

# KEEPING OUR KIDS SAFE

A Parent's Guide to the 2020-21 School Year



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## A Message from the Superintendent



Dear MCPSS Parents and Guardians,

Like most of you, I am looking forward to the day when we can welcome our students back into the classroom. However, Mobile County is experiencing some of its highest numbers of COVID-19 cases to date, and we as a community must do what is best for the health and safety of our students, our teachers, other employees, and their families. That is why we have made the difficult decision to offer all classes remotely for the first quarter of the school year, which will begin on September 1.

In this document, you will find our plan for remote learning, which will look different from last spring. We will outline our expectations and the support we will provide for your student and your family during these unprecedented times.

My hope is that we will be able to return to school for the second quarter, but that will depend on how the COVID-19 numbers trend in our county. I know this year will not be easy, but I also know that as #TeamMCPSS, we will work together to provide the best possible educational experience for your children during these times.

Sincerely,  
Chresal D. Threadgill  
Superintendent, Mobile County Public Schools

# What Is Remote Learning?

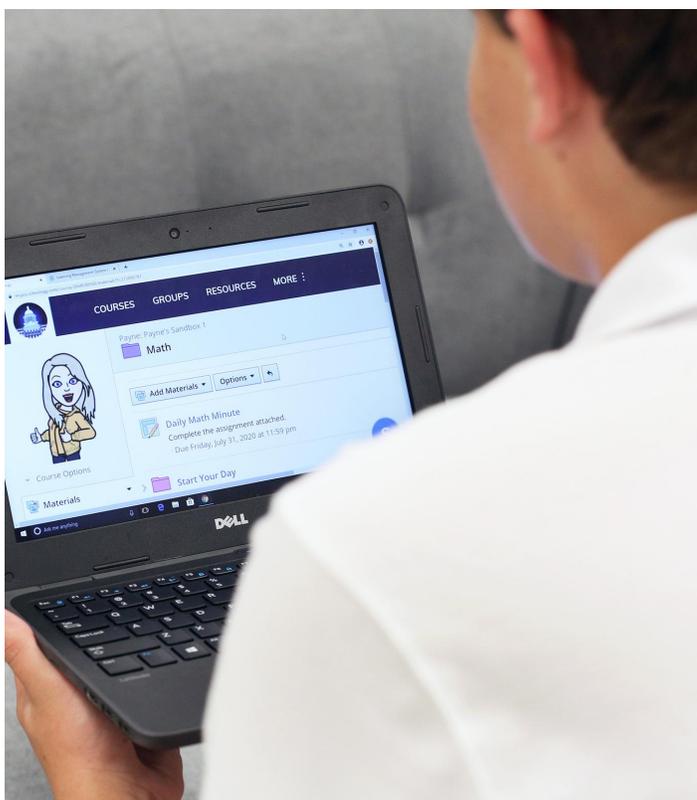
Mobile County Public Schools students will participate in remote learning during the first quarter of the 2020-21 school year using a variety of online resources through the district's learning management system, Schoology. Students will be assigned the same classroom teachers they would have if we were in a traditional school setting. Those teachers will provide daily instruction, academic support, and intervention with a goal of helping all students be successful. Students will be expected to attend school daily, and we highly recommend that they follow a class schedule as if they were in a traditional school setting.

## How will remote learning work?

Remote learning takes place when the students and teacher are not physically present in a traditional classroom setting and must rely on technology to connect them instead.

Teachers will connect with their classes via video meetings for live instruction. Information will be relayed online through discussion boards, video conferencing, and other methods. Students will be able to access classroom lessons and material and will submit their assignments to their teachers using Schoology.

Consideration will be given to students and parents who are not able to follow the recommended schedule. Through screen-



casting, videos will be archived so students can access teacher lessons, content, and assignments within the Schoology platform if they are unable to join the live lessons as recommended.

In an effort to limit screen time during the day, particularly with younger students, teachers will also provide activities that do not involve a computer.

