

# Mountain Brook Schools 2020-2021 Reopening Frequently Asked Questions

*All information subject to change as new guidance emerges. Last updated Oct. 16.*

## GENERAL

### **Why is Mountain Brook Schools transitioning to the traditional option with all schools at full capacity?**

The [Jefferson County Department of Health](#) has released new guidance stating that it is reasonable for schools to consider a more flexible approach in bringing secondary students back to school buildings while continuing with mitigation strategies such as masking, social distancing, and good hygiene practices. You can read more about the school system's decision in [this letter](#) from Mountain Brook Schools Superintendent Dr. Dicky Barlow.

### **When will Mountain Brook Schools transition its secondary schools to full capacity?**

Mountain Brook School students will make the transition Monday, Oct. 19.

### **On what days will secondary students enrolled in the traditional open report to school for in-person instruction?**

Secondary students enrolled in the traditional option will report to school on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, with a virtual day on Wednesday for teacher instructional planning for virtual and traditional students, student support, and cleaning. Elementary students enrolled in the traditional option will continue to report to school Monday through Friday.

### **What can I expect for my secondary student on the virtual day?**

Secondary schools are developing plans for student support that may include virtual or in-person support at designated times. More information will be shared by the local schools.

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**Can I change my family's decision about virtual or traditional school?**

The deadline to make a change to your child's learning option is the end of the day on Sunday, Oct. 11. Please contact your child's school to transition between the traditional and virtual learning options. Changes will take effect beginning Monday, Oct. 19.

**When might secondary students enrolled in the traditional option attend school Monday through Friday?**

Mountain Brook Schools will continue to evaluate new data and stay flexible in our planning as we move toward the ultimate goal of bringing our students back to school full-time.

**What do gradual transitions for elementary classes mean?**

Currently, elementary students are working within their classrooms as a small group with their teacher. Teachers of "specials" classes come to their classroom for their learning activities. In a gradual release model, the classroom of students will begin to travel to "specials" classrooms, and upper elementary grades will begin to rotate classrooms as a group. As these transitions occur, we will monitor any impact of these changes. Should these transitions occur with little impact over time, the classroom groups may begin to interact in small groups, eventually transitioning to grade level and school-wide activities. Any adjustments will be made in small incremental steps over time to support the monitoring of changes.

**What is the difference between virtual school and traditional school?**

Students who opt for virtual school will be using a virtual curriculum to guide their learning as they work from home. For all students, virtual school will be facilitated by a Mountain Brook Schools teacher. Students who opt for traditional school will attend classes in person at their designated school during regular school hours, unless virus exposure requires alternate planning. To make changes to your family's choice regarding traditional and virtual options, please contact your child's school by the end of the day on Sunday, Oct. 11.

**Do I need to notify anyone if we want to opt in for traditional school?**

Virtual students interested in transitioning back to the traditional option on Monday, Oct. 19, should notify their principal by the end of the day on Sunday, Oct. 11. Students already in the traditional option will remain enrolled in that option unless

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they express desire to transition to the full-time virtual option. Any student who is interested in transitioning to the virtual option should also notify their principal by the end of the day on Sunday, Oct. 11.

**Will facial coverings be required for students and employees?**

Cloth facial coverings are required for all employees and all students. Students and faculty will utilize masking for a significant period of time throughout the day. However, our schools have intentionally planned specific times when students can extend their distancing to 6 feet or more and have “mask breaks”. When riding a bus, masks are required for everyone.

**What types of facial coverings may be worn?**

Individuals can determine what type of cloth facial covering is most comfortable for them. Facial coverings should cover the nose and mouth. A facial covering that can be worn around the neck would be most beneficial for younger children. Any graphics or wording should comply with the Mountain Brook Schools Code of Conduct. Face shields will only be allowed for students when worn with a cloth facial covering or when a cloth mask cannot be worn as referenced in CDC guidelines.

**What types of facial coverings will teachers be wearing?**

Employees will be allowed to wear a clear face shield only when instructionally necessary if they are practicing physical distancing of 6 feet or more. But they must wear a cloth facial covering throughout the rest of the school day. Although reports have shown that face shields aren’t as effective as masks in limiting virus transmission, it is important for students to see a teacher’s face during instruction for a variety of reasons, including pronunciation, lip reading, and facial expressions.

**Will temperature checks be taken as people enter school facilities each day?**

All students and employees will be asked to conduct a daily symptom check before attending school. This includes checking body temperature. Mountain Brook Schools has provided a [symptom-checking tool](#) that helps parents, students, and employees make daily decisions regarding attendance. Temperature checks will be conducted by the school nurse if a student or employee begins to feel unwell or exhibits possible symptoms.

