

WELCOME TO THE 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR!



Mobile County
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

BACK-TO-SCHOOL PARENT GUIDE

WHAT'S INSIDE

- DISCLAIMER
- TWO OPTIONS FOR LEARNING: FACE-TO-FACE OR VIRTUAL
- COVID PREVENTION STRATEGIES AT-A-GLANCE
- 1:1 DISTRICT
- SCHOology
- STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES
- PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES
- BE READY FOR THE FIRST DAY
- SCHOOL CALENDAR
- MCPSS HEALTH PROTOCOLS WHEN A STUDENT IS SICK OR EXPOSED TO COVID-19
- CLEANING AND DISINFECTING
- CHILD NUTRITION
- TRANSPORTATION
- PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND ATHLETICS
- SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING
- VISITORS ON CAMPUS

MESSAGE FROM OUR SUPERINTENDENT

MR. CHRISAL D. THREADGILL

MCPSS Parents and Guardians,

As we prepare to return to school on August 11, I am sharing important information that you need to know as part of our official Back-to-School Plan.

Even though we are striving to return to some sense of normalcy, we again find ourselves facing a situation where COVID-19 numbers are higher than they have ever been and rising.

As superintendent, my number one priority is to keep our students and employees as safe and healthy as possible in order to continue with face-to-face instruction throughout the school year. However, I need your help to accomplish this goal. Please read this plan and talk to your children about what they can do to protect themselves from COVID-19 while at school and when they are away from school.

To assist with mitigating the virus, we are strongly recommending that students and employees wear face masks. However, there is still a possibility that if the confirmed cases continue to rise, we will require face masks to be worn. In addition, if your child is sick or has come in direct contact with someone testing positive for COVID-19, please keep them home.

We have been in constant communication with health officials and have worked hard to put together this plan, which includes layered prevention strategies to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our schools. Those strategies - including social distancing, proper handwashing, contact tracing, thorough cleaning and disinfecting, and more - are detailed throughout this document. Additionally, our comprehensive Return to School Plan will be posted on our district's website.

We learned from our experiences last year and we are entering into this school year better prepared. Please practice your patience and flexibility with us again as we get through this together as #TeamMCPSS. This year we are striving to #StartStrongStayStrongFinishStrong.

Sincerely,

Chresal D. Threadgill, Superintendent



START STRONG-STAY STRONG-FINISH STRONG



DISCLAIMER

ALL INFORMATION INCLUDED IN THIS PLAN IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE AS INFORMATION IS RECEIVED FROM THE CDC AND ADPH.

TWO OPTIONS FOR LEARNING: FACE-TO-FACE OR VIRTUAL

Mobile County Public Schools students will return to school on Wednesday, August 11. Our primary delivery of instruction will be face-to-face instruction.

Due to the need expressed by our parents, we will be adding a virtual option for students in grades K-6. A survey was sent allowing parents to select an option of face-to-face (traditional) or virtual (self-paced, online) school for their children. The majority of students K-12 have indicated that they will return to face-to-face, in-person learning. However, for those who will not be returning to the classroom, we are extending a virtual option through our district's Mobile Academy of Virtual Learning (MAVL).

Students wishing to attend school virtually can apply for enrollment in Mobile Academy of Virtual Learning. This option is available for students in grades K-12. Mobile Academy of Virtual Learning is a stand-alone school that offers the same courses as our traditional K-12 program but with a flexible learning schedule for students.

Courses are self-paced and do not have direct instruction provided by classroom teachers. Students selecting this option will be required to remain enrolled in MAVL for the entire semester. Students applying for admission into MAVL must meet the entrance criteria prescribed for the program. The enrollment criteria are as follows:

- Be a resident within one of the MCPSS school zones
- Be at or above grade level in reading and math
- Have acceptable attendance and minimal discipline issues
- Have passed all subjects for 1st - 6th graders
- Have passed all academic courses for upcoming 7th - 9th graders with an overall "C+" average in each core subject area
- Have a minimum 2.5 GPA for 10th-12th graders
- Have access to consistent internet
- Have reliable transportation to attend lab/testing days weekly at the designated virtual school lab

To apply for enrollment in the MCPSS Academy of Virtual Learning or for more detailed information about the program, including entrance criteria and student expectations, visit mcpss.com.

COVID-19 PREVENTION STRATEGIES AT-A-GLANCE

With COVID-19 cases as high as they've ever been, MCPSS is taking precautions to keep our students and employees as safe as possible.

