

Questions and Answers Regarding Back to School Plans (8-24-2020 Update)

Hartland Consolidated School District

1. How was the DRAFT Plan created and adjusted prior to being delivered to the Board for adoption?

The DRAFT plans were created following the Governors release of the MIS Safe Schools Roadmap (https://www.michigan.gov/documents/whitmer/MI_Safe_Schools_Roadmap_FINAL_695392_7.pdf) on June 30, 2020. The process that the district was going to use to create the DRAFT plans were shared with the community and staff as outlined below:

- A. After reviewing the MI Safe Schools Roadmap district administration would draw up DRAFT plans. This was to ensure that curriculum, food and nutrition, social emotional learning, special education, building maintenance, transportation, athletics, etc. expert staff ensured that all phases of the plan requirement were captured. The DRAFT also had to account for the needs of the community which seemed to be leaning toward face-to-face instruction with choice if not comfortable coming back to school right away. The DRAFT focused on the ability to transition easily from face-to-face to remote learning if necessary and safety for all.
- B. The next step was to share the DRAFT with the Board of Education and district stakeholders. This was done by inviting approximately 40 staff to a roll out meeting on July 20, 2020. All employee group leaders were invited to attend and one teacher from every building per a request from the Hartland Education Association. You can view the list of attendees in the DRAFT Plan documents. At the conclusion of this meeting concerns were reviewed and the DRAFT Plan documents adjusted.
- C. On July 23, 2020 the DRAFT Plans were released to the community to view and provide feedback through a special email. Superintendent Hughes responded to these emails and captured the thoughts of the community.
- D. The Board of Education discussed the DRAFT Back-to-School Plans as the main agenda item for this Special Meeting of the Board of Education (<http://www.hartlandschools.us/documents/meeting%20minutes/2020-2021/7%2027%2020%20Special%20Meeting%20Agenda.pdf>) on July 27, 2020.
- E. On July 28, 2020 district leadership sat down with the Hartland Education Association to review their thoughts and list of concerns resulting in a question and answer document being created and problem-solving solutions for some of the concerns.
- F. On July 29, 2020 a survey was distributed to HCS parents requesting them to share how they were feeling about the DRAFT Plans by indicating their plans for the fall (face-to-face, remote, or 7-12 Hartland Virtual Academy). We purposely did not ask about families leaning toward homeschooling or leaving the district as this will be done through each individual building. The survey results can be found in #4 of this document.
- G. On Thursday, July 30, 2020 the district teachers requested time to more thoroughly discuss the plans and on Friday, July 31, 2020 again voiced a concern about adopting the plans as written. This prompted the Board of Education to cancel a Special Meeting for August 3, 2020 so that this could be accomplished along with a continuation of information gathering.
- H. On Monday, August 3, 2020 district leadership met with the teacher association to continue discussion about how to best accomplish returning to school for the 20-21 school year and answer questions.
- I. On Tuesday, August 4, 2020 district leadership met with the teacher's association to continue discussions about the direction of the back to school plans. An agreement on what the back to school plans would look like was settled upon.
- J. On Thursday, August 6, 2020 the teacher's association informed the district that "our survey results suggested we recommend" the plans be forwarded to the Board of Education as discussed on August 4, 2020 with reservation and an understanding that open communication continues throughout implementation, if adopted.
- K. The Superintendent has recommended that that adoption of the back to school plans be placed on the Board of Education Agenda as an action item for Monday, August 10, 2020 with changes regarding a soft-start to the school year. Please refer to question number six for more information. The Board approved the plan 5-1.

2. Why does the district not have a plan for teachers who are not able to work in the classroom due to issues associated with COVID exposure to do all Virtual Learning?

The district has developed the Phase 4 plan around the concept that we are attempting to “prepare for the time in which schooling returns to normal,” Phase 6, or at least Phase 5. This means that we will need every teacher available to accommodate students when parents feel comfortable sending them back to school if they have chosen remote learning to start the year. The district collaboratively engaged in discussions with the teacher’s association to try and work through many concerns. During the collaborative sessions we talked about many things including the opportunity to open the door to discussion around JK-12 district provided virtual learning with Hartland teachers. We found common ground on some issues but not on all the issues presented.

The following is a list of barriers to pulling teachers out of building staffing to only teacher virtual, from the district perspective:

- a. If teachers are pulled out of the building, class sizes would potentially increase if no new teachers were hired. This is because, if you pull thirty first graders for virtual learning throughout the district with an HCS teacher buildings would lose a teacher but not be able to limit class size for the teachers left behind. Class size is consistently an issue with parents and teachers alike and currently with the concerns about social distancing.

Note: This is an important consideration as currently the district did not have a clear understanding about the final funding allowances for 2019-20 and little guidance on a budget for 2020-21.

