

## CARES Act Funding Town Hall Questions and Responses

<p>Thank you for providing this update and for all you do for our children. Can you please explain the role of CMP in meeting the safe return to schools LEA priority?</p>	<p>The Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP) is a long-term planning initiative that will help direct the District's facility and capital improvement into the future. The CMP provides a vehicle for understanding how immediate needs such as safety &amp; security and indoor air quality improvements fit into the long term plan for facility improvement and growth.</p>
<p>Does money have to be spent in the same way across the district? Can each region use funds differently, according to their needs?</p>	<p>Funds do not have to be spent in the same manner across the district. Funds may be used to address identified needs. However, providing resources for principals and other school leaders to address school-specific needs is not permissible under the ARP ESSER III. This is only allowable under CARES I and CARES II.</p>
<p>Can teachers be given a one-time bonus to offset the increase in internet costs and utilities?</p>	<p>CARES/ESSER funds can be used to pay bonuses.</p>
<p>One of the activities in the use of funds section is to address the improvement of indoor air quality including mechanical and nonmechanical heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems, window repairs and replacement. Can you please provide an update in regard to making this a priority through the CARES act funding and CMP implementation?</p>	<p>With the Comprehensive Master Plan, the District is already in the process of identifying and prioritizing major facility improvement needs such as indoor air quality, window replacement, etc. The division will conduct the most exhaustive diagnostic program for air quality in the history of the District. CARES act funding allows the District the ability to act on these priorities sooner and an additional revenue stream to complete more of these projects.</p>
<p>I am at PMS our HVAC is horrible. Can funds be used to fix this?</p>	<p>The District is looking at all schools to determine how best to improve indoor air quality, including Peachtree Middle School.</p>
<p>Will masks be required for kids for 21-22 year regardless of what the governor says?</p>	<p>At the present time, masks are strongly encouraged for students and staff but not required. The district reserves the right to update this practice and will continue to seek input from stakeholders. The district will also continue to monitor community spread of infection in order to make the best decision for the return to school.</p>
<p>Will there be leave available for staff who need to Quarantine due to exposure or COVID positive?</p>	<p>DCSD allows for a remote work option for staff who need to quarantine due to a positive COVID-19 test or documented exposure. It is coordinated with the employee's immediate supervisor.</p>
<p>The 3rd requirement to purchase resources to address the loss in learning opportunity. Can these funds be applied to reduce class sizes to enable for intensive learning? If the answer is yes, how many additional instructors will DCSD be seeking to implement and apply these funds.</p>	<p>Possibly. Since students could receive more services if there are less students in the classroom, this is considered an allowable strategy to address learning loss. However, as many studies note that class size reduction is one of the most expensive, least beneficial initiatives that a district could pursue. This is not currently being considered.</p>

