Frederick County Public Schools

Virtual Opening Overview
August 2020
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Dear Parents, Guardians, Staff and Students:

The start of the 2020/2021 school year will be unlike any that has ever occurred in Frederick County Public Schools as well as in many other school systems across the United States. While the pandemic may have us teaching and learning in a virtual environment to start the school year, we will not allow this new environment to dampen our enthusiasm and excitement for a new school year. We are committed to teaching, supporting and guiding our students regardless if it is in a traditional, hybrid or virtual model. I am confident that our educators will demonstrate an unwavering dedication to our students and Frederick County community.

We will focus intensely on providing rigorous, personalized and meaningful instruction on a daily basis to all our students. Staff and resources will be devoted to the social-emotional well-being of all our students in recognition of the tremendous stress created by the pandemic and social unrest over the past six months. Equitable access for all students will continue to be of the highest priority for FCPS. We will work tirelessly to address learning loss and the unique needs of our learners. FCPS recognizes the extreme value of educator-student relationships and will seek every avenue to foster these relationships. We are excited to introduce new learning tools and technology, establish daily routines and schedules for students, provide parents with supports and guidance for the virtual learning environment and explore possibilities to slowly reenter our schools and resume normalcy.

We know challenges await, but our community is strong, adaptable and committed to the education of every child.

We know challenges await, but our community is strong, adaptable and committed to the education of every child. Together, we can join hands and champion the learning and success of all our students. We can and will overcome this pandemic and forge forward to prepare every Frederick County child a brighter and better tomorrow.

Sincerely,
Theresa Alban, PhD.
Superintendent of Schools
Maryland State Department of Education Guidance

Maryland school systems are required to:

- Complete and post the plan on school system’s website by August 14, 2020.
- Ensure equity is a major component throughout the plan.
- Involve community and school stakeholders in the development of the plan.
- Assess where students are instructionally and determine possible learning gaps.
- Incorporate Maryland College and Career Ready Standards into all content areas.
- Comply with federal/state agency guidelines regarding positive COVID-19 tests.
- Adhere to MSDE, state and federal health and safety protocols associated with the health and safety of students and staff.
- Follow safety protocols for the safe transportation of students to and from school.
- Develop a system to track student attendance and engagement in virtual learning.
- Ensure athletics and activities are aligned with MSDE and local health and safety decisions.
FCPS is committed to . . .

- Prioritizing the safety and health of students, employees, and families.
- Making all decisions through an equity lens.
- Providing high-quality instruction and maximizing face-to-face interaction to the greatest extent possible.
- Supporting the social-emotional well-being of students and staff.
- Communicating concisely, accurately, and frequently.
- Engaging stakeholders in the decision-making process as appropriate.
- Deploying resources strategically while adapting to ever-changing conditions and requirements.
- Returning to full operational status as quickly as possible when safe health conditions exist.
A New and Improved Learning Experience for FCPS Students

In March, FCPS was thrust into a distance learning environment when the State Superintendent of Schools announced that all Maryland public school buildings were closing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While FCPS has been building its digital ecosystem for years, the sudden announcement allowed school systems little time to prepare for distance learning. During the spring closure, FCPS was able to learn valuable lessons as well as begin preparing for a new and improved virtual learning experience for FCPS students. Students and parents will experience an exciting and engaging virtual environment at the start of the 2020/2021 school. Some of these improvements include:

One Digital Platform
FCPS families expressed a desire for students to be in one digital platform to administer virtual learning. For this reason, the Schoology Learning Management System will be utilized by all staff for course management this coming year.

Technology Access
FCPS is committed to connecting with each and every child digitally. One-to-one technology deployment will continue at the secondary level, and a device will be made available to all secondary students. Elementary students who need a device to support virtual learning will be provided one upon request.

Internet access hotspots will continue to be available for families in need to ensure access in the 2020/2021 school year.

Increased live digital interactions and expectations between students and educators.

More Parent Resources
On-line resources will be available to assist parents and caregivers with:
- Accelerating learning such as strategies to support the development of executive functioning skills and strategies to maximize memory and retention.
- Supporting social-emotional health and wellness, including strategies for appropriately balancing screen time and perseverance.
Robust Professional Learning
In response to staff requests for additional tools and resources to build their capacity for teaching in a virtual environment, a wide variety of professional learning opportunities began in the spring and continued in earnest throughout the summer. All certificated staff participated in competency building around video conferencing using Google Meet as well as the use of Schoology to organize and deliver high-quality instruction. Multiple virtual learning courses and on-demand workshops have met the needs of staff while providing the flexibility and differentiated options appreciated during this time. In addition to online tools, courses, and workshops, one-to-one personalized support is an important component of the plan, including Virtual Learning Mentors for each school as well as additional mentors to meet the needs of new teachers.

Individual Student Needs
Educators will be provided a range of strategies with a significant focus on tending to individual student needs. Attention to academic, social-emotional and mental health needs are especially important. Teachers have received training utilizing PATHS materials to help students develop social-emotional awareness and establish a sense of belonging in the classroom. Additionally, FCPS has deployed software to deliver interventions, therapies, and provide enhanced access to accommodations through software such as Read/Write Extension and Equatio. At the foundation of the work, the FCPS curriculum office continues to frame resource development with all students in mind and with an emphasis on ready-to-use digital resources that allow teachers to strategically scaffold, differentiate, and personalize.

