

Reopening School Parent Q & A

Why aren't students, at least at the elementary level, going to be able to return to school every day?

With current staffing levels we are unable to split classes sufficiently to comply with social distancing requirements set forth by the State Education Department and the NY State Department of Health. If social distancing requirements are removed, we would be able to return with all students.

How will I make my selection for my child to either engage in virtual schooling or in person schooling?

After the governor's announcement is made during the first week of August, the district will send out a survey where parents may indicate their selection. We will post a deadline for making selections so that we can adequately plan for all of our student's learning needs.

Can I have the option to request my children's cohort to be changed?

It will be difficult to move students from one cohort to the next as placements are being made in order to balance class size to comply with social distancing requirements. That being said, every effort will be made to assist families as they work through child care issues and the like. We are committed to doing everything possible to keep families together in the same cohort to ease part of the burden that a hybrid model of school creates.

Will my child have to wear a mask all day long?

In general masks will be worn by all staff and students all day while at school, inside or outside, and on school buses. Staff members will schedule brief mask breaks when students are seated and practicing social distancing. In addition, as one could imagine, masks may be removed when consuming food or beverages.

What is the difference between Homeschool and virtual learning?

Homeschooling is an option that parents can elect at any time. Homeschooling is coordinated through the district office but in this model, parents are responsible for selecting and providing materials and instruction based on State Education Department Regulations. Virtual Schooling is a model of schooling available during this time of the COVID 19 pandemic where the materials and instruction are developed and implemented by school staff with assistance from parents.

Will my student have to have a COVID test before returning to school?

At this time there is no pre-testing requirement for students or staff to return to in person schooling. We will follow guidelines as required by the NY State Department of health should they determine that pre-testing us a best practice.

Were other day patterns considered rather than Monday Tuesday for one cohort and Thursday Friday for the other?

Yes. We explored 2 weeks on and 2 weeks off, and Monday/Thursday, Tuesday/Friday options. What we felt we could accomplish, while not ideal, with the chosen model was at least seeing students 2 days in a row to promote a little bit of continuity. In addition, we have found that having too much time away from school promotes a drop off in engagement. Having the two days on in a row and three days off in between was, in our opinion, the best we could do to provide continuity and momentum. We recognize that all hybrid models create significant challenges for those needing childcare and for children who learn best when in person every day at school. Under the current requirements of the NYS DOH and NYSED, we are not able to bring students back every day at this time but hope that soon we will be able to return to something that feels more normal.

What is the definition of a “high needs” student?

Students who are defined as “high needs” include those students who receive Special Class, Integrated Co-Teach and/or Direct Consultant Teacher services. Other students may be considered as “high needs” as determined through parent, teacher and/or administrator input.

What will recess look like for K-6 students?

Recess will follow the guidelines set forth by the state and CDC. Ideally, recess will be held outside and will follow social distancing requirements. The use of shared equipment will be discouraged and if shared equipment is used, the equipment will need to be sanitized according to regulations. It is likely that some of the typical recess activities will need to be temporarily discontinued as aerobic activities require 12 feet of social distance space making such activities and supervision nearly impossible.

How will playground equipment be sanitized?

Playground equipment will be wiped down after a class has used the equipment and prior to another class using it. Playgrounds will be accessed only by one class at a time.

What will lunch look like for K-6 students?

K-6 students will eat lunch in their assigned classrooms whenever possible. This will decrease the exposure to other students. The cafeteria may be used if appropriate on a rotating basis, but social distancing regulations will be in place.

How would virtual PE work for students at the high school if that is chosen?

Teachers will design activities and instruction that students are able to work through independently. It is likely that there will be an emphasis on personal fitness, wellness and nutrition goal setting with logging of practices and activities as well as personal reflection.

Will the K-6 schedule remain the same?

For “in-person” instruction, the start of day and end of day time will remain the same. It may be necessary to alter arrival and dismissal procedures by limiting access to visitors and staggering when students enter and exit the building. Alternative doors may be used to further reduce proximity. The typical school day schedule will look similar. Students will have time for art, music, library, and PE. These classes may also take place in the child’s assigned classroom. Lunch will be served in the classroom. Lunch will include sanitizing surfaces before and after use. Recess periods in the classroom will follow social distancing guidelines.

