

Inclement Weather *Virtual Instruction*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Presentation

Monday, August 18, 2025

Katie Ridgway
Chief of Staff

Key Leaders

- **Operational Leadership:** Dr. Eric Davis, *Deputy Superintendent for Operations*
- **Inclement Weather Team:** Cathy Bendis, *Asst Superintendent for Operations*
- **Instructional Plan:** Heather Kutcher, *Asst Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction*
- **Calendar Committee:** Jillian Lader, *Manager of Communications*
- **Survey & Dashboard:** Yakoubou Ousmanou, *Manager of North Star Research and Program Evaluation*

Background



Calendar must include at least 3 traditional inclement weather days.



All built-in in-person closure days must be used before a virtual day.



Virtual instruction must provide at least 4 hours of synchronous, real-time instruction.



2024–2025 survey results showed support for virtual instruction.



Both options (holding virtual instruction or not) come with challenges and benefits.


- *Example challenge:* Reaching all students
- *Example benefit:* Community support for earlier end-of-school date



HCPS did not adopt a virtual plan in 2024–2025 due to the presence of six built-in closure days and operational challenges.

- *Note:* Five inclement weather days were used last year.

Draft Plan



HCPS Synchronous Instruction Plan for Inclement Weather Days
School Year: 2025–2026

Overview:
HCPS may determine to use synchronous instruction during an inclement weather-related closure. Synchronous instruction means that students will log into Canvas and attend live, real-time classes via Microsoft Teams. HCPS will only use a synchronous instructional day when it can be announced during the school day prior to the closure so that schools, teachers, families, and students can prepare and take home their assigned HCPS device and any other necessary resources from the school building.

On synchronous inclement weather days, students will attend classes virtually following their school's regular 2-hour delayed schedule. Teachers will work their normal duty day hours, using 75 minutes of the initial two hours before students arrive virtually to finalize and publish lessons in Canvas with active Microsoft Teams links and 45 minutes of the initial two hours before students arrive for negotiated planning time.

HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

Decision must be during the school-day before

2-hour delay schedule for students (not staff)

Students have 10 days for assignments

MS Teams links posted on Canvas

Attendance taken

Practice day direct by each school

Will be brought to the Board of Education for a vote at the September 22, 2025

Feedback



Draft instructional plan reviewed by Teacher of the Year groups, Curriculum and Instruction leaders, Special Education staff, and principal advisory groups.



Summer 2025 surveys collected input from 1,520 staff and 3,195 parents/guardians to assess readiness, access, and logistical needs. Link and public access to dashboard available on Monday, August 18, 2025.



Key themes/considerations include internet access, technical support, professional development, and barriers for certain student populations.

Considerations

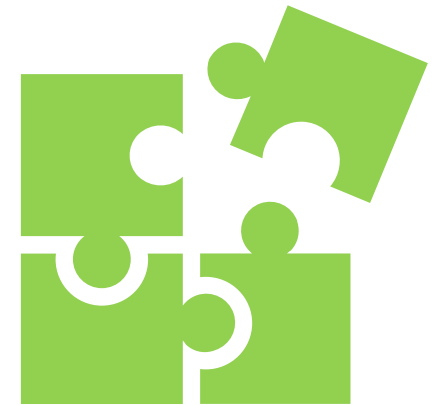
24% of teachers (from survey) have limited or no experience teaching synchronously.

19% of families (from survey) lack or are unsure of supervision during closures.

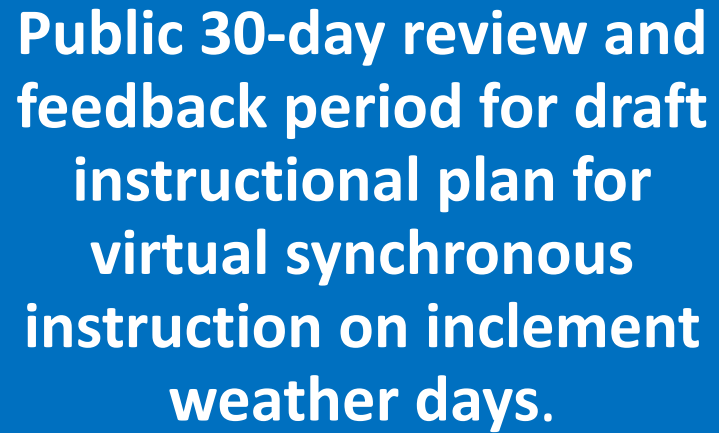
Reliable home internet access remains a challenge; cost to provide hotspots estimated at **\$200,000**.