Student Training Video
Students will have access to numerous training videos that will enhance their abilities to successfully learn in a virtual environment. Some of these training videos include student onboarding for FCPS core digital tools such as Schoology, PearDeck, PlayPosit, Newsela and more. Videos are delivered within Schoology course materials and are available 24/7 to help students as they navigate assignments.

Rigorous Virtual Courses
FCPS staff has increased the rigor and accessibility to engaging instruction for students as they participate in online learning opportunities. It is important to emphasize that students participating in the Full Virtual option should expect a more rigorous academic experience than Continuity of Learning in the spring of 2020. Students will receive a schedule that includes required daily face-to-face virtual instruction Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, with additional support sessions available on Wednesdays and during evening hours.

FCPS educators have worked to develop “Blueprints” that are available within Schoology. Blueprints are high-quality curriculum materials developed, curated, built student-facing, and provided for immediate use in the classroom. This new way of building curriculum and resources allows teachers to focus time on connectivity and personalization in face-to-face, hybrid, or full-virtual environments.
High School Students
What to Expect in a New Virtual Environment

Courses Available and Student Schedules
Students participate in virtual learning five days a week.

Students take four courses based on graduation requirements, registration requests and course availability.

To provide as many online learning opportunities as possible, FCPS may assign students to sections with students from various FCPS high schools and taught by teachers not located at the student’s assigned school.

Course offerings will depend on student enrollment, school staffing and whether content and assessment are possible in a virtual format. Offerings such as in Visual and Performing Arts, Career and Technology Education and Physical Education may be limited.

Learning Time and Engagement Expectations
Students are engaged in learning for approximately 30 hours a week. (This includes 80-90 minutes per course daily but may be longer for advanced courses.)

Virtual learning may include:
• Distance-learning assignments and activities (reading, research, projects, rehearsal, etc.).
• Engaging with digital tools and software.
• Independent practice.
• Real-time sessions via Google Meet as teachers deliver new content and reinforce prior instruction.
• Submitting assignments and assessments for feedback and grades based on established timelines (flexible but not self-paced) and following expectations for academic integrity.
• Viewing videos for learning.
• Working independently, self-advocating and asking for support when needed to ensure success.

Synchronous (Real-Time) Learning Expectations
Students are expected to access Schoology and/or Frederick County Virtual School (FCVS) courses, use online learning tools and attend Google Meet sessions.

Advisory
Students participate in an online advisory period at least once per week. A weekly FLEX, CONNECT, SET or Advocacy advisory period takes place via Google Meet to provide opportunities for students to:
• Develop a sense of community with other group members and within the greater school.
• Discuss school information/updates/opportunities.
• Practice and improve social, emotional and academic skills.
• Receive support/resources.
On-Line Learning Mentors
Students are assigned a weekly check-in with a mentor who provides technical assistance and general support for time management, organization, work habits, and study strategies for success in an online learning environment.

Grading
Grading follows FCPS Regulation 500-05: Grading, Reporting, and Intervention and students will receive letter grades.

Eligibility
All students begin the year eligible for extracurricular activities; eligibility then follows FCPS Regulation 500-24. Specific decisions about FCPS athletics and extracurricular activities will be made by the Board of Education of Frederick County in consultation with other state and local guidance documents.

Attendance
A student is designated “present” using multiple measures, such as:
- Completion of Schoology coursework.
- Completion of assigned classwork (digital or paper) during or outside traditional school hours.
- Participation/engagement in school activities.
- Verbal or virtual meetings with a service provider.

Support for Individual Students
While students will be receiving face-to-face scheduled instruction with their teacher/s on a schedule, additional time is planned for individual students who may need re-teaching or enrichment opportunities. There is flexibility to schedule additional face-to-face support sessions, not only mid-week, but also during evening hours. Each school will accommodate tutoring needs beyond the regularly scheduled school day.

These additional sessions could be initiated by the teacher, the parent, the student or recommended by a FCPS School Support Team. These support teams played a critical role in meeting individual needs in the spring and will continue to support students and their families in the 2020/2021 school year.

Orientation
Additional support options (online learning mentor). Students and parents will participate in a virtual orientation that includes:
- Attendance criteria and grading policy.
- Enrollment commitment.
- Interventions for students not making progress.
- Overview of the Full Virtual Learning Model.
- Review of Schoology features.
- Technology support.
Small Group Face-to-Face Instruction in the School

The Board of Education has charged staff to identify targeted small groups of students to participate in face-to-face instruction to support individualized educational needs, to ensure access to virtual options, and to address specific courses requiring in person instruction.

More information will be provided to parents regarding these options. Parents/guardians will ultimately reserve the right to decline these services if they have concerns regarding their child’s health in a face-to-face FCPS school building. Specific health measures will be in place to protect the health of both students and staff.
Courses Available and Student Schedules
Students are enrolled in courses based on registration for the 2020/2021 school year and will receive a schedule of required face-to-face virtual instruction for their courses.