## Why Schoology?

A benefit of using Schoology is that by having all of our teachers use one system, we will alleviate confusion that some parents encountered last spring when we were using multiple apps and programs. Schoology is a one-stop shop for teachers, students, and parents as all lessons, assignments, grades, and assessments will be stored and accessed in one place.

Parents and students will be able to track their course grades through Schoology. Also, parents will receive weekly emails to track their children's progress and to let them know if their children are turning in assignments. Please make sure your school has your correct email address so you can receive these updates.

Students and parents will be able to message their teachers for help through Schoology. Teachers will be expected to respond to messages during school hours. Technical support will be offered on the MCPSS Helpline and academic support will be available on the state's Homework Hotline.

## How will students access Schoology?

Students will log on to Schoology daily using their district username and password, which is the same username and password they used during the spring. If your student does not remember his or her user name and password, contact your school or call 251-221-7777 for assistance.

Schools are also providing laptops and hotspots to students as needed. Your school will have information soon about distribution, which will be in late-August. MCPSS is also stationing 20 buses throughout the county that will be equipped with hot spots to allow students to go online.

# What Can Parents Do Now to Prepare for School?

- Complete online registration at [www.mcpss.com](http://www.mcpss.com). All students need to register as soon as possible so that all students can focus on instruction from Day 1. If you are moving to a new school and need to provide documentation, contact your school for information about how to complete the registration process.
- Make sure your school has your updated contact information, including phone number(s), email address and home address.
- Follow your school's Facebook page and check its website for information about any registration or orientation activities.
- Look for information from your school about distribution of laptops for students who need them for online learning. Hotspots will also be available for families who have told us they do not have adequate internet connectivity.
- Video tutorials as well as a parent guide and a student guide to remote learning are available for viewing at: <https://acp.mcpss.com>
- Stay positive. This is not where anyone thought we would be months ago, but this pandemic is beyond our control. Your children will react to how you are feeling and to what you are saying. Assure them that everything is going to be okay and remind them that we are here to support them in these unprecedented times.

## What is the difference between remote learning and virtual learning?

Remote learning is teacher-paced instruction, as the classroom teacher provides daily lessons and content. Virtual learning is student-paced. Through virtual learning, which is an option via the MCPSS Academy of Virtual Learning (formerly known as Envision Virtual Academy), students in grades 8-12 move independently through courses at their own pace. That allows them to accelerate their learning if they are able to do so. For more information about the MCPSS Academy of Virtual Learning, visit: <https://www.mcpssvirtuallearning.com/>

## When will students return to school?

Our hope is to return to in-school instruction for the second quarter. But that will depend on how the COVID-19 numbers are trending. Alabama has been identified as a COVID-19 hot spot, and Mobile County currently has some of the highest numbers in the state. Our first priority is and will continue to be the health and safety of our students, our teachers, other employees, and their families. We will continue to monitor these numbers and will make an announcement about the second quarter as soon as we can.

### District Calendar

Mobile County Public Schools has requested a waiver from the Alabama Department of Education so we can end the school year as close to the originally scheduled date of May 27 as possible. If that waiver is granted, we hope to keep the same holidays for students and teachers that were included on the 2020-21 calendar approved by the Mobile County Board of School Commissioners this past spring. We will send out the updated calendar after we hear back from the state.



# What Are the Expectations for My Child?

Mobile County Public Schools expects that all students log on to Schoology daily and be prepared for instruction.

Students should:

- **Log in** to Schoology every school day so your attendance is counted.
- **Complete** all of assignments through Schoology on time and to the best of your ability.
- **Participate** in Digital Citizenship lessons as assigned by your teachers.
- **Take responsibility** for your devices, which are being assigned for school use.
- **Follow** teachers' instructions and assigned schedule.
- **Focus** during instructional time, making the most of all learning opportunities.
- **Ask for help** from a teacher if needed. Students can chat, email, or video conference with their teachers.
- **Participate** in intervention via LIVE video conference help sessions as needed.
- **Be engaged** in your learning.

