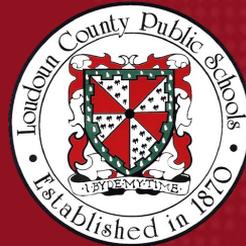


# Loudoun Return to School Planning

Focus Group Summary

June 1-5, 2020



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The purpose of focus groups is to **gather feedback** from different stakeholders on what gives them **confidence, concern**, and what **outstanding questions** they have regarding possible reopening scenarios. We will use this information to inform updates and variables to consider within our return to school plan.

<u><b>Elementary</b></u>	<u><b>Middle</b></u>	<u><b>High</b></u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ES parents</li> <li>Gifted Education Advisory</li> <li>ES teachers &amp; school-level staff</li> <li>ES principals</li> <li>Pupil Services</li> <li>Support Services staff</li> <li>DDI staff</li> <li>Business &amp; Finance staff</li> <li>Hunt District PTA</li> <li>SEAC</li> <li>DOI staff</li> <li>IFTs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MS students</li> <li>MS parents</li> <li>MS teachers &amp; school-level staff</li> <li>MS principals</li> <li>Pupil Services</li> <li>DDI staff</li> <li>Business &amp; Finance staff</li> <li>MSAAC</li> <li>School-Business Partnership</li> <li>DOI staff</li> <li>IFTs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HS students</li> <li>HS parents</li> <li>Public Safety</li> <li>HS teachers &amp; school-level staff</li> <li>HS principals</li> <li>Pupil Services</li> <li>Support Services staff</li> <li>DDI staff</li> <li>Business &amp; Finance staff</li> <li>Equity Committee</li> <li>DOI staff</li> <li>IFTs</li> </ul>

*Note: Each Focus Group conversation was focused on Elementary, Middle or High but all had access to all narratives and could provide feedback on other levels.*



# By the numbers



**27** Focus  
Groups



**245**  
People invited  
to Focus  
Groups



**30**  
LCPS  
Facilitators

## 30-50% Capacity

## 100% Distance Learning

### Areas of Strength Themes



- In-person learning allows for social interaction for students
- Supports and additional time in school for students with IEPs
- Monday planning time for teachers

- Increased structure and accountability in schedules
- Increase in synchronous learning
- Safest option for students from a physical health standpoint

### Areas of Growth Themes



- Logistically very difficult for teachers and families, especially those with multiple students in different schools
- Ensuring safety precautions are followed by all students
- Mental health supports for students

- Lack of social interactions and opportunities to build community and connection
- Varying levels of access will create further inequity
- Mental health concerns for students and staff
- Challenging for working parents to manage



# Elementary School

- **Sebastian** (30% capacity)
- **Alexis** (100% distance learning)
- **David** (100% in-person)

## Overall Themes

### All scenarios:

- + Easy to follow and increased structure
- > Concerns around childcare, time commitment and schedules for working parents/ multi-level families
- > Social-emotional well-being of students

### 30% & In-Person:

- + Social interaction when in school
- > Concerns around safety precaution logistics: transportation, social distancing, masks, procedure if someone gets sick

### 30% & Distance Learning:

- > Inequities for students with disabilities & those without technology

# Sebastian

30% Capacity | Elementary Student



**11** Focus  
Groups

- Elementary parents (x2)
- Hunt District PTA
- Gifted Education Advisory Group
- SEAC
- Elementary principals
- Support Services staff
- Pupil Services
- IFTs
- Elementary licensed staff
- DOI staff

# Sebastian (ES, 30% Capacity)

## Summary of Findings

Respondents thought this plan was thorough. Respondents liked that students interacted with their peers & teachers regularly, and that the structure was easy to follow for ES students.

Respondents liked that there was a specific focus on students with disabilities in the story, but were confused about how this scenario would work for them and which students get to go into the school.

Concerns included safety precaution logistics (social distancing, masks, bus monitoring), childcare for working parent homes, social emotional health of students, transportation, and if there's enough teacher planning time.

"I am worried that trying to enforce social distancing will make them more scared. If that becomes a hypervigilance it supersedes the learning."

- ES Parent

"As a parent of multiple kids, I couldn't keep track of the schedules, the work."

- SEAC

"Concerned about the feeling of intimidation in students with the level of precautions being proposed; negative connotation about going to a school building."

- DOI

"Lack of planning time for teachers; teaching in whole different format and amount of support they've had to give is a time consuming process because they have to develop new materials - need to plan & deliver in-person & distance learning at the same time. In terms of special education, how does this look for special ed preschool/self-contained autism how will they get related services?"

