



Mohawk Trail Regional School System

Return to Learn

Fall 2020 Reopening

Summary of Reopening

Educational Model Decision

Fall School Reopening Final Educational Model Recommendation

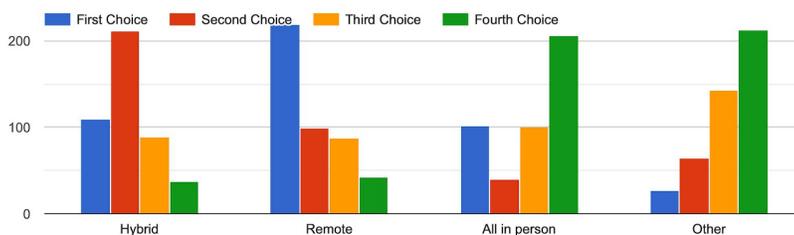
I would like to begin by extending my sincerest appreciation for the countless hours our families, community members, and staff have dedicated to participating in workgroups, providing feedback, attending school committee meetings and virtual town halls, writing emails, answering surveys, and reaching out through phone calls. It is safe to say that no one educational model is going to fit the unique needs of each family. During the entire process of developing our plans, I have been incredibly proud of our ability to maintain a problem-solving approach to meet the challenges presented during COVID-19, engage in active listening and respectful discourse. I understand that each of us brings unique and varied experiences that shape our opinions regarding the best way to plan for our September school reopening. I do believe we share the common goals of ensuring our decisions are in the best interest of the health and safety of students, families, and staff and educating ALL students.

We are fortunate to live in a region where the number of cases of COVID-19 are low, but our collective response has been in the best interest of our community. Our daily lives have changed—we have transitioned to wearing masks when outside our homes; routinely practicing physical distancing; and have increased our focus on routine and thorough hand-washing. We do these things because we know we are not only keeping ourselves safe, but we are keeping our families, our communities, and our loved ones safe. In all of our planning and decision-making, the health and safety of our students, families, and staff and educating ALL children have been our focus. While COVID-19 has presented many challenges, we've also discovered new opportunities to educate and support our children; build communities of learners in many different forms; and support both the academic and social-emotional learning needs of students in order to build resiliency in our entire learning community.

RESULTS FROM PARENT SURVEY 8/7/20

The final decision regarding which model to move forward with reflects our collaboration with the community and is influenced by the many opportunities for stakeholders to provide input and feedback on the plan. We know that there is no substitute for in-person learning. However, I have said many times throughout this process that in the coming school year, the course of COVID-19 will determine many of our decisions and actions. This is

With all that you know about the plans that were sent to DESE, and the currently available health data, which of the plans are you most comfortable with?



absolutely true as we entered the last phase recommending a final educational model for the reopening of school.

We are recommending returning to school in ***Phase I: Remote Learning Plus model*** with a transition to ***Phase II: Hybrid model to begin tentatively November 24.***

Phase I: Remote Learning Plus

Overview

In the best interest of the health and safety of our students, families, and staff, we are recommending a return to school in a Remote Learning Plus model. We have come to this decision after many hours of public comment, staff input, an understanding of our unique setting and COVID-19 cases in our region, and an analysis of our resource capacities. From our emergency closure of school buildings in March, we recognize that remote learning was difficult for some students and families. We are committed to removing obstacles and barriers to remote learning. With 17% of families reporting limited or no access to the internet, we will be creating remote learning hubs to increase access for our students. In Remote Learning Plus, we also recognize that some students may require additional support. We will use criteria set by the state to determine which students are eligible for more in-person learning. Using the Return to Learn via a remote model will assure we have a safe return to the school year while providing benchmarks/phases for safe returns to our buildings. We will continue to assess the model through November and decide when to move between phases based on metrics and guidelines established by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG), the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, local Boards of Health (BOH), administration, and educators.

How will remote learning be different from the Spring?