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**What will social distancing look like in the classroom and hallways?**

Spaces between student desks are being extended as much as possible, and teachers are removing unnecessary items from their classrooms to create as much space for student distancing as possible. Schools have also made preparations to assist with traffic flow in the hallways during class changes. When possible, schools will consider staggering classes moving in the hallways. Please note that distancing of 6 feet or more may not always be possible due to space constraints within our buildings, but Mountain Brook Schools will do everything in its power to keep students distanced as far apart as possible in all situations.

**How will student absences be handled this school year?**

The Mountain Brook Schools Attendance Policy has not been changed. However, all COVID-19 related absences will be excused. Students will be able to continue their academic work while away from the building or make up their work after a reported illness.

**How will Mountain Brook Schools determine if it transitions to another instructional delivery model within the full-time traditional option?**

Mountain Brook Schools has consulted with the chief officers at the Alabama Department of Public Health and Jefferson County Department of Health and will follow their guidance when considering a transition to another instructional delivery model. We are examining available information daily and continuing to consult with local health officials to determine the best path forward. Jefferson County and local data will be considered.

**HEALTH**

**What is the plan when a student or employee tests positive for COVID-19?**

**Student:** If you or a family member test positive, please inform your school nurse so that we can assist you with developing a plan. The individual should remain home until they meet all "return-to-school" criteria. Family members should also quarantine at home for 14 days to monitor for symptoms. Mountain Brook Schools will communicate with the Jefferson County Department of Health and follow all guidance provided for the individual situation. The school and family should make every attempt to work together to assist with identifying any possible exposures.

**Employee:** If you or a family member test positive, please inform your school nurse and administration so that we can assist you in developing a plan. Dr. Susan Cole, Director of Personnel, is prepared to talk you through the [Families First](#)

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[Coronavirus Response Act \(FFCRA\)](#), which allows you some paid leave entitlements assuming you meet one of the six qualifying reasons for leave related to COVID-19. For your protection and that of others, if you or a family member test positive for COVID-19, please follow appropriate quarantine requirements and provide a physician release upon returning to work. FFCRA also covers questions related to those with underlying health conditions.

**Return to School and Work Criteria:**

- Fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication, and
- Symptoms have improved, and
- 10-day period has passed since the onset of symptoms (symptomatic) or positive test date (asymptomatic)

**If a student or teacher tests positive, will I be notified?**

Currently, the guidance we have received directs us to notify the groups of people who may have had certain levels of interaction and possible exposure with the positive individual. If there is a close contact exposure (6 ft./15 min.), the Jefferson County Department of Health or Mountain Brook Schools will speak with your family directly. The Jefferson County Department of Health will lead the contact tracing process when warranted.

**Will an entire classroom/school need to quarantine if a positive case is reported?**

If a student or teacher tests positive, Mountain Brook Schools will work with the Jefferson County Department of Health on contact tracing and exposure levels. If distancing and masking have been continuously occurring, it may be possible for the class to continue at school. However, if the exposure risk is high based on a variety of factors, it may be possible that the class would need to quarantine for 14 days. Each situation is different, and decisions will be made on an individual basis.

**What if someone in your family tests positive? Do you have to quarantine?**

Based on guidance from the Jefferson County Department of Health, if you live with an individual who has tested positive, this would be considered a close contact situation. You and other family members would be asked to quarantine for 14 days to monitor for symptoms. Employees in this situation would need to contact Dr. Susan Cole, Director of Personnel, for more information.

**If I am notified that I need to quarantine, do I have to pay for a test?**

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If you receive notification that you may have been in direct contact with a positive COVID-19 case, you will be asked to quarantine for 14 days. There is no mandate from the school system to seek out and pay for a COVID-19 test.

**What services are available to help the social-emotional well-being of students and teachers dealing with the stress of the pandemic?**

Employees have access to the Employee Assistance Program for counseling if needed. Our school counseling team and virtual teachers are assessing the needs of students and faculty members. Counselors will use small group guidance and individual support to assist with mental health and social-emotional needs. All parents and students are welcome to meet with our school counselors should they have concerns. Mountain Brook Schools students and parents also have access to the Mountain Brook Schools Reporting Line through ClassLink should they need assistance.

**What measures are in place to assist employees who have underlying health conditions?**

We ask those employees to contact their school administrator and Dr. Susan Cole, Director of Personnel, should they have any concerns.

**Do students and employees have to notify the school if they test positive?**

All families and employees will be required to notify the school nurse of a positive test result to assist with notification and cleaning procedures.

**How will school nurses evaluate individuals with COVID-like symptoms (ex., cough, sneezing, allergy/sinus)?**

We will follow the guidelines provided by the Alabama Department of Public Health. Should an individual present with symptoms while at school, they should see the school nurse to be evaluated. School nurses will use the list of major and minor COVID-19 symptoms found in the [Alabama Department of Public Health School Toolkit](#). If symptoms present while at home, the family should seek the guidance of their health care provider.

