



“Unlocking the Potential in ALL Students”

Office of Operations & Communications

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

This message is to help clarify and answer some of the questions we have recently received. I first want to thank everyone for their participation in our recent re-entry survey. Our survey data from two weeks ago was compelling and informative. The rationale for the parent/student mandatory re-entry form is due to over 4,000 parents' participation and 15% of families stating that they were opting to continue their child's remote learning experience. Also, over 20% of our families expressed they do not know if a return to brick-and-mortar is possible (i.e., safety concerns) despite the State's recommendation. This information has put our central office team and schools in a situation because it is difficult to plan accordingly without knowing who will return to brick-and-mortar or continue remote learning. We want to plan for every student so we can provide the highest quality of services.

We have decided to extend the survey deadline for families to **August 3**. Our re-entry plan will be sent to parents and guardians after the state deadline on Wednesday, July 29. We are required to align our plan with the State Department of Education, and it will not be radically different from their recommendations. We appreciate your patience and assistance in effectively planning for full re-entry and distance learning based on the recommendations from Governor Lamont, Commissioner Cardona and our local health department.

Below are some of the main components of our district's plan (that's still in draft form/tentative) as of today:

- Parents will be required to take their child's temperature before leaving home. To date we have distributed over 2,000 thermometers and are trying to secure additional thermometers for those who don't have one. If you are in need of a thermometer, please email operations@mpsct.org
- Students will be required to wear a mask at the bus stop and keep their social distance as they wait for the bus.
- All students will have assigned seats to maintain social distancing standards. The opting-out transportation question on the re-entry form will help us develop the best transportation bus routes.
- Bus drivers will be required to wear a mask.

- Buses will be cleaned between each tier.
- There will be separate parent drop off/pick up times and locations at each school. Parent drop off/pick up times might be different from bus arrival times to manage an increase in traffic. This time difference will provide the safest environment possible.
- All students, teachers, and staff will be required to wear a mask.
- All students, teachers, and staff will have their temperature taken before reporting to their respective classrooms.
- There is a detailed plan, including immediate isolation, that addresses students, teachers, and staff who arrive at school with a temperature or become ill during the school day. Additional guidance and direction will be provided by the city health department when cases of COVID-19 occur within a school population.
- Each student and teacher desk will have an individual desk shield for instruction and use during meal times.
- Breakfast & lunch will take place in the classroom.
- Students will be able to take off their masks during meals (due to desk shields) and when meals are eaten outside.
- Cohorting students will be done when possible. Cohorting is defined in the guidance set by the State as, "Emphasize grouping students by the same class/group of students and teacher, so each team functions independently as much as possible". All specialized instruction will be provided in a manner that maximizes cohorting and minimizes risk of cross-contamination.
 - ❖ Elementary School - students will stay in their room for all instruction (including specials), except for when PE, art, library, and music classes are held outside. All of this is tentative and in the planning stages.
 - ❖ Middle School - Students will stay in a classroom within their team. Core teachers (ELA, math, science, social studies, world language) will rotate into the students' assigned class except in a few cases. Students will only leave the assigned classroom for specials, encore, intervention, and outdoor breaks. All of this is tentative and in the planning stages.
 - ❖ High School - Multiple plans are being explored to provide the safest learning environment for our students. There will also be the possibility of freshmen only days at the start of the school year. More information will be provided to parents in early August. All of this is tentative and in the planning stages.
- PE classes will occur outside (weather permitted). Teachers will be encouraged to have segments of their class outside whenever possible.
- Mask breaks will be provided at least twice a day outside or when space inside allows social distancing. These mask breaks don't include the two meal times when students don't have their mask on. There will be at least four to six occasions when students are not required to wear their masks.
- Cleaning will occur continuously throughout the school day.
- Hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, disinfectant spray, paper towels, extra masks and gloves will be available in all classrooms and critical areas of the schools.
- Materials will not be shared, and any materials that are required to be shared will be cleaned regularly.
- All building systems will operate at maximum filtration levels. Building systems will be inspected and have air filters changed regularly.

- Bean bags and soft furniture will be removed from the classroom.
- Classrooms will be arranged in a way to provide the most distance possible.
- Signage will be installed in each school, and strategies will be implemented to promote proper social distancing and hygiene habits.
- We will have extra masks in cases where a student's mask becomes soiled or dirty.
- Safety and security are of the utmost importance. Outside visitors will not be allowed without an appointment. Virtual meetings with parents will be encouraged when necessary.
- YMCA a.m./p.m. care and after school programs are to be determined. We are currently in discussions with the YMCA on how that will take place—more information to follow.
- There are plans for monitoring, containment, and class/school cancellation. All these decisions will be made in collaboration with our city health department.
- Middletown Public Schools will have three plans prepared for the start of the year:
 1. Full day/in school (remote learning for families that do not feel safe returning)
 2. Hybrid A/B schedule with blended learning if there is a moderate increase in COVID-19 cases in Middletown or Connecticut.
 3. All students return to distance/remote learning if there is an exponential increase in COVID-19 cases in Middletown or Connecticut.
- All plans will address inclusion, equity, and access for all learners.
- Students with disabilities will be included in all re-entry plans and will have access to intervention and recovery learning opportunities afforded to students without disabilities as appropriate. Assessment will be made of each student's individual ability to access these activities. Individualized plans will be developed based on student need, present levels of functioning, developmental levels, student/parent input and with consideration to health and safety.
- MPS acknowledges the importance of providing measures and opportunities that support and develop the social and emotional well-being of all of our students, particularly in times of increased stress, such as a pandemic event. To that end, students will receive support and strategies that address social and emotional growth and well-being.
- Parents/guardians can voluntarily choose to engage in remote learning for a variety of reasons temporarily. However, we understand that there might be situations that arise that might require a change in your decision. We will do our best to handle any changes promptly. We are awaiting guidance from the State in this area.
- Continuous health and guidance will be reviewed. Information provided pertaining to specific schools will be taken into consideration.
- The re-entry form data is needed to finalize students' classroom teachers, team, schedule, and bus route/times. The re-entry form must be completed by **August 3**.

*Desk shield example for students



*Desk shield example for teachers



We hope this answers some of your questions, but understand you may have more unanswered questions. We will continue to communicate any updates and required adjustments to our plan as they happen. Communication will be provided through your updated information in PowerSchool via phone, email, and text messages. If you are not currently receiving any of these messages, please contact your student's school for assistance.

The health and safety of all students is our highest priority. Thank you for your patience and understanding during this time when protocols/recommendations are continuously changing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marco Gaylord". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "M".

Marco Gaylord