Professional development and family resources will be essential for successful implementation.


Providing day-of technical support for staff, students, and families will need to be considered.



Next Steps



Public 30-day review and feedback period for draft instructional plan for virtual synchronous instruction on inclement weather days.



Return to the Board on September 22, 2025, for a vote.

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ADDENDUM

Expanded Background

Background

MSDE allows districts to utilize virtual instruction on inclement weather days.

- Districts must use all built in in-person inclement weather days
- Must include 4 hours of synchronous instruction

MSDE requires at least 3 traditional inclement weather days to be included in district calendars for waivers of the 180-day requirement.

- Current HCPS policy has 6 inclement weather days.
- The Board will vote at the next meeting (Sept 8) about altering our inclement weather days to 3.

For 2024-2025, HCPS conducted a survey about desirability for virtual instruction on inclement weather dates.

- Staff:
 - 75% in favor
 - 25% not in favor
- Parents/Guardians:
 - 71% in favor
 - 29% not in favor

HCPS did not elect to have a Virtual Instruction Plan, so did not present to the Board for 2024-2025.

- Decision surrounded operational challenges and the built-in 6 days.
- HCPS used 5 inclement weather closure days in 2024-2025 and therefore would have never been able to utilize a virtual day.

The Dilemma

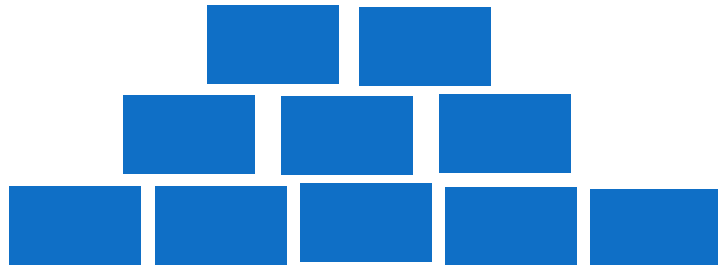
All Maryland districts have faced the decision of whether to offer synchronous virtual instruction on inclement weather days. Both options (holding virtual instruction or not) come with their own challenges and benefits. Example factors influencing the wide variation in district approaches include:

Challenges

Internet Access

Instruction for All (S.E., M.L., PK-2)

Readiness & Resources

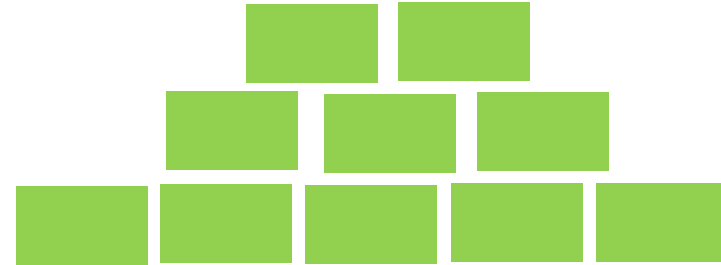


Benefits

End date of school

Community Support

Testing Windows*



*State and national testing dates don't change regardless of our opening/closing on inclement weather days.

Feedback Approaches

Draft instructional plan sent for input/feedback from:

- Teacher of the Year Groups (7 total groups of 5 each)
- Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Office (Supervisors, Teacher Specialists, and Instructional Coaches)
- Special Education Office (Supervisors, Coordinators, Teacher Specialists)
- Principal Advisory Group
- Operational Principal Advisory Group

Survey sent Summer 2025

- 2024-2025 survey indicated support for synchronous instruction on inclement weather days
- Goal for this survey was to seek pragmatic and logistical input from families and staff who will be in HCPS for the 2025-2026 school year.
- Responses:
 - 1520 Instructional Staff
 - 3195 Parents/Guardians

Survey Scope

Teachers were asked about:

- Experience teaching Synchronous Virtual Instruction
- Comfort teaching Sychronously
- Professional development needs
- Internet service
- Home workspace
- Strengths/Challenges

