



January 8, 2021

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education
From: Michael J. Martirano, Ed.D.
Subject: Staffing Small Group, In-Person Supports

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide information about the staffing considerations associated with the expansion of small group programs and the gradual return to normalized operations. During the January 7, 2021 Board of Education meeting, I provided an overview of a plan designed to bring a small percentage of students and a small percentage of staff to work in buildings with an eye on achieving three goals:

- Reestablishing existing specialized special education programs, Career and Technical Education programs at the ARL, in-person educational assessments, and in-home support visits for some students receiving special education services;
- Expanding small group supports to every school using the *School-Based Learning Center* model;
- Initiating a gradual return to work in buildings, schools and central office, as part of the return to normalized operations.

The goal would be to implement as early as February 1, 2021. However, as was mentioned many times during that board meeting, **these efforts are entirely contingent on the health metrics** approved by the Board of Education in the fall of 2020. The health metrics would have to reflect a positivity rate of <5.3% or the number of cases per 100,000 as 20 or less for 14 consecutive days in order to implement programs. For reference, Wednesday's positivity rate was 7.6% and the case rate per 100,000 was 34.96, both significantly above the levels allowing small groups to resume. Staff will review health metrics on January 18 in order to determine the feasibility of a February 1 start date. If metrics remain unfavorable, then the start date will be pushed back one week to February 8. Each Monday, staff will review health metrics to determine a possible start date. Staff **will not** be required to report to buildings until health metrics permit.

Staffing Considerations

Staffing will be required to achieve stated goals. Last fall, our small group efforts were supported solely through staff volunteers. Consequently, programs were only offered in about one-third of our school buildings. By November, staff volunteers had dwindled to the point that about two-thirds (15) of programs remained. This spring, it will be necessary to require

designated staff to report to buildings to support each goal listed above. A summary of each initiative and rationale for each designated position is provided below.

Reestablishing Existing Special Education and ARL Programs

This fall, students received specialized, in-person service at the Cedar Lane School, the Homewood School, Folly Quarter Middle School and the Application and Research Laboratory (ARL) as part of a phased-in plan to serve specialized student groups. This spring, the goal is to first reestablish, and then expand, these programs as it is safe to do so.

Here are the positions, with rationale, that were listed in an internal communication to support this effort:

- Designated Special Education Staff – Some special education teachers, paraeducators, student assistants, and temporary employees (TEs) will be required to resume services at the sites listed above. By the end of March, health metrics pending, it is our goal to have additional specialized special education programs, including regional programs, established so that we can meet the needs of some students with disabilities. This could result in additional special education staff required to work in buildings.
- Designated ARL Staff – Career and Technology Education (CTE) teachers at the ARL will be required for in-person instruction to seniors when health metrics permit. By the end of March, it is our goal to expand CTE offerings at ARL by program and student group.

Expanding In-Person Supports to Small Numbers of Students

This fall, and at its peak, about 200 students were receiving in-person support in *School-Based Learning Centers (SBLC)* in 21 schools. By the middle of February, it is our goal to serve over 3000 students in SBLCs hosted in every school. This would represent approximately 5% of our student population. Students participating in the SBLC model not only access their virtual instruction in a safe and supportive place, they also may be supported by teachers and support staff tending to academic needs (reading and math), executive functioning skills, social-emotional learning, in-person counseling and support, and mentoring.

Here are the positions, with rationale, that were listed in an internal communication to support this effort:

- Non-Special Education Paraeducators – These paraeducators provide the primary supervision of students working in the SBLC model. Principals design a schedule that best fits the needs of the school and refine work assignments to achieve safe supervision of students. (Supervision)
- Elementary Reading Specialists – Reading Specialists were identified to provide in-person reading instruction and intervention to students in small groups. These staff would work with school leaders to define a student support schedule that permits them to provide service to students virtually as well as to students participating in person. (Academic Support)
- Reading Support Teachers – These elementary support teachers primarily provide mentoring and coaching support to teachers across a number of schools. In this model, support for students in small groups would be limited to one school. These staff would

work with school leaders to define a student support schedule that permits them to provide service to teachers virtually as well as to support students participating in person. (Academic Support)

