum also provides recent data on each component and explains how the data informs staff outreach to increase engagement.

- a. Technology Distribution:** 1:1 model for student devices (Chromebooks)
 - Mobile internet hotspots and touchscreen Chromebooks (elementary students) are also available
- b. Digital Footprints:** myMCPS Classrooms (Canvas LMS) and Zoom logins
 - 99% of students have logged in to a platform as of September 25
 - A chart provides a demographic breakdown of those who have not yet logged in
 - Of the 1% not logged in, 53% are Hispanic students and 20% are Black students

- c. **Tiered System of Support:** Student Well-Being Teams: home/virtual visits
 - Purpose: reduce barriers to learning for unengaged students and provide social-emotional support and resources
 - Majority of recorded home visits are for ESOL, special education, or FARMS students

5. Enrollment and Attendance ©4-6

As of September 30, 157,895 K-12 students and 3,688 Prekindergarten/Head Start students enrolled in the 2020-2021 school year. This reflects a 1.9% decrease of enrolled K-12 students compared to this time last year. MCPS is closely monitoring withdrawal and enrollment patterns. The data shows 1,018 students either transferred to a Maryland nonpublic school outside of the County or are now homeschooled. The data shows a 9.0% decrease in Kindergarten enrollment and a sharp decline in the number of international student admissions as well. MCPS notes there is a nationwide trend of declines in enrollment, with news reports indicating it could be due to parental concerns with virtual instruction and the COVID-19 health pandemic.

Since the first day of school, student attendance has fluctuated between 97 and 99 percent. While MSDE requires daily attendance to be recorded, MCPS has implemented three ways for a student to be counted as “present” despite not attending live instruction: 1) watch a recorded lesson; 2) engage in an online discussion thread; and 3) complete other follow-up work as designated. Guardians can verify student interaction through an online form. MCPS has found these measures to be successful in increasing engagement and accommodating virtual instruction challenges.

B. CARES Act and State Aid Funding ©27

Federal funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act have been distributed to states to allocate to local education agencies. Through CARES Act funding and State aid, MCPS will have received approximately \$60 million to date to help address loss of learning, technology gaps, and more.

The table below highlights the Board requested and Council approved supplemental appropriations known to Council staff at the time of this committee meeting.

Appropriation Title	Funding Level	Action
CARES Act Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund grant	\$24,768,196	Council approved on June 23
CARES Act- Broadband for Unserved Students grant (15,521 hotspots)	\$1,117,512	Council approved on Sept. 29
CARES Act- Tutoring Program grant	\$13,241,438	Council approved on Sept. 29
CARES Act- Technology Program grant	\$18,344,404	Council approved on Sept. 29
Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund grant	\$1,748,276	Council approved on Sept. 29
GEER Fund- Innovative Approaches to Connecting with Students Project grant	\$374,031	Action scheduled for Oct. 13
Total to Date	\$59,593,857	

Council staff suggests that the Committee consider holding a fiscal/budget update briefing with MCPS and Montgomery College later this fall to discuss the status of CARES Act appropriations and expenditures, as well as the most current General Fund expenditure projections through the end of the fiscal year.

C. Learning Hubs and Other Distance Learning Supports for Students

As school districts across the nation establish new instructional procedures in light of the COVID-19 health pandemic, many are also attempting to address inequities arising from virtual instruction as concerns are raised internally and by the community and elected officials. An issue perpetuating all hybrid and virtual school models is the need for school-age childcare and/or basic assistance. For many guardians, schools provided supervision of children. Additionally, most elementary schools also provided before and after care to accommodate guardian work schedules. However, with children learning at home, guardians physically working at their place of employment (or from home) struggle with finding adequate care.

As a result, local community organizations have raised the need to establish learning hubs throughout the County. Neighboring jurisdictions and those across the country are utilizing various forms of learning hubs to address school-age supervision needs; internet access; and even loss of learning gaps for high-risk students. Some provide basic care while others utilize school-trained staff to provide curriculum enrichment.

MCPS, County departments, and local organizations are beginning to collaborate on how to utilize school buildings and community centers for childcare programming, learning hubs and additional enrichment activities. However, a streamlined process does not currently exist to help coordinate the multiple efforts occurring across sectors at this time.

The Joint Health and Human Services and Education and Culture Committee is scheduled to discuss in greater depth efforts by MCPS, County agencies, and community-based organizations to expand distance learning supports for students on October 15, 2020.

Council President and E&C Chair Letter. On September 14, Council President Katz and E&C Chair Rice transmitted a letter to Superintendent Dr. Smith urging MCPS to lead and coordinate efforts in the establishment of learning hubs throughout the County. The letter can be found on ©35-36. Due to limited fiscal resources, the Council President and E&C Chair want to ensure that recommendations before the Council reflect the Council's priorities and are the most comprehensive options available. They believe coordination among the multiple stakeholders (MCPS, County agencies, and community organizations) will help achieve the most efficient recommendations. The letter also requested additional information on MCPS' tutoring program efforts. The partnerships identified in the letter are outlined below.

- **Collaboration Council for Children, Youth, and Families:** Proposing to host afterschool hubs at 12 locations (3 each in 4 targeted cluster areas)
- **Black and Brown Coalition, Children's Opportunity Fund, and Bar-T:** Partnering to offer a full day "Educational Equity Hub" for a cohort of 52 students in the Montgomery Village area, with the hope to expand to additional locations

- **Children’s Opportunity Fund:** Targeting additional private resources to provide early literacy, tutoring and family support services
- **Montgomery County HHS:** Proposing subsidized childcare for low-income families that will support online learning during the day
- **Montgomery County Recreation:** Anticipating an expansion in youth sports and afterschool programs

On September 25, Dr. Smith responded to the letter and provided details on the MCPS tutoring program and community partnerships (©37-38). Their efforts include, but are not limited to:

- Partnering with the Department of Health and Human Services to host immunization centers;
- Promoting Montgomery County Department of Recreation youth opportunities, including Excel Beyond the Bell; and
- Planning and coordination with the Collaboration Council for Children, Youth, and Families to increase youth supports in a community-based and comprehensive manner.

Additional community partners include: the Montgomery County Council of Parent Teacher Associations, Inc.; Montgomery College; Identity, Inc.; the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Manna Food Center; Women Who Care Ministries; XMinds; the faith community, and more.

Educational Equity & Enrichment Hubs (EEE Hubs). MCPS is also supporting the joint effort of the Black and Brown Coalition, Children’s Opportunity Fund, and Bar-T to open educational equity hubs by allowing the use of school buildings for the hubs and by identifying families to participate in the hubs. The first hub is located at Stedwick Elementary School and opened on September 14. Additional programs at Brown Station, Daly, and Wheaton Woods Elementary Schools are being planned.

A presentation from the Black and Brown Coalition describing their goals and efforts for the EEE hubs can be found on ©39-57. Their main goal is to address the racial/ethnic disparities that also arise with virtual instruction inequities (supervision, loss of learning, etc.). The presentation outlines their framework for the Stedwick location and their proposal to expand the EEE hubs.

MCPS Tutoring Program. In response to the letter from the Council President and E&C Chair, the Superintendent elaborated on how MCPS will use the \$13.2 million Tutoring Program grant to address learning loss for high-risk students. To begin with, MCPS reports that approximately \$9 million of the tutoring grant funding will be used to cover expenses for the enhanced summer programming that MCPS provided due to school building closures and truncated virtual learning at the end of the 2019-20 school year.

For the current school year, MCPS plan to use the remainder of the grant funding (approximately \$4.2 million) to implement math and reading tutoring efforts for high-risk students, including special education students. Tutoring will occur two-to-three days a week and will be conducted by teaching staff. Since the CARES Act grant funds must be spent by the end of the 2020 calendar year, MCPS plans to continue tutoring services for the rest of the school year after January 1st with local operating dollars.

Special Appropriation for School-Age Care. In addition to the efforts listed above, on September 29, the Council approved a \$7,687,000 special appropriation to the FY21 operating budget, Early Care and Education Non-Departmental Account for COVID-19 school-age childcare during distance learning. Learning hubs are one model for school-age care during distance learning. This appropriation provides:

- \$1.8 million for reopening grants for full-day, school-age childcare services in MCPS buildings;
- \$5.6 million in tuition support for children in foster care and for low-income working families whose income is below 400% of the Federal Poverty Level; and
- \$287,0000 to Dept. of Health and Human Services for staff administration costs.

School Building Use. In a normal school year (pre-COVID-19), community-based organizations provide before and after school care and activities for students in school buildings coordinated by the Office of Community Use of Public Schools. Now, as local service providers try to meet the needs of students during the distance learning school day, they are seeking to deliver programming in school facilities. As the learning hubs discussion continues, it is important to note that there are limitations on the availability of school facilities due to competing priorities. These include: MCPS teachers using classrooms for virtual teaching; SAT/ACT testing; childcare programs; state licensing requirements; food distribution; immunization centers; voting centers; in-person tutoring; and more. Moreover, COVID-19 related social distancing requirements further restrict the availability of school space. How and when MCPS brings students back for in-person learning will impact the extent to which community providers will have access to space to serve students.

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Opening of Schools in Recovery of Education - Update

Montgomery County Council
Education and Culture Committee
October 5, 2020

Reimagine, Reopen, Recover

MCPS Fall 2020: Recovery of Education Guide
FALL SEMESTER



MCPS 2020 Recovery Plan Fall Semester

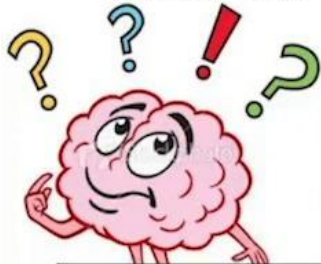
William H. Farquhar Middle School

CLASSROOM Community Agreements

Building a positive classroom environment is important to your success in English.