Parents/Guardians should:

- **Check** to make sure that your child is logging into Schoology every day as the MCPSS Attendance Policy will be in effect.
- **Ensure** that your children take responsibility for the device assigned to them for school use.
- **Cooperate with and support** teachers, your school, and school district policies.
- **Communicate** with teachers regularly and as needed.
- **Work with your children** to comply with all district requests regarding instruction and submission of assignments.
- **Understand** that this is a very crucial time in your child's educational journey. Stay positive and remain flexible as situations occur.
- **Remember that we are better and stronger TOGETHER** and our students deserve all of us working together during this time. The quality of their education depends on it.

## Important Dates To Remember

- July 16** Superintendent Threadgill announced that due to high numbers of COVID-19 cases in Mobile County, MCPSS will open on Sept. 1 and offer all instruction remotely.
- Aug. 4** Teachers returned to work to train on the Schoology platform.
- Aug. 17-31** Laptop distribution for students.
- Aug. 27** Students receive their class schedules this week.
- Sept. 1** Classes begin remotely.

**Sept. 1-10**

Teachers introduce students to the Schoology platform and begin classroom instruction. Teachers will establish school and classroom expectations and will help students get to know their classmates and teachers through virtual ice-breaker activities. They will review last spring's content as needed and will get started on a successful 2020-21 school year.

*\*\* We will conduct iReady and ACT diagnostic testing for each student sometime between Sept. 1-22 as well as AlaKiDS testing for kindergartners; and we will conduct growth monitoring testing for students in grades K-9 between Oct. 13-20. These tests are not graded, but they are important tools our teachers and schools use to assess the academic progress of each student.\*\**

# What Supports Will MCPSS Provide?

## Academic Assistance

Parents of children who are struggling should reach out to their teacher(s) and their school first with any issues they are having accessing the remote learning platform or any issues their children are having academically or emotionally. Our teachers and counselors will be available to provide support.

For students in need of academic intervention, math and reading intervention groups will be provided.

For students with IEPs, special-education teachers will be available for second delivery and intervention, utilizing groups and conferencing tools for break-out sessions.

Mobile County Public Schools will again offer a technical assistance hotline at 251-221-7777. The hotline will be answered Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m.

Students will also have access to academic tutoring and homework help at HomeworkAlabama.org. Students can log on to that site for instructions on how to get the assistance they need. Tutors will be available daily from 10 a.m. until 11 p.m. This service is available free of charge.



## Technology Assistance

Mobile County Public Schools is investing millions of dollars to make sure all students have access to computers and the internet. District-owned devices, such as Chromebooks, will be provided to meet the needs of students based on the parent survey conducted this summer. Your school will have information soon about distribution.

Mobile County Public Schools will also provide hotspots to families as needed and will park 20 buses with hotspots installed in communities that have been identified as not having adequate internet access. We will release more information about these buses and their locations soon.

The hotline listed earlier in this document will also be available for technical assistance, including help with passwords and logging on.

## Feeding Program

Students will be served breakfast and lunch free-of-charge through Mobile County Public Schools' Child Nutrition Program. Meals will be available at about 40 sites. More information will be available at <https://acp.mcpss.com/feeding-program>.

## Special Education

Mobile County Public Schools will give our best effort to continue educating all students, including students with special needs. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requirements have been waived, but the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and 504 requirements are not being waived.



All IEP goals will be addressed through the Schoology platform, and accommodations will be made through Schoology. Special-education resource teachers will support classroom teachers in any way needed and will assist with IEP and other meetings. All IEP meetings will be virtual until we can return to face-to-face instruction.

Psychological services will compile a list of evaluations that are overdue and will test students in a timely manner. The psychometrist assigned to your school will coordinate testing for students with special needs. The testing will be conducted at a designated school in your feeder pattern.

