

## Response to Questions asked in Parent Zoom 8/26/20

### Mask requirements

DPH and CSDE Guidance cited in Addendum 11 of the Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together mandate that “*all students and staff inside the school building wear a face covering that completely covers the nose and mouth.*” There are several types of masks that are recommended for use by staff and students; **KN95 facemasks** (appropriate for older students & staff); **surgical/procedure style masks** (a new/fresh mask should be worn daily; **cloth masks** (Masks of this type should be washed daily.); **not recommended**; **neck gaiters** (needs to be layered/doubled to prevent droplets from getting through the cloth.) **bandanas** (do not adequately prevent droplet control); **exhalation valve masks** are not recommended because it is not known if aerosol droplets expelled when breathing will make it through the valve and potentially cause another person to be infected.

Students and adults alike, need a break from wearing a mask, particularly if the temperatures are high. When outside, or in an indoor space with good ventilation, the ability to social distance 6+ feet and stringent cleaning & disinfection practices, masks may be taken off for short periods of time. When students & staff are outside, social distancing is strictly enforced. At this time, all students have been compliant and we don't anticipate issues moving forward.

The only time masks are removed while indoors is when a student is eating or drinking. Students maintain social distance while seated at a desk with a student desk shield. There have been no issues reported at this time of non compliance.

### Live Streaming Instruction

Many families have asked about the use of Live Streaming Instruction. The design, in theory, is simple: Students at home log into a videoconferencing platform at the start of class. Everyone, whether in class or remote, can listen to the same lesson, ask questions, and receive feedback on independent work. Kids who are doing distance learning can see their classmates and feel like they're part of the same community. However, there are many more considerations and technical requirements than just setting up a camera in the back of the room and having students log in for instruction.

- **Privacy & Permission** - parents of students *in school* will need to sign a consent form to allow their child to be filmed and “broadcast.”
  - **FERPA Laws** (Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act) protect student privacy and mandate that any records, digital or paper, generally cannot be shared without parent permission. Some parents of special education students would object to having their student filmed & broadcast.
- **Security** - our system needs to be strong enough to allow *only* students to log in, otherwise we could be opening our students & staff to being hacked.
- **Professional Development** would need to be provided to faculty & staff regarding FERPA laws. Faculty & staff would also need training in how to set up and maintain connectivity of live streaming.
- **Additional Technology needed** would include the cost & set up of cameras, microphones, wifi capabilities, fire walls etc. All of these expenses *could* be covered

under our CARES Act funds. The acquisition of and set up of all of the infrastructure would put a strain on our already overworked IT person.

- **Additional Staff** would be needed to monitor the camera to ensure that camera angles are focused on the appropriate subject - teacher, board, poster etc.

### **Kindergarten & Remote Learning**

Kindergarteners are *in school* Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday for a ½ day session (AM 8:25 - 11:30am, PM 12:00 - 3:05pm) During the time the student is in school, the teacher is conducting lessons in all of the core content areas - Math, Literacy, Science, Social Studies and Social Emotional Learning. Students are also attending one 45 minutes special (Music, PE, Library, and Art) each day. Mrs. Conway feels confident that she is providing instruction that addresses priority common core standards and there is no need to have students engage in remote learning activities when they are not in school. On Wednesdays, full time remote learners will have the opportunity to touch base with Mrs. Conway &/or Mrs. Tatro. Hybrid remote learners will be given "homework" for Wednesday that may include some digital assignments and paper pencil work.

### **Visitors to School**

Students often forget needed materials, and parents, out of the kindness of their heart, will come to school to bring whatever is needed. During this Covid-19 time, we ask that parents call school before coming over. If possible, one of the office staff will meet you at the door or buzz you in to make a delivery.

If you need to pick up your child for a during the school day appointment, please just notify us in advance by phone or email. We will do our best to have the student in the office ready to go when you arrive.

### **Devices**

Currently, devices have been issued to all students in grades 4 - 8. Priority was placed on those grade levels because the majority of students are Hybrid Remote learners that are in school 2 days a week and at home 3 days a week. Devices for grades 4 - 8 will be going back and forth between school and home if there is no available device at home. Mrs. Leask feels confident that the cases currently being used to protect FMS iPads are sufficiently durable to secure devices going back and forth from home to school.

