



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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M-DCPS Releases 2020-2021 Reopening of Schools Plan

The Miami-Dade School Board approved a tentative plan for the proposed reopening of schools for the 2020-2021 academic year. Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) is committed to making the soundest decisions regarding reopening and strongly believes in making those decisions based on science. The reopening approach is comprehensive in nature and is informed by what is happening internationally, as well as following national and state guidance, and local decisions.

M-DCPS also obtained the feedback of parents, teachers and students; and the unanimous approval of a workgroup comprised of health, logistics and education experts, parents, community and business leaders, to establish its plan shaped by four guiding principles for reopening schools in the fall:

- Ensure the safety and wellness of students and staff
- Deliver high-quality instruction to students, regardless of delivery model
- Provide parents flexibility and choice in instructional delivery models
- Optimize use of resources

Parents will be provided with choices and flexibility, based on their preferences and comfort level with in-school education versus a distance learning experience for their children. The fourth guiding principle relates to the likely expenses that will come with operating under social distancing guidelines, the funding needed to provide content-rich, innovative, educational courseware during distance learning, and the commitment of M-DCPS to be fiscally responsible during a looming, nationwide financial crisis due to the pandemic.

M-DCPS strives to safely return students to the physical schoolhouse but recognizes that doing so will not be possible while Miami-Dade County remains in Phase 1 of *The Plan for Florida's Recovery*. The District's 2020–2021 proposed plan assumes schools will reopen once Miami-Dade County is in Phase 2. The plan is built to ensure M-DCPS can rapidly pivot, if necessary, in response to a shift back to Phase 1 or to a broader reopening under a transition to Phase 3.

In response to parents and guardians who may be uneasy about sending their children to school, despite stringent safety measures that will be implemented, M-DCPS will offer non-schoolhouse learning options to parents during Phase 2. The District's goal is that upon entering Phase 3, all students will return to the schoolhouse.

A COMPREHENSIVE, INFORMED APPROACH

In addition to the guidelines and recommendations issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Florida Department of Health and the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE), the District felt it was important to hear from its stakeholders in developing reopening plans.

Stakeholder Surveys: Surveys were designed and deployed to teachers and parents to learn more about the various perceptions of COVID-19. Parents were asked about their preferences regarding their child's instructional model for the fall. Teachers were asked about potential barriers to working in either a physical or online environment and proficiency with various learning platforms.

The parent survey, administered May 15-27, received more than 100,000 responses from parents, representing more than 155,000 students. The teacher survey was administered June 4-10, and more than 96 percent of the District's 19,000 teachers responded.

The survey results indicated that the preference of parents was nearly evenly split among three different models. Roughly one-third of parents surveyed, due to personal or professional reasons, wanted students to return five days per week in the traditional brick-and-mortar model of schooling with preventive measures to ensure the health and wellbeing of students and staff. One-third of parents declared a clear interest in continuing a full-time distance learning process like the model established in March. An equal percentage of parents preferred a hybrid model that reflected some degree of presence in school as well as some distance learning.

PROPOSED INSTRUCTIONAL MODELS

Although M-DCPS recognizes that there is no ideal alternative model, the District took into account parental feedback when crafting its instructional model options. Reopening schoolhouses amidst a global pandemic requires flexibility and the ability to pivot between models, if necessary.

- **Schoolhouse Daily Attendance Model** (*5 days a week*):
 - By providing effective safeguards to protect the health and safety of students and staff, this model can create an environment that provides an opportunity for students to return to the traditional school experience.
 - Though schools are not designed to easily allow for social distancing of six feet, every effort will be made to maintain as much distance as possible.
 - Reopening schools requires certain procedures be in place to ensure safety as students, teachers and staff return to school campuses.
 - This model may be implemented if school building utilization is low. (Building utilization is the student enrollment divided by the permanent capacity of the school.)
 - Class sizes will be reduced and non-traditional spaces like cafeterias and gymnasiums may be utilized to maximize distancing.
 - Teachers will also utilize a blended learning model to be prepared for potential building closure.

