

Responses to Questions

Submitted by

HCPSS Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee

Emailed -

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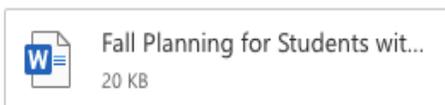


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1. How are parents, particularly working parents, single-working parents, parents of elementary students, supposed to adhere to this schedule?

The asynchronous activities do not have to adhere to the schedule. They can be done later in the day or on weekends. HCPSS is also exploring additional resources to support elementary students and families. HCPSS hopes students will be able to participate virtually with teachers as much as possible. Teachers as well as other staff, such as paraprofessionals, will also be in place to encourage student participation, even if a parent is not able to sit next to the students while they are online.

2. What options for lessons are parents being given for children who are disengaged from virtual learning, unable to sustain attention, etc... who may not be in that special population to receive face to face instruction?

The fall virtual learning will be supported by paraprofessionals, including those assigned out of the Department of Special Education. This group of support staff will work with students for instruction in both general education and special education small group sessions. They may also provide individual student support as scheduled by the general or special education teacher. DSE is developing updated roles and responsibilities for support staff as well as finalizing professional learning for paraeducators to fulfill duties. Additionally, case managers will continue to provide support, as needed, to parents/caregivers who need assistance with strategies to help them increase engagement time for students. Strategies could include things like setting up the physical work environment, implementing reinforcement systems, etc. The DSE behavior team will also be available to help parents set goals and provide coaching as well.

While it does not replace instruction by the teacher, HCPSS is exploring alternative resources to record lesson information as well in order to provide parents with options to engage their students at times most beneficial for their learning experiences. DSE is also planning to provide printed resources for students whose IEP team has determined they are unable to participate in some periods of virtual community building and learning. We encourage thoughtful decision-making when considering appropriate aspects of the virtually delivered lesson, activities, etc. that are most suitable for printing purposes.

3. Some parents will need hands on support during the “coaching” model for related services. Services such as physical therapy might be difficult for them to learn virtually as parents are not trained to know how much pressure to place on their child for an activity, as an example, how is this to be accomplished? Page 15

While this can be challenging, a big part of coaching is helping parents identify how a child/student is responding to the strategies, regardless of the area of need. These conversations focus on: (1) what is working, (2) what is not/how we know (what “data” we are gathering”), (3) and how to make adjustments accordingly. There will be aspects of IFPs/IEPs that will still be challenging to implement in a virtual environment.

4. How are parents being provided sensory supports for virtual instruction? For example, a student who uses a body sock at school for calming down strategies. Will these tools and tangible objects be provided to families? Page 23-24

Depending on the specific needs of the students and the reason behind the need for calming, there are multiple calming strategies and other sensory supports. Strategies needed can vary from child to child and even from situation to situation for the same child. Staff will work to problem solve strategies related to sensory supports that can be used at home on an individual basis with families as needed. System staff will continue to devise plans to provide families with the tools and equipment needed to facilitate learning to the greatest extent possible.

5. “Paraprofessionals will be an integral part of service provision and provide targeted supports aligned to the child’s goals and objectives.” How is the use of paraprofessionals being determined? Case by case basis? Assessment and evaluation on progress monitoring? Page 14-15

Paraprofessionals will be fully utilized in the Fall 2020-2021 school models. They are considered an integral part of the services team. Using their system-issued technology, paras will be able to continue participating in virtual live sessions to provide support, collect data on student performance, assist with community building, deliver some instructional interventions under the direction of the teacher, and more.

A workgroup has been meeting to develop guidelines which will include the roles and responsibilities for paraeducators. Training on how to support small group instruction, digital tools and more will be provided.

6. Will those teachers delivering face to face support be trained and certified as special education teachers? Page 22

A workgroup, led by the Chief Academic Officer, is responsible for planning the system's model for providing in person, face-to-face instruction for small numbers of students. We expect professional staff supporting this model to be certified. Support staff, although trained, may not hold an education certification.

7. Will more school psychologists, counselors, and social workers be hired to meet the recommended ratios supported by the National Association of School Psychologists? Page 33

HCPSS added 6.4 additional mental health support positions for the FY'21 school year. The ratios of school psychologists, school social workers and school counselors recommended by the National Association of School Psychologists, School Social Worker Association of America and American School Counselor Association are not met in all schools. More positions will continue to be requested in future years to move to the recommended ratios in all schools.

