

August 14, 2020



MCS Builds Student Re-Entry Plan on Scientific Metric

The Monongalia County Schools announced today school re-entry options for the county's pre-k-12 students beginning Sept. 8.

"In keeping with the WV Department of Education's re-entry protocols and metrics, we will provide our students a blended option for the first nine weeks of the 2020-2021 academic year," said Monongalia County Schools Superintendent Dr. Eddie Campbell. "We're focusing on a plan that will allow half of our students to attend school in-person every other day through Nov. 2, and to attend safely."

Elementary and middle school families whose oldest student's last name begins with the letters A-through-L will attend one day. Students from families whose oldest student's last name begins with M-through-Z will attend the next, with the two groups alternating days of in-person instruction for nine weeks.

High school students will follow their standard odd/even schedule, which translates into two consecutive days in school and two consecutive days working remotely at home.

"Parents also may choose to register their children for virtual instruction provided by the WV Department of Education or to homeschool their children," said Deputy Superintendent Donna Talerico. "Five-day-a-week and locally-originated remote instruction are no longer options under consideration by Monongalia County Schools."

Administrators decided to focus the district's preparation efforts on the nine-week blended learning plan following a Thursday afternoon meeting with the schools' re-entry team's committee of the whole, comprised of Lee Smith, MD, medical director of the Monongalia County Health Department; Chris Edwards, MD, with Mon Health and child mental health practitioner Emily Finamore.

"With our initial in-person, five-day-a-week option, the committee members were concerned about the sheer number of students enrolled in some of our schools, which would have made adequate social distancing challenging and contact tracing extremely difficult if we experienced an outbreak," Dr. Campbell said. "The logistics of conducting effective in-person and locally-originated remote instruction – and the burden on our teachers of teaching both in-person and remotely – also influenced our decision."

"The district's blended learning plan is based on scientific metrics and is in keeping with the Harvard Metric model Gov. Justice released today."

The Harvard metrics are based on a seven-day rolling average of new cases in each West Virginia county divided by 100,000 tests, with incidences of community transmission assigned a color. Counties depicted in green are experiencing the fewest cases of community transmission; yellow, an increased incidence of transmission; orange, a heightened incidence; and red, substantial community transmission.

"Monongalia County currently is a 'yellow county,' the second-best designation," Ms. Talerico explained. "As long as we keep our incidences of community transmission down and are designated as either yellow or green, our blended instructional model indicates safety for our students and staff."

"If Mon County were to fall into the 'orange' category, the schools would tighten up their social distancing, which would mean a further reduction in the number of students in the building each day."

"At 'red,' if there were to be substantial community transmission, we would suspend our in-person blended learning model and go into locally-originated remote instructional mode until that transmission rate decreased to yellow-level on a seven-day rolling level."

Dr. Eddie Campbell
MCS Superintendent