<p>Younger children do not have an option for vaccination yet. Why are masks not mandatory for all ages or at least for elementary school students who do not have a vaccination option as per CDC? Distancing and hygiene is already hard enough for younger children, why is the mask policy being applied equally across all age groups?</p>	<p>At the present time, masks are strongly encouraged for students and staff but not required. The district reserves the right to update this practice and will continue to seek input from stakeholders. The district will continue to monitor community spread of infection in order to make the best decision for the return to school.</p>
<p>Will there be a virtual option for students in the fall – or will they be required to attend at a physical location?</p>	<p>All students will be scheduled for in-person instruction beginning August 2021 to eliminate the need for concurrent learning; however, the District will offer families the opportunity to opt out of in-person learning to participate in virtual learning options. The virtual learning options allow students to learn from virtual teachers through FLEX Academy, Georgia Virtual School, or designated virtual teachers throughout the school district. Parents should consider the following before making a decision for <b>each</b> child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you choose for your child to opt out of in-person learning, the decision is a semester-long commitment because of staffing and scheduling. There will be an opportunity in November 2021 to change your child’s learning option to in-person learning for second semester.</li> <li>• Virtual learning is not optimal for every student. Some students did not adjust well academically, socially, or emotionally in the virtual learning environment. Parents should consider how their child engaged and performed in the virtual learning environment before making a decision for the 2021-2022 school year.</li> <li>• Middle and high school students may take courses through FLEX Academy, Georgia Virtual School, or a designated FLEX teacher at their local schools or throughout the school district. Note: Students may be taught by teachers from other schools.</li> <li>• Elementary school students will participate in school-based virtual learning courses offered by designated teachers at their schools and throughout the school district.</li> <li>• Virtual course offerings may be more limited than those available for students attending school in-person. For example, International Baccalaureate, Montessori, Dual Language Immersion, Scientific Tools and Techniques (STT), Advanced Studies, some Advanced Placement, some world language courses, and some performance-based courses will not be offered virtually.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If a family chooses virtual learning, the students must fully engage in synchronous (live direct instruction led by a teacher) and asynchronous (online without real-time teacher-led instruction) learning. Daily attendance will be monitored.</li> </ul>
Why are you not making masks a requirement in the schools when children in the lower grades do not have access to the vaccinations yet? Not requiring them can put these younger children at risk.	At the present time, masks are strongly encouraged for students and staff but not required. The district reserves the right to update this practice and will continue to seek input from stakeholders. The district will continue to monitor community spread of infection in order to make the best decision for the return to school.
CDC recommends, "Avoid crowds and poorly ventilated indoor spaces." The HVAC at Fernbank Elementary on the floor for 4th and 5th graders malfunctioned during the last 3 weeks of May. Because the windows in Fernbank Elementary do not open, this means that students and teachers were in poorly ventilated spaces for prolonged periods of time; this could have resulted in transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19. Whether or not that occurred would be hard to know because school was dismissed shortly thereafter. **Parents of affected students were not notified of these exposures and risks.** With the Delta variant becoming more dominant, vaccination rates in GA low, and elementary students too young to be vaccinated, when and how can this funding be used to ensure that windows can be opened at Fernbank Elementary AND the HVAC improved? Safe reopening of schools also requires that parents/guardians be notified of possible exposures and risks. DeKalb should not be withholding information as happened in May.	Converting windows from "fixed" to "operable" is an involved process that requires the existing window to be completely removed and replaced with a new window unit. This type of work would need to be done during one or more significant down times e.g. summer breaks. Additionally, as Fernbank Elementary School is one of 11 prototype elementary schools, the other ten schools would need to be updated as well.
Has the school district considered using some of these funds for a regular in-school COVID19 rapid surveillance testing program to mitigate spread and identify asymptomatic cases in the population?	Yes, the district is considering how to provide testing to our schools to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.
How many schools in DeKalb County have windows that do not open? CDC recommendations state, "If indoors, bring in fresh air by opening windows and doors, if possible." We need to make sure that all classrooms can open windows and doors. HVACs fail, as already demonstrated at Fernbank Elementary. Functional windows are essential to protecting students.	The current CDC guidelines state where "possible and feasible" in regards to the opening of windows and doors. It also refers to the EPA in this regards. It is not recommended where the opening of windows will bring in outside pollutants or excessive humidity or cause the overloading of the HVAC system when doing this. DCSD has increased the amount of fresh air that is being brought into the buildings without overloading the HVAC systems.
While the most effective prevention strategy is vaccination, children younger than 12 cannot be vaccinated. Therefore, will DCSD offer a virtual option for elementary school aged children?	All students will be scheduled for in-person instruction beginning August 2021 to eliminate the need for concurrent learning; however, the District will offer families the opportunity to opt out of in-person

	<p>learning to participate in virtual learning options. The virtual learning options allow students to learn from virtual teachers through FLEX Academy, Georgia Virtual School, or designated virtual teachers throughout the school district. Elementary school students opting out will participate in school-based virtual learning courses offered by designated teachers at their schools and throughout the school district.</p>
<p>I'd like to know what the county wide protocol is for informing parents of a Covid case in the school. Is every school communicating with parents in the same directive when a case is present? If a case is present in school or the classroom, does the teacher, the principal etc reach out right away to parents?</p>	<p>The district has a protocol for reporting cases to parents. The reporting guidance is being updated and will be available soon.</p>
<p>Per the comments regarding elementary students not being eligible for vaccination and some students having health conditions placing them at increased risk for severe COVID-19 disease, the fact that these school settings are not safe due to lacking ventilation and optional mask use, why are students and families not being offered the option for VIRTUAL learning? The CARES act addresses increasing IT capacity. VIRTUAL learning options would also help allow greater distancing for the students who do attend in person school. WE NEED VIRTUAL LEARNING OPTIONS. The safety of our children should not be politicized. Decreasing social distancing in schools is not driven by science.</p>	<p>Virtual Learning is supported through the procurement of applications and digital content necessary to expand FLEX Academy course offerings. We also intend to use funds to support course development using these tools and facilitation by highly qualified and certified educators. Devices have also been purchased to ensure all students have equitable access to these virtual learning opportunities.</p>
<p>Interventions/Mental Health - I would like to hear more about what the DC Dept of Health is doing to address some of these issues. The presentation seemed to bleed into the work of the DOH.</p>	<p>The DeKalb County Board of Health works in collaboration with the district to address infectious diseases. The BOH provides the isolation and quarantine guidance, and does the contract tracing for COVID-19 cases that are reported.</p>
<p>It was stated that 'homelessness' doesn't always mean families are without a place to live, but their situations have changed. Can we create a different category for them?</p>	<p>The district uses the definition of homelessness as defined under the McKinney Vento Act. The Act defines the categories of homelessness. The broad definition under McKinney means " individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence".</p>
<p>Will you update the application based on parents' feedback?</p>	<p>The application will be updated based on parents' feedback.</p>