- b. If teachers are pulled to support a district virtual academy, they may need to develop and teach many grades or subject areas to make it work. This might be undoable.
- c. If teachers are pulled out of the building to handle a virtual classroom the commitment for parents would have to be one year. This is because there would be little room, if any, for students to return as staffing would have been rearranged. This is not consistent with the ease of transition that the Phase 4 plan is designed around.

Note: The district had planned on a one-year commitment for 7-12 Hartland Virtual Academy and changed it to a semester due to parental concern that they did not want a one-year commitment.

Additional thoughts but probably not barriers:

- a. If three teachers at the high school who happen to teach the same content area request a switch to virtual learning, but we only need one, who determines the person who gets this opportunity?
- b. It seems that districts trying to plan this type of approach are struggling with how to most efficiently make it work. The question that remains to be seen is, what happens when we move up to Phase 5 or Phase 6 and these students/parents strongly request to go back to school? Will the districts demanding a year-long commitment be able to hold them back?
- c. We understand that some districts are hiring any certified teacher to mentor and teach virtual students through platforms like Michigan Virtual University instead of pulling teachers from building staffing with specific certifications to teach their own content. This would be like our 7-12 HVA school. Doing this would not accomplish the creation of positions for teachers unable to continue working in the classroom as we already have teachers on our Alternative Education staff to mentor students using Michigan Virtual University classes.

3. Why is the district even considering Phase 4 face-to-face instruction?

The district looks to the State of Michigan to compile the science behind the phases in place. The State of Michigan and Governor have the resources to best make these decisions. Local Livingston County Health Department data (<https://livgov.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/b6dddfbad2ac4125812e301e5694e291>) currently shows that in Livingston County with a population of 194,668 citizens, there have been 837 confirmed cases or .42% of the population in Hartland Township the data shows 24 confirmed cases out of 6,786 residents or .35% of the population. Of the 777 confirmed cases there have been 28 deaths or 3.6% of all cases. The county is also experiencing a very low positive result rate of about 1.6% of all people tested for COVID-19 (<https://www.mistartmap.info/>). These factors seem to indicate that the district can open for face-to-face instruction per Phase 4 guidance in the MI Safe Schools Roadmap (https://www.michigan.gov/documents/whitmer/MI_Safe_Schools_Roadmap_FINAL_695392_7.pdf). At the same time, the district wishes to respect the choices that parents must make for their children by offering the opportunity to engage in face-to-face, district offered remote learning JK-12, or Hartland Virtual Academy learning 7-12. The first two options provide an ease of transition if the Phase designation changes, and if the classroom or buildings need to go into quarantine. HVA offers a full year of consistent education regardless of the changes in conditions that may occur, and all students will receive the same curriculum with just the delivery being differentiated.

4. How will the district ensure consistency in the expectation to wear a face covering?

The district Phase 4 DRAFT Plan requires students and staff to wear facial coverings. If the plans are adopted by the Board of Education, it will be expected that the wearing of facial coverings is enforced throughout the district. Building administration will work with staff and students to ensure compliance using current Student Code of Conduct dress code language (Board Policy) and any adjustments at the building level necessary to meet compliance with Phase 4 implementation. If students refuse to wear face coverings, they will be disciplined according to the handbook rubrics which includes parental involvement and possibly directed to the district provided remote format for instructional delivery if they choose not to comply. The distance learning option is consistent with providing a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) due to the current health crisis. The expectation to wear face coverings will not be debatable or option based. If a student has a medical condition that keeps them from wearing a face covering, the child find team or Individual Educational Plan (IEP) team will have determined this through the normal process. Until the process is complete, the student must wear the face covering or engage in the remote learning option.

Note: On July 29,2020, I was made aware that the Governor's office released a FAQ document regarding Executive Order 2020-142 in which facial shields are not an option to replace cloth masks. However, the MI Safe Schools Roadmap is more essential when it comes to the law than the FAQ document; therefore, we will look closely on a case by case basis at any request to wear a face shield through the child find or IEP process which requires staff input once medical documentation is received. Until the process is complete, students will be required to wear a cloth face mask. If a parent requests a case review to not wear a face mask, it must be accompanied by medical documentation. A parent making a request for their child not to wear a facemask without medical documentation will not move forward and the child must wear a face mask. Again, students refusing to wear a cloth face mask may not be able to attend face-to-face instruction.

