

Benfield Elementary Summer Updates

July 23, 2020

Greetings!

Dear Benfield Families,

I hope you are well and enjoying a more relaxed pace that the summer months bring us. The purpose of this newsletter is to share updated information about the reopening of school for the 2020-2021 school year. As I learn information, I will share with you through family newsletters.



This past Monday, Anne Arundel County Public Schools announced the fall semester for the 2020-21 school year will be virtual. Dr. Arlotto updated the BOE last night and shared an overview of the plan and the work of the 14 committees that are focused on ensuring a smooth opening and the most optimal plan for eLearning for all students.

The Benfield staff is working to ensure that the fall eLearning experience supports our high standards for excellent instruction. Teachers have been engaged in professional development to best support the online learning platform, as well as collaborating with their teams. We are committed to providing a nurturing eLearning environment which will allow our children to reach their potential academically, emotional, and socially.

Below are a few highlights from the meeting that I wanted to share with you:

- All K-5th grade students will receive a supply backpack from the county with materials to support learning.
- By the end of September, we expect to have chromebooks for all elementary students. The goal of AACPS is to have a 1:1 chromebook ratio.
- Daily Schedule - there will be live synchronous teaching four days per week for approximately 3-4 hours each day. The fifth day will be focused on supporting individual students based on need.
- There will be small reading groups to support all academic needs. This includes intervention and enrichment (ALP's / GT).
- Each day will begin with a class building activity focusing on social-emotional needs of our children.
- Attendance will be taken daily and grading practices return to normal practices.

In this newsletter I have also included:

- [Link for the BOE Meeting](#)

- Link to the Powerpoint shared at the meeting
- Capital Gazette article summarizing the BOE meeting

As always, I am available to you via email or phone. Please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sue Myers

smmyers@aacps.org

(410) 222 - 6555

BOE Meeting - July 22, 2020

This link takes you to the BOE meeting. The reopening of schools presentation begins at the 1 hour 7 minute spot. I would encourage you to watch both Dr. Arlotto's presentation and the BOE members question and answer section.



Power Point from BOE Meeting

Please click on this [link](#) to access the Powerpoint shared at the BOE meeting. This Powerpoint also includes information from the Anne Arundel County Health Officer, Dr. Kalyanaraman.

Anne Arundel School Superintendent Presents Online Learning Plan for Fall

By NAOMI HARRIS

CAPITAL GAZETTE |

JUL 22, 2020 AT 11:56 PM

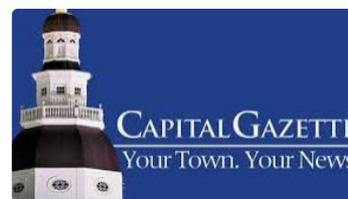
Online learning for Anne Arundel County public schools this fall will look different from the way it did when schools first closed in the spring – with four days of real-time online classes with a fifth set aside for digital small groups and one-on-one teaching.

The four days of online instruction would include three to four hours of learning each day and the fifth will act as a more individualized support day and possible evening tutoring sessions.

The school system announced Monday that its first semester would be entirely online.

Superintendent George Arlotto said there's a chance the school system could enter a hybrid model later in the 2020 to 2021 school year as he outlined a plan for online learning at Wednesday's Board of Education meeting.

Teachers will be able to return to the negotiated work week with time built in for meetings with administration and other teachers, as well as professional development. Some students may be able to move from online learning and head back to schools for face-to-face instruction, dependent on county guidance and staffing ability. Special education students at specialty centers, ESOL students and students at the CAT programs are targeted populations to come back to the buildings first.



"We are not able to meet all students' needs in a virtual environment. We need students who need hand over hand, that face to face. We are exploring scenarios for limited in-person instruction," Arlotto said. The public can submit feedback on the plan until July 31. The plan has to be submitted to the Maryland State Board of Education by Aug. 14.

Elementary school students from kindergarten to fifth grade will receive backpacks full of school supplies, headphones and learning materials for the fall. Normal attendance and grading policies will return as well with the goal to return back to the grading system before school closures. The school system is still working to distribute Chromebooks to students in an effort to provide one device for each student.

As of Wednesday evening, the system obtained 63,000 devices and ordered 30,000 more. So far, county schools have passed out 13,000 Chromebooks. The meal program at the 60 sites will continue during the fall semester and the system will look at expanding food sites, Arlotto said. The school system will also conduct diagnostic assessments of students within the first three weeks of the school year to identify what gaps exist, though Arlotto said he anticipates an exacerbated gap because of the challenges created out of the pandemic.

The initial plan of reopening school in the fall with in-person instruction became a safety risk for school communities as the Anne Arundel County health department anticipated a worsened state of the coronavirus pandemic.

"We wanted to get kids back into school, in-person. What has happened since late May/early June, we have seen the trend in our county go in the wrong direction," said County Health Officer Nilesh Kalyanaraman, who gave a presentation at the board meeting.

During his presentation, he discussed factors to consider like an increase in hospitalizations, the percent of positive cases at 4%, confirmed case count and infection rate at 1.28. Infection rates below 1 reflect fewer people who spread the virus and a rate above 1 means a higher spread, the county health officer said.

"One thing we know about this infection... COVID acts in a way that it will grow slowly, it will start to pick up speed and some moment it will hit and then it will start to skyrocket. You don't know the moment it will skyrocket," Kalyanaraman said. The county increased enforcement, implemented a public mask order and increased testing availability to address the trend, Kalyanaraman said. As of Wednesday morning, the county had 6,062 confirmed cases with 206 deaths. Another eight people may have died from the respiratory illness but a lab test was never performed. The county health department is working with other counties and experts at Johns Hopkins School of Public Health and the University of Maryland School of Public Health to set up guidelines for reopening. To do so, the metrics will "define community conditions to allow safe reopening for both students and staff," Kalyanaraman said. "I'd argue school reopening is probably our biggest priority. We want to define these and target a fall opening date when we can define these priorities." The county health officer was invited back to the school board for the August meeting, ahead of the fall semester, to provide those guidelines.

School board member Robert Leib asked Kalyanaraman about the county's priorities, highlighting his concern about not seeing a more established plan since school closures in March. In response, the county health officer said the guidelines will help with responding to changes in the coronavirus data. But before schools can safely reopen, he reminded the public to practice social distancing and wear masks. "People not doing the things that they know they need to do, is our challenge. People got the message about masking and think it is either not important enough or they will not do it," he said. "Cases rise and we see illnesses — we have to compromise our other priorities."



Summer Registration: Kindergarten - 5th Grade

AACPS new student (including kindergarten) registration is now open and will be online this year. You can access the portal here:

[AACPS Online Registration](#)

Please share this link with neighbors who have a child ready to start kindergarten or are new to the area.