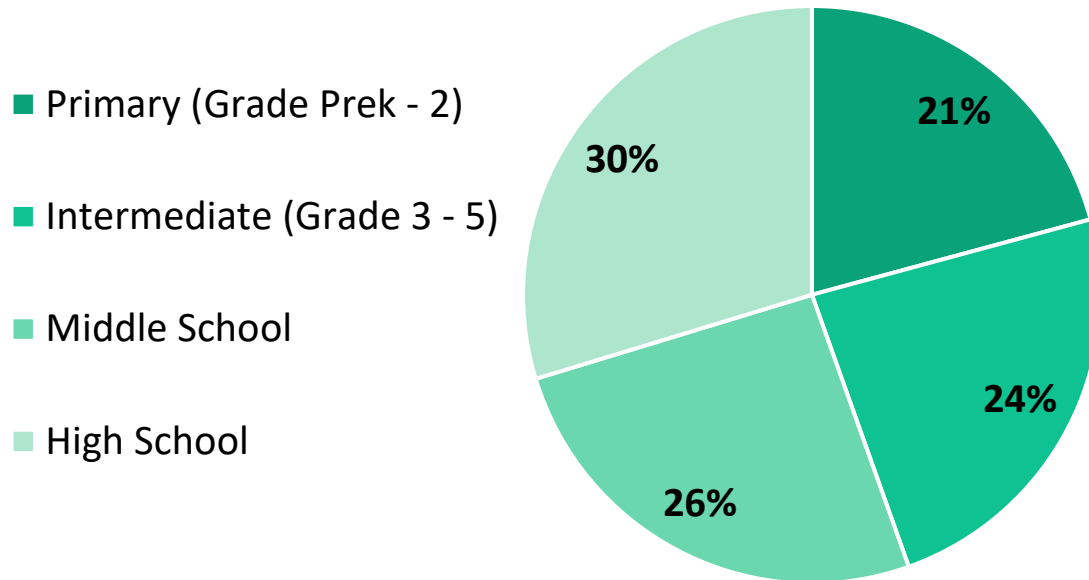
Parents/Guardians were asked about:

- Experience participating in Virtual Instruction
- Household support during closure
- Comfort with technology & tools
- Preparation needs
- Internet service
- Home workspace
- Strengths/Challenges

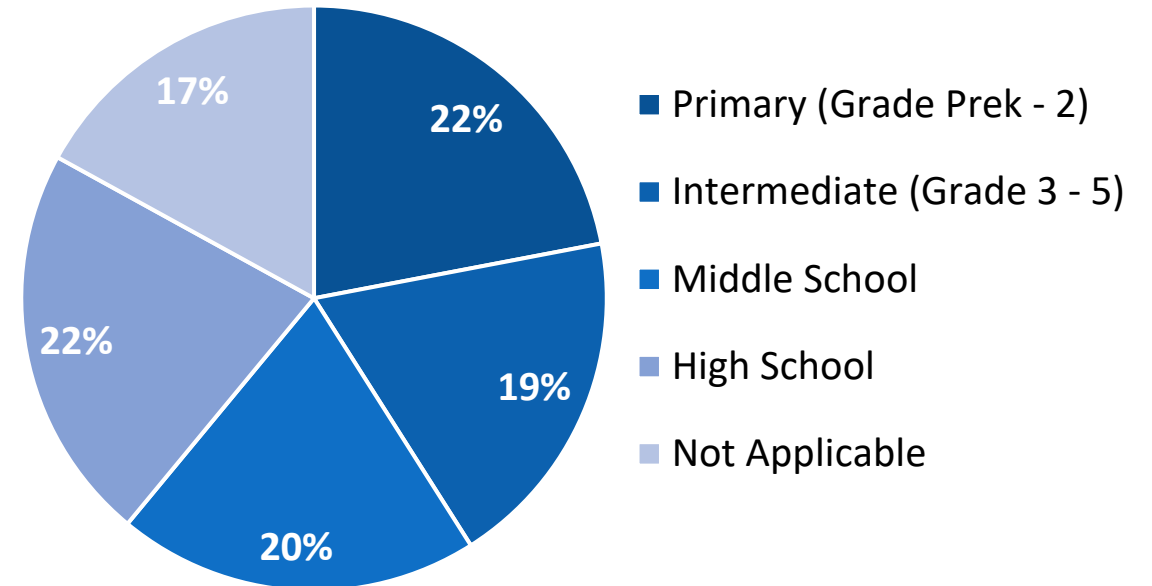
Survey Respondents

The survey had a generally even distribution of respondents by level:

Parents/Guardians (3,195)



Teachers (1,520)



Instructional Plan Feedback

The TOY, instructional leaders, and principal groups provided feedback to improve clarity of the language and logistical details of the plan (such as a teacher absence and advisory periods) and these consistent themes:

Attendance, absence coding, chronic absenteeism	Barriers for English Language Learners, students receiving special education services, and families who face economic hardship	Teachers who have never taught in Teams	Ability for day-of technical support
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