- IFT

"The thing that gives me the most confidence is that this represents a routine that an ES student could understand and follow. Not as much back and forth changes each day as some of the other scenarios. This student understands that on Mondays, it's distance learning, Tuesdays, goes to school. Routines for bus and lunch."

- Support Services

Plan looks good on paper but, through a deaf and hard of hearing lens, there are concern as it relates to communication for these students due to masks.

-Pupil Services

"Liked the notes on social-emotional learning and mental health. This summer, teachers need to consider how to create a classroom community with families and students who they have not met yet. They need to think about how to make synchronous learning engaging."

- Gifted Advisory



# Sebastian (30% Capacity)



## Areas of Strength Themes

- Plan feels well-thought out
- Routine for ES student is easy to follow & more structured
- Face-to-face time with teachers
- Synchronous sessions to socialize & see other students
- Specific focus on students with disabilities & IEPs
- Teachers have a planning day
- Specials are included



## Areas of Growth Themes

- Safety precaution logistics: Temperature/symptom checks, enforcing social distancing, & mask usage
- Childcare for households in which all caregivers work
- Social emotional health of students
- Transportation: scary experience for ES students
- Teachers will need more planning time (e.g. individualized playlists)
- Clarify which students with IEPs go to school



# Alexis

100% Distance Learning | Elementary Student



**9** Focus  
Groups

- Elementary school parents
- Hunt District PTA
- Gifted Education Advisory Group
- Support Services staff
- Elementary school principals
- Pupil Services
- IFTs
- Elementary school licensed staff
- DOI staff

# Alexis (ES, 100% Distance Learning)

## Summary of Findings

Respondents thought this plan was a major improvement compared to the current distance learning schedule. Respondents felt this would be the safest option for students.

Respondents liked the increased structure build into the schedule which incorporated routines for students, including specials.

Concerns included time and responsibility requirements placed on parents, lack of ability to build community virtually, inequities in access to technology, and required training on how to use platforms.

"Good communication and consistency would be ideal. It is important we have Schoology training for teachers, students and parents"

- ES Parent

"There are a lot of families with multi-level students and if everyone is at home, we're going to have HS students trying to do theirs, ES doing theirs, parents going back to work and having to have older kids watch younger ones. This could be a difficult situation for families."

- Support Services

"I liked seeing the social-emotional learning lesson. The mental health component is important. The situation is taking a toll on everyone. I have one kid on anti-anxiety medication, and I've had to increase her dosage during this. Thank you for making sure mental health is included in the weekly plan."

- Hunt PTA

"I definitely liked the section that talked about real-world problems, a real shift to PBL"

- ES Parent

"Synchronous learning needs to be promoted to build community. Where and when are the students able to build community?"

-Pupil Services

"Personal health and wellness will be protected and this provides clear expectations for students and families."

- ES Teacher

"Teachers want clear directions and expectations - they need direction, even as a minimum"

- IFT



# Alexis (100% Distance Learning)



## Areas of Strength Themes

- Structure in schedule
- Inclusion of Social Emotional Learning lessons into weekly routine
- Real world application through project-based learning
- Accountability and attendance
- Increase in synchronous learning



## Areas of Growth Themes

- Requirement on parents to support children, especially difficult for families with multiple children
- Youngest learners engaging with technology and screen time
- Training on schoology for teachers, parents and all stakeholders involved in supporting students
- Varying levels of access and issues of equity



# David

100% In-Person | Elementary Student



**4** Focus  
Groups

- Elementary school parents
- Support Services staff
- Elementary school principals
- Pupil Services

# David (ES, 100% In-Person)

## Summary of Findings

Respondents liked that students would have the opportunity to socialize and interact.

Respondents were primarily concerned with logistics of students in schools. This includes classroom set-up, division of staffing across multiple rooms, supply sharing, transportation of fewer students on buses, and schedules of multi-level families.

Respondents also expressed concern about well-being of MS and HS students who would be in school less, and ES students who would be in unfamiliar spaces.

Health check getting off bus -what would the parameters be? Temperature taking? Time it would take is a concern. With this scenario would there be a need to hire more

- ES Parent

"If Mrs. Green has to shuttle between these different classrooms, I am concerned about continuity of teaching. It is a task to teach 2 classrooms at once."

- Support Services Staff

"This will require a lot of staffing with kids in two rooms, over multiple schools. Who are these co-teachers and teaching assistants? Would middle school and high school assistants/ EL teachers etc. help with elementary since those students are distance learning."

- Principals

Family schedules will be impacted. If you have multiple children in a household who attend different grade levels (i.e., ES,MS,HS) what does scheduling look like for them?