- Includes VPK, Head Start Early Head Start, and students with disabilities in separate classroom settings.
- **Hybrid Models** (*Alternating 2 or 3 days a week in school with eLearning*)
 - In cases where school building utilization is high, the school may adopt a hybrid model of student attendance.
 - These models separate students into cohorts, which come to physical school every other day, or every two consecutive days, depending on the model.
 - The eLearning component allows students to receive instruction in both a brick-and-mortar school and an online environment. It provides consistency in delivery of instruction and content by limiting the digital platforms that will be utilized.
 - Teachers will be provided with District-developed or licensed curriculum content to modify, as needed, for eLearning days, providing a seamless transition between content delivered during “in school days” and during eLearning days.

Parents will be notified of the plan for their school the week of July 27. The Schoolhouse and Hybrid Models will also include a variety of programs and electives, following an evaluation of related safety and health protocols. In some cases, programs may be redesigned.

These models will only be options if Miami-Dade County shifts into Phase 2, and with the understanding that if there is a regression to Phase 1 or a transition to Phase 3, then the implementation could change.

- **My School Online (MSO)** (*5 days a week*):
 - My School Online (MSO) is the M-DCPS online school option for those students in grades K-12 who wish to take online classes full-time but still maintain their connection to their enrolled schools.
 - MSO is designed based on feedback received from parents on distance learning during the recent school closures, and incorporates many of the features that parents and students valued such as a single online platform to access digital course content and real-time interaction with teachers each day for every class.
 - MSO provides a learning model that reflects the District’s commitment to providing students with high-quality instructional experiences and meets the needs of students and their families during these uncertain times.
 - Student maintains enrollment status at his/her brick-and-mortar school.
 - Students attend online following their standard school schedule. This model includes online lessons and interaction with the student’s assigned teacher, and accompanying innovative curriculum facilitated through courseware.
 - Counseling, therapies and other mental health services will also be provided to students.

LEARNING MODEL SELECTION

Beginning today through Friday, July 10, all parents of current or prospective M-DCPS students are asked to indicate whether they intend to enroll their child in MSO or have their child return to physical school in the fall.

Parents of current students may make their selection in English, Spanish or Haitian-Creole by visiting the Parent Portal or the Dadeschools Mobile Application. The enrollment selection form is also be available at reopening.dadeschools.net and may be submitted by email or dropped off at the school between 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. until July 10. Parents of new students must complete the physical form and take it in person to the intended school of enrollment.

The District also conducted a telephone survey with parents, whose children are eligible for school bus transportation, to determine their plans for the fall. This information will assist in the addition and adjustments of school bus routes to promote greater social distancing and follow all other public health guidelines.

REOPENING M-DCPS SCHOOLHOUSES

Various procedures are being developed and comprehensive steps are being taken to make school sites as safe as possible for a fall reopening. The M-DCPS Chief Health Officer will work closely with local, state and federal health officials to ensure the District and schools are adhering to all guidelines.

Facial Coverings – Facial coverings will be required at all times in school facilities, and on District transportation. The only exceptions will be during meals, during strenuous physical activity or if there is an underlying health concern for a specific student. In these situations, distancing guidelines will be followed, and alternate arrangements may be made.

Immunizations – Students will be required to be current on all standard immunizations, as is mandatory every year. Additionally, parents are strongly encouraged to have their children immunized against influenza. The flu has many similar symptoms to COVID-19 and is also highly contagious.

Temperature Checks – Based upon the latest recommendations from public health experts, temperature checks will not be required to enter schools. Medical experts agree that symptoms of COVID-19 don't present themselves the same way in children as they do in adults, and the benefit of doing the checks would not outweigh the risk of queues and clusters of students forming to ensure social distancing. Parents are strongly encouraged to perform temperature checks at home and to keep children home upon any sign of illness. If a student appears ill while at school, staff will conduct a temperature check.