**Are Pre-K and Kindergarten students expected to wear masks?**

All Mountain Brook students are expected to wear masks. However, we understand this will be especially difficult for very young students. Our goal is to do the best we

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can to help young children with this process. We realize there will be more instances when masks come off for these younger ages.

**What if my child forgets to bring their mask to school?**

Each school will have a supply of extra masks should someone forget their mask or their mask breaks during the day.

**What happens if a child refuses to wear a mask?**

Wearing a mask is not optional while at school or participating in school-related activities. Should a student refuse to wear a mask, we will address the behavior through positive reinforcement strategies just as we would with any other behavior. Our administrators are prepared to work with families should this become an issue for their child. Exceptions will be made for students who have a medical disability per CDC guidelines.

**What is the best cough etiquette for when you are wearing a mask?**

The health department has told us to remain masked and cough in your elbow. All of the schools have extra masks if needed.

**CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

**Do virtual students follow the same academic calendar as traditional students, and will they be allowed to attend graduations?**

Virtual students will follow the Mountain Brook Schools board-approved calendar. Virtual students who are enrolled in Mountain Brook Schools are allowed to participate in graduation.

**What will PE and recess look like for students?**

We encourage students to be outside during PE and recess as much as possible. PE teachers have worked on safety protocols that include distancing and heat index monitoring, as well as rotation plans. Our PE teachers have received guidance from state professional organizations regarding recommendations for PE classes. Lesson design minimizes the use of equipment, reduces group sizes, utilizes outside activities as much as possible, and adheres to cleaning protocols. Students are not

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required to wear masks when participating in direct physical activity during PE and will not be required to wear masks at recess if physical distancing can be achieved. Recess can be one of the most unstructured activities of the day. Teachers will use their discretion during recess and may keep students indoors if it is too hot for them to wear masks safely outside for an extended period. Health and safety for everyone are our top priorities.

**Will my child have the same teacher regardless of whether they attend traditional or virtual school?**

Virtual instruction for grades K-12 will consist of courses designed and taught by a Mountain Brook Schools teacher. Teachers will have access to a variety of resources, including programs used by all Mountain Brook students, as well as content from Schools PLP and ACCESS distance learning.

**How will special services look during this time?**

Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEP) should have a team meeting with the appropriate members of that team to make a decision about the best placement and strategies to meet the needs of the student. Students with 504 plans may have a meeting to modify their 504 plan to support the option of their choice.

**Are specials offered at the elementary schools?**

Yes. Specials classes are offered at all four elementary schools. Virtual students will receive lessons in art, music, and PE. Classes will be allowed to move to the specials classroom.

**Will my child be able to participate in advanced and AP courses?**

If your child chooses the traditional option, advanced and AP courses will be offered at school as in previous years. If your child chooses the virtual option and their advanced or AP class is offered virtually, they will complete their coursework virtually. Should their class not be offered in the virtual option, they will have the opportunity to come to school for the specific advanced or AP class only.

**How will students who attend virtual school for the first semester transition back into traditional classrooms if they choose to return for the second semester?**

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Mountain Brook Schools will assess the academic progress of each student upon their return to a traditional classroom. If there are gaps, schools will create a plan to address them.

**What will be the role of the virtual teacher?**

The Mountain Brook Schools virtual teacher will select activities based on grade-level content, monitor and assess progress, and meet weekly with students and parents if needed. The teacher will have access to the same resources as other teachers, including Schools PLP and ACCESS distance learning.

**Why can't students who want to attend school virtually just watch traditional Mountain Brook classes online for the first semester?**

This is not a viable option because students would be in front of a screen for more than 7 hours per day. Virtual learning is designed differently than in-person learning. Protecting the confidentiality of students in classrooms that may be live streamed into families' homes is also a concern.

**Will parents with students enrolled in virtual school receive progress reports and have nine-week conferences with the virtual teacher to ensure they are doing well?**

Yes.

**Will students still be able to participate in enrichment if they choose a virtual option?**

Students in the virtual program may attend enrichment in person or will have access to a virtual option designed by our enrichment specialists.

**Will there be training on the learning management system?**

Yes, virtual teachers will be able to train parents and students on how to use the learning management system.

**What can we expect from specials in Schools PLP?**

Schools PLP offers music, art, and PE. Assignments will be designed and taught by a Mountain Brook Schools teacher.

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**If we choose to homeschool our children using a homeschooling curriculum (not the virtual one provided by the state), are we able to enroll in MBS at any time?**

Enrolling in a homeschool curriculum would require a student to withdraw from MBS and then choose a curriculum accredited by an accreditation group, such as AdvancED or Cognia. Those courses could be accepted by MBS at any time and allow you to re-enroll your student.