- Mathematics Support Teachers and Mathematics Instructional Support Teachers – These elementary and secondary teachers, respectively, primarily provide mentoring and coaching support to teachers across a number of schools. In this model, support for students in small groups would be limited to one school. Staff will work with school leaders to define a student support schedule that permits them to provide service to teachers virtually as well as to support students participating in person. (Academic Support)
- HCPSS Social Workers – These staff were identified to provide services to identified students participating in the SBLC. Staff would work with school and program leaders to refine their schedule to accommodate in-person supports. (Mental Health and Social Emotional Well-being for Academics)
- School Psychologists - These staff were identified to provide services to identified students participating in the SBLC. Additionally, these staff were also identified to support a return to in-school, in-person educational assessment. The latter will not begin immediately. (Mental Health and Social Emotional Well-being for Academics; Operations)
- Alternative Education Teachers - These staff were identified to provide services to identified students participating in the SBLC. Staff will work with school leaders to define a student support schedule that permits them to provide service to teachers virtually as well as to support students participating in person. (Mentoring, Social Emotional Well-being, Academic Support)
- BSAP/Hispanic/International Liaisons - These staff were identified to provide services to identified students participating in the SBLC. Staff will work with school leaders to define a student support schedule that permits them to provide service to teachers virtually as well as to support students participating in person. (Mentoring, Social Emotional Well-being, Academic Support)
- Elementary ESOL Teachers - - These staff were identified to provide services to identified students participating in the SBLC. Staff will work with school leaders to define a student support schedule that permits them to provide service to teachers virtually as well as to support students participating in person. (Social Emotional Well-being, Academic Support)
- Pupil Personnel Workers – These staff provide support to a number of schools. PPWs will work with program leaders to develop a schedule that permits the continuation of support to multiple schools, virtually, while focusing in-person support to one school. (Mentoring, Social Emotional Well-being, Academic Support)
- School Counselors - These staff were identified to provide services to identified students participating in the SBLC. Additionally, school counselors were identified as part of a return to normalized school operations as we move toward a greater need to support students in danger of failing, academic planning, registration, scheduling, and staffing. Counselors will work with school leaders to determine how to balance their existing virtual work with support to students participating in person. (Mentoring, Social Emotional Well-being, Academic Support, Operations)

Facilitating a Return to Normalized Operations

In order to support groups of students receiving in-school support and instruction, it is important to tend to central office and school operations and infrastructure. School and central office leaders have communicated a need for more efficient operations. While all are “making do” with the current virtual model, it is our goal to take measured steps toward a full return to work in buildings.

Here are the positions, with rationale, that were listed in an internal communication to support this effort:

- School Administrators – These staff provide the necessary leadership and supervision of all school operations. School administrators are currently required to work in buildings on a rotating schedule. Increased demands associated with in-person student supports will require that administrators report to work in buildings. (Operations; Academic; Leadership Supports)
- School Nurses and Health Assistants- School cannot host students in buildings without the service of a school health professional. Health and safety remain a priority and these staff will be integral to the success of in-person programming as they work to educate students, families and staff, to support the daily operations of the health room, and to respond to possible instances of COVID-19 cases in their schools. These staff are also an integral part of the community vaccination effort. Therefore, some schools may find that they are only able to offer in-person students supports 4 days per week because their assigned health professional will be supporting the Howard County Health Department on that fifth day. (Physical and Mental Health Support)
- School Secretaries (Principal’s Secretary, Teacher’s Secretaries, Counselor Secretary) and Bookkeepers– These staff are essential to the effective operation of the school. Increased demands associated with in-person student supports and the return of staff to buildings will require that secretaries report to work in buildings. (Operations)
- Registrars and Data Clerks – These staff are an integral part of the student services team. While they are “making do” by performing their duties virtually, the efficient support of school operations, specifically as it relates to school records, school schedules, and staffing, require these staff to report to work in buildings. (Operations)

The list of designated staff is designed to support the attainment of the three goals detailed in this memo. As we move forward, we will work closely with school leaders, designated staff, and leaders from our bargaining units to further clarify the timeline for implementation and the roles and responsibilities of designated staff. The intent of the internal communication was to provide a “heads up” to staff prior to the Board of Education meeting. Now is the time to move from awareness to providing additional details. As plans unfold, we will be communicating updates to the Board of Education about health metrics as well as greater details on progress toward stated goals.

Please reach out to Bill Barnes, Chief Academic Officer, or Anissa Dennis, Chief of School Management and Instructional Leadership, if you have further questions.

Copy to: Executive Staff
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