8. The Ready to Read Act has not been waived, yet there is no mention of implementation of the Universal Screener and professional development regarding the screener for the 20-21 school year, nor whether screening was completed district-wide before the COVID school closings.

HCPSS adopted DIBELS as the universal screener in Fall of 2019. The first administration of the screener occurred in January/February 2020. HCPSS will be complying with expectations set by MSDE for administration to occur this school year.

9. What are the exact formative and summative assessments elementary teachers are using to determine student reading progress and the measures to determine grade level?

Elementary teachers will utilize the formative assessments associated with the primary reading instructional program Being a Reader and Lexia Core5. Lexia Core5 will provide progress monitoring data which focus phonological awareness, phonics, comprehension and vocabulary. Comprehensive reading tasks will assess progress on the grade level MCCRS Reading Standards. Instructional decisions will be based on data collected from assessment data which will support differentiated reading instruction that will focus on an individual's reading progress. Classroom teachers will review formative and summative assessments to determine student's progress towards grade level expectations.

A writing assessment will be used as well and will require students to independently respond to a writing prompt that aligns to the three purposes for writing. Teachers evaluate the strength and areas of need using grade-level rubrics. This evaluation is used for students to establish personal goals and for teachers to design instruction.

NOTE: Responses provided by staff from the Division of Academics (Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, Special Education and Program Innovation and Student Well Being) 3

10. How is the school district defining grade level “diagnostic samples for reading and writing” at the secondary level?

A diagnostic writing sample requires students to independently respond to a writing prompt. Teachers evaluate the strength and areas of need using grade-level rubrics. This evaluation is used for students to establish personal goals and for teachers to design instruction.

A diagnostic reading sample requires students to read 3-4 grade-level passages of fiction and informational text independently and respond to questions that are aligned to the MCCRS Reading Standards. Each grade-level will use the same reading diagnostic. This provides teachers with an overview of strengths and needs for individual students in regard to the MCCRS Reading Standards. Teachers will also be able to evaluate what supports and scaffolds students need.

The results of these diagnostic assessments will be shared with special educators, reading specialists, and ESOL teachers.

11. What are the progress monitoring tools being used for the middle and high school seminar classes for decoding and comprehension?

In middle school we use the Reading Inventory (RI) for comprehension and the Phonics Inventory (PI) for decoding. These are used with students that are in Seminar C (comprehension) and Seminar D - System 44. For students in Seminar D that need a different approach than System 44, we are adding SIPPS (training and materials new this year), and RGR will still be available if necessary. Both programs (SIPPS and RGR) have progress monitor tools. Currently in HS we are using RI for comprehension.

Progress monitoring tools associated with the specific interventions will be used. Teachers can also develop summative assessments to determine reading skills in foundational skills, decoding and comprehension.

12. How is it determined if the classes are appropriate for students?

For students with IEPs, the IEP determines the reading goals and objectives/skills that need to be addressed. The IEP team then discusses the service that will be needed to achieve those goals. Teachers use the data and IEP to make a best reading intervention match. Different interventions are offered in a variety of ways. Depending on the students individualized needs the appropriate setting for reading intervention is recommended.

13. Are students being recommended for evaluations to determine if a SLD in reading/Dyslexia is present if they continue year after year in the seminar classes?

NOTE: Responses provided by staff from the Division of Academics (Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, Special Education and Program Innovation and Student Well Being) 4

Yes, the referral, evaluation and identification process in special education must continue. DSE will be providing additional training in the Fall on SLD assessment and criteria including dyslexia. This began prior to the school closure with school psychologists and will continue with special educators and speech pathologists. Staff will also be involved in facilitated, cyclical data conversations to support analysis of intervention data.

14. Which of the reading interventions are specific to students with dyslexia? Is Wilson available?

We will provide reading interventions to include Really Great Reading (RGR), Visualizing and Verbalizing (V&V), Systematic Instruction in Phonological Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words (SIPPs), Wilson and Foundations. Planning and training to deliver these interventions began in the Spring. To date, the summer training sessions included:

- 48 participants in RGR
- 14 participants in V&V
- 70 participants in SIPPS

Training will soon begin for the Fall sessions for anyone who were unable to attend the optional summer training opportunities. Many teachers of our students who attended ESY have already been delivering these types of interventions virtually. Feedback was positive.