MCPSS strongly recommends that students, employees, and SCHEDULED visitors wear face masks at school and on our buses. Health officials and the Centers for Disease Control agree that proper mask-wearing is one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of the virus.

The district will have layered prevention strategies in place to protect our students and employees. That includes:

- Practicing social distancing
- Ensuring constant and thorough cleaning of our classrooms, buses and facilities
- Encouraging proper handwashing and providing hand sanitizing stations
- Conducting the appropriate contact tracing to identify students and employees who are exposed to COVID-19 and taking the appropriate steps to protect them and those around them
- Having at least one nurse assigned to every school
- Asking parents to keep their children home when they are sick
- Working with health officials to host vaccination clinics in our schools to provide access to this vital service to our community

Details of these and other strategies are included throughout this plan.

ONE-TO-ONE (1:1) DISTRICT

We are looking forward to returning to face-to-face learning. This will be very similar to the traditional classroom instruction offered pre-COVID, but we are making some notable improvements.

First, Mobile County Public Schools will officially be a **1:1 district**. As a result, we are providing each student with a Chromebook for the 2021-2022 school year and beyond. It has long been the goal of MCPSS to become a 1:1 district, which will allow equitable access to the most modern technologies for ALL students for the 2021-2022 school year and beyond.

These Chromebooks will enhance - not replace - traditional classroom learning experiences. Students will collaborate with their classmates on projects and engage in real-world problem-solving activities. These devices will enable teachers to encourage student innovation and creativity in an ever-changing, globalized society. This initiative will generate enthusiasm among our students as they continue to become critical thinkers, effective communicators, problem solvers and responsible digital citizens.

Your school will distribute laptops at the beginning of the school year and will provide you with additional information at that time. Students will receive a **student laptop agreement and a copy of the MCPSS Chromebook Handbook**. Parents and students may also visit <https://1to1.mcps.com> for additional information.

SCHOOLGY

Why Schoology? PowerSchool's Schoology is the leading PreK-12 Learning Management System for schools to establish an engaging learning environment. Schoology helps support student learning in the classroom or anywhere with its powerful and flexible collaboration tools. It allows teachers to easily differentiate instruction and personalize learning for students. In addition, its tools promote collaboration by allowing all stakeholders in a district to share resources and materials across their class, school and district.

Teachers will be providing face-to-face instruction to students daily. MCPSS will continue to use the Schoology learning platform for course materials and assignments, grades, and attendance in all classrooms. In addition, students will receive daily face-to-face instruction provided by their teacher(s). They will also participate in technology-rich lessons using their student laptops.

Students will access their teachers' courses through Schoology at <https://mcpss.schoology.com> using their district username (email address) and password. In addition, in-person classroom teachers will allow opportunities for students to submit assignments and create projects in the Schoology platform. Students who are absent from school due to illness or quarantine will be able to access their classwork and homework assignments through Schoology.

MCPSS will continue to send out weekly Schoology progress reports to parents via email.

FACE-TO-FACE STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Be prepared for daily instruction.
- Follow teachers' instructions and schedule.
- Be responsible for your school-issued device.
- Charge your laptop for school daily.
- Transport your laptop to school in a laptop bag or bookbag.
- Report any issues to your teacher.
- Adhere to the laptop agreement and handbook for the student-issued device.
- Focus during instructional time and make the most of learning opportunities.
- Submit all required work through Schoology.
- Be engaged in learning!

Virtual Student and Parent Responsibilities are shared during Mobile Academy of Virtual Learning (MAVL) Orientation.

Resources available for parents:

Visit: <https://1to1.mcpss.com>

The site includes tutorials for Schoology, instructions for logging in, help guides for parents and students regarding Chromebooks, and the district's Return to School Plan.

FACE-TO-FACE PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Cooperate and support your teachers as well as your school and school district policies.
- Monitor your child's health daily and keep sick children home.
- Communicate with teachers regularly and as needed.
- Adhere to the laptop agreement and handbook.
- Ensure your email address on file with the school is accurate.
- Review weekly progress reports emailed each Friday evening.
- Understand that this is a very crucial time in your child's educational journey. Therefore, stay positive and remain flexible as situations occur.
- Remember that we are better and stronger TOGETHER. Our students deserve all of us working together during this time because the quality of their education depends on it.