**At what point would traditional school convert to remote learning for everyone?**

If a complete transition to virtual learning were ever considered due to COVID-19, that decision would be made in conjunction with the Jefferson County Department of Health, Alabama Department of Public Health, and Alabama State Department of Education. Our hope is for students to return to school as much as possible pending the continued availability of a safe and healthy environment.

**If a student misses school for a couple of weeks due to COVID-19, how will they make up missed work?**

If a student is out for a short-term absence of approximately 14 days, we will utilize our learning platforms and technology tools to connect that student with their class and/or teacher during that time.

**How will instruction be provided to virtual students?**

There could be recorded lessons, specific readings, discussion boards, conferencing, etc., but there will not be a live video feed due to privacy issues.

**Will any opportunities for group interaction be provided?**

That will be up to that teacher, but we would consider that to be best practice.

**What contact will the virtual students have with their teachers?**

Our plan states that the teacher must have contact with students a minimum of once weekly. With that said, we are working on a way to support teachers in doing that.

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**What happens if only a small number of students in a class go virtual? Will the teacher spend as much time or effort on two to three virtual students as they do on the large majority of in-person students?**

Our plan is to schedule a class period for the virtual class so the teacher can be hands-on with students and have specific time carved out during the day for the virtual students. If there is a class that has very few virtual students, the school administration will work to provide time and support to that teacher.

**What limits the ability to provide one curriculum that can be consumed in person or virtually simultaneously?**

All students will need a robust virtual environment, but make-up work is designed differently than virtual learning. Short-term absences are something teachers are used to, as many students are out of school for a variety of reasons in any school year. We do not want virtual learning to be “make-up” work but rather a robust learning experience specifically designed for a virtual platform. We also need to consider staffing decisions based on the number of students opting for the virtual option.

**How can I get answers to specific questions about the courses and processes in place at each school?**

Those with specific questions about courses and processes in place at a particular school should contact that school directly.

**OPERATIONS/MAINTENANCE**

**How will schools be cleaned?**

Mountain Brook Schools custodial teams are performing all cleaning and sanitization in accordance with the CDC Guidelines. All custodians have received professional training prior to the 2020-2021 school year. All high-touch surfaces and bathrooms will be cleaned on a rotating basis throughout the school day. All buildings will be cleaned and sanitized before the next school day.

**What plans exist for classroom ventilation and HVAC filter changing?**

Mountain Brook Schools is following CDC recommendations for the maintenance of all HVAC systems to ensure air quality in the buildings. We are installing new Tri-Dim MERV 11 filters in all schools and adding ionizers to existing units.

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**Are our classrooms large enough for student seats to be spread 6 feet apart so that students do not have to wear a mask?**

The size of our classrooms may limit our ability to distance students 6 feet apart. Schools will do everything they can to space students as far apart as possible. Creative instructional solutions may be utilized to support spacing in secondary classrooms. Due to this limitation, students will be asked to wear masks in classrooms should they not be able to distance.

**How will lunch be served?**

In elementary schools, students will go to the lunchroom to pick up their lunch and return to their classrooms to eat. At the junior high and high school, students will pick up their lunch and eat in designated locations around the building. Classrooms will be used as a last resort for lunch. Schools have made the necessary adjustments for all students to have time to eat lunch. Our lunchrooms have transitioned to a “touchless” system to reduce the spread of any virus.

**What safety precautions will be in place for lunches regarding food preparation and service?**

All meals will be prepackaged by our child nutrition team and will be picked up by individual students in the cafeteria. Elementary students will eat lunch in their individual classrooms. Secondary students will eat lunch at designated locations where distancing can be achieved.

**How will the Extended Day Program meet the criteria for distancing?**

The Extended Day Program will not be offered at this time but will be re-evaluated as classrooms move to grade level and/or schoolwide gatherings. Each of our elementary Extended Day Programs is developing procedures and activities that will support social distancing. Students will be placed into cohorts (small groups of approximately 15 students) and they will remain with that group throughout the semester. Registering for full-time (5 days per week) or part-time (designated days) will be very important so that EDP directors can appropriately staff for after-school activities. We will not be able to accommodate last-minute decisions to attend EDP.

**Will outdoor spaces be used throughout the school day?**

Each school is developing its own school-based plan regarding how to use outdoor spaces for various activities throughout the day.

**If it becomes necessary for a classroom to be closed for 24 hours for cleaning, what will that class do?**

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If it becomes necessary for a classroom to be closed for cleaning, that class would be relocated to another classroom in the building.

**Will maintaining 6 feet of social distancing be enforced in the cafeteria, hallways, and other places outside of the classroom?**

Yes, we will try to maintain 6 feet of distancing in all areas when possible.

**Have a question that isn't answered above? Email [covid19questions@mtnbrook.k12.al.us](mailto:covid19questions@mtnbrook.k12.al.us) with your inquiry.**