Students take English/Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, an Exploratory/Elective, and Physical Education and Health Education.

Students enrolled in Algebra, Geometry, Spanish or French may be assigned to a high school section taught by the FCPS Virtual School.

To provide as many online learning opportunities as possible, FCPS may assign students to sections with students from various FCPS middle schools and taught by teachers not located at the child’s assigned school.

Advisory
Students participate in an online advisory group up to three times per week.

Learning Time and Engagement Expectations
Students are engaged in learning for approximately 30 hours a week, including:

- Attending two weekly online sessions for each course and any scheduled office hours.
- Attending one weekly virtual advisory period.
- Completing and submitting virtual assignments and activities for feedback.
- Reviewing feedback the teacher provides and resubmitting assignments as needed.
- Viewing videos for learning.
- Using digital tools and software
- Working independently, self-advocating,
- Asking for support when needed.

On-Line Learning Mentors
Students are assigned a weekly check-in with a mentor who provides technical assistance and general support for time management, organization, work habits, and study strategies for success in an online learning environment.

Grading
Grading follows FCPS Regulation 500-05: Grading, Reporting, and Intervention and students will receive letter grades.
Attendance
A student is determined “present” using multiple measures, such as:
- Completion of assigned classwork during or outside traditional school hours.
- Completion of Schoology coursework.
- Participation/engagement in school activities.
- Participation in virtual meetings with a teacher or service provider.

Support for Individual Students
While students will be receiving face-to-face scheduled instruction with their teacher/s on a schedule, additional time is planned for individual students who may need re-teaching or enrichment opportunities. There is flexibility to schedule additional face-to-face support sessions, not only mid-week, but also during evening hours. Each school will accommodate tutoring needs beyond the regularly scheduled school day.

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Orientation
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- Attendance criteria and grading policy.
- Enrollment commitment.
- Interventions for students not making progress.
- Overview of the Full Virtual Learning Model.
- Review of Schoology features.
- Technology support.
Learning Expectations
Students engage in a combination of virtual real-time instruction, virtual instruction on an individual schedule, completion of assigned tasks and non-screen time activities. Expectations for time spent in virtual learning increase as students become comfortable with the digital tools and vary depending on the student’s age and developmental level. Teachers of virtual learning communicate expectations and adjust instruction as appropriate to ensure that students are learning and successfully able to navigate the virtual classroom.

On-Line Mentors
A mentor to support online learning with designated office hours to provide technical assistance and general support.

Grading
Grading for in-person and virtual coursework follows FCPS Regulation 500-06: Grading, Reporting, and Intervention - Elementary

Attendance
A student is determined “present” using multiple measures, such as:
- Participation/engagement in activities and assignments.
- Engagement with digital tools such as Schoology, Lexia and Study Island.
- Attendance in virtual meetings via Google Meet with a teacher or service provider.

Support for Individual Students
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Orientation Session
Virtual Learners attend a virtual orientation before starting this program. It covers:
- Overview of “Full Virtual” option
- Review of Schoology features
- Enrollment commitment
- Attendance criteria and grading policy
- Interventions for students not making progress
- Additional Support Options (Mentor role)
- Technology Support
Advice for Serving as a Parent/Guardian Learning Coach

Students participating in courses in a virtual environment should expect a rigorous academic experience which differs in demands from the Continuity of Learning that students experienced in the spring of 2020. For students participating in the Full Virtual Learning Model, the requirements and workload will be equitable to the course content and workload experienced in a face-to-face environment.

FCPS believes that parents and guardians can provide critical support to help their children be successful in a virtual learning environment.

Prior to the start of class and during engagement until course completion:

- Consider incentives to help motivate your child.
- Help your child establish and maintain a regular schedule for working on virtual courses daily. Build in breaks and encourage movement.
- Help your child establish a study space, including the technology needed for working online with reduced distractions.
- Monitor your child’s progress weekly. For Frederick County Virtual School courses, biweekly progress reports will be sent from each teacher to email accounts for students, parents, and counselors.
- Help your child maintain pace and not fall behind in an effort to avoid increased anxiety and becoming overwhelmed. Secondary students should be prepared to designate 80-90 minutes per course per day to maintain satisfactory pace. A minimum of 5 hours per day. Additional work may be required for upper level course work.
- Participate in required orientation for the Full Virtual Learning model.
- Reach out to your child’s teacher, mentor, or counselor, for additional support if needed.
- Reinforce that virtual courses and coursework are as important as face-to-face courses.
- Review the course syllabus with your student and define expectations.
  - Look fors:
    - Assessment requirements
    - Google Meet sessions
    - Grading expectations
    - How to submit assignments
    - Teacher contact information
    - Office hours
- Set up Schoology notifications and add the Daily Digest to your parent account to help with time management and due dates.
- Sometimes learning can be a struggle. Encourage your student to contact teachers when they don’t understand or have questions about an assignment. Try not to jump in too fast to “save the day.”