### **English as a Second Language**

Mobile County Public Schools' English as a Second Language teachers will assist classroom teachers in implementing accommodations through Schoology. And they will conduct eligibility meetings digitally or over the phone. Students who speak English as a second language and/or who are eligible for help through our Migrant Services program can receive support as follows:

- Main line: 251-221-5189
- Assistance in Spanish: 251-221-5184
- Assistance in Arabic or French: 251-509-6824
- Assistance in Vietnamese: 251-490-5729
- Assistance in Chinese: 251-490-5760
- Facebook: Mobile County Public School System English as a Second Language

### **Alabama's First Class Pre-K**

This national-award-winning pre-k program will operate remotely during the first quarter in accordance with the state's framework and requirements.

MCPSS will provide students with developmentally appropriate early learning activities to cover each day of the quarter. The following areas will be covered each day:

- Social connection: Provide an opportunity for children to build social-emotional skills.
- Language/literacy: Create an opportunity to build children's phonological awareness, comprehension and writing skills.
- Physical: Develop ideas for gross motor skills and outdoor play.
- Daily challenge: Family activities including a family calendar.

These areas will be covered at least once per week:

- Math learning activity: One-on-one, small group, or family activity.
- Science experiment/problem solving activity.

MCPSS will provide each First Class Pre-K family with an activity bag filled with resources to use remotely to support the student's early learning. Teachers will develop and share with families

## **Logging on to Schoology**

Using the same username and password as last spring, students will access their classes on Schoology at:  
<https://mcpss.schoology.com>.

Here is a sample student login:

- Username: first letter of first name, first letter of middle name, first letter of last name, last 6 digits of state ID. (Ex: Sheree T. Moore – STM123456@stu.mcpss.com). If no middle name is listed, it will just be the two initials. Using capital or lowercase letters does not matter in a username.
- Password: Capital first letter of first name, lowercase letter of last name, 8 digit birthdate. (Ex: Sm01012020)



various learning activities to go along with the resources included in the activity bags.

Pre-k families will also have access to the Waterford Early Learning at Home and the BornReady online programs. Families without technology or internet access will receive assistance via the telephone or other methods.

### **Special-Education Pre-K**

Our Special-Education Pre-K programs will offer remote learning using a variety of different strategies and online activities based on individual student needs. Service providers will collaborate and provide guidance to families as they navigate through this new way of learning.

# What About Sports, Extracurricular Activities, the Arts, and Other Programs?

Mobile County Public Schools officials understand the importance of sports, extracurricular activities, and the arts to our students and their educational experience. We will do the best we can to provide opportunities for our students in these areas so long as we can do so safely as the health and safety of our students and staff is our top priority.

We will continue to monitor COVID-19 numbers and will remain flexible to adjust our activities and recommendations as needed. Here is the information available as this document was published:

## Sports

Middle school sports have been postponed until further notice. They have not been cancelled, but postponed.

High school sports are continuing to practice with social distancing and other precautions in place as outlined by each school's COVID-19 plan. If an athlete or coach tests positive, the other players, families, and coaches are notified, and the team sits out for 14 days. Athletes are encouraged to social distance and wear masks even when not on campus to avoid contracting the virus as much as possible.

We will continue to be in communication with the Alabama High School Athletic Association, the Mobile County Health Department, the Alabama Department of Education, and other agencies about how and whether to proceed with sports in these unprecedented times.

## Extracurricular Activities

Your school has information on the various extracurricular activities offered and on how and whether they will be available during the first quarter and when we return to school.

## Music and Fine Arts

Grade-specific customized lessons will be recorded and shared via Schoology for elementary art and music classes.

Middle and high school fine arts classes will be available through remote instruction. Your school will have more information about the specific courses offered.