*The remote learning experience designed for our fall reopening is vastly different from what our staff and students experienced this spring during the emergency closing of school buildings due to COVID-19. **With the recommendation to move forward with a Return to Learn in the remote model**, we've made significant changes to our remote learning plan: we've balanced DESE's requirements with families' concerns regarding a robust remote program, while prioritizing the health and safety of our staff and students.*

What we've learned:

- DESE's remote learning platform, which is available to all school districts, does NOT meet the needs of our students, staff, and families.
- Our Return to Learn Remote Model will be developed and delivered by MTRSD/HRSD teachers.

- Following state guidelines, clear expectations for participating in remote learning will be different for elementary and secondary students.
- Technology and internet access remain a challenge for our district. We are committed to breaking down barriers for families (access, financial, connectivity problem-solving) and assisting families with accommodations.
- Expectations for students and families in remote learning model:
- Lessons will be structured and scheduled; attendance will be taken; work will be graded and students will receive credit for their work.
- Students will participate in live-streaming, virtual face-to-face/real-time instruction (synchronous learning) AND off-line instruction via website-based (non-live) lessons/assignments, videos, or independent learning activities (asynchronous learning).
- We will provide families with a schedule which allows students to share synchronous learning; additionally, the district will provide a sample schedule for each grade-level (with input from our teachers).

Our commitment to remote learning:

Through the multitude of surveys we've issued since March, one thing has been clear: our teachers and families want a well-developed and executed remote model ***created and implemented by our district staff. Our revised remote model includes this important distinction.***

As we move to Return to Learn this fall via a remote model, students will have a regular schedule and direct contact with their MTRSD/HRSD teacher and classmates; they'll spend time learning together and independently; they'll be expected to participate in classes and will be graded. Their experience from this spring will be significantly different. With these changes, we're excited to start our school year and welcome our students back to Return to Learn.

Guiding principles for remote learning:

Equity

Equity is a top priority as we plan for remote learning. Addressing the unique needs of students in a rural setting as related to connectivity, internet access, devices, English Language Learners, Special Education students, and poverty continue to shape the development of our remote learning model.

Maintaining Connections with Students and Families

We are focused on maintaining connections between school staff, students, and families, particularly for the most vulnerable members of our school communities as we develop our remote learning model.

Growth Mindset

We are focused on developing a growth mindset and resiliency for all of our learning community

members. Working together, supporting our collective learning, and providing feedback are all key components of ensuring we focus on the journey of our learning together.

MTRSD/HRSD Plan for All Students Engaged in Remote Learning Model

Teachers will develop and provide remote instruction to all students scheduled into their classrooms and courses. The curriculum and instruction will be based upon the grade-level state standards and existing district curriculum, with adaptations for remote learning. This will include additional/different texts, instructional tools, and/or materials.

Teachers will provide instruction in a variety of formats, but will use common district platforms for instructional delivery with a limited number of apps, websites, or other online tools for students to utilize. Instruction will include synchronous and asynchronous learning modes. Dedicated time in the remote learning schedule will be used for social-emotional learning, community-building, wellness and related arts (specials), in addition to academics. Supplemental instruction will be provided to students with additional academic needs as part of the tiered intervention model. Individualized services and instruction will be provided to students with additional needs, including but not limited to, those indicated on IEPs/504s and counseling services.

Teachers will have dedicated time for planning, curriculum development, and professional training in order to prepare for the remote learning model. Teachers will assess student learning and growth in a variety of ways and will be responsible for grading students, participating in parent-teacher conferences (and other parent meetings as needed), and completing report cards. Student attendance will be tracked and monitored.

Considerations for Students with Limited Internet Access

The district recognizes broadband internet access is an essential part of online learning and many of our students have inadequate access for a variety of reasons.

- The district will make every effort to leverage funds and collaborate with municipalities to problem-solve so as many families as possible have access to high-speed internet.
- The district is committed to supporting families in participating in all aspects of remote learning. Components of the remote learning model will include (but are not limited to):
 - Projects, assignments, and other tasks that are not technology-dependent and/or utilize other materials and texts that can be provided to students asynchronously.
 - Synchronous/Asynchronous interaction through Google Classroom and/or other learning platforms.
 - Synchronous/Asynchronous instruction through video, audio, or other media.

