
McGuffey School District

Return to School

Frequently Asked Questions

October 16, 2020

Why did the Return to School Committee not consider a full reopening?

We did, extensively. The committee's approach throughout the process has been to balance health, safety, and education. We feel a measured approach to reopening will actually keep our schools open longer. The Hybrid model has already prevented a full closure at McGuffey. We know some other districts have started reopening. However, each community and school system has unique needs around spacing, staffing, healthcare resources, etc. Many of those schools have already had a full closure of one or all buildings. We are always planning for the full reopening, but doing so at a time when the pandemic is worsening did not seem prudent. We are already working on next steps (beyond K-1) even as we plan for K-1 to return.

Did the team review plexiglass options?

Yes, we have investigated plexiglass options for multiple areas. We have installed plexiglass in several locations in the buildings, including the serving areas of the cafeterias and in the school offices. We are currently looking at additional plexiglass options for students. As you can imagine, plexiglass for students comes at a significant expense, but the district is still exploring options.

Please explain the funding question.

McGuffey School District receives over 50% of the budgeted revenue from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The largest portion of the revenue is Basic Education and Special Education Subsidy which is budgeted at \$11,833,919 or 38% of the budgeted revenue.

Why did the district not hire in August?

We did. We filled 6 teaching positions. However, by late August we also had over 330 students enrolled in McCyber. We decided to hold off on hiring for two other positions due to the reduced enrollment in the physical school buildings. Since August, over 100 cyber students have returned to the school buildings. With the return of students, we are now looking into filling the two open positions.

The district website does not list job openings other than English Language Arts in the MS/HS.

Why?

We received over 110 elementary applications during the summer for other open positions. We still have those applications on file and we are reviewing the current applicants. In the event that we do not find a teacher in that pool of applicants, we will post the opening.

Why don't you stagger bussing?

The district currently operates one bus run because we service over 200 square miles with transportation. As we reviewed options, we realized staggered bussing could put some students home later than 6:00 PM each night. Ultimately, it was determined staggered schedules in a district as large as McGuffey will not work logistically.

Can students with IEPs return for 4 days of the school week in the current Hybrid model?

Our Department of Special Services is currently working with families on an individual basis to determine the need for returning four days a week. There is specific criteria that must be met for this determination. There is nothing to hide in this process, but the sensitivity of this information does not allow us to discuss every aspect of the criteria. This is a matter of student privacy. However, the school board has been provided relevant information concerning this process so they can better understand how these determinations are made.

Why is the district participating in athletics if it's unsafe for students to return to school for a 4 or 5 day week?

The district adopted a Health and Safety plan relating to sports in compliance with the guidelines and recommendations. Athletics are voluntary, while attendance to classes is mandatory. Please reference the Return to School section of the website to see the plan:

<https://www.mcguiffey.k12.pa.us/ReturntoSchoolResources.aspx>

Why is the Return to School Committee not focused on the needs of students alone?

McGuffey is a central hub of our community. Between students, staff, and visitors, nearly two thousand people a day enter our buildings. The committee is looking at the district-wide impact. Early studies may show younger people (generally) having a stronger ability to fight COVID-19, but many students live with individuals with medical issues who may not be able to fight it as easily. We are considering the way an outbreak might impact students, parents, grandparents, staff, and even the community as a whole. Our goal is to return students to school as safely as possible within a measured approach.

Is the District waiting for a vaccine before returning five days?

At no time did the Return to School Committee make a recommendation based upon a future vaccine for COVID-19. We review the state recommended guidelines, district and county information when making our recommendations to the school board.

Why do you not want to hear from families and the community when making recommendations?

This couldn't be further from the truth. Our administrators, teachers, and staff interact with parents, students, and the community every day and have received extensive feedback on the current model. Many of our staff members are community members with children in our schools. We are currently working on a survey for families and will notify families when the survey is posted. Once received, we can review the responses with the Return to School Committee and the Board of Education. However, not all decisions can be made based on survey results. We fall under Department of Education and Department of Health requirements in many instances.

Are parents involved in these recommendations?

When the initial Return to School Committee was formed in the late spring, there was parent representation throughout the various subcommittees, including an entire subcommittee dedicated specifically to Parent Engagement. That group met on October 5th, and their feedback was incorporated into the larger recommendations from the Return to School Committee. As mentioned on the previous slide, a new survey is being crafted to gather further feedback from families, and the RTS parents will continue to be invited to participate in the recommendation and planning process.

Why aren't teachers using Zoom or another platform to livestream instruction each day?

Some teachers within the district have chosen to offer this type of instruction. However, requiring teachers to manage an in person classroom, virtual students, and technology in addition to providing effective instruction is a very challenging task. Considering the demands our teachers are already shouldering, the resources we currently have available, and the training we have been able to provide to date, we do not feel it is fair to make this a mandatory expectation for all teachers at this time. Additionally, the research shows students sitting through virtual classes all day is not an effective model for learning.