District/School Site Sanitation Procedures – M-DCPS will facilitate the following measures to ensure maximum effort is taken to provide sanitized physical environments in schools:

- Promote greater handwashing and provide hand-sanitizing stations in high-traffic areas

- Routine sanitization of facilities throughout the day with a hospital-grade germicide that has demonstrated effectiveness against viruses on hard, non-porous surfaces.
 - Restrooms will be monitored and sanitized multiple times during the school day, as well as cleaned and sanitized nightly.
 - Classrooms will be frequently sanitized.
 - Hallways, corridors and other common areas will be sanitized throughout the day.
- Screening protocols will be in place for all visitors.
- Capacity limitations will be implemented for restrooms and elevators.

Contact Tracing – The District is exploring how to leverage a health screening tool being facilitated by FLDOE, which provides:

- Screening questions based on CDC guidelines
- Daily self-screening or assisted screening for younger students
- An option to use check in/check out for contact tracing
- Real-time data will be available at the classroom, school site and district levels.
- Additionally, the District is exploring the use of a health information and data management solution that is essentially an "early warning" system for physical, mental & behavioral health (aligned to CDC guidelines.)
- Student attendance will be monitored for increased chronic absences, and to check for possible illnesses.

Arrival and Dismissal – M-DCPS has developed protocols related to the arrival and dismissal of students to ensure they follow all state and public health mandates for safety and security, including staggered arrival and dismissal times, altering parent pick-up/drop-off protocols, and evaluating monitored points of entry.

Moving Around School Campuses – When students and teachers move around campus, the District will facilitate:

- Directional hallways
- Staggered classroom release
- PPE protocols for entering and moving around school campuses
- Protocols for transitions during passing times
- Strategically placed signage, posters and fliers to reinforce safety measures about preventing the spread of COVID-19

Classroom Environment – Various steps will be taken to provide a safe classroom setting, which also enables maximum opportunity for learning. M-DCPS will do the following

- Manage class size to adhere to maximum distancing guidelines
- Group students, as feasible, to minimize exposure and allow for contact tracing
- Create in-classroom meal service options to reduce exposure
- Remove non-essential, shared items from the classroom
- Creatively repurpose alternate spaces (cafeterias, gyms, media centers, courtyards) for instructional use
- Encourage use of digital resources for instruction
- Determine feasibility of singular platform to facilitate parental engagement during distance learning

Bus Transportation Considerations – The District will facilitate the following related to M-DCPS transportation:

- Add bus routes and adjust current ones to accommodate reduced occupancy
- Increase the number of bus stops to facilitate social distancing
- Intensify cleaning protocols for transportation
- Evaluate options for screening and requirement of face coverings
- Identify protective measures to ensure the safety of bus drivers
- Recruit additional drivers to support reduced occupancy per bus
- Encourage social distancing at all pick-up/drop-off points and require utilization of face coverings before entering buses

Adapting Student Meal Service – The District is undertaking efforts to implement the following:

- Minimize crowds by deploying alternative meal service options
- Provide grab-and-go meals to be eaten in the classroom or outdoor spaces
- Design classroom meal delivery models for younger students
- Use signage and other social distancing strategies in cafeterias, if the cafeteria is in use for meals
- Adjust lunch service options to utilize alternative spaces for meal consumption
- Adopt cashless, touchless point-of-sale transactions for cafeteria service line
- Stagger meal schedules to limit students in the cafeteria at one time

Before/After-School Care, Extracurricular Activities and Athletics – The District is taking the following steps:

- Implement a phased approach for participation in activities and athletic programs, starting in July following CDC guidelines
- Monitor and follow guidance from Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA)
- Conduct extracurricular activities online, when possible
- Implement sanitization procedures for shared equipment
- Evaluate before/after-school program models to accommodate reduced adult/child ratio, which may include adjustment of operational hours

