

FCPS Will Begin School Year September 8 Virtually

By Office of Communication and Community Relations |

Message from the Superintendent | JULY 21, 2020

Dear Parents, Caregivers, and Staff,

The changing course of the COVID-19 pandemic with infection rates surging both nationally and regionally has required us to alter our plans for school year 2020-21. **Today, the Fairfax County School Board supported my revised recommendation that we begin the 2020-21 school year with virtual learning for all students. The online school year will begin, as scheduled, September 8.** Should health conditions improve, we would first bring back students for intervention supports on a limited basis. Following that, we would work to bring students back to school as soon as possible starting with elementary school students, select PreK-12 special education students and English Learners.

This was not an easy decision, but after reviewing the best available health data and continuing to gather input from teachers, staff, students, and families, we have determined that full-time online instruction is the only safe option at this time. The pandemic looks much different now than it did even three weeks ago. Although infection rates in Fairfax County have declined and are relatively stable, 33 percent of our employees live outside the county. The threat posed by the virus does not recognize borders or boundaries.

We know this is very disappointing news for the families who chose the two-day-a-week in-person learning option in our recent preference questionnaire. We all want in-person learning to resume as quickly as possible. We will reassess health

conditions regularly to determine when students can begin in-person instruction, if science and data suggest it is safe to do so.

The Board also directed my office to determine clear multifaceted metrics to be used to determine if we can start to offer in-person instruction starting with our most vulnerable students. They requested an update regarding the metrics to be presented to the Board no later than August 15.

The online instruction model will be the same one offered to families in our recent survey. For distance learning, our first priority is to provide access and equity in the learning experience for each of our students. We understand that there are significant academic and social/emotional challenges to our students learning remotely. We have strengthened our digital learning model so that we can provide an even more rigorous and engaging virtual-learning program with greater connections for all students at all grade levels.

- Online learning provides four days (Tuesday through Friday) of live, face-to-face instruction with teachers.
- At the elementary level, students will receive real-time, interactive instruction each day.
- The elementary day will also consist of additional small group instruction, intervention supports, and independent learning activities assigned to students.
- Middle and high school students will follow an A/B block schedule.
- Student work will be graded and attendance is required.
- Mondays will remain a teacher planning day with intervention supports for selected students that we hope can be provided in-person.

We will dedicate ourselves to spending the weeks before September 8 preparing resources and help for parents and students. We will provide additional training for our teachers to better meet the needs of our students and provide distance learning

supports and guidance for our families. Your child's school will be communicating with you regarding schedules and other information to prepare for online learning.

As we move forward, our decision-making will remain guided by safety, equity, science, and the many needs of our stakeholders in the midst of a dangerous global pandemic.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Scott Brabrand, Superintendent

Fairfax County Public Schools