As of the writing of this response, students in grades K - 3 have been issued devices for use in school. Teachers have elected *not to send home devices as yet.* Because our K-3 students are in school 4 days a week, teachers felt they could give more "paper/pencil" types of assignments for Distance Learning Wednesday. Grades K-3 teachers focus their attention on connecting with full time remote learners on Wednesday and 1 whole class or small group meeting to foster class connectedness. Please contact your child's teacher directly if you have questions regarding *when* a device will be needed at home.

### **Busses**

Currently, PreK and Kindergarten students are the only students who have a ½ day schedule. There is 1 bus that delivers students to school at noon, while another bus brings students home from school. Older students are not permitted to ride this bus. We have

contracted with First Student for a specific run/route and to change that would increase the cost for the bus and potentially increase the length of the route.

All buses receive a disinfectant coating/shell monthly and are wiped down between every bus run. Currently, only 10-12 students are riding each bus daily to and from school.

### **Full Time Remote Learners & Support**

There was some confusion regarding the labels/identification of the 3 different groups of students here at FMS. Moving forward, the following designations will apply;

**Full Time Remoter Learners (FTRL)** - students whose family have chosen to have their student(s) engaging *only remotely*. *These students do not come into school at all.*

**Hybrid Remote Learners (HRL)** - students who attend FMS on the hybrid schedule, 2 days in school, 3 days at home.

**4 Day a Week Learners** - students who come to school 4 days a week due to IEP considerations or enrollment in grades PK - 3.

**FTRL** should be logging/checking in each day. FTRLs will receive support and have contact with 1 certified teacher each day for 20-30 minutes depending on the grade level. Ms. Elizabeth Brown will be providing support/service to students in grades PK - 5. At the middle school level, each homeroom teacher will be reaching out to a small group of students each day for 15 - 40 minutes. The number of FTRL in middle school is 17. Each homeroom teacher makes a connection with up to 6 FTRL students each day. During the course of 1 week, every FTRL Middle school student will have contact with every MS teacher. On Distance Learning Wednesdays, MS homeroom teachers & para professionals will schedule whole class Zoom meetings and conduct "office hours" for those students who need assistance.

Homeroom/Classroom teachers in grades K-5 will schedule whole class or small group Zoom meetings and make Zoom appointments with FTRLs assigned to his/her class. *If you have questions or concerns about who remote learning is working for your student(s), please contact your child's teacher first. If your questions or concerns are not resolved, please contact the principal directly.*

Creating/producing lessons that are taped live and made available at a later time is a very time consuming process for the teacher. When these types of videos were being made last spring, *all learners* were remote and teachers were able to schedule time in their work day to produce a video. Due to the Hybrid model, teachers are actively teaching during school hours, 8:25 - 3:15, making it impossible to create and record individual lessons. Teachers are actively seeking out and posting links to instructional videos from reputable sources that will present the same learning targets/standards that are being presented in class. In the event that FMS goes to full Distance Learning for all, you will begin to see more personalized videos.

### **What happens to the Kindergarten Schedule when *all* students are brought back?**

Bringing back all FMS students full time, depends on many factors; CDC & DPH guidelines and the ability to maintain small cohort sizes for all grade levels in our current footprint - one class of students per grade level.

## **Assessments**

Being able to conduct regular progress monitoring assessments is a vital part of the instructional program. That being said, having full time remote learners do progress monitoring assessments is tricky. Teachers need to be assured that the work a student is submitting on an assessment is AUTHENTICALLY their own and represents a true reflection of what he/she can and cannot do independently. Teachers are working to develop assessments or find digital assessments that will give them the information they need to plan appropriately for our learners. More information will be available in the coming weeks regarding the type of assessments FTRL might be expected to do to demonstrate mastery &/or progress toward a learning target.

## **Common Core Standards and Processes**

Many parents are anxious about being able to help their student(s) with the Common Core math assignments. The biggest difference between the way most parents learned math and the way children today are learning math is that *toda*, it's not just about doing the algorithm and getting the "right" answer. Students need to understand or tell about the *thinking they did to get to the answer*. There can be more than one strategy a student can use to get to the correct answer, and teachers typically will teach several different strategies to students then allow them to use the one the individual student is most confident using.