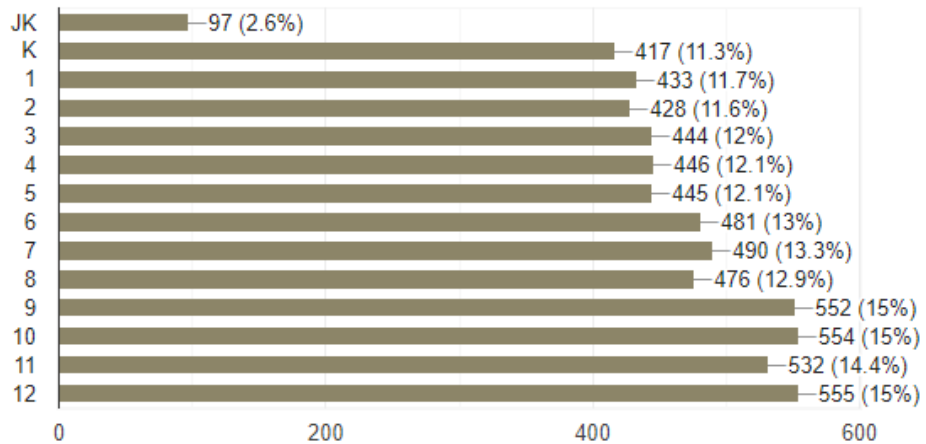
5. What does the community want school to look like when we return?

On 7-28-2020 we asked parents to tell us what they were thinking knowing what they do about the DRAFT Plans. As of this moment, 3,691 parents have responded with the following: 75.7% (2,795) Face-to-Face, 20.8% (769) Remote, and 3.4% (126) HVA grades 7-12. We did not ask about homeschooling or finding an alternate educational program. This will be done through a form that each family will fill out for each child. Below is a screenshot of the survey results.

Please mark the grades that your children will be in when school starts on August 19, 2020.

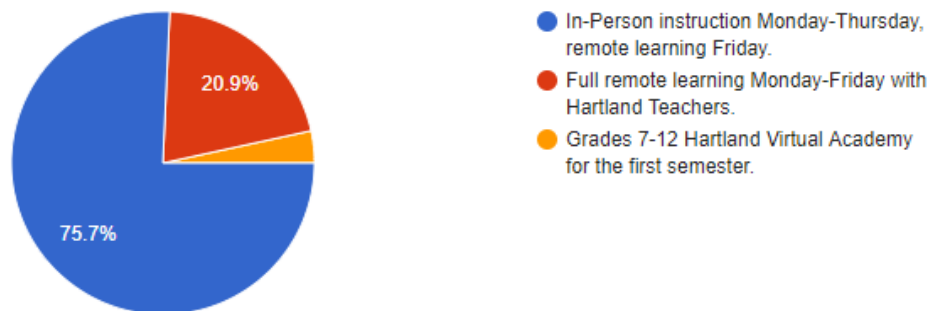
Mark all that apply:

3,691 responses



Given your current understanding of the Hartland Schools return to school plans: If the state of Michigan keeps school districts in Phase 4, how would your children start the 2020-2021 school year?

3,691 responses



6. What percent of students chose to go remote to start the year?

During the first week of school 83% of students attended face-to-face instruction while 17% choose all remote. The number of students choosing 7-12 Hartland Virtual Academy was 17 middle school and 53 high school students.

7. How can we create situations that help to limit exposure throughout the district?

Building principals and staff will analyze the functions of their buildings to identify and adjust these functions where possible to limit movement and exposure. Examples might be in adopting a block schedule at the high school and middle school where students would visit three or four classes a day versus six or seven, while the elementary schools might institute a two-week rotating schedule for electives so that these teachers do not have contact with every student every week.

8. Why is the district planning a soft-start from August 19, 2020 to September 3, 2020?

As the district looked at how to best bring students back to school after roughly five months, we felt that a soft-start would be a good way to assimilate back into the business of “doing school.” Along with student transition back into school, we would be able to test and analyze our new post COVID-19 procedures more easily with only half of the population in the buildings at a time. This concept came out of conversations with our teaching staff as it is important to them that they have an opportunity to teach students these new expectations and that they get a chance to analyze how things go so that adjustments can be suggested before all students return at once, which the district agrees is a positive to the soft-start. We will also continue collaborative discussion with each other and the Livingston County Health Department related to the most up to date data available.

9. What was the emphasis behind initiating Friday remote days?

- A. Teachers need time to prepare and deliver both face-to-face and district provided remote learning if we are to have a process which provides ease of transition into full face-to-face and not have parents commit to semester or year of online learning with a Hartland Teacher. This requires asking teachers to do a tremendous job which necessitated the need to find time for them to create balance in the approaches.
- B. Friday remote time will allow time for teachers to engage in outreach to our remote only students, record lessons, send lessons, establish virtual office hours, meet with grade level or content area peers, engage in assessment and grading, contact parents, or even meet with small groups of students when needed.
- C. This would ensure that students have some experience with remote learning if we move from Phase 4 to Phase 3 or if there is a quarantine situation that arises.
- D. Friday can be used for deep cleaning where needed, beyond surface cleaning, thus allowing the hard surfaces to sit for 2-3 days which is currently the time frame established by the CDC before the virus is neutralized.