Can I change to the “in-person” hybrid model once the school year begins?

Once the year begins, families will have the option to change their choice for instruction at the end of each quarter for those wishing to change from virtual instruction back to in person schooling. There may be instances where an emergency situation arises necessitating a change mid-marking period. Those cases will be evaluated and decisions made by building principals as they arise. It will be less disruptive to students to make changes in school models, for the most part, at marking period end points.

How will I be able to communicate with my child’s teacher?

You may continue to use email or call the school to request time to talk with your child’s teacher. Zoom, Google Classroom, Google Meets, SeeSaw and other electronic modes of communication may be used. Please contact your child’s teacher to discuss the possible options and what will work best for you.

If we choose virtual schooling, who will provide the instruction?

Whenever possible we will use our own district teachers to deliver virtual instruction. That being said, as I have no way to gauge who will elect this option, it is difficult to say. If I don't have a critical mass that enables me to dedicate a district teacher or teachers, I will explore regional options.

Will my child still be able to attend their BOCES CTE program?

Yes. In fact we received word late Friday that BOCES will be able to offer instruction 5 days a week for CTE programs. Students going to BOCES would spend half of their time (2 days a week based on their cohort) at Marcellus taking core classes the other half at BOCES. Transportation on Marcellus virtual days will be coordinated at a later date.

If my child attends a full time BOCES program for special education or alternative education, will they have the same schedule that they were accustomed to last year?

If the program is one that is housed at a BOCES facility and not in a school district, they will be attending 5 days a week as long as schools are allowed to be open. BOCES is still working out possibilities as it relates to programs housed in school district buildings. More information will be coming soon.

Will my 7 or 8th grader still be able to take accelerated courses?

DMS students still electing accelerated courses should be able to access them. Specialized courses could impact other things a student wishes to take and it also could impact the school's ability to keep families together in a cohort based on when courses are offered although this should be unlikely.

For the hybrid model, what support will be available for students on their 2 remote learning days assuming their teacher is busy with the other cohort for the full school day?

We will continue to experiment with the best ways to meet the needs of students not in school while others are, but have come up with the following thoughts so far:

- During the mid day lunch block, there is also time for virtual advisement. Teachers could post a zoom or google meet and students can drop in to ask questions
- Teachers that have an open block in addition to their planning a lunch time could have office hours by subject or grade level and students who are virtual that day could stop in virtually for extra help.
- Certain teachers will be assigned to teach virtual classes for those who have elected virtual schooling. They may also pick up supporting students who are out of school on their off days if we can figure out a way to make that work.
- Students may send questions via email and the teacher respond to provide support and direction that way

For the 7-12 schedule, how will students move through the hallways maintaining social distancing and mask protocols?

Students will be "taught" the proper protocols for mask wearing and social distancing at the beginning of in person schooling and it will be repeated frequently as reminders to ensure compliance. Teachers who are available (some will be wiping down desks and tables prior to the next group arriving) will be out in hallways monitoring students moving about. Classes will be released in a staggered fashion. While we set times on the schedule draft we recognize that there will be a bit more fluidity between classes and they may not start as promptly as we are used to during this strange time. The most important thing will be students taking responsibility for following the rules as it is a responsibility that goes along with the privilege of returning to in person schooling.

For the fully remote schooling option: If a family chooses fully remote and you need to look at regional options, how will the quality of the instruction be vetted? Will the tools and curriculum mirror what the in-person cohort is doing so that when the family transitions back to in-person, the children are able to join in as seamlessly as possible?

Whenever possible, we are committed to serving the needs of those students utilizing full virtual schooling using our own staff members. That being said, because I have NO IDEA at this point the quantity of students who will choose this option, I have to include a disclaimer in case I need to look for different options. That being said the reality is that I can have access to the

curriculum used to ensure that it is of sufficient quality but there is not a possibility of ensuring that it will mirror ours as a regional option would have students coming from many districts. While that may be a concern, the reality is that students and families move from community to community every year and we always find a way to fill gaps and catch students up when it is needed. It would be no different then if a student moved from virtual to in person schooling at some point throughout the year.