

Quote from Dr. Morse, District 10 Health Department: “The benefit of in-person school far outweighs the health risks based upon the current data.” 8/7/20

Quote from The American Academy of Pediatrics: “The AAP strongly advocates that all policy considerations for the coming school year should start with the goal of having students physically present in school.”

Quote from The American Academy of Pediatrics Continued: “Physical distancing sometimes referred to as social distancing, is simply the act of keeping people separated with the goal of limiting spread of contagion between individuals. It is fundamental to lowering the risk of spread of SARS-CoV-2, as the primary mode of transmission is through respiratory droplets by persons in close proximity. There is a conflict between optimal academic and social/emotional learning in schools and strict adherence to current physical distancing guidelines. For example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that schools “space seating/desks at least 6 feet apart when feasible.” In many school settings, 6 feet between students is not feasible without limiting the number of students. Evidence suggests that spacing as close as 3 feet may approach the benefits of 6 feet of space, particularly if students are wearing face coverings and are asymptomatic. Schools should weigh the benefits of strict adherence to a 6-foot spacing rule between students with the potential downside if remote learning is the only alternative. Strict adherence to a specific size of student groups (eg, 10 per classroom, 15 per classroom, etc) should be discouraged in favor of other risk mitigation strategies. Given what is known about transmission dynamics, adults and adult staff within schools should attempt to maintain a distance of 6 feet from other persons as much as possible, particularly around other adult staff. For all of the below settings, physical distancing by and among adults is strongly recommended, and meetings and curriculum planning should take place virtually if possible. In addition, other strategies to increase adult-adult physical distance in time and space should be implemented, such as staggered drop-offs and pickups, and drop-offs and pickups outside when weather allows. Parents should, in general, be discouraged from entering the school building. Physical barriers, such as plexiglass, should be considered in reception areas and employee workspaces where the environment does not accommodate physical distancing, and congregating in shared spaces, such as staff lounge areas, should be discouraged.”

Q: Why isn't our district developing a hybrid model with some days off and on for students? The primary reason that some districts are making this decision rests solely on the purpose of providing a constant degree of 6 feet of distance between students. The distance of 6 feet is not a requirement in the Roadmap plan and was not required by the creators of the document because they knew school districts, by the way of structural design, could not accommodate 6 feet of distancing in classrooms. Interviews with State Roadmap Committee members, and our Local Health Department officials show that their emphasis focuses on mitigation of the spread in our system on mask-wearing, disinfecting, and cohorting. It is without doubt, that human nature, even with a 6-foot social distancing protocol will not be fully compliant 100 percent of the time. Students of all ages will be driven, despite our best adherence to social distancing, to be close to each other. This is human nature. This is exactly why we have focused on mask-wearing, disinfecting, and cohorting. The compliance with mask-wearing allows for the differential of the typical 6-foot distancing protocol. **(See Quote from The American Academy of Pediatrics above)** The only time students in the middle and high schools have masks off, is during the timeframe when they are eating and/or outside. When eating or outside they will be social distancing to a 6 feet standard or greater.

Q: What might be some challenges with a Hybrid Model? I guess when we are speaking about hybrids, we are thinking about a mode that has a combination of in school and out of school instruction. As many parents can attest to from last spring's shut down, connectivity to the internet while at home can be a fairly challenging situation. It may be challenging because of the lack of internet connection, the lack of computer resources, or even the strain on those resources when there is more than one student in the home trying to access the school's lessons. In addition, many parents during this time are working remotely at home during the day using the computer and connectivity for their employment. Schools that have adopted the Hybrid models typically have a school population with full access to the internet via ethernet connections, satellite, or even cell service, which is spotty and inconsistent in many areas of the District.

Additional challenges relate directly to students being home on an inconsistent weekly schedule where parents would have to find daycare while at work when students are home with an expectation for learning. Another factor more recently questioned is the idea that teens, through their mobility, might connect with each other on these “home days”

not following Covid Mitigation practices, thus causing greater risk to community spread. At least in the consistent school setting, students are wearing masks, in a clean, and cohorted environment.

Q: How can the Governor implement an Executive Order that limits personal gatherings inside buildings to 10 people all the while knowing that schools will have hundreds of children gathering to learn? We can only surmise at this point that the restriction of 10 for personal gatherings is her effort to slow the spread of the disease to a level that would make it easier to open schools under the conditions she approved in the Return to School Roadmap plan.