10. How will the transition option work along with attendance?

Parents will or have been receiving information from each principal indicating how to report the option your children will be engaging in starting on August 19, 2020, the first day of school. It will be made clear that students must stick with this option through at least September 8, 2020. Starting on September 3, and with a two-day notice throughout the time we are in Phase 4, students can transition either to face-to-face or remote depending on their starting choice with an expectation that this is done in large blocks of time. We will not be accepting any day-to-day transition requests. This would be too difficult to manage thus the need to share with the building administration in advance so that conversations can be had. If we have a quarantine situation, students will simply move to remote. If face-to-face students are absent, they may complete the assignments provided to remote students on the day of the absence, but they will be marked absent because the district

must maintain a record of who was in the seat each day. If students are absent for confirmed COVID related issues they will be marked as school related so that it does not count against their attendance record. More information will be provided by the school administration regarding how attendance will be taken daily and weekly.

11. What will the lessons and assignments for remote look like?

The district will provide professional development on utilizing the tools and resources available to deliver instruction in a remote format to our teaching staff. We are secure in the ability of our teachers to determine what this looks like on a teacher by teacher basis while also embracing collaboration among teachers where appropriate. Fridays for both face-to-face and remote learners will require students to engage in completing assignments posted by each teacher. Building principals will be providing information on this subject as well.

12. What would Phase 3 Remote learning look like?

In Phase 3 teachers would provide a daily schedule requiring students to sign into the class or subject through a teacher/school developed process. Teachers will load lessons and related instructional materials onto the platform for each child to complete. Daily assignments and virtual meetings will be required between teachers and students. Some students may be required to check in for small group instruction/intervention. Teachers will keep track of daily contact for attendance purposes. More specifics will be forthcoming that coincides with pupil accounting expectations.

13. What if my family needs assistance for connectivity for their remote learner?

The district will be providing information on when and where to pick up the devices needed to ensure that children are able to engage in remote learning. This will be like the spring pick-up process.

14. What will be the basis for curriculum?

Teachers will spend the two professional development days before school starts to identify the most important critical standards to be taught by grade level and content area. Teachers will develop their lessons, activities, and assessments around these standards so that we can best assess proficiency in student learning. We feel confident that our teachers can make the decisions necessary for instruction which includes what must be taught. Regardless of the delivery mode chosen, all students will receive the same high level of curriculum as all other students. The district will collect student proficiency data for students as it is mandated under state law.

15. What product will teachers use in the classroom for cleaning?

The district will be using a product called Hilliard Vindicator. This will be premixed for teachers (extra buckets in the office area if refills are needed throughout the day) which is extremely mild in its diluted phase. This product will not stain clothing. Students may also be expected to use cleaning wipes to clean chrome books and computer keyboards at the end of their classroom sessions which is no different than how we have always operated in many of our buildings.

16. How can computer course-based classroom teachers clean all the keyboards between the exchange of students?

The district will do its best to provide enough keyboards to rotate versus cleaning each time. It may be that students will be asked to wipe down the computer mouse and keyboards at the end of each hour.

17. Will lockers and locker rooms be used during Phase 4?

Lockers will not be assigned to students at the beginning of the year so that students move from location to location quickly without gathering in groups. The PE locker rooms will not be used until we reach Phase 5.

18. How will staff handle sick students?

Staff will send students that seem to be sick to the office where their symptoms will be assessed. No sick children will remain in school at any time so parents will need to pick them up if called.

19. How will the district address the large blended classrooms in the elementary schools?

The district is looking at the possibility of providing an alternative opportunity for students where blended courses exist such as media. This would only be offered with grades that are blended, meaning that there are more than three classes of a grade and only three elementary elective teachers available.

20. Where are the best places to get COVID testing if needed?

The Livingston County Health Department suggested the following sites:

IHA Urgent Care, 5505 S. Old 23, Brighton. Results 4 days

Ascent Urgent Care, 1255 E. Grand River, Howell. Results 1-2 days

St. Joseph Hospital-Howell, 620 Byron Road, Howell. Results 24-72 hours

U of M Brighton, 8001 Challis Road, Brighton. Results 24-48 hours

Testing should be free in most cases while some offices may charge for the office visit.

21. When will the district consider moving into a different phase?

As Superintendent, I continue to recommend following the Governor's guidance regarding what Phase we are in. At the same time, if the district experiences outbreaks and the situation points toward falling back to all online learning, I will work with the county health department and staff to best understand current data trends and not hesitate to move us into Phase 3 for the safety of all if warranted. I will not have the authority to move the district into Phase 5 as that is the Governor's perspective.