

July 17, 2020

Dear MCS Families,

This morning, the MCS BOE approved my recommendation that we begin the school year for all MCS students (PreK-12) in a full virtual model. I recognize that this is a significant change from our previous reopening plan and I would like to share the reasons for our shift.

Over the last month, in every email, school staff meeting, and family town hall, we've communicated an unwavering commitment to the safety of each of our students and our staff. Our approach has been guided by close collaboration and input from health experts, acknowledging we would shift immediately if advised to do such.

That time is now. I am no longer confident we can keep our staff and families safe if our school buildings welcome back hundreds or thousands of students for in-person learning. The change in both rising COVID-19 numbers and updated guidance this week by local and regional health experts suggest that any consideration of an in-person opening could jeopardize the health and safety of our MCS staff, and due to potential exposure through students who may remain asymptomatic, our MCS families. You may recall that our in-person reopening plan included risk mitigation strategies such as case investigation, contact tracing, and timely test results. Based upon recent information from the agencies with whom we collaborate, it seems unlikely that these strategies can be implemented. Without them, our protocols and ability to keep people safe and healthy have significantly changed, and thus, so has our reopening plan. Our families and our staff are too important to take such risks.

Our first day of virtual school will remain August 4; please refer to forthcoming information from your school principal regarding the first weeks of school. In regards to virtual learning, you may recall from our MCS BOE meeting in June that school principals and central office leaders collaborated to develop virtual learning schedules reflective of staff and family feedback from the spring closure. Our priority is to build upon our successes and, equally as important, establish more consistency in learning and engagement for students. Across all grade levels, you will see more live, virtual instruction and accountability for learning.

We will continue to provide meal delivery throughout our community during virtual learning – no child will go hungry in Marietta. Further, we are committed to ensuring that every MCS student in need has access to a Chromebook and internet to stay connected learning, and we will provide textbooks, worksheets, and other learning materials to families. We are exploring creative and safe options for interested students to collaborate with staff in small groups that are appropriately socially distant while wearing masks – look for more details to come as we consult with local health experts on safety protocols that would allow for this personal connection. In making the decision to shift to all-virtual learning, we acknowledge the potential hardship and disruptive effect that this may have on our families, particularly related to employment responsibilities and childcare. We are working diligently on partnerships with organizations that can provide low-cost childcare to our MCS families and will share more information as soon as it is available.

For more information and specifics about our virtual learning protocols, please review the appropriate family guide:

- [Virtual Learning Family Guide ELC](#)
- [Virtual Learning Family Guide K-5](#)
- [Virtual Learning Family Guide 6-8](#)
- [Virtual Learning Family Guide 9-12](#)

In closing, I thank you for your continued grace and flexibility. While we recognize our need to be responsive and adapt to the ever-changing dynamics, one thing will always remain the same in MCS: our commitment to you.

Sincerely,  
Grant

Grant Rivera, Ed.D.  
Superintendent  
Marietta City Schools