## Driver's Education

*(As this information is subject to change, each school has a backup course available.)*

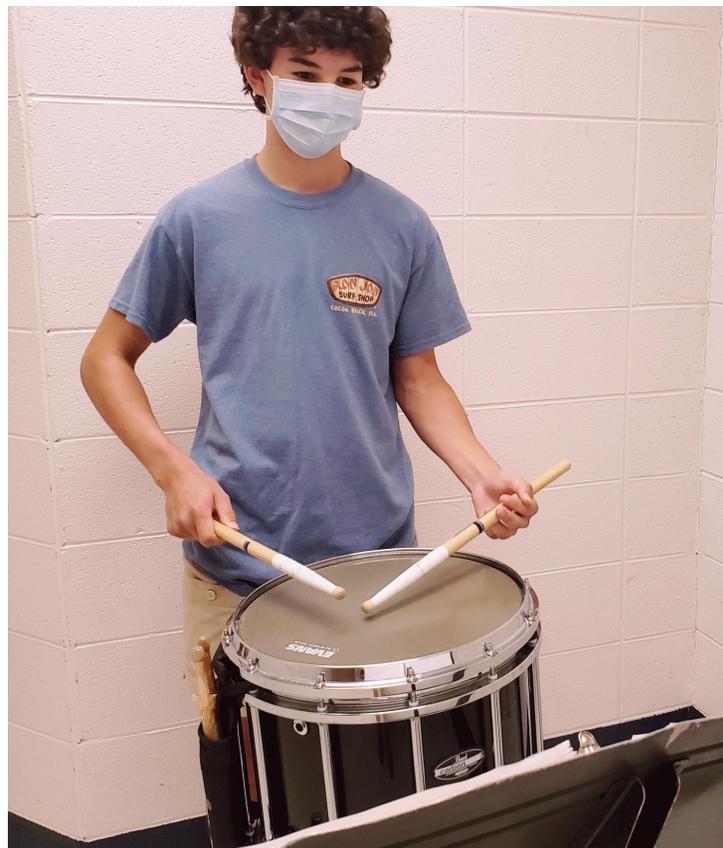
MCPSS will offer a virtual course as well as actual driving instruction. Instructors will provide six hours of driving time for each student. There will be a maximum of three people in a car, and each person will be required to wear a mask. The car will be sanitized before and after each use.

Students must complete two weeks of coursework before driving. Students and parents will be notified of the scheduled driving dates for each student.

A road test will be provided with precautions in place for students to earn their driver's license.

## Online Credits

Students will be able to participate in online programs, such as Credit Recovery, the MCPSS Academy of Virtual Learning, Twilight School, and EEOP (Evening Educational Options Program). Contact your school for more information.



# Seniors

Seniors meeting academic requirements may be able to graduate mid-year and/or participate in senior release.

## Mid-Year Graduation

Eligible seniors can apply electronically to graduate mid-year. To do so, they must complete all graduation requirements by mid-year, and they must earn a career credential or a state-approved CRI (college- and career-readiness indicator) to participate. They must develop their electronic career portfolio and pass a civics test. They also must have parental permission. Students electing to graduate early will be eligible for the Top Ten and other honors. They can participate in prom and senior activities after fees are paid, but not in spring sports. They must notify their counselor of their intent to participate in the graduation ceremony in the spring.

## Senior Release

Once face-to-face school is back in session, seniors may apply for senior release if they meet the prescribed requirements. Students must have successfully earned 22 of the required 24 credit hours to participate and must be on track for graduation. They also must have earned a career credential or a state-approved CRI to participate. They must have parental permission. This is a non-credit course and it can impact the Top Ten status. This privilege can be revoked if a student has a disciplinary incident.



## What Will A School Day Look Like?

Remote learning will be different from the at-home learning offered by MCPSS last spring.