BE READY FOR THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 11, 2021

Please be sure that your children are ready for the first day of school by following this checklist:

- Register for school. Parents of new students who were not enrolled in MCPSS last year may register their children at mcpss.com/registration. Parents of returning students who did not register by the June 4 deadline should check with their school(s) for instructions on completing the process. Some parents may need to submit required documentation, such as proof of address and a vaccination/Blue Card.
- Purchase school uniforms. MCPSS requires that all students wear a uniform to school daily. Check your school's webpage and Facebook page for specific uniform requirements, as they vary by school.
- Check your bus routes. Visit [mcpss.com/bus routes](https://mcpss.com/bus-routes) to review your school's bus route, including pick-up and drop-off times.
- Get your children back in a school routine. After a long break, students will need to re-establish a regular nighttime schedule with consistent bedtimes and morning routines to be prepared for the first day of school.
- Review breakfast and lunch menus. MCPSS will continue to provide breakfast and lunch for all students free of charge. Check your school's website for daily menus. Students may also bring their lunches to school.
- Buy a reusable water bottle. Water bottles should be labeled with your child's name to bring to school. MCPSS is again keeping its water fountains turned off to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Visit school website. Your school's website should include grade-specific lists of school supplies and information about summer reading and math activities.
- Follow social media. Your school's Facebook page and other social media accounts should provide the latest information, including information about Meet the Teacher events, orientation, arrival and dismissal information, and more.
- Provide current contact information. Make sure your school has your most current address, email address and phone number on file so you can receive important information throughout the school year.



2021-2022 SCHOOL CALENDAR

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MCPSS HEALTH PROTOCOLS

MCPSS is implementing layered protection strategies to protect our students and our employees from COVID-19 as follows:

- MCPSS strongly recommends that students, employees, and visitors wear face masks, especially indoors. To be effective, masks should fit and be worn properly. Besides helping to prevent the spread of COVID-19, students who wear a mask are less likely to have to go into quarantine. For example, if one student wearing a mask is exposed to another student who was wearing a mask but tests positive, the exposed student would not have to quarantine if he/she is symptom-free.
- Parents are encouraged to keep their children home when they are sick or when they have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.
- Schools will promote social distancing, which following the latest CDC guidance, is three feet between students.
- Students and employees will be encouraged to follow proper handwashing techniques, which includes washing hands with soap and water for twenty seconds, as well as proper respiratory etiquette, which includes coughing and sneezing into your shirt or elbow instead of into your hands and not wiping your nose with your hands.
- Hand sanitizer will also be available for student and employee use.
- MCPSS custodians have been trained to thoroughly clean and disinfect our schools to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Custodians are using cleaning products and sanitizers approved by the CDC.
- At least one nurse will be assigned to each school. Our nurses have been trained on our COVID-19 protocols and how to identify and isolate students and employees exhibiting symptoms.
- MCPSS will do proper contact tracing to identify and notify any students who have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. In addition, we will inform parents of these students as soon as possible and provide instructions on what to do.
- To be transparent, MCPSS will post daily COVID-19 reports on mcpss.com, including the number of reported positive cases of COVID-19 at each school.
- MCPSS will continue to work with the Mobile County Health Department to offer COVID-19 vaccination clinics to serve our community. Those who are vaccinated and exposed to COVID-19 do not have to quarantine unless they exhibit symptoms.

WHEN A STUDENT IS SICK OR EXPOSED TO COVID-19

IF A STUDENT IS SICK, PARENTS SHOULD KEEP THEM HOME FOR THE DAY. THE CDC RECOMMENDS THAT PARENTS CHECK THEIR CHILD'S TEMPERATURE EVERY MORNING. IF THE TEMP IS 100.4 OR HIGHER, THE CHILD SHOULD STAY HOME UNTIL THEY ARE FEVER-FREE (WITHOUT THE USE OF MEDICATION FOR THREE DAYS) BEFORE RETURNING TO SCHOOL.



Parents are encouraged to contact a health care provider if their child is experiencing two or more of these symptoms:

- Fever of 100.4, especially first thing in the morning
- Cough, runny nose, sinus congestion
- Trouble breathing or persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- Common symptoms, sore throat, loss of taste or smell
- Diarrhea or vomiting

Students diagnosed with COVID-19 should stay home until they have completed the required ten-day quarantine and recovered following Alabama Department of Public Health guidelines. Students must test negative or be quarantined for ten days AND be asymptomatic (fever-free without medication for three days) before returning to school. Parents are encouraged to bring in a release form from a doctor or healthcare provider upon a student's return to school.