Q: If we cannot assemble with more than 10 people under one roof, how can schools meet with classrooms of more than 10? The governor's roadmap identifies that schools may open under specific cleaning, masking, and spacing protocols, all of which are highly recommended and not required with the exception of mask-wearing and some specific disinfecting processes.

Q: How much are you really going to disinfect on a daily basis? We will have hand sanitizer at all entrances to the building, buses and in all classrooms. Students will be sanitizing their hands when entering these areas. Our custodial crew will be increased during the day for constant, high traffic, touchpoint, cleaning. While students are eating outside of the room, socially distanced, or cohorted, custodians will use backpack sprayers to disinfect classrooms with electrostatic backpack sprayers. In addition, all classrooms will have disinfectant wipes to wipe down desks used prior to new students entering the classroom.

Q: So what constitutes a mask and does my child have to wear one? A mask is a fabric or mesh worn to cover someone's mouth and nose in a way that mitigates the flow of air. It could look different depending on the structure but must be school appropriate. Masks must be worn by students in 6th grade and above throughout the day except when eating or outside. Students in Pre-K through 5th grade, if cohorted, may only have to wear masks when they are not in their own classroom environment. They would have to wear a mask on the way to things, such as lunch, recess, P.E./music, etc.

Q: Will my middle school student get in trouble if he takes his mask off? We will remind your child that it is the rule that he/she has to wear his mask. If the student continues to defy the rule, we will contact the parents. If the student continues to not wear the mask despite this intervention, the student will not be able to attend school and may have to consider a virtual school option.

Q: Will my child have a break once in a while from his/her mask? Yes, they will have the mask off during their eating time at lunch, and teachers are allowed to take students outside for instruction and/or even a mask break time.

Q: What if my child has a medical condition or an IEP where a mask would be a problem? The parents would have to supply a medical release from a doctor to the school. We would also work within the legalities of an IEP. In these cases, we would encourage the use of a shield as an alternative to a mask. We would provide the shield.

Q: Can my daughter do the Panther Virtual and attend Voc, Band, P.E.? Panther Virtual is an entirely online school experience and does not include any in-person classes whether it is Voc, band, P.E., etc. Students wishing to have these classes will have to elect to continue in-person instruction.

Q: Will the school provide a Chromebook as they did before if we move into remote learning from in-person learning? Yes, as we did this spring, we would sign out Chromebooks to families that need additional devices if we had to move as a district into remote learning. In addition, we are trying to identify locations within the district boundaries where we can provide some hotspots on school buses for the purpose of downloading school assignments.

Q: Okay, so what if the school begins with in-person instruction and then goes to remote learning for some reason? The classes the student had been attending will move to a remote instructional platform through the student's current teachers and schedule. So if a student is enrolled in Voc, they would continue with Voc, but through an online experience with their instructor from the center.

Q: Will the kids be able to use their backpacks to carry 3 classes of books with them? Yes, it is our intention to allow this due to the circumstances presented with the pandemic. Students that switch classes in the middle and high school will get their books and materials from their lockers two times a day. Once in the morning when they enter school for their first three hours of classes and then after lunch for the last 3 hours. This keeps kids from hanging out in the halls.

Q: Will the students be eating in the classroom or cafeteria? Elementary breakfast will be served in the classroom as it has in the past. Secondary breakfast will be served through the cafeteria as it has been in the past with additional seating opportunities in the H.S. commons area and the multipurpose room. Lunch for elementary will take place in classroom cohorts with considerable distance apart from each other utilizing the cafeteria and an additional open classroom. Middle and High School students will get the food in the cafeteria and will eat in additional eating areas to provide for social distancing.

Q: I know masks are required on the bus but are they going to be able to maintain social distance on them as well and still bus all the students? Students taking the bus will not be able to be socially distanced 6 feet. Although this would be preferable, it is not feasible. They will be required to use hand sanitizer and wear a mask to ride unless they have a medical condition that is excused by a doctor. We would encourage parents who are able to transport their children to do so to lessen the number of students on the bus. When riding the bus, students will sit with family members. There will also be no bus passes during this time.

Q: Will I be able to come into the school to drop my elementary student off? Unfortunately, it will be a kiss and go from the car. We will be working on a drop off plan for the parking lot to help with safety concerns.

Q: Do I have to wear a mask if I have to come into the office for something? Everyone entering the office who is not a direct school employee must wear a mask and have temperature check. (Employees have their own health check protocols to accomplish before they begin for the day.)