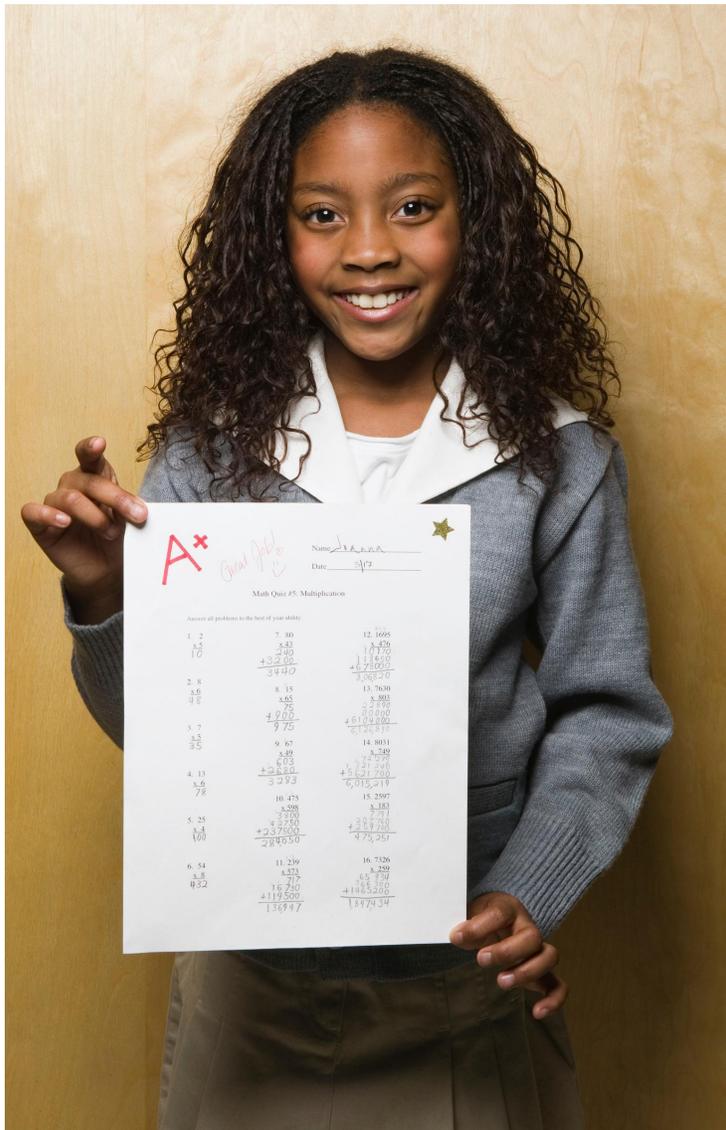
The MCPSS Attendance Policy will remain in effect, and attendance will be recorded daily as students log into the Schoology platform.

We encourage students to follow their normal class schedule – which will be provided the week of Aug. 27 - as their instruction will occur in the same manner it would be during traditional on-campus instruction. Families can expect to have their students log on during the same hours that school was in session last year.

For students who are unable to follow that regular school schedule, screencasts and video recordings will be available. But as attendance will be taken daily, students need to plan to log on, view their teacher's lessons, and complete their assignments that same day. If a student does not log in sometime that day, the teacher will mark them as absent for that day on the following day. If you have concerns about your child not being able to submit work daily, please reach out to your teacher.

Daily schedules will include the following:

- Elementary school: Instruction in reading and language arts, math, science, and social studies; a lunch break; several brain breaks; time for physical education; and a designated time for small-group instruction and/or intervention.
- Middle school: Instruction in language arts, math, science, and social studies, as well as electives; a lunch break; several brain breaks; time for physical education; and a designated time for small-group instruction and/or intervention.
- High school: Instruction divided into four blocks and based on a student's chosen core and elective courses; a lunch break; and small breaks between classes. Time during each block will be devoted to ACT preparation, as warranted. The blocks will include time for explicit, direct instruction; guided/independent practice; and small-group intervention. A 30-minute "skinny block" will also be devoted to intervention or additional ACT preparation.



## Grading

As a district, we will utilize "category average" grading.

Sixty percent of a student's grade will come from major assessments. That includes one major grade every three weeks with a maximum of three major assessments per quarter.

Forty percent of a student's grade will come from minor assessments. Students may receive 1 or 2 minor grades per week, with no minor assessments required during the weeks of major tests.

Teachers may also add a "notebook grade," which would be a combination of bell ringers, homework and other assignments.

For AP, IB, Cambridge, EPIC, dual enrollment and other advanced programs, additional grades may be recorded.