What are some actions you feel you should take as student to be successful in English class?

Respond in the chat box



2020-09-08 10:28:12



By the Numbers: Enrollment

Grade	Asian		African Am		White		Hispanic		Two or More Races		TOTAL SY 2021
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Grades K-5	9,841	14.2	14,863	21.5	17,239	24.9	23,328	33.7	3,746	5.4	69,257
Grades 6-8	5,336	14.2	8,213	21.9	9,782	26.1	12,225	32.6	1,870	5.0	37,521
Grades 9-12	7,516	14.7	11,036	21.6	14,240	27.9	16,002	31.3	2,220	4.3	51,117
Total K-12	22,693	14.4	34,112	21.6	41,261	26.1	51,555	32.7	7,836	5.0	157,895
Pre-K	305	8.3	927	25.1	362	9.8	1,550	42.0	527	14.3	3,688
Grand Total	22,998	14.2	35,039	21.7	41,623	25.8	53,105	32.9	8,363	5.2	161,583

By the Numbers: Withdrawals

SY 2020 Withdrawals after Jul 01, 2019 through Sept 30, 2019 (Grade K-12)	SY 2021 Withdrawals after Jul 01, 2020 through Sept 30, 2020 (Grade K-12)	Withdrawal Code Descriptions
1,622	1,200	Transfer to a Maryland public school outside of Montgomery County.
1,889	1,674	Transfer to a public school in another state.
986	1,189	Transfer to a nonpublic school within Montgomery County.
148	1,018	Transfer to a Maryland nonpublic school outside of Montgomery County.
252	346	Transfer to a United States nonpublic school or institution in another state.
966	770	Transfer to a school (public or nonpublic) of a foreign country.
74	1,080	Home schooling.

By the Numbers: Meals Distribution

- **424,988 meals** served through September 25
- MCPS is now serving triple meals every Friday to provide food through the weekend
- **75** schools, **13** Bus Stop sites

By the Numbers: Technology

Spring 2020	Summer 2020	Fall 2020
70,123 Chromebooks Distributed	127,981 (+57,858) Chromebooks Distributed	133,554 (+5,573) Chromebooks Distributed

Connection to Technology Systems: Engagement

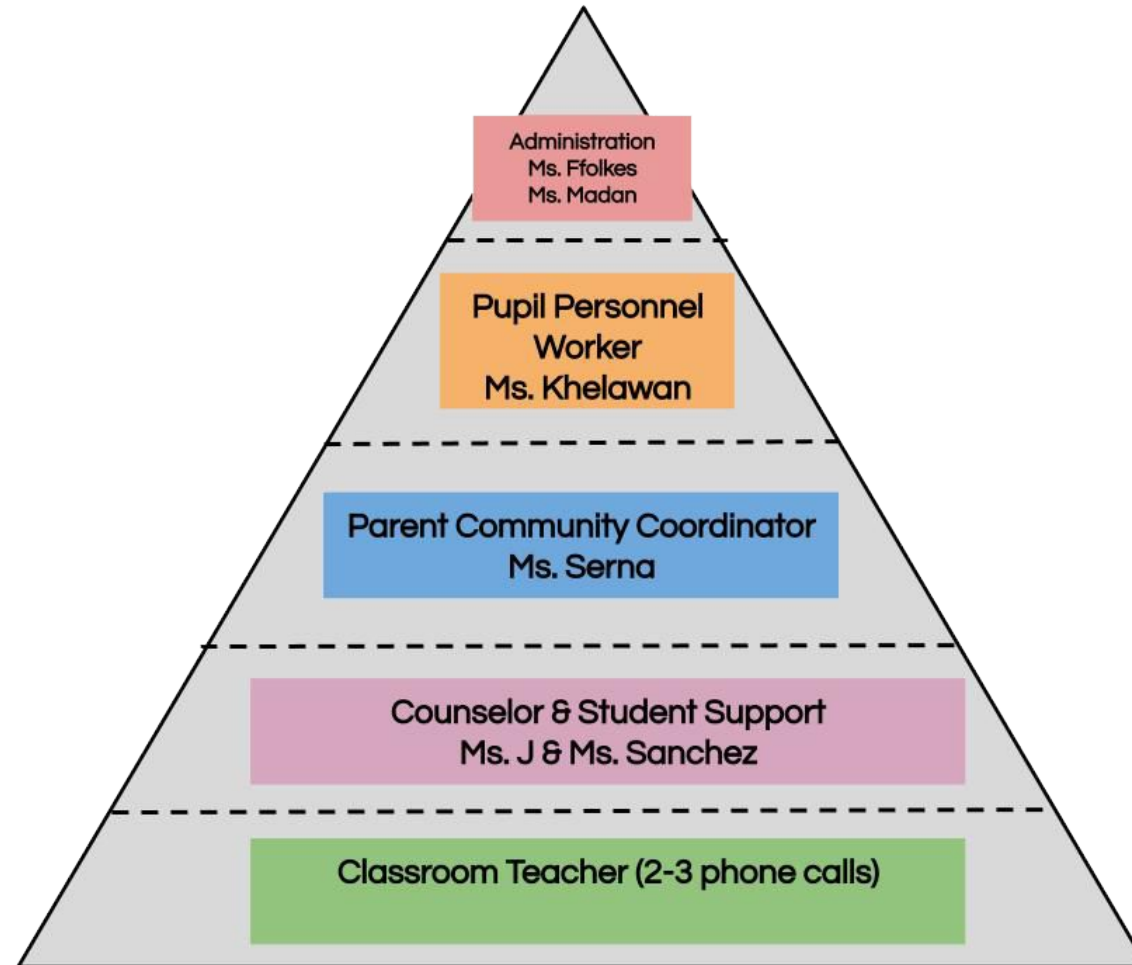
Time Period	Total Non-Logins	Asian		African American		Hispanic		White		More than One Race		IEP (Y)		LEP (Y)		FARMS (Y)	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
8/31 - 9/4	4,349 (3%)	325	7.5%	968	22.3%	2065	47.5%	834	19.2%	143	3.3%	611	14%	1339	30.8%	2011	46.2%
9/7 - 9/11	2,196 (1%)	125	5.7%	402	18.3%	1164	53%	307	14%	186	8.5%	427	19.4%	616	28.1%	845	38.5%
9/14 - 9/18	2,149 (1%)	117	5.4%	415	19.3%	1131	52.6%	296	13.8%	181	8.4%	437	20.3%	582	27%	792	36.9%
9/21 - 9/25	1,858 (1%)	98	5.27%	373	20.08%	987	53.12%	244	13.13%	148	7.97%	373	20.08%	509	27.40%	802	43.16%

Engagement: Follow-up

Summary Data on Home Visits

Level	# of schools reporting	# of virtual home visits	# in-person home visits	Demographics
Elementary School	132 (10 of 132 reported no in-person or home visits)	4,481	1,493	131 ES school in-person or home visits focused on ESOL, Special Education students
Middle School	28 (8 out of 28 reported no in-person or home visits)	503	182	16 MS school in-person or home visits focused on ESOL/Special Education/FARMS students
High School	19 (3 out of 19 report no in-person or home visits)	591	267	8 HS school in-person or home visits focused on ESOL, Hispanic, FARMS students, current and 5th year seniors.
Special Schools	5	237	95	Special education
Totals	184	5,812	2,037	ESOL, Special education, FARMS

Student Support & Wellness



CARES Act

Partnering with the Community

- Educational Equity Hub
- Department of Recreation
- MCCPTA
- Faith-Based Groups

Current Use of MCPS Facilities

- Child Care
- Teacher Access
- SAT
- Distribution of Materials

Context for a Return to In-Person Instruction

- Metrics
- Safety Protocols
- Considerations Small Groups

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Council Education and Culture Committee

FROM: Jack Smith, Superintendent of Schools, Montgomery County Public Schools

SUBJECT: Recovery/Reopening Update: Montgomery County Public Schools

Summary

On August 31, 2020, more than 160,000 prekindergarten through Grade 12 students began the school year virtually. While this is not the experience Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) wanted for students, it is an essential part of our countywide effort to limit the community spread of COVID-19. Though the first month has not been without challenges, we have determined that virtual-only instruction can provide a solid foundation that meets the needs of many, but not all students. Virtual learning cannot replace the in-person learning experience, however, our current plan helps us bridge the gap until conditions allow us to safely return to in-person learning. The following information outlines the MCPS strategies for virtual instruction; provides key metrics on the return to school buildings; highlights initiatives and partnerships to support students; and frames next steps for our district.

The MCPS Fall Recovery Plan

On August 25, the Montgomery County Board of Education approved the Fall 2020 Recovery of Education Plan, which outlined the 13 key recovery components required for approval by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). The plan, which is available on the [MCPS website](#), was developed with our principles of excellence and equity at the forefront to ensure that our students have rigorous and robust virtual learning experiences that are flexible to the needs of our families. This includes:

- Primarily synchronous/live learning strategies
- Recording of live lessons to provide flexibility
- Digital devices for every student and educator, including new touchscreen devices for elementary students
- Wireless internet hotspots for students and staff with inconsistent access to reliable high-speed internet
- Significant professional development opportunities for staff
- Robust training for students and families on technology in multiple languages
- Increased resources and support for student and staff wellness
- Engagement strategies to ensure that students are maximally participating in virtual learning

To improve the experience for students, staff and families, adjustments continue to be made based on data and community input, while still adhering to the requirements outlined by MSDE.