- Pupil Services

"Additional supports for students with disabilities could possibly require extra staff when students are 6 feet apart."

-Pupil Services

Concerned about our middle and high school students being home alone with possible mental health issues. In addition, we are relying on them to be responsible for doing the learning with their parents back at work. Distance learning isn't great for all kids, besides the social emotional needs there are huge academic needs. Middle school and high schoolers need to make a connection with teachers as well.

- Principals



# David (100% In-Person)



## Areas of Strength Themes

- Creativity with the plan
- Student socialization and interaction
- Opportunities to be in school
- Allows parents to go to their jobs
- Focus on progress, not perfection



## Areas of Growth Themes

- Logistics in the school & classroom: requires large # of staff with students in two rooms over multiple schools; supplies for students (art, books)
- Older students would be in school less & would get less social interaction
- Unclear what happens when a student or staff member gets ill
- Transportation of fewer students will be difficult & cause delays



# Middle School

- **Kayla** (*50% capacity*)
- **Cole** (*100% distance learning*)
- **Brianna** (*revised 100% distance learning*)

## Overall Themes

### All scenarios:

- + Increased structure and accountability
- > Concerns around childcare, time commitment, & schedules for working parents/ multi-level families
- > Social-emotional well-being of students

### 50% Capacity:

- + Social interaction when in school
- > Concerns around safety precaution logistics: transportation, social distancing, masks, if someone gets sick

### 100% Distance Learning:

- > Inequity with access and ability to interact with technology
- + Safest option for students and staff for physical health

# Kayla

50% Capacity | Middle School Student



**7** Focus  
Groups

- MSAAC
- Middle school teachers/staff
- IFTs
- Middle school students
- Pupil services staff
- Middle school parents
- Middle school principals

# Kayla (50% Capacity)

## Summary of Findings

Respondents appreciated that this plan allowed for social interaction and in-person learning for students.

Respondents felt this plan took into consideration the needs for students with IEPs and EL students. They liked the Monday planning time for teachers.

Concerns included students abiding by social distancing guidelines, and keeping the building clean. There are also additional concerns around logistics of this schedule, how it will be implemented effectively, which teachers will be in the building and accounting for vulnerable populations.

"I'm concerned about the emotional strain of a middle schooler. Impressively huge lift for everybody-teachers, parents, community, administrators."

- Middle School Parent

" From a Medical perspective I have concerns around the maintenance of diabetes, management of medication. This potentially could create inconsistencies in schedules of this type of care; difficulty staffing part time positions for nurses, private nurses-especially if schedules frequently change."

- Pupil Services

"As a parent of two middle schoolers, and one with IEP, pleased with peer connections, as this is important at that age. This scenario was positive in the balance of ability to get small group instruction, and receive in person time with their teacher."

- Middle School Parent

"Concerned if we will have enough staff available to ensure the wellness checks and monitoring the social distancing."

- MS Principal

"With the design of our school building and its narrow halls, I can't see how students will stay socially distanced. "

- IFT

"I like the idea of going back and being able to ask questions instead of waiting a while for getting answers."

- MS Student

"Appreciate the in-depth nature of making sure everyone is safe going into the building."

- MSAAC



# Kayla (50% Capacity)



## Areas of Strength Themes

- Monday planning for teachers
- Built in advisory
- Social benefits to in-person learning
- Meal services and food services for students
- Strong structure for students
- Supports and time in school for students with IEPs
- Integration of PBIS lessons



## Areas of Growth Themes

- Difficult for families who have kids in different schools at different levels
- Ensuring safety precautions are followed by all students
- Teacher scheduling in this model will be complicated
- Ongoing and more developed mental health supports for students



# Cole

100% Distance Learning | Middle School Student



**6** Focus  
Groups

- MSAAC
- Middle school teachers/ staff
- IFTs
- Middle school students (6/8)
- Pupil Services
- Middle school parents
- Middle school principals

# Cole (100% Distance Learning)

## Summary of Findings

Respondents liked that this plan was detailed and included more schedule consistency and accountability than current distance learning. Some appreciated the inclusion of support for students with special needs.

Respondents had concerns with platform usage/training (Edmentum, Google Classroom), keeping engagement high in a virtual setting, lack of student social interaction, lack of clarity around specifics/logistics of students with IEPs + EL students, attendance in buildings. Some also expressed concerns around childcare and scheduling for families, attendance tracking, and the social emotional health of their students.

"I am concerned that I did not see specifically addressed in the story homeless students, foster children or home insecure students."

