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WORCESTER COUNTY TO OPEN SCHOOLS VIRTUALLY WITH GRADUAL PROGRESSION THROUGH LEARNING STAGES

Newark, MD, July 30, 2020— At a press conference this afternoon, Worcester County Public Schools Superintendent Lou Taylor announced the school system’s plans for students to begin the 2020-2021 school year in Stage One of the *Responsible Return* mode, meaning students will be engaged in distance learning.

Flanked by officials from Worcester County’s Board of Education, Health Department, Teachers Association, Educational Support Personnel Association, and the Worcester County Commissioners, Taylor began his remarks by thanking these organizations for their partnership and guidance as the school system crafted the *Responsible Return* model and determined the in which learning stage students would begin this school year.

Taylor also acknowledged the incredible amount of input the school system received from families, staff and the Worcester County community.

“We have received an enormous amount of input from our families, faculty, and staff,” he said, referring to the thousands of survey responses, emails, messages and more the school system has received over the last several weeks. “I am confident that today’s decision is the right one for our community.”

The *Responsible Return* model outlines four stages of learning, as depicted in the graphic below. (Visit www.worcesterk12.org to view the entire draft model, including details about each stage. The model will be finalized by the state’s deadline of August 14.)



Taylor also acknowledged the need to bring students back into the school environment as quickly as health and safety conditions allow.

“We recognize the significant challenges that distance learning poses for many of our students’ academic and social-emotional development, which is why we intend to re-evaluate conditions every two weeks,” he said. “As those conditions allow, we hope to move into Stage Two by Monday, September 28, which will welcome back into our buildings small groups of identified students for face-to-face instruction.”

The stage two model builds upon the success the school system has had in bringing small groups of students back into classrooms through our summer academy programs currently underway at all schools.

Once again referencing the feedback received from stakeholders, Taylor also announced that families could choose to keep their child in distance learning when students are able to return to the classroom.

“We recognize the fear that many families have at this tenuous time, so to ease those fears, Worcester County Public Schools will continue to offer a choice of distance learning for any families that do not wish to physically send their child back to school,” he said. “Parents will be able to exercise this option as schools reach out to invite their child back to the classroom.”

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