The recovery plan, which was approved by MSDE on September 22, 2020, also includes a framework for an eventual return to in-person, in-building instruction, when health and safety conditions permit. This includes:

- Use and distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Transportation strategies
- Classroom design to allow for physical distancing
- Cleaning procedures
- Contact tracing if a case of COVID-19 is identified in a school

This framework will continue to be reviewed and revised in collaboration with staff, student and community stakeholders to ensure it best meets the needs of our community.

Opening of School Data

Enrollment

In accordance with MSDE requirements, MCPS submitted an enrollment report reflecting the data as of September 30, 2020, for final review and verification. These numbers are unofficial and may change when the state completes its process.

As of September 30, 2020, MCPS has 157,895 K-12 students enrolled for School Year (SY) 2020-2021. This is a 1.9% decrease compared to the same time during the 2019-2020 school year. In addition, 3,688 students are enrolled in Prekindergarten/Head Start. The student demographics are consistent with previous years, with 14.2% of students identifying as Asian, 21.7% identifying as Black or African American, 32.9% identifying as Hispanic/Latino; 25.8% identifying as White; 5.2% identifying as two or more races; and less than 1% of students identifying as Pacific Islander or American Indian. (see appendix for enrollment data chart)

As in previous years, we are closely monitoring enrollment and withdrawal patterns. With the need to begin the school year in a virtual learning setting, we find it even more essential to monitor withdrawal patterns that may provide context for our enrollment numbers. Data show a significant year-over-year increase of students who have transferred to a Maryland nonpublic school outside of Montgomery County (148 students last year compared to 1,018 this year) or who are now homeschooling (74 last year compared to 1,080 this year). Of particular note is the decrease in kindergarten enrollment (down 9.0% compared to the previous school year). While data is not currently available regarding the cause, [news reporting](#) indicates this is a trend across the country that may reflect parent concerns about starting their child's learning experience in a virtual model. (see appendix for withdrawal data chart)

International Student Admissions

There is also a slowdown of international student admissions. The number of intakes (students being processed) has remained fairly steady from SY 2015-2016 through SY 2019-2020, averaging 4,004 intakes in those years. Since the pandemic, the International Admissions and Enrollment office has seen a sharp decline in the number of intakes. In July–August, for each year from SY 2015-2016 through SY 2019-2020, an average of 1,431 intakes were performed. The number has decreased to 284 and the trend appears to continue through September. (See appendix for data charts.)

Attendance

All students are expected to attend school on a daily basis. MSDE has issued an expectation to school districts for daily attendance to be recorded. In order to meet this requirement, MCPS adjusted attendance recording procedures to address taking attendance in a virtual learning model. Our virtual learning environment is designed for flexibility because we know there are circumstances that may prevent students from attending live instruction. For students who are unable to attend live instruction, there are three ways they still can be counted as "present" for attending the class.

These are:

- Student watches a recorded lesson on myMCPS Classroom during self-paced/independent learning time
- Student engages in an online discussion thread on myMCPS Classroom during a live or self-paced/independent learning class
- Student completes other follow-up work designed by the teacher

To ensure students are not penalized for not being able to attend live instruction, teachers are providing work in a variety of ways using the myMCPS platform, while also giving ample time to engage and complete the learning.

We have created a simple way for students/parents to attest that they have interacted with the recorded video, online discussion thread or attendance check-in. All school websites have an interactive link (found in the school information box on the top left) where a parent can complete a form attesting that the follow-up was completed. Once the form is submitted, it is automatically transmitted to schools so that absences can be reconciled. It is important to note that there is flexibility within the timeframe for attesting to completion of the follow-up from missing live instruction. Recordings will remain active for 72 hours. If there are circumstances that prevent the student from meeting this timeframe, we encourage the family to contact the teacher directly.

Attendance Data:

Based on the first four weeks of school, attendance data fluctuated from a high of 4,873 students absent on August 31, 2020 (97% attendance) to a low of 1,946 students absent on September 4, 2020 (99% attendance). On September 11, there were 3,650 students absent across the school

system (98% attendance). On September 18, there were 3,508 students absent (98% attendance). We are examining the reasons for this fluctuation. However, we believe that it could be due to schools verifying student enrollment, and/or processing entries and withdrawals during the first month of school. Additionally, since students have 72 hours to reconcile their live instruction absences, these reconciliations might not be reflected in the data that has been collected at that time. We predict that the number of students who are recorded absent will decrease as students complete tasks to reconcile missing live instruction.

There is evidence that the system of reconciling missed live instruction is successful. As of September 5, a virtual absence reconciliation form was completed by 1,643 students to reconcile missed live instruction. From September 4 through September 11, the form was completed by 1,512 students. The number of students using the reconciliation form continued over the next two weeks (3,425 and 2,467 respectively). From this data, it is evident that many families and students are taking advantage of this flexibility to attend live instruction at a more convenient time.

We will continue to monitor attendance to observe and examine trends in absenteeism, as well as engagement. Each school monitors attendance and has created a system to address student absences and engagement. A systemwide data collection tool has been created to help schools organize and pinpoint support to students who may be absent or disengaged. In addition, each school has developed well-being teams that are deployed to help support students. The specifics of those teams are discussed below.

Engagement

In order to monitor student engagement in the Continuity of Learning program, MCPS designed and is implementing a comprehensive student engagement monitoring program that includes multiple data sources and mobilizes staff and resources across the district to meet individual student and family needs. The MCPS student engagement plan consists of three components: technology distribution, digital footprint data and a tiered system of support led by Student Well-Being Teams.

Technology Distribution

The first component focuses on ensuring students have the technology needed to participate in online classes. MCPS has employed a 1:1 model for students to devices, ensuring any student that needs or wants a device has access to one to fully participate in the instructional program. Since Continuity of Learning began in March, we have tracked the distribution of technology, including Chromebooks and mobile internet hotspot devices. In August, all elementary students were eligible to receive a new touchscreen Chromebook for use during this school year. Additionally, secondary students were able to return devices for an updated model to use this fall. Mobile internet hotspots continue to be available for families in need through a central distribution model. To date, MCPS

has provided more than 133,000 Chromebooks and more than 8,000 mobile internet hotspots to students.

Spring 2020	Summer 2020	Fall 2020
70,123 Chromebooks Distributed	127,981 (+57,858) Chromebooks Distributed	133,554 (+5,573) Chromebooks Distributed

Digital Footprints

The second component of engagement is monitoring the digital footprint of students. MCPS is monitoring students’ ability to connect to our core teaching and learning platforms, which include myMCPS Classroom (Canvas LMS) and Zoom to determine the number of students who have made at least one successful login to these systems each week. After the first week of school, approximately 97% of MCPS students (156,829 of 161,178) were reported as having logged into either myMCPS Classroom (Canvas) or Zoom or both; only 3% (4,349 students) were reported as not having logged into either platform. As of September 25, the numbers had improved to 99% of students having logged in, with only 1,858 students having not logged in yet. Student access data is shared with school support teams weekly to inform next steps and drive their outreach in order to assess and eliminate student barriers to accessing classes. Through this outreach and due diligence, MCPS was able to reduce the number of students who were not able to join or participate in virtual learning by two-thirds; this is a significant feat and speaks to the commitment of our schools and staff to ensure students are able to participate in teaching and learning. This chart details the number of students that have not yet logged in as of September 25, with the demographic breakdown:

Time Period	Total Non-Logins	Asian		African American		Hispanic		White		More than One Race		IEP (Y)		LEP (Y)		FARMS (Y)	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%

8/31-9/4	4,349 (3%)	325	7.5%	968	22.3%	2065	47.5%	834	19.2%	143	3.3%	611	14%	1339	30.8%	2011	46.2%
9/7-9/11	2,196 (1%)	125	5.7%	402	18.3%	1164	53%	307	14%	186	8.5%	427	19.4%	616	28.1%	845	38.5%
9/14-9/18	2,149 (1%)	117	5.4%	415	19.3%	1131	52.6%	296	13.8%	181	8.4%	437	20.3%	582	27%	792	36.9%
9/21-9/25	1,858 (1%)	98	5.27%	373	20.08%	987	53.12%	244	13.13%	148	7.97%	373	20.08%	509	27.40%	802	43.16%

Standardized Assessments

A key part of the instructional program is having students engage in remote, online assessments to gather information and inform instructional decisions for students. The Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) has been a core component of the MCPS assessment program and Evidence of Learning structure. MAP is being administered this fall to continue measuring progress on learning outcomes. The Maryland Ready to Read Act, passed by the Maryland General Assembly in 2018, requires all Kindergarten and Grade 1 students to take a screener to measure early literacy skills. MAP-RF (Reading Fluency) is the screener that MCPS uses for this purpose.

While the testing window is still open, we are able to measure engagement in the assessments to monitor participation and completion. As of September 16, 12% of elementary students have participated in MAP testing. These students spent an average of 48 minutes completing the assessment. At the middle school level, 15% of students have participated in at least one MAP assessment; and the average amount of time it has taken them to complete it is 75 minutes. For high school, where MAP testing is relatively new this year, five high schools have implemented MAP testing with students spending an average of 65 minutes completing an assessment. The testing window was originally set for September 8–October 9 (23 instructional days) for MAP growth in Grades 2–12. Due to technical difficulties with the vendor, this window has been extended to October 14. As of September 18, the vendor has reported that technical challenges have been resolved and testing should continue without system outages or delays. Schools have developed implementation plans that use an array of schedules to avoid interrupting core

instructional time, such as conducting them on Wednesdays, or meeting in groups outside of reading or math blocks.

