



Analysis and Clarification of the Maryland State Board of Education's Actions Regarding School Schedules

This document provides further analysis and clarification of the actions of the Maryland State Board of Education (SBOE) at their September 1, 2020 meeting to demonstrate the impact on local school system schedules.

Synchronous/Asynchronous Definitions

MSDE defines synchronous instruction as "remote learning that happens in real time with the interaction between the teacher and students and occurs in a virtual classroom setting," including:

- Direct teacher instruction
- Targeted small group instruction
- Teacher led - large/small group discussions
- Collaborative groups
- Assessment/checking for understanding
- Office hours that include meeting with students
- Guided instruction

MSDE included the following items in their definition of asynchronous instruction:

- Digital platform instruction
- Pre-recorded video lessons
- Resource videos
- Assigned readings
- Independent practice
- Paper/pencil learning activities
- Rotation/center activities
- Posted assignments

MSDE Requirements and MSEA Interpretations

MSDE Requirement: *Schools must be open for students at least 180 school days.*

MSEA Interpretation: Day counts begin from day one for students of the 2020-2021 school year.



MSDE Requirement: All schools must include at least a total of six hours per day.

MSEA Interpretation: Six hours a day can be a combination of both synchronous and asynchronous instruction.

For example, consider the two following examples of possible 4th grade day schedules:

Sample A	Sample B
4 synchronous hours/2 asynchronous hours	3 synchronous hours/3 asynchronous hours
1 hour class instruction (reading) - <i>sync</i>	30 min pre-recorded lesson - <i>async</i>
30 min independent reading - <i>async</i>	30 min small group instruction - <i>sync</i>
1 hour class instruction (math) - <i>sync</i>	1 hour independent assigned work* - <i>async</i>
40 min class instruction (PE) - <i>sync</i>	2 hours teacher office hours - <i>sync</i>
30 min small group instruction - <i>sync</i>	30 min one-on-one support - <i>sync</i>
30 min recess - <i>async</i>	30 min recess - <i>async</i>
30 min class instruction (SS/S) - <i>sync</i>	30 min small group instruction/SEL - <i>sync</i>
1 hour independent assigned work* - <i>async</i>	
20 min teacher office time - <i>sync</i>	

*Any items listed under asynchronous

MSDE Requirement: Schools must have an average of 3.5 hours across the grades (K through 12) of synchronous instruction spread out over the course of the day.

MSEA Interpretation: Schools/districts have until the end of the calendar year (see item below) to meet this requirement utilizing an average of 3.5 hours across all grade levels. That means kindergarten students in a district may have less than 3.5 hours synchronous instruction while high school juniors may be over the 3.5 synchronous hours of instruction, utilizing the list of acceptable synchronous activities outlined by MSDE. Both sample schedules above could meet this requirement. Obviously sample A does meet the requirement with 4 hours of synchronous instruction and sample B may meet the requirements when averaged in across all grade levels. Our assumption is local districts will set grade band minimums for synchronous instruction for schools to adhere to when setting their class schedules. We hope that districts,



in collaboration with stakeholders, fulfill this new requirement with the least amount of disruption to current schedules.

MSDE Requirement: *The half-day pre-K school day for each local school system must include a minimum of 1.5 hours of synchronous instruction spread out over the course of the half-day.*

MSEA Interpretation: This requirement is clearly just for half-day classes and all synchronous and asynchronous activities can be considered to fill any remaining time for pre-K.

MSDE Requirement: *MSDE will collaborate with local school superintendents and provide technical assistance as they work to implement the minimum hours of synchronous instruction by the end of the calendar year.*

MSEA Interpretation: MSDE will provide assistance to local districts to help them configure their schedules regarding synchronous hours of instruction so they implement the average 3.5 hours of synchronous instruction across all grade levels requirements by the end of the calendar year.

MSDE Requirement: *School systems that have indicated that they are not returning students in person until second semester should reevaluate their reopening plans by the end of the first quarter (after nine weeks) and submit to MSDE by the third week of November.*

MSEA Interpretation: If some form of in person instruction, even for small groups, is not currently in a local's plans to begin before the second semester, they must reevaluate their plans after nine weeks and submit a plan by the third week in November likely with the expectation to outline how and when they will return students to in person instruction. These plans are system-wide and may, depending on the data, just be a plan to return limited groups of students or cohorts such as pre-K-grade 2 students back and/or CTE programs and/or students with special education needs. This is not a requirement for local districts to begin returning students to in person learning by the third week in November, only submit a plan to do so.



MSEA Position and Guidance Remains the Same

The MSEA position remains the same. Jointly with the Maryland PTA and Baltimore Teachers union, we called for local school systems to begin the 2020-2021 school year virtually, ensuring all students have access to learning virtually. Then as systems can meet and maintain health and safety protocols and allow for those with underlying health conditions to continue to telework, they should begin to transition students back to in person learning. What was outlined in the joint letter is exactly the groupings of students that MSDE is not asking districts to provide plans for returning.

We continue to advocate for local districts, in collaboration with their stakeholders, to make determinations as to when they have met the goals to begin returning students to in person instruction based on district information, health data, and ability to mitigate health and safety risks.

With recent timelines approved by the State Board, local associations should begin to press conversations around working conditions to ensure the creation and maintenance of a healthy and safe work environment that addresses social distancing protocols, cloth face coverings, enforcement of protocols, and cleaning schedules; and to develop flexible work arrangements for not only employees with underlying medical conditions but also child care issues stemming from a hybrid or limited return to in-person work schedule. Local association leaders and UniServ directors should refer to the various guidance documents that have been sent out and contact your field managers or attorney assigned to your local.