Transition to hybrid learning set for Jan. 19

The transition to a hybrid model of instruction for Poughkeepsie City School District students, originally scheduled for Nov. 30, is being postponed due to concerns associated with the post-Thanksgiving COVID-19 surge. It will now start Jan. 19, 2021.

As previously structured, the transition will occur in phases and span a three week period. The following timeline outlines when grade levels will transition to hybrid:

**Start of Hybrid Instruction Timeline**
- January 19th (Week 1) - Pre-K, Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grades, & District wide 8:1:1, 12:1:1, 15:1:1, 15:1
- January 25th (Week 2) – 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th and 9th grades
- February 1st (Week 3) – 7th, 8th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grades

When PCSD transitions to the hybrid model, all elementary students regardless of their assignment to remote or hybrid instruction will receive 5 hours of daily instruction and secondary students will receive 5.5 hours of daily instruction. This instructional schedule will provide students with more meaningful instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. School specific schedules will be provided by building principals to their school communities prior to beginning the hybrid model.

**Remote/Hybrid Instructional Schedule***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDENTS ASSIGNED TO HYBRID INSTRUCTIONAL MODEL</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cohort A</td>
<td>At School</td>
<td>At School</td>
<td>Virtual (Asynchronous)</td>
<td>Virtual (Synchronous)</td>
<td>Virtual (Synchronous)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort B</td>
<td>Virtual (Synchronous)</td>
<td>Virtual (Synchronous)</td>
<td>Virtual (Asynchronous)</td>
<td>At School</td>
<td>At School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDENTS ASSIGNED TO REMOTE INSTRUCTIONAL MODEL</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remote Students</td>
<td>Virtual (Synchronous)</td>
<td>Virtual (Synchronous)</td>
<td>Virtual (Asynchronous)</td>
<td>Virtual (Synchronous)</td>
<td>Virtual (Synchronous)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adjustment may be made to the number of days that students under the hybrid model will receive additional in-person instruction based on the following criteria: Individual Education Plans (IEP), number of students participating in hybrid model, size of classrooms at each school, and transportation.

As PCSD continues to press forward to increase its impact on student learning, COVID-19 implications may shift the district’s planning but will not shift our intended goal. If local data and/or the New York State Department of Health or Dutchess County Behavioral & Community Health deems in-person instruction to be a risk to public safety before or during hybrid instruction the Poughkeepsie City School District will adhere to state and local mandates. In the event this were to occur all students participating in hybrid instruction would revert to the remote instructional schedule.

In preparation of the transition to hybrid instruction, district staff are finalizing a guide to strengthen parent and caregivers understanding of the Poughkeepsie City School District’s Hybrid Learning Model, safety protocols for in-person instruction, student and family resources, and other general information. The anticipated completion date of this document is Dec. 23, 2020. Upon completion it will be posted to the district website at this [location].
District improves classroom, building technology

When COVID-19 struck it thrust Poughkeepsie City School District and districts across the nation into a virtual world for teaching and we were not fully prepared. Since then, we’ve moved to address the issues.

For the past two weeks, Interim Director of Instructional Technology Nadine Dargan’s team has been updating technology in all of the district’s buildings in preparation for the move to a hybrid model of instruction.

“Each classroom has a camera so teachers can teach virtually through Google Classroom, Google Meet or Zoom,” Dargan said. The district purchased 375 cameras with integrated microphones, so all the administrators and clerks also have them. As of today all have been installed.

In addition, WiFi service has been improved throughout every building.

As part of the new phone system installed over the summer, lines were run to each classroom and office. Wireless access points have been added and activated so that when teachers and students return to school, WiFi signals will be stronger.

Before this, there were routers at different locations in the buildings, but they may have covered multiple rooms. “Some rooms or offices wouldn’t receive the signal. We added additional access points and upgraded the old system,” Dargan said.

Thanks goes to the full time IT team of Brian Cook, Jeff Kover and Chris Kearse as well as Alexander Gibbes, a temporary technology support worker, for getting all the work done. “We have worked diligently on classroom readiness - our sole focus has been to get the infrastructure ready for teachers and students to return,” Dargan said.

In addition to classroom updates, IT is still working on obtaining computers for teachers and students. Dargan spoke with the vendor handling the teacher devices Monday and was told the arrival date of the 325 remaining devices is slated for the first few weeks of January.

The district is also awaiting about 160 non-touchscreen Chromebooks for students and 2,700 touchscreen devices which will be given to the younger students.

This time, devices are arriving fully prepared for distribution so all IT staff have to do is scan them into inventory. “Normally we have to set them up and prepare them. This was all included in this order so we can get them out as quickly as possible,” Dargan said.

Story reading resonates with superintendent

This week I had the wonderful opportunity to join Morse Elementary School 1st grade teacher Cheryl Haines’ class of 21 students to engage them in how to identify story elements - characters, setting, problem, solution, plot, point of view, comparison and contrast, by serving a story teller.

Haines’ class engages in what is referred to as “The Ginger Bread Journey” every year on the Monday after Thanksgiving. The class enjoys a different gingerbread story every day up to the day of the district winter break. Champions for PCSD students “from the school and local communities are invited to join in the gingerbread fun”, Haines said.

I had the wonderful opportunity to read “The Gingerbread Pirates” to the class, dusting off my story telling skills that have not been used since the start of the pandemic. As I read this engaging story I was able to reflect on what motivated me to pursue a career in education; Making a difference in the lives of others, providing students with more enriching opportunities than I received in my K-12 experience, sharing my own love of learning, and accessing the intangible reward of student exploration and the acquisition of knowledge.

‘Tis the season of giving and while I spent my time giving to some of the district’s youngest learners by reading to them, I too received the gift of contributing to the cognitive development of youngsters who will be contributing members of our community. Our Children, Our Future, Our Responsibility.

Thank you, Ms. Haines, for the opportunity to contribute to their development in a more direct way.