One particular area of struggle has been with administering the K-2 reading assessment, MAP-RF. The login process for this assessment has proved to be challenging for our young learners. Schools have collaborated to identify best practices for helping students login and complete the assessments. We continue to troubleshoot and work to improve this experience.

Tiered System of Support

The third component of the MCPS engagement strategy includes implementing a tiered system of support through school-based Student Well-Being Teams (SWT). To support the active engagement of all students, MCPS has created guidelines to ensure that each school establishes and maintains a student well-being team focusing on the engagement levels of students and families in the school. Student Well-Being Teams will use a [tiered approach of interventions to address students who are not engaged in learning](#).

The SWT is a collaborative, comprehensive team to support students in reducing barriers to learning. With schools moving to distance learning and families under stay-at-home orders, social-emotional competence and the need to identify and support mental health challenges is more important than ever. The SWT is responsible for reaching out to the family to follow up on the concern and providing ongoing support and resources from central office. Central services staff members may provide additional assistance or work with county partner agencies to ensure that the student’s and family’s needs are met.

Below is preliminary data from home visits that have occurred across elementary, middle and high school levels (as of September 16, 2020). We will continue to refine our processes to ensure that engagement is monitored at both the school level and central office level.

Summary Data on Home Visits as of September 16, 2020

Level	# of schools reporting	# of virtual home visits	# in-person home visits	Demographics
Elementary School	132 (10 of 132 reported no in-person or home visits)	4,481	1,493	131 ES school in-person or home visits focused on ESOL, Special Education students

Middle School	28 (8 out of 28 reported no in-person or home visits)	503	182	16 MS school in-person or home visits focused on ESOL/Special Education/FARMS students
High School	19 (3 out of 19 report no in-person or home visits)	591	267	8 HS school in-person or home visits focused on ESOL, Hispanic, FARMS students, current and 5th year seniors.
Special Schools	5	237	95	Special education
Totals	184*	5,812	2,037	ESOL, Special education, FARMS

Note: *Data being gathered from remaining schools

Supporting Teaching and Learning and Activities

Staff Professional Development

New districtwide systems and processes have been implemented for SY 2020-2021. Professional development is being delivered to assist school-based staff, including attendance secretaries, school counselors and high school registrars adapt to two simultaneous challenges—COVID-19 and remote learning/working. During the week of September 14, seven professional development sessions were conducted via webinar for school-based staff to communicate and troubleshoot enrollment, attendance and withdrawal activities. Continued support will be delivered through the official September 30 enrollment reporting period.

Psychoeducational Lessons

As part of our overall effort to support students' mental health and wellness, all schools are implementing a student psychoeducational lesson during a Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) schedule block. The psychoeducational lessons provide direct crisis intervention support to students. They provide students with crisis facts about the dual pandemic (COVID-19 and systemic racism) in our nation. They will also provide information on common crisis feelings/reactions, stress management strategies and where to find help. Teachers will implement these lessons with coaching from counselors, psychologists and other school-based mental health staff. Families who have concerns about their child's ability to participate in the student psychoeducational lessons due to a mental health concern or a prior traumatic event should contact the school administration

to request an alternative way of meeting the lesson objectives. The student will also be referred to the school's Well-Being Team for additional support.

Social-Emotional Learning Lessons

Throughout the school year, staff will provide Social-Emotional Learning lessons to help all students effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions; set and achieve positive goals; feel and show empathy for others; establish and maintain positive relationships; and make responsible decisions.

Parent Portal

As part of a larger system implementation, MCPS launched ParentVUE, a new parent portal that provides access to student schedules, grades and attendance data. Parents can enroll new students, apply for special programs, register for athletics and update emergency information. As of September 16, 80,214 students had at least one parent with an activated parent portal account. While the adoption of the parent portal has grown exponentially in the first month that it launched, the district recognizes that there is much work still to be done to eliminate disparities and ensure all parents are connected to the portal.

Parent Webinars and Help Desk

To help connect with parents and students for the start of school, MCPS launched a parent webinar series. This was an extension of the Parent Academy. Topics include understanding and using technology; logging in and navigating myMCPS Classroom; joining and participating in a Zoom meeting; and activating a ParentVUE portal account to access student data. More than 23,223 parents participated in live sessions and more than 10,000 have watched the recordings on the Parent Academy website. Webinars were offered in multiple languages, are archived and incorporate closed captions for playback. The parent webinar series will continue through the fall and will include topics related to the curriculum and social emotional well-being.

Food Services

As of September 25, the Division of Food and Nutrition Services (DFNS) has provided 424,988 meals since the start of school on August 31. These meals were provided via 74 school sites, plus five bus sites. An additional five bus sites started on September 29. On October 5, three bus sites and another school site will open. Based on approval of USDA waivers, MCPS will offer meals to all youth 18 and younger. MCPS students 18 and older will need to provide a student ID to pick up meals. As daycare programs have opened in school buildings, meal service has been made available.

Beginning on September 18, DFNS began distributing triple meals on Fridays. This includes three breakfasts and three lunches to support the needs of our community. The district is also partnering

with local nonprofit and faith-based organizations, county government agencies and others to provide food and other critical resources to the community. Additionally, families are encouraged to visit Montgomery County's COVID-19 Food Resource page for additional resources.

Transportation

The Department of Transportation (DOT) has joined forces with several groups in community outreach efforts. School bus operators, bus attendants and supervisors have worked alongside DFNS in the distribution of daily meals, along with Manna Food Center and Women Who Care Ministries in the distribution of weekend food bags and fresh produce. DOT also has distributed fresh produce to numerous other Montgomery County community organizations who in turn distribute to their communities, including many MCPS families. DOT employees have also helped distribute technology, curriculum materials and student belongings as schools closed in June. Spanish-speaking staff also fielded Help Desk calls.

Ask OSFSE

The Office of Student and Family Support and Engagement (OSFSE) continues to offer *Ask OSFSE* as a resource for collaborative problem-solving in complex cases. [Ask OSFSE](#) is a way for school-based and central office-based staff members to stay connected with students and families, as part of the MCPS *Be Well 365* initiative. School administrators may submit requests to *Ask OSFSE* if they have concerns regarding food availability, social-emotional well-being, medical needs, academic or behavioral supports, or online learning. OSFSE staff members work with the school's SWT to provide assistance. Since its inception, we have received and responded to 106 *Ask OSFSE* inquiries.

Family Engagement

Since July 1, Parent Community Coordinators (PCCs) have logged approximately 3,500 entries detailing communication, interactions and supports provided to families. Of these entries:

- 81% were based on individual student/family interactions
- 72.7% of students/families supported are Hispanic/Latino
- 20.5% of the students/families served are Black/African-American
- 61.6% of the students served receive ESOL services
- 39.4% of the families received support in English and in Spanish
- 27.4% of the families received support in Spanish only

Athletics and Extracurricular Activities

On September 24, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) released updated guidance that allows local school systems to choose to continue in the current Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) Two-Semester Plan, which was released on

September 11, or restart interscholastic athletics starting on October 7, using a revised calendar that allows for a more traditional delivery of the program.

The new guidance, entitled Interscholastic Athletic Contingency Season Options, allows for school systems to begin the fall season on October 7, and provides new start dates for the winter and spring seasons. This option would reinstate interscholastic athletics in compliance with state and local guidelines and restrictions due to COVID-19. The October 7 option addresses multiple concerns that have been raised by supervisors of athletics, state committees, athletic directors, coaches and medical professionals with the Two-Semester option for implementing in-person seasons in a condensed calendar, which is currently scheduled to begin February 1, 2021. In addition to the shortened seasons, concerns noted in the MPSSAA guidance include:

- Two-week overlap between sport seasons
- Coaches who coach multiple sports would not be able to coach both teams
- Students who drop from teams to start their next sport season
- Overuse injuries of students playing maximum games within shortened back-to-back athletic seasons
- Facility concerns on school campuses, including the availability of fields with fall and winter sports seasons overlapping
- Roster concerns, especially for smaller schools
- Appropriate preseason preparation for a shorter season, such as pitchers in baseball and softball
- Availability of facilities, such as parks and recreation and other private facilities traditionally used during interscholastic athletics (indoor track facilities, tennis courts, swimming pools, golf courses, etc.)
- Providing spring sport athletes with a potential full season after losing all of last year

MCPS also adheres to Montgomery County Guidelines and Operations on athletics. The guidelines for sports are evolving and are posted on the Montgomery County Government website. The current guidelines allow for low- and medium-risk sports to operate, including games and competition. High-risk sports practices that include skills building and drills are allowed; however, scrimmages and games are not permitted at this time.

It should be noted that, in compliance with the previously mentioned county guidelines, other Montgomery County agencies are operating and conducting programming for community members. Montgomery Parks and Montgomery County Department of Recreation are providing opportunities for engagement, as both agencies have opened operations for business. Additionally, the Community Use of Public Facilities (CUPF) is issuing permits to organizations and community users, including MCPS outdoor fields, for activities and programming in compliance with the Montgomery County COVID-19 guidelines for youth and adult sports.

CARES Act Tutoring Grants

One of the opportunities MCPS is providing to support students is targeted online tutoring for students at the highest risk of learning loss as a result of the closure of school buildings. Diagnostic data and other information will be used to determine the appropriate interventions for selected students in reading and math. This includes special education virtual tutoring opportunities two to three days per week. To implement this tutoring strategy, MCPS is leveraging its experienced teaching staff to extend learning opportunities to students before and after the school day. This critical work is funded through a Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act grant. The \$13 million grant requires the implementation of evidenced-based strategies and programs to close identified learning gaps; these funds must be used by the end of 2020. Approximately \$9 million already has been used to support extended and enhanced summer programming. MCPS plans to continue this effort with local operating dollars to extend tutoring programs through the end of the 2020-2021 school year.