Grades will be entered and maintained weekly by teachers. Parents and students will be able to access grades daily. Parents who have an accurate email address on file with their school will automatically receive weekly reports on Fridays summarizing student progress in all classes.

## EQTs and Other Standardized Testing

No End of Quarter Tests will be administered during the 2020-21 school year.

Unless we receive a waiver from the state or federal government, the following assessments are expected to be administered:

- Elementary: Waterford (pre-k), AlaKiDS (kindergarten), iReady (K-5), and the ACAP (2-5).
- Middle: iReady (6-8), and the ACAP (6-8).
- High: iReady (9 & special-education students); ACT CERT (9-12); Pre-ACT (10); ACT (11); ACT WorkKeys (12).

# How Will MCPSS Keep Its Schools Clean?

Mobile County Public Schools' Custodial Program is following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for disinfecting school buildings. Custodians and other employees are completing Safe Schools training that includes information on precautions that should be taken to avoid the spread of COVID-19.

Each school will be thoroughly cleaned at the end of the day. Throughout the day, custodians will disinfect hard, non-porous surfaces as well as critical touch points with a cleaner that has been certified by the CDC to fight COVID-19. That cleaner is PH7Q. MCPSS has purchased industrial misters to sanitize areas that have been utilized by anyone who has possibly been exposed to COVID-19.

Critical touch points that will be cleaned throughout the day include but are not limited to the following:

- Classrooms: door handles, desktops, floor, countertops, and light switches.
- Restrooms: door handles, hand washing stations, dispensers, handrails, countertops, floors, toilets, and urinals.
- Offices: light switches, door handles, desks, and floors.
- Gymnasium, auditorium, library, and band room: light switches, door handles, floors, and countertops.
- Entrances and hallways: door handles.
- Locker rooms, weight rooms, and showers: lockers, benches, weight equipment, showers, door handles, and floors.

# How Will MCPSS Handle COVID-19 Cases?

## Employees

Any employee who is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, who has tested positive, or who has had direct contact with an individual who has been diagnosed with the virus will be quarantined based on CDC guidelines. Employees will wear face masks and other PPE and will adhere to social distancing guidelines. Similarly, we will adhere to CDC guidelines on when an employee who previously tested positive can return to work.

If an employee tests positive and has recently been at school, contact tracing will be conducted by MCPSS Health Services and the Mobile County Health Department. Our staff has been trained and will be equipped with a new program that will allow nurses to get an accurate list of any students and employees who have come in contact with them.

Anyone who has been determined to have had direct contact with the individual will be notified. Direct contact is defined by the CDC as being within 6 feet of an infected person for 15 minutes or more.

## What about students after we return to school?

MCPSS is hiring additional nurses through the federal CARES Act, which will allow us to have at least one nurse stationed at every school throughout the school day. All school nurses are receiving training on COVID-19 so they can identify students or employees with potential symptoms. Please note that MCPSS cannot test anyone for COVID-19, but we may recommend that testing be done by an outside healthcare provider.

Each school has a dedicated well-child first aid room, as well as a dedicated isolation/quarantine room for individuals with COVID-19 symptoms. The district has also purchased extra thermometers. Nurses will wear N95 masks when caring for anyone who has COVID-19 symptoms.

MCPSS will have additional precautions and procedures in place – including on our buses; for arrival and dismissal; regarding social distancing, hand washing, hand sanitizer and masks; and for our classrooms and other areas of our schools - that we will publicly release before students return to in-school learning.



## In Conclusion...

This plan was developed with input and guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Alabama Department of Education, the Alabama Department of Public Health, the Mobile County Health Department, the Alabama High School Athletic Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and more than 100 educators and support personnel in Mobile County Public Schools.

We would like to thank you, as a Mobile County Public Schools parent or guardian, for your help in implementing this plan to educate our students in the safest way possible. Thank you for your patience and flexibility as we work through this together as #TeamMCPSS.

We look forward to welcoming all of our students back to school whenever it is safe to do so. When we announce plans to return to in-school learning, we will share information with you about how we will continue to work hard to protect our students and employees.