15. Lexia has been a big issue for many parents. Lessons repeat themselves until a student gets it right. There is no change in lesson structure or teachable moments. Instructions and directions are also read aloud most of the time, making it difficult for students with auditory processing disorders to access lessons.

Lexia will be a supplement by live, synchronous reading and writing lessons. Students in grades K-5 will be assigned Lexia and Dreambox activities to complete during asynchronous times in the schedule. In the fall, various reading interventions will also be provided in a live synchronous model for those students with identified reading goals and objectives that require additional individualized intervention. Additionally, there is time within the schedule for students to receive additional specially designed instruction and support from teachers and specialists.

16. Professional development should also include training in appropriate discipline of students that does not negatively target certain racial groups. Page 32

Racial equity professional learning is scheduled for all staff beginning in August including special educators. Additional information can be provided by the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Additional staff dedicated to supporting the system initiatives for diversity, equity and inclusion are expected to join our teams by Fall.

17. Disability awareness and training should be included for all instructional staff as 78% of students with disabilities are included in the general education setting.

NOTE: Responses provided by staff from the Division of Academics (Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, Special Education and Program Innovation and Student Well Being) 5

The Board of Education set forth an expectation for this disability awareness to be a component part of our training efforts. The Board and system staff value this important step. One important effort will be the required professional learning module for staff specifically addressing accessibility to instruction in the virtual learning environment. We will also continue work with disability awareness through Inclusive Schools initiatives as well as within DSE's strategies to address disproportionality.

18. Under Professional Learning for Special education; supports for parents to contact the local Parent Training Information Center, The Parents Place of Maryland should be added so parents can acquire support and training for 504s, IEP/IFSP

We appreciate The Parents Place of Maryland being available to parents and families. Your feedback has been noted and we will continue to share opportunities for training with parents through our system sites, documents, flyers, etc. to also include information about The Parents Place. We also have a *Student Well Being Family Engagement and Support Work Group* and this information has been passed to our DSE representative from the Family Support and Resource Center who is on this group as well.

19. Parent surveys to determine specific barriers to student participation are a good use of collecting valuable information. Page 16

We agree that parent surveys provide very useful information for our planning. Through the system survey, we were able to identify several themes in the parent data that have informed changes to our model. Additionally, valuable ideas collected from families whose children attend ESY as well as parents who have called/emailed with suggestions based on their experiences has been very beneficial.

17. Evaluations for initial eligibility will adhere to federal timelines, as no waiver for the IDEA law has been granted. Page 17

HCPSS understands that there is no waiver for timelines under IDEA. While there is a number of assessments/evaluation that must be completed, the DSE began addressing this requirement, to the greatest extent possible, this summer. There were 4 testing sites, 6-8 rooms depending on the site. Over 100 face-to-face meetings with students this summer to complete assessments took place. DSE is currently determining how to continue this work in the Fall under the circumstances.

18. Is there a plan and detailed criteria to identify student groups who will begin face to face activities? What department is in charge of this? Page 21-22

The work group, led by Chief William Barnes, is focusing on the possibilities for serving small numbers of students in a face-to-face model. The group includes staff from various system divisions and departments. At this time, the plan is under development.

19. Does communication between the Pupil Personnel Worker and homeless families include a visit to the resident place of record and collaboration with local social workers? We know that some families might not have reliable communication devices, or addresses, so they might be missed in this identification. Page 29

During the 2019-2020 school year, the Pupil Personnel Office was able to connect with all families experiencing homelessness. Pupil Personnel Workers (PPWs) continue to reach out to these families to ensure they are ready for school. HCPSS is not currently conducting home visits, but PPWs have connected with families outside of schools or in other outdoor areas. HCPSS collaborates with the Department of Social Services and other county and community agencies to ensure students experiencing homelessness receive needed services and supports. The PPW office is concerned families that may become homeless in the near future and these families may not be aware of the supports that are available. HCPSS leadership has been and will continue to encourage Student Support Teams and administrators to share information about homelessness to encourage families to come forward with needs, even prior to losing housing.