Community Partnerships

We know the work to support our students during this difficult time cannot be done in isolation. Our community has always been a supportive partner in MCPS' efforts. We are working closely with a diverse set of community stakeholders on behalf of our students. These efforts include, but are not limited to:

- Supporting the joint effort of the Children's Opportunity Fund and the Black and Brown Coalition to open educational equity hubs, the first of which is located at Stedwick Elementary School in Gaithersburg. MCPS is assisting with this initiative through the identification of families to support their efforts.
- Partnering with the Department of Health and Human Services to provide immunization centers to support students who need to meet state requirements
- Promoting Montgomery County Department of Recreation youth opportunities and supporting the opening of Excel Beyond the Bell to support the physical, social and psychological well-being of students
- Planning with the Collaboration Council for Children, Youth, and Families. MCPS and the Montgomery County Collaboration Council have engaged in planning and discussions to increase youth supports in a community-based and comprehensive manner.

MCPS is also collaborating with the Montgomery County Council of Parent Teacher Associations, Inc.; Montgomery College; Identity, Inc.; the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Manna Food Center; Women Who Care Ministries; XMinds; the faith community, and many others. We are appreciative of their efforts to help engage and support our students, families and staff during this health crisis.

Building Use

While school buildings have been closed for direct student teaching and learning, they are being used for limited purposes to support students. Since mid-August, schools have distributed thousands of digital devices, textbooks, workbooks, art and music supplies, and more to students during virtual learning. Buildings have also been made available to teachers/instructional staff who prefer to teach from their classrooms, in accordance with health and safety protocols. Approximately 2,200 educators have signed up to work from school buildings.

SAT/ACT

Using paid volunteers, MCPS and the College Board administered the SAT to registered students on September 26 and October 3 at select MCPS test centers. Test centers included: Walter Johnson, Whitman, Gaithersburg, Watkins Mill, Einstein, Blair, Northwest, Quince Orchard, Clarksburg, Seneca Valley (at Clemente or Clarksburg), Damascus, Rockville and Paint Branch high schools. MCPS is exploring an opportunity to provide an SAT school day for seniors who missed testing opportunities in the spring as a result of the COVID-19 closures.

Important Note on ACT: Although large national ACT administrations in MCPS buildings are not being offered in September or October at this time, MCPS is currently planning to administer the ACT for students with already approved accommodations. This small group testing will take place during the approved October special testing window.

Child Care

As part of our commitment to support our community's interest in childcare, a limited number of MCPS facilities are being made available to school-aged child care providers through existing agreements with our county government's Community Use of Public Facilities (CUFP) agency. In adherence to State regulations, these private childcare providers are required to have a current license to provide childcare in the building. Providers can serve 13 or fewer children in a room and were given initial access to four or fewer classrooms in a facility. The total seats available to private childcare providers represent less than 2% of the MCPS student body. No in-person instruction is being provided by MCPS staff in these childcare centers. Students in these centers continue to receive instruction virtually. MCPS does not receive any direct revenue from the providers, only minimal reimbursements through CUFP for utilities and other impacts on the facility.

Educational Equity Hubs

MCPS is supporting the joint effort of the Children's Opportunity Fund and the Black and Brown Coalition to open educational equity hubs, the first of which is located at Stedwick Elementary School in Gaithersburg. MCPS is assisting with this initiative through the identification of families to participate in the hubs.

Planning for a Phased-In Return to In-Person, In-Building Instruction

There is no question that virtual learning has been difficult for students and staff. However, it is also important to acknowledge that virtual learning is an essential part of the statewide effort to limit the spread of COVID-19 and keep our community safe. While not perfect, the virtual-only learning model has provided a solid foundation that meets the needs of many students. This foundation is the product of the dedication and hard work of every staff member in our district. However, we also recognize that virtual learning cannot replace the in-person educational experience for our students. **When health and safety conditions allow**, we will begin a **phased transition** back to in-person instruction to ensure students have the access and opportunity they need, while maintaining student and staff safety.

On August 27, 2020, Governor Hogan and State Superintendent Karen Salmon released metrics for a return to limited in-person learning based on two metrics—a county testing positivity rate below 5% and the number of new cases between 5 and 15 per 100,000 population. It is important to note that health experts had deemed these guidelines too broad, according to news reports. (<https://www.baltimoresun.com/education/bs-md-health-metrics-schools-20200922-jgp5ezr545dbbagskgr7edbuga-story.html>)

The Centers for Disease Control also released metrics for a return to in-person instruction. (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/indicators.html#thresholds>)

On September 25, 2020, MCPS formally provided employee associations the minimum 45-day notice required by our employee association agreements to legally honor and preserve timelines regarding a phased-in return to in-person instruction. To be clear, this does not mean that in-person instruction will begin 45 days after the notice was provided. Instead, it means that we can reopen impact bargaining and do more in-depth collaborative planning for the eventual return to in-person, in-building instruction within health and safety guidelines.

The safety of our students and staff is the top priority for us. MCPS is working with county health officials, and closely following state and local health metrics to guide our timing for a phased-in return to in-person learning.

When students do begin to return for in-person instruction in buildings, robust safety protocols will be in place. These include, but are not limited to:

- PPE for students and staff
- Physical distancing
- Regular hand washing/sanitizing
- Contact tracing

We will continue to work with our employee associations and community to build on the ideas and framework for an eventual return to in-person instruction that are included in our Fall 2020 Recovery plan. There is much more to be considered, examined and decided before in-person learning can begin. We will continue to gather input from stakeholders throughout the process and we welcome your feedback. Updates will be provided on a regular basis as we move forward in our efforts to return safely to in-person learning.

Appendix

Montgomery County Public Schools Enrollment as of September 30, 2020

Grade	Asian		African Am		White		Hispanic		Two or More Races		TOTAL SY 2021
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Grades K-5	9,841	14.2	14,863	21.5	17,239	24.9	23,328	33.7	3,746	5.4	69,257
Grades 6-8	5,336	14.2	8,213	21.9	9,782	26.1	12,225	32.6	1,870	5.0	37,521
Grades 9-12	7,516	14.7	11,036	21.6	14,240	27.9	16,002	31.3	2,220	4.3	51,117
Total K-12	22,693	14.4	34,112	21.6	41,261	26.1	51,555	32.7	7,836	5.0	157,895
Pre-K	305	8.3	927	25.1	362	9.8	1,550	42.0	527	14.3	3,688
Grand Total	22,998	14.2	35,039	21.7	41,623	25.8	53,105	32.9	8,363	5.2	161,583

School Year 2020 vs. 2021 Withdrawals after Jul 01, 2020 Through Sept 30, 2020

SY 2020 Withdrawals after Jul 01, 2019 through Sept 30, 2019 (Grade K-12)	SY 2021 Withdrawals after Jul 01, 2020 through Sept 30, 2020 (Grade K-12)	Withdrawal Code Descriptions
1,622	1,200	Transfer to a Maryland public school outside of Montgomery County.
1,889	1,674	Transfer to a public school in another state.
986	1,189	Transfer to a nonpublic school within Montgomery County.
148	1,018	Transfer to a Maryland nonpublic school outside of Montgomery County.
252	346	Transfer to a United States nonpublic school or institution in another state.
966	770	Transfer to a school (public or nonpublic) of a foreign country.
28	11	Transfer to a state institution in Maryland with an educational program.
74	1,080	Home schooling.
0	2	Illness.
17	9	Academic. Student, 18 years or older, who drops out due to lack of academic success.
117	65	Lack of Interest. Student, 18 years or older, who drops out of school due to a lack of interest.

	21	13	Employment. Student, 18 years or older.
	1	3	Military Service. Student, 18 years or older, certified by documentation.
	0	2	Court Action
	1	1	Economic Reasons. Student, 18 years or older, lack of financial resources
	0	0	Disciplinary reasons of a student under 18 years of age.
	12	46	Immaturity. Immaturity under age five.
	7	13	Special Cases. Other reasons with superintendent's approval, under 18 years of age.
	7	6	Death.
	0	1	Parenting. 18 years and older, who leaves due to child care.
	288	269	Whereabouts Unknown.
	142	85	Graduating September-June with Maryland High School Diploma.
	9	13	Graduating September-June with Maryland High School Diploma and Certificate of Merit.
	1	0	Special Education High School Certificate program Completion.
	2	0	Pregnancy.
	31	25	"Age Out"—The student has exceeded 21 years old prior to the first day of school.
Total	6,621	7,841	

**MCPS Student Intakes by the International Student Admissions Office by Month
FY 2016 through FY 2021**

Month	N Student Intakes	N Student Intakes	N Student Intakes	N Student Intakes	N Student Intakes	N Student Intakes
	SY 2016	SY 2017	SY 2018	SY 2019	SY 2020	SY 2021
July	381	327	366	271	515	56
August	1118	1385	869	748	1174	228
September	474	673	362	748	1104	131 (as of 09/16/2020)
October	347	330	213	430	N/A*	
November	233	299	127	250	N/A*	
December	266	282	155	210	N/A*	
January	310	459	242	359	N/A*	
February	384	426	186	352	N/A*	
March	327	381	195	355	N/A*	
April	442	244	198	293	N/A*	
TOTAL	4,282	4,806	2,913	4,016	N/A*	
* Data is not available.						