- MS Parent

"I agree that the current 30 minutes per class is a lot, it worries me to double that amount. It also worries me that our students will not have the same opportunities to build relationships. For some of our students, school is a safe place for them."

- IFTs

"The distance learning model is the easiest to enforce. Going from distance learning to in-school may create a decrease in engagement." "Confident about safety with the distance learning scenario. Everyone would be protected."

- MSAAC Respondents

"Gross inequities in teacher responsibilities based on roles; some teachers may work many hours in this scenario while others may work considerably less. How are teachers within grade level or content teams held accountable for their service delivery?"

- Pupil Services

IEP and EL students may still have to attend school in person? How does that work for teachers who teach self contained and co-teach gen ed?

-MS Teachers & Staff

"There isn't consistent follow up on engagement or a clear definition of non-engagement-- how will this be any different when there is compulsory attendance? Concerns that students who have disadvantages (access, EL, parents not home, etc) and how this will be handled with enforcing compulsory attendance. We already have disparities with Spanish-speaking families with truancy."

- Pupil Services

"Concerns about student not accessing online and students we have not been able to get in touch with, student cheating/plagiarism, how to effectively build relationships students."

- Principals



# Cole (100% Distance)



## Areas of Strength Themes

- Detailed plan
- More schedule consistency and accountability than current distance learning
- An attempt to support students with special needs



## Areas of Growth Themes

- Concerns with platform access, usage & training (e.g., Edmentum)
- Keeping engagement high may be difficult
- Lack of relationship building and social interaction
- Unclear if students with IEPs and EL students will attend school and how it will work if so
- Many inequities may arise
- Childcare and scheduling for families



# Brianna

Revised 100% Distance Learning | Middle School Student



**3** Focus  
Groups

- MSAAC
- Middle school principals
- Pupil Services

# Brianna (100% Distance)

## Summary of Findings

Respondents liked that elementary students would be in the school building full-time and felt this would take care of the childcare and working parents issue for younger students.

Respondents had concerns with inequitable experiences across ES, MS and HS, middle school students being left at home without supervision, trying out new thing on our youngest students without knowing what the result will be, and students not following safety precautions.

"We would like to have some face-to-face instruction with our secondary students too."

- **MS Principal**

"I like that this plan gives flexibility for parents with younger children."

- **Sprint 2 Participant**

"This model helps the community the most. We like the accountability aspect of all of the modules."

- **MS Principal**

"Do not feel safe leaving high school kids alone all day without supervision. It is difficult to say that elementary students need greater supervision, and that is not the case."

- **Pupil Services**

"Community response may be negative about giving priority to younger students. All students should be treated the same."

- **School Business Partnership Council**

"If elementary age students go back to school that gives confidence for high school students to return later, but concerns about younger students being guinea pigs."

- **MSAAC**

"I'm concerned about safety-- my sister who attends school may affect my parents and others in our home."

- **MS Student**



# Brianna (100% Distance)



## Areas of Strength Themes

- Elementary school students getting full day in school buildings
- Use of the secondary schools to accommodate elementary school students to allow for safe engagement.
- Parents' ability to return to work if they have elementary students



## Areas of Growth Themes

- Inequity across ES, MS and HS
- Secondary students left home without supervision
- Trying out things with our youngest learners
- Ensuring high-quality instruction
- Younger students following safety protocols for in-person learning



# High School

- **Anna** (50% capacity)
- **Anthony** (100% distance learning)

## Overall Themes

### All scenarios:

- + Easy to follow and increased structure
- + Synchronous time among students
- > Social emotional well being of students
- > Childcare

### 50% Capacity:

- + Social interaction when in school
- > Concerns around safety precaution logistics: transportation, cleaning, social distancing, masks, procedure if someone gets sick

### 100% Distance Learning:

- > Lack of social interaction & extracurriculars

# Anna

50% Capacity | High School Student



**8** Focus  
Groups

- Equity Committee
- High school parents
- IFTs
- Support Services staff
- Pupil Services
- High school students
- Public Safety
- High school licensed staff

# Anna (50% Capacity)

## Summary of Findings

Respondents liked that students would get face-to-face interaction, and that expectations are mostly clear. They liked the level of detail and consideration in the scenario, and that parents can choose to continue distance learning if they want. Some staff thought this scenario might work well for HS students, but most parents and a few staff did not.

Respondents were concerned about childcare (particularly for families with multiple children), health & safety of students, logistics of transportation & cleaning, lack of communication with parents and how synchronous learning would work with 50% at home and 50% in person.

Respondents also shared concerns with teacher technology/platform proficiency and usage, and holding students and parents accountable for at-home work.

