

Spring Semester Planning - October 22, 2020 Work Session
Preliminary Remarks - Dr. Michael J. Martirano

Board members, in a moment I will turn it over to staff to walk you through our operational preparations to ensure the school system will be well-prepared for a potential transition to a hybrid instructional model, as well as data and metrics to support the Board in making a final decision about the second semester on November 19. I also want to extend a personal welcome to Howard County Health Officer, Dr. Maura Rossman and members of her staff, who are joining us for tonight's presentation and discussion.

I would like to preface tonight's presentation and discussion with a few preliminary remarks.

Ever since the COVID-19 pandemic forced schools to close back in March, staff have been working diligently to ensure that students continue to learn and thrive. Just as our preparations for the fall semester began almost the moment that schools initially closed, our preparation for eventually bringing students back into schools has been underway for several months.

The planning involved in shifting between instructional models is extremely complex, with numerous and simultaneously moving components and decision points. Regardless of the outcome of tonight's discussion or the Board's eventual decision, I can state with conviction that:

- We will continue to always lead with equity in supporting students and staff.
- We hold the health and well-being of our students and staff members as paramount in considering any decision.
- We are committed to providing students with a robust learning program, regardless of the format of the instructional model.
- We deeply appreciate the partnership of our students, families, staff, community members, and county leaders in providing the best possible education and supports for our students.

Students, families and staff are deeply invested in the decision about the second semester instructional model, and their input is absolutely critical to consider in making the decision.

- We have asked all HCPSS families to express their intentions regarding sending their students back to school and transportation preferences in the event that a hybrid model would be offered. We ask that any family who has not yet responded to the survey, to complete it by tomorrow, October 23. We ask for this information to give us some idea of families' preferences to support our planning. Please note, this is not a commitment; families will be able to adjust their decision when plans for the spring semester are finalized.
- This week we have asked school-based staff to complete a survey to express their intentions regarding returning to work, and ask that staff submit a survey by Monday, October 26.
- I am also pleased to announce that beginning tonight, we are offering a new email option for families, staff and other stakeholders wishing to provide input to the Board regarding the spring semester instructional model. Input and feedback may be submitted by email to spring-input@hcpss.org. Please note that while the Board will review all input submitted, due to the anticipated volume, individual responses should not be expected.

Today's presentation will focus on the metrics that would allow students and staff to safely return to school buildings. We will ask the Board to take action on two points: the metrics that will serve as criteria for moving to a hybrid model, and the metrics that will signal the need to revert back from hybrid to a virtual model. We will come back on November 5 to present a hybrid model for the Board's consideration. The Board is scheduled to take action on the second semester instructional model following the final work session on November 19.

I want to thank our staff, the County Health Department and other county government partners, and our community stakeholders for their continued partnership as we move forward through this complex planning process toward a spring solution that best serves our students.

I will now turn over to Mr. Scott Ruehl, HCPSS Director of Leadership Development, and Ms. Kerrie Wagaman, Coordinator of Health Services, who will lead the Board through highlights of our preparation and planning.