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

Dr. Jack Smith,
Superintendent
Montgomery County Public Schools
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, Maryland 20850

September 14, 2020

Dear Dr. Smith,

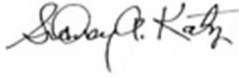
We commend you and your team for the incredible work to implement a robust virtual learning experience for our students. We know it required many hours of research, debate, creativity, and innovation. As you have noted however, the current pandemic exposes as well as exacerbates the inequities for many students in our county. Layering the abrupt change in learning this past spring, the summer slide, and now the “COVID” slide in the loss of reading and math skills, it is imperative we stand up effective support systems for our highest need students.

In reviewing steps already taken by MCPS, the Wednesday virtual check-in opportunities for struggling students is an excellent resource if communicated well so that students will take advantage of them. We have also looked to our community organizations for solutions on how to support students in their education, which is more critical considering COVID social distancing restrictions which limit the use of public space available for support services. To date, we are aware of multiple efforts and urge you to coordinate and collaborate with these organizations to ensure we are wisely using the limited resources at our disposal.

- Collaboration Council for Children, Youth, and Families – Proposing to host afterschool hubs at 12 locations (3 each in 4 targeted cluster areas)
- Black and Brown Coalition, Children’s Opportunity Fund, and Bar-T – Partnering to offer a full day “Educational Equity Hub” for a cohort of 52 students in the Montgomery Village area, with the hope to expand to additional locations
- Children’s Opportunity Fund -- Targeting additional private resources to provide early literacy, tutoring and family support services
- DHHS – Proposing subsidized childcare for low-income families that will support online learning during the day
- Montgomery County Department of Recreation – Anticipating an expansion in youth sports and afterschool programs

We also understand that MCPS will be implementing a before and after-school tutoring program. We are interested in how this effort will mesh with efforts by the above organizations. We encourage you to lead the effort to bring all these parties together to identify synergistic opportunities, avoid duplicative supports, and determine how to best use federal funding and existing MCPS resources to enhance community-wide educational support services. We request that Council staff also be included to fully optimize coordination efforts. MCPS’ ability to identify our struggling students as well as your expertise in tying the right support to the need presented is, yet again, a challenge we offer you. As we all face limited resources, our goal is to ensure any recommendations that come before the Council are comprehensive and meet the priorities. We are relying on MCPS to be a leader once again.

Sincerely,



Sidney Katz
Council President

Sincerely,



Craig Rice
Councilmember

cc: Montgomery County Councilmembers
JoAnn Barnes, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services
Adriane Clutter, Montgomery County Recreation
Raymond Crowel, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services
Byron Johns, The Black and Brown Coalition for Educational Equity
Robin Riley, Montgomery County Recreation
Kimberly Rusnak, Children's Opportunity Fund
Diego Uriburu, The Black and Brown Coalition for Educational Equity
Elijah Wheeler, Collaboration Council for Children, Youth, and Families

September 25, 2020

The Honorable Sidney A. Katz, President
The Honorable Craig Rice, Councilmember
Montgomery County Council
Stella B. Werner Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Mr. Katz and Mr. Rice:

Thank you for your letter, dated September 14, 2020, in which you share your message of support for our students and staff as we provide virtual learning in the midst of a worldwide pandemic. We remain committed to ensuring that our students have the access, opportunities, and resources to realize their full potential—regardless of where teaching and learning take place.

One of the opportunities Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) is providing during virtual learning is targeted online tutoring for students at the highest risk of learning loss as a result of the closure of school buildings in spring 2020. Diagnostic data and other information will be utilized to determine the appropriate interventions for selected students in the areas of reading and math. This includes special education virtual tutoring opportunities two to three days per week. To implement this tutoring strategy, MCPS is leveraging its experienced teaching staff to extend learning opportunities to students before and after the school day. This critical work is funded through a *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act* grant. The \$13 million grant requires the implementation of evidenced-based strategies and programs to close identified learning gaps; these funds must be expended by the end of 2020. Approximately \$9 million already has been used to support extended and enhanced summer programming. MCPS intends to continue this effort with local operating dollars to extend tutoring programs through the conclusion of the 2020–2021 school year.

We know that the work to support our students during this difficult time cannot be done in isolation. Like the County Council, our community always has been a supportive partner in MCPS' efforts. We are working closely with a diverse set of community stakeholders on behalf of our students. These efforts include:

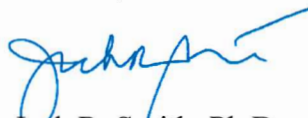
- Supporting the joint effort of the Children's Opportunity Fund and the Black and Brown Coalition to open educational equity hubs, the first of which is located at Stedwick Elementary School in Gaithersburg: MCPS is assisting with this initiative through the identification of families to support their efforts;

- Partnering with the Department of Health and Human Services to provide immunization centers to support students who need to meet state requirements;
- Promoting Montgomery County Department of Recreation youth opportunities and supporting the opening of Excel Beyond the Bell to support the physical, social, and psychological well-being of students; and
- Planning with the Collaboration Council for Children, Youth, and Families; MCPS and the Montgomery County Collaboration Council have engaged in planning and discussions to increase youth supports in a community-based and comprehensive manner.

In addition to the community organizations identified in your letter, we are collaborating with the Montgomery County Council of Parent Teacher Associations, Inc.; Montgomery College; Identity, Inc.; the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Manna Food Center; Women Who Care Ministries; XMinds; the faith community, and many others. We are appreciative of their efforts to help engage and support our students, families, and staff during this health crisis.

We look forward to meeting with the County Council's Education and Culture Committee on October 5, 2020, to share additional information about our virtual learning effort; the opportunities and challenges we face; and considerations for the coming weeks and months. We appreciate your unwavering support for the students and families of Montgomery County Public Schools.

Sincerely,



Jack R. Smith, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

JRS:MBM:sln

Copy to:

Members of the Montgomery County Council
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Ms. Barnes
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Mr. Crowell

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Ms. Webb
Mr. Wheeler



Educational Equity & Enrichment Hubs

Byron Johns, Black and Brown Coalition for Educational Equity and Excellence
Ben Wikner, Cross Community Church
Kimberly Ruskin, Children's Opportunity Fund

5 October 2020

The Problem Statement

- Despite MCPS' tremendous effort to implement a robust virtual learning environment, the persistent racial and educational disparities Montgomery County's Black, Latino and low-income children were subjected to prior to the pandemic, have further been exposed and exacerbated during the pandemic
- Highly impacted students are not able to engage with virtual learning because of barriers beyond their control and need additional support
- These students live in the communities hardest hit by COVID and have experienced heightened trauma and need access to safe, supervised consistent learning environments

County Council has Asked MCPS to coordinate and collaborate with Multiple efforts to ensure wise use of the limited resources

Virtual Instructional Day Support

- Black and Brown Coalition, Children's Opportunity Fund, and Bar-T – Partnering to offer a full day “Educational Equity Hub” for a cohort of 52 students in the Montgomery Village area, with the hope to expand to additional locations
- DHHS – Proposing subsidized childcare for low-income families that will support online learning during the day

Wrap-Around Services and Support

- Children's Opportunity Fund -- Targeting additional private resources to provide early literacy, tutoring and family support services
- Collaboration Council for Children, Youth, and Families – Proposing to host afterschool hubs at 12 locations (3 each in 4 targeted cluster areas)
- Montgomery County Department of Recreation – Anticipating an expansion in youth sports and afterschool programs
- **City of Gaithersburg is trying to stand up "study bubbles" thru National league of Cities initiative

Solution Strategy

- ❑ Develop Educational Equity & Enrichment Hubs (EEEH) providing an affordable option for highly impacted K-5 students and families which includes on-site support during the school day operated by private before- and after-care providers
 - Privately funded pilots for rapid response & proof-of-concept
 - Publicly funded rollout to scale capacity to meet demand

- ❑ Coordination and Collaboration with community advocacy organizations & MCPS Student Well-Being Teams to Identify and engage students & families most in need of support

Educational Equity & Enrichment Hub Comparison to HHS Childcare

Criteria	EEE Hub	HHS School-Age Child Care During Distance Learning
Program Funding	\$.5M Private funds ; \$50/month/child family CoPay; \$ 7.56M for 30 school-based Hubs and/or open additional Cohorts now thru Jan 2021; \$12.09M** thru school year	\$1.8M grants to home & school base childcare providers; up to \$5.6M grants for individual applicant families thru Jan 2021
Program Focus	K-5 th grade; FARMS Eligible; Un-supervised minors; unable to fully participate in Virtual Learning	children ages 5-13; family childcare Homes; foster families
Program Availability	Stedwick ES Open ; Daly & Wheaton Woods opening 10/5; additional sites within days of funding	Following Provider & Parent Grant Approval
Participant Id/Outreach	Community Education Partners & MCPS Collaboration	HHS Community Health Groups
Students Served	Up to 2,340; K-5 th Grade	Up to 1,500; K-8th Grade
Family Financial Qualification	Priority focus on FARMS eligible (180% x FPL)	Up to 400% x FPL
Childcare Service Providers	8 providers capable of rapidly opening/staffing new sites	11 providers currently operating in schools
Provider Funding Model	Funding per approved Cohort	Per student/family approved;
Locations	30 new Highly Impacted schools & Adjacent licensed sites	Additional subsidized seats at 62 schools
Equity Focus	Priority Access to Highly Impacted Students & Families	Low income, Documented Families(43)

Priority Target Students/Families for EEE Hubs

- K-5 students
- Eligible for Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS)
- Students without adult supervision options and/or in need of internet access
- Families willing to commit to attending every day as a part of the Participant Agreement
- Able to provide their own transportation**
- A COVID-19 Test 72 hours or 2 weeks of temp checks before starting a Cohort
- English or Spanish language speakers

Not Capable of Supporting

- Not capable of supporting students with more severe Special Needs
- Limited language support other than those mentioned