Mental Wellness Support – The M-DCPS Department of Mental Health Services is providing the following:

- Conduct outreach to families to identify priority supports for reopening
- Provide a blended model of support, inclusive of in-person and online deployment of mental health services
- Enhance partnerships with network of mental health professionals to provide services
- Implement trauma-informed practices by training school-site administrators and staff to identify warning signs
- Continue operating Mental Health Parent Assistance Line (305-995-7100) to support families with their needs

SAFETY AND SUPPORT FOR STAFF

All employees at all M-DCPS work locations must follow a series of core practices, including:

- Daily health screenings
- Distanced employee stations

- Physical barriers in cases where employees' job functions require face-to-face contact with members of the public
- No sharing of equipment (to the extent possible; frequent cleaning of shared equipment like copy machines, etc.)
- Preference for online meetings
- PPE requirements and increased sanitation

In addition to supporting the physical wellness of M-DCPS employees, the District supports the mental and emotional needs of the workforce through its Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and Employee Wellness Program, better known as Well Way. These support services have been utilized as employees cope with the effects of the pandemic and will remain available throughout the summer and 2020-2021 school year. Employees can reach EAP by calling 305-995-7111, and Well Way by calling 305-995-2265.

Employees with underlying medical conditions may seek accommodations to continue performing their essential job functions by contacting the District's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Office at 305-995-7104.

COMMUNICATIONS AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Communications – Recognizing the importance that effective communication plays in carrying out a plan as comprehensive and complex as the reopening of schools, all available means will be utilized to ensure our families, employees and the community are well-informed. As is customary, all communications to families will be provided in English, Spanish and Haitian-Creole.

Information will be shared utilizing various news outlets, social and digital media, and automated messages via text, voice and email directly to families and employees. Telephone support lines will be available to address questions pertaining to distance learning, school operations, mental health and employee matters.

The District has also launched a new dedicated website, reopening.dadeschools.net, which will be continually updated to keep all stakeholders informed about the return to school in the fall.

Community Partnerships – The following points will pertain to all community partners, which provide valuable support for students:

- CDC guidelines recommend limiting nonessential visitors to campuses.
- Partnerships with business, alumni, municipalities, chambers and other community-based organizations will continue to support the needs of our students, their families and the District.
- All volunteers, mentors and community partners will be encouraged to continue their service utilizing alternative methods (i.e., online and outside the school building).
- School volunteers, mentors and community partners will be encouraged to follow CDC guidelines, if their roles require visiting campuses.
- Volunteer policies and procedures are being revised to incorporate CDC guidelines and alternative methods of service.

Family Engagement – The engagement of families continues to be critically important in providing a high-quality educational environment for students. The District will facilitate the following:

- All volunteers and school-site liaisons will utilize Raptor for registration, background screening, tracking their service hours and communications.
- Professional development on engaging families and partners online will continue to be offered throughout the year to our educators and community stakeholders.
- District recognition events will be held online to prevent mass gatherings.
- District advisory committees and PTA/PTSA will continue to meet online; working to advocate and communicate with stakeholders.

Visit reopening.dadeschools.net for continuous updates about M-DCPS' reopening plans, which may necessarily evolve depending on the progression of the pandemic. For questions related to the instructional models and enrollment selection, parents may also contact the M-DCPS Distance Learning Helpline at 305-995-HELP.

For the most up-to-date information, please download the Dadeschools mobile app to your iPhone or Android device. Follow us on Twitter [@mdcps](https://twitter.com/mdcps) and [@miamisup](https://twitter.com/miamisup), on Instagram [@miamischools](https://www.instagram.com/miamischools) and [@miamisup](https://www.instagram.com/miamisup), and on Facebook at [MiamiSchools](https://www.facebook.com/MiamiSchools) and [AlbertoCarvalho](https://www.facebook.com/AlbertoCarvalho)

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