"How will the students interact? Some are on line and others in class? 30-50% of kids in school: are schools going to be sanitized every single day? Keep kids safe."

- HS Parent

This will work for students at the traditional school, but not for ACL. How will students get in the ACL? This schedule assumes that all teachers on campus every day ( not split among schools). Sometimes 1 block and then travel to another school. Sanitization? How are we cleaning things between classes to ensure they are clean in 5 minutes?

- Principals

How do we meet teachers where they are? If we are doing in-person learning along with synchronously learning. Our best practices must change? How do we support that change? Is our Google Meet tool able to meet our instructional needs? Breakout rooms etc? If we have to go to 100% distance learning for all students, how do we meet the IEP requirements for our SPED students?

- IFT

"Very limited number of kids on the bus at one time, so we are talking about needing to expand time instruction is occurring so you don't have overlap or are talking about significant growth in your fleet."

- Support Services Staff

"It is very structured and expectations are clear. How will this impact graduation rates? What will the accountability for engagement look like?"  
"Secondary students might be more motivated but some might not be especially with limited supervision and that is concerning."

-Pupil Services

"Where's the week in the life of the parent, teachers, support, staff? Parents would need to be communicated with; what was completely lacking in the last quarter was communication."

- Equity Committee

"How is a bus driver going to enforce mask compliance? If denied access to a bus, what happens to student?  
Is LCPS liable if student is left stranded at bus stop because they were not wearing a mask?"

- Public Safety

"Excited about going back to school. Will be easier to go back to school. Did like distance learning for personalizing and having self pacing. Worked on one subject/day during distance learning."  
"LCPS should have a system of communication for feedback for lessons. Email is too multi-purpose to communicate with teachers. Office hours would be a good idea."

- High School Students



# Anna (50% Capacity)



## Areas of Strength Themes

- More synchronous / face-to-face learning
- Level of detail, structure, and consideration by LCPS
- Expectations are clear and there is accountability with grades/attendance
- Support for EL students
- Support for students with IEPs



## Areas of Growth Themes

- Concerns for parents' schedule, especially working parents with multiple children
- Concerns for health and safety of students (e.g., logistics of transportation, PPE, social distancing)
- Technology issues (e.g., Edmentum, teachers knowing how to use tech)
- Holding students/parents accountable
- Mental health of students
- Logistics of teacher rotation/transition between classrooms and cleaning
- Unclear how asynchronous & synchronous will work with 50/50
- Missing complete experience of school (e.g., sports)



# Anthony

100% Distance Learning | High School Student



**9** Focus  
Groups

- Equity Committee
- High school parents
- Support Services staff
- IFTs
- Pupil Services
- High school students
- Public Safety
- High school licensed staff

# Anthony (100% Distance)

## Summary of Findings

Respondents felt this was the safest option for students. They liked the accountability and structure of the schedule, especially the increase in synchronous learning. Overall, respondents thought the schedule was more manageable due to increased time for teacher planning on Mondays.

There were concerns around the lack of social interaction, and missing a lot of the things that make school memorable for students including sports, extracurriculars and hands on learning. Respondents were worried about leaving secondary students home all day, and concerned about the mental health of both students and teachers in this narrative.

"This would be a letdown. Prom, pep-rallies, football and high-school experience would be taken away."

- **HS Students**

"The structure is good, however, I would be concerned about this age group of students disconnecting from school in general and not completing their education."

- **Support Services Staff**

"This could be good for HS students going to college - it prepares them for an online environment."

- **Equity Committee**

"Concerned about Mental health - how are we going to identify students in crisis and get them the resources they need?"

- **Public Safety**

"Liked the increase in synchronous learning sessions. Those are key. Not keeping it optional because that threw off a lot of kids."

- **SEAC**

"Students are working at this age and are responsible for younger siblings. This might lead to a larger dropout rate. What can we do to help these students still access lessons and not be discouraged?"

- **HS Licensed Staff**

"Disappointed with this work as it doesn't focus on the maximum delivery academically or socially emotionally; Let's maximize every social/ learning opportunity for our kids, to include Mondays, and not limit our students access to these experiences!"

- **HS Parent**



# Anthony (100% Distance)



## Areas of Strength Themes

- Safest option for students and staff
- Increased amount of synchronous learning
- Monday as a space for teachers to plan
- Requiring attendance
- Set schedule for students to follow
- Prepares students for online classes they might take during college



## Areas of Growth Themes

- Lack of social interaction for students
- Students left unsupervised, not having support at home
- Onus on student to advocate for their learning
- Mental health concerns for students and staff
- Low engagement could lead to higher dropout rate for students
- Technology issues, need training for all