** Will Seek transportation options for highly impacted school communities where the school facility cannot host a Hub

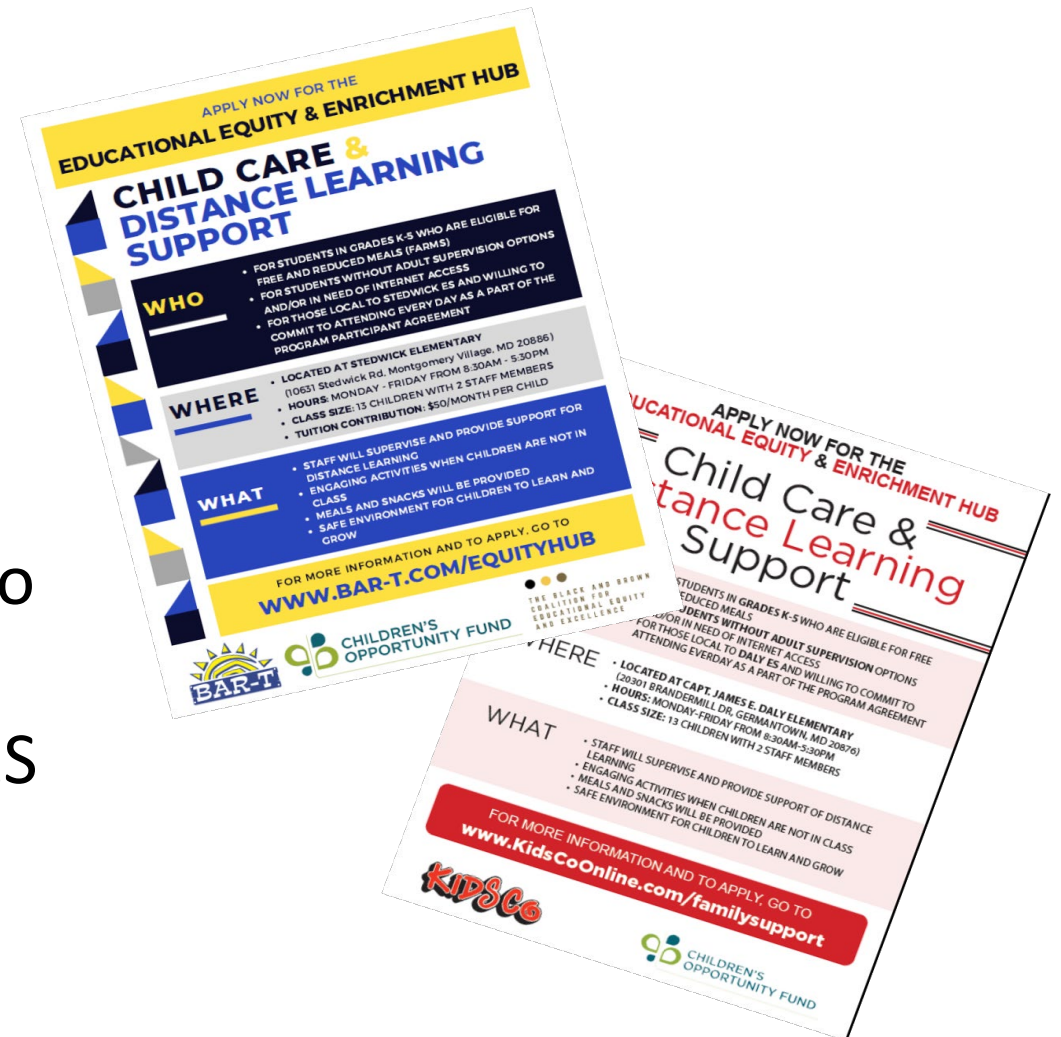
Educational Equity & Enrichment Hub (EEE) Hub Solution Strategy and Approach

Phase 1

Children's Opportunity Fund (COF) is leveraging private funding to:

- *Opened the first pilot EEE Hub at Stedwick ES with Bar-T on 9/14*
- **Work with KidsCo & Kids Adventures to establish additional pilot Hubs at Daly, Wheaton Woods, and Brown Station ES**

MCPS delivering meals from nearest food distribution locations



Stedwick ES EEE Hub Experience

STEDWICK EEE HUB was Approved for access 9/10, Opened 1st Cohort 9/14!

- **DEMOGRAPHICS** (n=63)
- **Average Income:** \$29,829/Year
- **Student Gender:** 57% Male, 43% Female
- **Grade Levels:** K-2nd 57% , 3rd – 6th 43%
- **Student Race/Ethnicity:** 51% Hispanic or Latino, 32% Black or African American, 11% Multiracial, 3% White, 1% Asian, 1% American Indian or Alaskan Native
- **Language Spoken at Home:** 51% English, 49% Spanish
- **Parent/Caregiver Employment:** 86% applicants are working outside the home
- **Distance Learning Supervision at Home:** 73% applicants indicated that their child is unsupervised, or alone at home, during Distance Learning.
- **How did they find us?** 62% families heard about EEEH through a contact at the school (Principal, Teacher, PPC, PPW, Linkages to Learning, etc.); 38% families heard about EEEH through community contacts



Stedwick ES EEE Hub Experience-2

STEDWICK Testimonials

- *“4 of our students had not participated in virtual learning classes before attending the Stedwick Educational Equity Hub” – Staff*
- *“My two foster sons recently came into my care amidst the COVID pandemic. My older foster son had never been enrolled in school and certainly didn't have the skills to participate in distance learning while I worked from home full time. The ability to be able to access the Equity Hub at an extremely affordable cost was a lifesaver. The cost also increases the likelihood that he will be able to continue to use this service and have continuity when he transitions back home. This service is an invaluable one to the community.” --Foster Parent*
- *“I need to work, so both my children were staying with my disabled elderly parents and I was concerned about their safety and well being. Attending the Equity Hub allows my son to attend classes and receive the support he needs to learn” --Parent*
- *“I work and don't have internet at home, so <Name> didn't do online school before she started at Bar-T. She is now able to go to the distance learning hub at Stedwick and attend classes”--Parent*
- *“I work every day and don't understand what she needs to do on the computer. Going to Stedwick is the way she is able to go to class online with her teachers” --Parent*
- *“Our student's parent is a single mom who works long hours outside her home, and she is unable to supervise and support her Kindergarten daughter during distance learning. The parent has 5 or 6 kids and <child> stays under one of her older's sibling's supervision, who is unable to support <child> because he has to be attending MCPS distance learning at the same time. This situation has made <child> miss school several times, which may prevent <child> from having successful distance learning” --PCC*



Educational Equity & Enrichment Hub (EEEH) Solution Strategy and Approach

Phase 2

- While MCPS works on re-opening schools to serve SPED and other high priority groups of students, allocate public funds to expand EEE hubs/cohorts for highly impacted and vulnerable students who need on-site support to benefit from virtual learning
- Provide additional public funds through Children's Opportunity Fund (COF) to work with service partners to expand EEEH sites across the County to serve ~ 1,500 – 2,400 of MCPS' most impacted students and families.
- Community Education partners and MCPS' Principals, Teachers, Counselors, PCCs, PPWs, collaborate on identification and outreach to target student/families for EEEH support

Phase 2 Sites Identified by Children's Opportunity Fund (COF) with the potential service providers

1. JoAnn Leleck/Broad Acres (no provider ID) – one of 8 Kirwan Community Schools
2. Harmony Hills (Alpha BEST) – one of 8 Kirwan Community Schools
3. Highland (no provider ID) – one of 8 Kirwan Community Schools
4. Sargent Shriver (AlphaBEST) – one of 8 Kirwan Community Schools
5. New Hampshire Estates/Oak View (no provider ID) – one of 8 Kirwan Community Schools
6. Burnt Mills (Horizon Child Care) – White Oak
7. Arcola (Montgomery County Childcare Association)
8. Rock Creek Forest – Silver Spring (Bar-T)
9. Greencastle (Kids After Hours)
10. Brown Station (Kids Co)
11. Rolling Terrace (Horizon Child Care)
12. Strathmore (Cosmic Kids)
13. Kemp Mill (YMCA)
13. South Lake (no provider ID)
14. Gaithersburg (no provider ID)
15. Summit Hall (no provider ID)
16. Whetstone (Bar-T)
17. Clopper Mill (Bar-T) [34 parents have pre-registered]
18. Watkins Mill (Bar-T)

Where no provider has been identified in the school, a plan to utilize nearby locations and/or support for transportation would be developed

Additional Phase 2 sites Bar-T indicates are Available to Open as *exclusively* EEEH locations:

Germantown Area:

- Clopper Mill ES
- Christa McAuliffe ES
- Germantown ES
- Matsunaga ES
- Sally K Ride

Gaithersburg/N Potomac:

- Diamond ES
- Fields Road ES
- Darnestown ES
- Travilah ES

Montgomery Village & North

- Mill Creek ES
- Woodfield ES (Damascus)

Rockville/Potomac/Bethesda/N Bethesda

- Burning Tree (Bethesda)
- College Gardens (Rockville)
- Potomac (Bethesda)
- Rock Creek Valley (Rockville)
- Somerset (Bethesda)

Additional **Phase 2** sites Bar-T indicates are Available for *additional* EEEH Cohorts:

"Down South"

- Bannockburn
- Bells Mill
- Kensington Parkwood
- Ritchie Park
- Rock Creek Forest

Germantown:

- Great Seneca Creek
- Ronald McNair

North Potomac:

- Poolesville
- Rachel Carson
- Thurgood Marshall
- Lakewood

Olney/Gaithersburg/Montgomery Village:

- Belmont (Olney)
- Goshen (Gaithersburg/MV)
- Laytonsville

Educational Equity & Enrichment Hub (EEEH) Solution Strategy and Approach

Phase 3

- When MCPS re-opens schools for hybrid (virtual & in-building) learning, students will be out of school building 3 of 5 days of the week and EEE Hubs will need to continue to be available. **County Leadership must begin planning now to authorize alternate spaces for Hubs to continue operating through the school year.**
- EEE Hubs will plan for transition out of school facilities to other public and/or private facilities (libraries, rec centers, churches/synagogues,...) to continue providing support to students during their out-of-school learning days.
- As space and health/safety protocols permit, assess the ability to engage additional support service providers for middle and high school age students

The Budget

Fee for Families is \$50 per month per child

Operating expense is ~\$50K per site per month (4 cohorts, 52 students)***

Public Funds Needed to Open 30 sites = \$1.5 M per month

Phase 2 Funding Requested (30 sites x5mths) \$7.5M

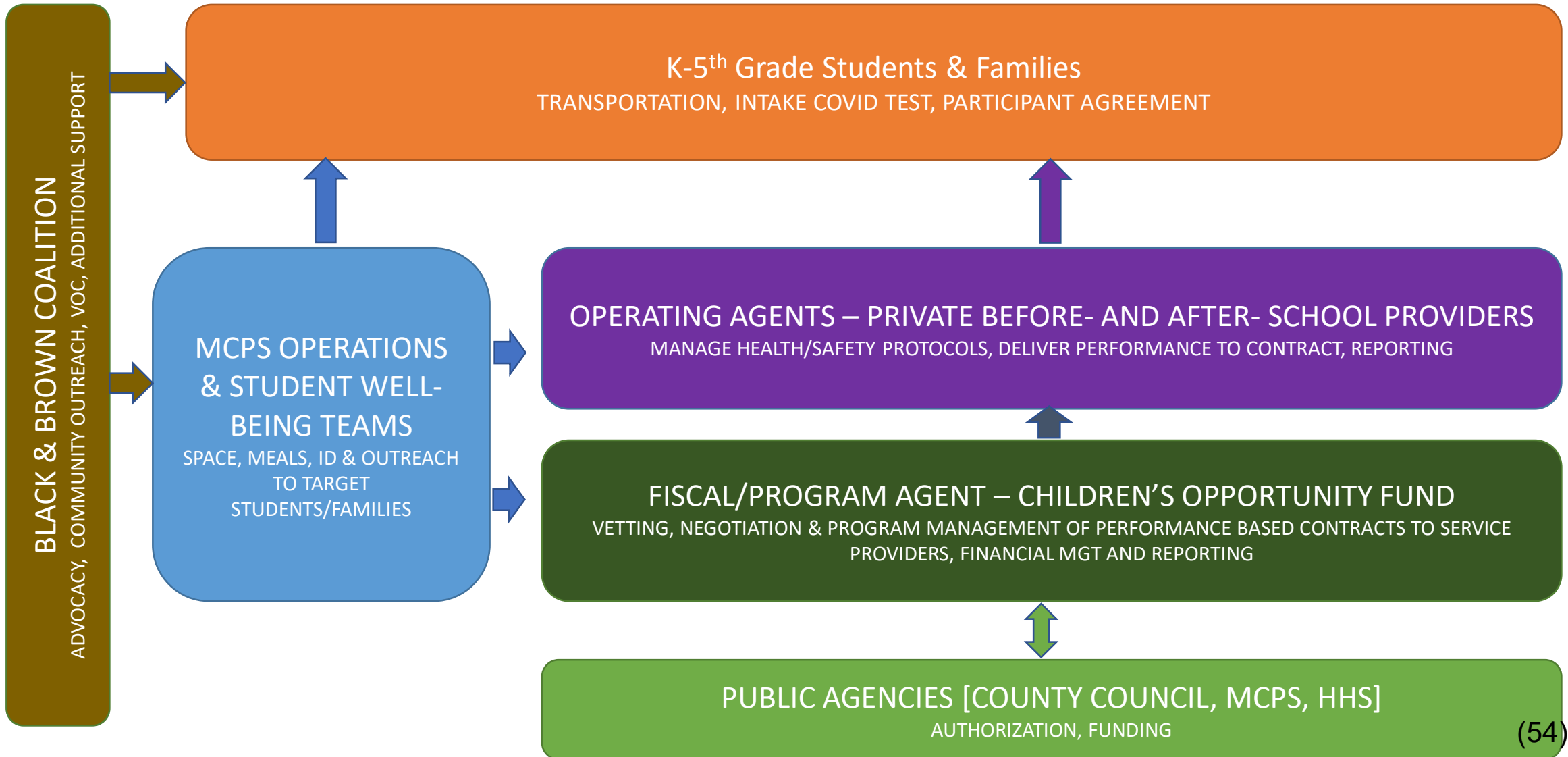
Phase 3 Estimated Cost(30 sites x 3 mths) \$4.5M

Program Manager (\$10K x9 mths) = \$90K

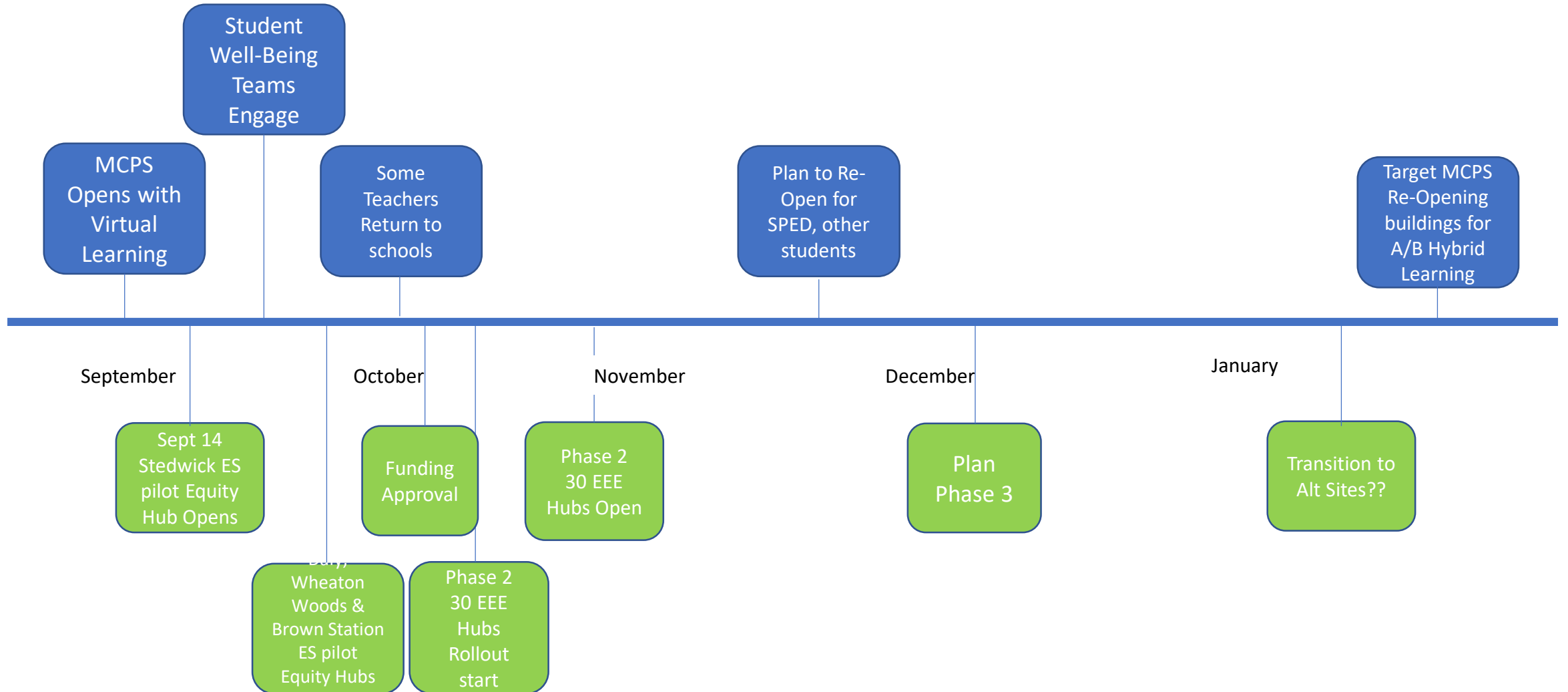
Total Budget = \$12.09M

***Some sites could support 6 cohorts/78 students and operating expense would be ~\$75K per site per month. Spending will be authorized by cohort enrollment and maintained performance

Collaboration Roles and Responsibilities



Educational Equity & Enrichment Hub Proposed Timeline



Summary

- Educational Equity & Enrichment Hub pilots demonstrate successful, safe operation; and anticipated demand will exceed current planned capacity
- As additional EEE Hub Cohort seats are funded, collaboration with Community organizations & MCPS' Student Well-Being Teams can match demand with supply
- Targeted EEE Hub promotion and outreach to each school community needs to begin and regularly be refreshed to gauge and stay in front of demand
- Providers are prepared to begin opening sites within 3-5 days of funding commitment & site access
- **Requesting a commitment to authorize immediate access to school sites and funding COF for additional Educational Equity and Enrichment Hubs**

What's At Stake?

With the Loss of Learning and Educational Opportunities, We Are At Risk of Losing an Entire Generation in Montgomery County, Particularly the Most Vulnerable!

MCPS is more than a month into the 1st semester and every day that passes where our most impacted students are not able to access a safe, supervised, supportive environment to engage with virtual learning, increases the risk of long-term disengagement, scholastic futility, and dropping out!

Time is of the Essence!