All math teachers are making available tutorial math videos that will help parents and students learn the different strategies available to solve math problems. In addition, if a student &/or parent is "stuck", you can email the remote learning support teacher, Ms. Brown or Mrs. Leask for MS students to ask questions during the school day.

As you encounter difficulties and find solutions that work for you, please let us know so that we can either assist you or pass on the new found information to others.

## **Concerns about Teacher Time**

Parents are concerned that their individual child/ren are not going to get the time and attention from the teacher(s) needed for their student(s) to be successful and make progress. There are comparisons being made to the amount of time a teacher was accessible last spring as compared to this fall.

We need to make clear some expectations and limitations that we are currently facing:

- The administration recognizes that the decision to have a student(s) learn remotely was made out of an abundance of caution to protect a child or vulnerable loved one from potential exposure to COVID-19.
- ALL teachers want to do the best for ALL their students,
- Frequent, open and honest communication is the best way to move forward so that students get the instruction and support they need to be successful, and parents get the support and answers they need to make informed decisions.
- Our teachers *also* have vulnerable family members and children at home than need their care and attention.
- There are a finite number of hours in the day which a teacher &/or FMS family should devote to school work. Teachers and support staff are contracted to work a 7.5 hour

day. In reality, teachers work far more hours than those for which they are contracted, sometimes an additional hour or more on any given day to plan, correct and provide feedback to students and families, and that was *before* the world wide pandemic.

- Last spring, *everyone* was working remotely - students, teachers, paras and administration.
- Some teachers were far more comfortable and confident with technology than others. The learning curve was steep and very public.
- This fall approximately  $\frac{1}{3}$  of our population is fully remote,  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the population is in school 4 days a week (PK - 3), and  $\frac{1}{3}$  of our students are hybrid (In school 2 days & home 3 days).
- Teachers are required to plan for all 3 groups at the MS & 4/5 level. Teachers in grades K - 3 must plan for both FTRL and four day week learners in front of them.
  - Every lesson/unit they plan has to be planned in such a way as to accommodate the students in front of the teacher and those learning from home. **Planning time for a single lesson/unit has essentially doubled.**
  - However, there is no additional planning time within the school day and Wednesday is not a "day off" but rather the day teachers are connecting with FTRL.
  - A significant amount of time is being spent researching websites and digital platforms that can support or provide instruction that the classroom teacher can't due to time constraints.
  - Teachers have received PD regarding what remote learning lessons should include and have access to How To webinars to improve their proficiency with Google Classroom and Zoom.
- Teachers take their cues regarding mask breaks from students. They look at body language, engagement and naturally occurring times to take a break between learning/teaching blocks. In the first few days of school, teachers had classes outside several times a day for as few as 10 minutes and as long as 30 minutes. Longer outside breaks often include lunch, reading a story or having a class discussion.

### **Cleaning & Ventilation**

Many parents raised concerns about the cleaning of the building and our ventilation system.

- Our custodians are in the process of becoming "Certified" in meeting CDC and DPH cleaning protocols.
- We have hired an additional part time custodian during the day. At the end of this week, we will determine the need for a part time evening custodian.
- On Wednesday
- Student bathrooms are carefully monitored and are cleaned mid morning and shortly after lunch, in addition to a thorough sanitizing at the end of the day.
- Kindergarten and PK classrooms are wiped down with a sanitizer between cohorts and toys are disinfected after a cohort leaves.
  - Currently PK toys are in individual baskets for student use. Once a week the toys are taken to the kitchen and run through the dishwasher to clean and sanitize them.
  - PK has a rotation schedule for toys so that students have choices in those toys with which they play.

- Kindergarten also has individual tubs of toys and manipulatives for students to use that are sanitized &/or disinfected after use.
- Several parents suggested getting AC for the classrooms.
  - Individual AC units for each classroom have been explored and priced out. Installing such units is on the Capital Improvements list of the things to do. However, due to budget constraints, all capital improvements have been frozen.

**What do you do if a parent/family member comes in contact with someone who has had close contact with a Covid-19 positive person?**

The parent needs to be quarantined for 14 days or until s/he has proof of a negative covid test. The rest of the family can go about business as usual. The exception would be if the parent then comes down with symptoms, then the family would also need to do the 14 day quarantine or have proof of a negative test. If they quarantine for the 14 days and nothing happens they return to business as usual. As always, please check in with your medical professional with any health related questions or concerns.