- Scheduled class meetings, individual check-ins, and instruction time that are spread throughout the week scheduled to minimize multiple children in a family requiring video streaming concurrently.
- Exploring partnerships with towns to find local WiFi access points designated for student use.

Special Education

The state is requiring schools to provide all IEP services and Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

- Once school resumes, **a student with an IEP will receive all of their services.** Paraprofessionals, Special Educators, and Related Services Specialists will participate in the student's class(es), as well as conduct small group and 1:1 meetings with students.

Annual, Initial, or Three-Year Reevaluation Meeting: If your student's meeting was scheduled, but not held remotely during the closure, the meeting will be scheduled when school resumes

- IEP meetings will continue to be held virtually until further notice.

Initial or Three-Year Re-evaluations:

- Evaluations were not completed during closure due to lack of fidelity in scores when assessments are completed virtually. They will be scheduled in-person when school resumes. *Please keep in mind we will be prioritizing high-needs situations.*

Supporting High Needs Students

We are utilizing the criteria set by the state to determine which students are eligible for more in-person learning. If your child meets this criteria, their support team will reach out to you by August 21 to discuss eligibility for more in-person learning.

Criteria for additional in-person learning time:

- Students previously identified as "high needs" through the IEP process on the IEP form entitled, "[Primary Disability/Level of Need-PL3.](#)" **Such students must meet at least two of these criteria:**
- Services provided outside of the general education classroom;
 - Service providers are special education teachers and related service providers;
 - Special education services constitute more than 75% of the student's school day;
- Students who cannot engage in remote learning due to their disability-related needs;
- Students who primarily use aided and augmentative communication;
- Students who are homeless;
- Students in foster care or congregate care; and/or
- Students who are dually identified as English Learners.

For Additional Questions regarding Special Education please contact Leann Loomis, lloomis@mtrsd.org, (413) 625-0192 ext.1025.

Phase II: Transition to Hybrid Model

Overview

We have identified several steps which must occur in order to implement our Hybrid Learning Model. First, we must establish open and consistent communication with our community regarding the status of COVID-19 in the state and in our region using tools developed by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. We must establish a working group of educators, administration, local Board of Health (BOH) and Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) health officials to weekly evaluate this information and share the status of COVID-19 in our region. We must establish benchmarks to guide our decisions in returning to in-person learning. Finally, we must continue to evaluate and communicate to staff and families the readiness of our buildings for a return to learning during COVID-19.

Evaluating Readiness to Phase II:

The following resources will be used to gauge district readiness for in-person learning in a hybrid model.

- Massachusetts COVID-19 Dashboards
 - Daily Dashboards
 - <https://www.mass.gov/doc/covid-19-dashboard-august-5-2020/download>
- Weekly Report (Cases by Town)
 - <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-response-reporting# covid-19-weekly-public-health-report>
- NY Times Map on Expected Cases in US Counties
 - <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/31/us/coronavirus-school-reopening-risk.html>

Important to note, a phased approach to the hybrid model is contingent upon several factors:

- Meeting countywide benchmarks for COVID-19 measures.
- Meeting statewide benchmarks for COVID-19 measures.
- Continued work in facilities to ensure building safety relative to COVID-19 per DESE guidelines.
- Adequate funding to ensure all safety and staffing measures are fully implemented per DESE guidelines.

In Closing

While these are certainly challenging times, what is abundantly clear is that we all share a commitment of ensuring a safe and healthy learning environment and educating ALL students.

The upcoming school year will require a tremendous amount of patience, kindness, and empathy from all of us. However, our collective response to this pandemic will provide many lessons about ourselves, our communities, and what we value. Our children will no doubt take notice of how we respond and treat each other. As we move together in this next chapter, let us continue to be the role models our children need. I'm hopeful for our future, even with the challenges that may lie ahead, and am grateful to work with our community.