Unless they are fully vaccinated, students residing in a household where someone has been determined to be positive for COVID-19 are considered a "direct contact" and should be quarantined for ten days. In addition, the student should be asymptomatic, fever-free without medication for three days, OR receive a negative test before returning to MCPSS property.

The school nurse will assess students who get sick during the school day. Parents will be immediately notified. Those students will be required to wear masks until their parents or guardians can pick them up.

As COVID-19 cases are reported, MCPSS will conduct proper contact tracing to identify any other students or school employees who may be at risk due to close contact. In addition, schools will follow the CDC's three-foot rule for school settings, which states that students within three feet of an infected student for at least fifteen minutes are considered close contact. (The rule is still six feet for adults).

Due to federal privacy laws, schools will not identify the names of those who have tested positive. However, the school will notify parents of students who have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive and provide instructions on what they should do to quarantine themselves.

There will be at least one nurse assigned to each school. Each school will have designated first-aid rooms and separate isolation areas for students exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms or otherwise express that they are not feeling well.



CLEANING AND DISINFECTING

Custodians at each school will develop a daily routine of cleaning and disinfecting hard, non-porous surfaces with a cloth, mop or auto scrubber. Custodians will use PH7Q, a dual-concentrated, neutral disinfectant cleaner that complies with CDC guidelines on helping to prevent the spread of COVID-19. An emphasis will be placed on "critical touchpoints," including door handles, desktops, countertops, light switches, hand washing stations, handrails, floors, toilets and more.

CHILD NUTRITION

Mobile County Public Schools will continue to offer breakfast and lunch to all students, free of charge.

Each school will determine whether students will eat in the cafeteria or their classrooms, based on whether students could maintain social distancing and other health and safety criteria. Before meal service, all carts, tables and equipment will be cleaned and sanitized. In addition, students will have access to hand sanitizer before and after meals.



Students wishing to bring their lunch to school should do so in the morning. They should pack items that do not require heating or reheating. Parents may not bring food to the school building. Snack and food items are limited to the individual child. No items may be brought from home for a class or group of students.

Water fountains will be turned off. Students are encouraged to bring a filled water bottle, labeled with their name, to school daily.

TRANSPORTATION

Given the current COVID-19 situation, parents are encouraged to drive their children to and from school if possible. **Bus riders are expected to comply with all MCPSS COVID-19 protocols. It is strongly recommended that they wear face masks while on the bus.**

Every student boarding an MCPSS bus will be encouraged to clean their hands using a hand sanitizer dispenser mounted on the bus. As much as possible, students will be assigned seats to allow for social distancing and contact tracing. Students should face forward and not lean across seats.

Bus drivers will sanitize the bus before and after each route.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND ATHLETICS

During physical education classes, dressing out will be optional. Students will not be penalized for not dressing out, but participation in P.E. activities is required to receive a passing grade.

Mobile County Public Schools will follow guidance from the CDC and the Alabama High School Athletic Association to keep athletes as safe as possible.

During practices, protocols include:

- Sanitizing equipment after each use
- Cleaning and sanitizing locker rooms and weight rooms daily
- Utilizing hand-washing stations in locker rooms and weight rooms
- Encouraging students to bring their water bottles
- Strongly encouraging students to wear masks when not engaged in physical activity
- Maintaining social distancing whenever possible
- Monitoring symptoms daily

During games:

- Encouraging fans to maintain social distancing at all athletic events
- Cleaning and sanitizing benches, equipment and locker rooms before and after each game
- Continuing using GoFan to sell tickets digitally rather than at the gate
- Implementing seating charts, strongly recommending face masks, and keeping windows open while teams are traveling on buses
- Allowing concession stands to open

Coaches and schools will continue to educate parents, athletes and coaches on mitigating the spread of COVID-19.



SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Mobile County Public Schools has counselors and social workers available and has established partnerships with various community agencies to help our students with their social and emotional well-being. Those agencies include the Mobile County Health Department, Alta Pointe, the Bridge, and the University of South Alabama Psychology Department.

Schools can also refer families to community agencies that can provide counseling services, food, uniforms, and other necessities. We are here to help.

VISITORS ON CAMPUS

To mitigate the spread of COVID-19, all MCPSS campuses will limit visitors entering the buildings. We understand that emergencies will arise. However, when possible, please contact the school to schedule an appointment for all non-emergency visits. This includes meetings with the principal and teacher(s).