Dr. Martirano's Opening: Development of any type of instructional model during the pandemic presents significant challenges to implement and requires compromises on the part of students, families and staff. After feedback, the board will approve a hybrid model. Approving a hybrid model is separate from determining if students and staff will transition to a hybrid model in the second semester. All decisions would be dependent on metrics at that time.
The input of students, families and staff is critical, you can email feedback about model: Spring-input@hcpss.org.

Guest Speakers:
Dr. Rossman- Howard County Health Department
Dr. Fitzpatrick: University of MD School of Medicine, Center for Vaccine Development & Global Health Assistant Professor

HCPSS Staff:
Kerrie Wagaman: HCPSS Health Service Coordinator
Annisa Dennis- Chief School Management and Instructional Leadership
David Larner- Chief HR and PD
Justin Benedict- Executive Director Information Technology
Jenny Novak- Director of Curricular Programs
Brian Ralph- Director Food and Nutrition
Scott Rheul- Director Leadership Development

Health and Safety
Q: What would secondary transmission rates be in a classroom setting based on your mathematical modeling for ES, MS and HS and how models differ depending on cohorting?
A: Dr. Fitzpatrick: At the ES school of 550 students in 23 classrooms with cohorting, no mixing or eating outside the cohort (not in cafeteria) and with masking and distancing we expect on AB schedule, the majority of time there would be little to no transmission (1 new or two new infections for every 3 infectious entries) which halts the transmission most of the time and big outbreaks can be cut off. But, in some cases the secondary attack rate can be quite high. We don't detect a lot of cases in younger students because the symptoms are milder. We did not model for non-cohort at ES because we assumed creating a cohort would be the first step districts would take.

At the HS level, on a model of 986 students with 9-10 in a classroom, we expect (without co-horting) every infection will lead to one more with potential for 1.5 secondary infections for every one introduction person if quarantining wasn't happening.

Q: What are the projections of how many outbreaks we should expect (by school or by school system)?
A: Dr. Fitzpatrick: What is the definition of "outbreak?" It is contingent on the level of community transmission. At Ho. Co.'s current community transmission level (10 new cases per day) it would be 20 new introductions over the semester at one ES but they would not all be detected (statistically, only 2 students would show symptoms that would be noticed).
Dr. Rossman: Cases are above 10 per 100,000 right now- with higher community rates, it will be a given that people show up at school infected, so the emphasis is containing transmission to others in the school setting.

Q: We are in the "red" zone, children's rates are going up and factors are changing. Given all of this is playing out- are your models bearing out? Do they feel true?
A: Dr. Fitzpatrick: Emily Auster has a self-reported database (which can lead to bias b/c places tending to do better may be more apt to post) but, in Texas there was a 40% elevated risk of infection attending in person schools compared to the state average. This is consistent with our expectation of a 30% elevated risk and what we have seen across the State. There are more staff outbreaks than what we expected in simulations.

Q: Populations of people of color are impacted more with COVID. Has that been considered in the models? What are those strategies employed to help these families?
A: Dr. Fitzpatrick: Although there are much more severe outcomes for those communities, we did not estimate the outcomes in terms of how many deaths we expect or how many severe hospitalizations or outcomes. But it is so different depending on the community surrounding the schools.
Dr. Rossman: We do need to take this into consideration and reach those families with less access to testing, living in environments with more people in a household that create higher transmission, and employment in riskier settings than those working remotely. We are testing in faith-based communities.

Q: There is increased risk with non-tight, co-horting?
A: Dr. Fitzpatrick: Yes. Minimizing the mixing by cohorting is very important to minimize the transmission and minimize the number of classrooms that would have to close if an exposure was found. Strongly recommend tight co-horts if this is not already a built-in feature of this AB Hybrid scheduling.

Dr. Rossman: The more movement you have, the higher the risk. The purpose of co-horting is to keep a small group of persons together.

N. Dennis: All grades will be moving/transitioning classes in this model.

Q: Can ES create cohorts based on math and have that teacher teach that cohort everything?
A: Dr. Fitzpatrick: make a cohort that doesn't change (however that works)

Q: How will traveling in the hallways and into the cafeteria, sharing air, impact transmission? Is it riskier to be in the cafeteria or stay in their classroom?
A: Dr. Fitzpatrick: This is a legitimate concern.

Hallways: Although we don't want the hallways to be crowded, students passing each other briefly is probably not a major concern with regard to transmission.

Cafeterias: I can't speak to whether the ventilation systems in the cafeterias are sufficient but, brief contact to pick up lunches and bring back to classrooms would be less risky than keeping students in that space.

Ms. Dennis: We don't have enough staff to cover students eating in their classrooms while also giving teachers a 30-minute, duty free, lunch.

Q: Why wouldn't we have staff move instead of students?
A: J. Novak: In some cases, it may be possible, in others it may not be. For example, we are currently staffed for RA classes in ES to be "sprinkled" so even if the RA teacher came into the classroom, a subset of students would move into that classroom space.

Q: Dr. Fitzpatrick, do you have any additional concerns regarding transmission with the model that was suggested or alternative suggestions?
A: Dr. Fitzpatrick: Another concern is the RA teachers who rotate. They are exposed to more classes of students and could bring transmission to multiple classrooms. Any student they interact with will need to be quarantined if the RA teacher was infected.

Q: If the RA teacher did their lesson closer to the door, as opposed traveling in the classroom, would that be better?
A: Dr. Fitzpatrick: I would put them next to a window if I were trying to be really careful but, I don't know the ventilation pattern of any given room, I don't think anyone has the time to go through that in this particular instance.

J. Novak: Grade level teachers have their planning time when students go to RA. So, if we changed the model to have RA virtually or on alternating days, without additional staffing, teachers would not get that planning time because they would still be supervising students.

Q: Have you seen other in-school models that have less transmission that others?
A: Dr. Fitzpatrick- I have seen AB schedules and 5 days a week but the 5 days a week are in private schools with much smaller class sizes to begin with.

Q: Both you and Ms. Rossman are saying that if we had to compare with concern in transmission it's more at the HS level than the ES because they go to different classes. If we could cohort HS with a different model, would that reduce transmission?
A: Dr. Fitzpatrick: If you have one class on one day and one on another, that may have an impact but the infectious period is 5 days so the impact will be minimal. If you could keep classes like math/science at the HS level together in one cohort, that would be more desirable.

Q: With the rise in adolescents being diagnosed with COVID positive (60,000 in the last week), what should we take as implications for our decision making:
A: Dr. Fitzpatrick: stick to the standards you make for yourself you decided was safe

Dr. Rossman: follow the metrics you set up at the beginning

Q: If a student tests positive, what is your recommendation of who should quarantine?
A: Dr. Fitzpatrick: Everyone that has been in the same class with the child because the shared airspace is the real high risk. Six feet for 15 minutes has been the proxy of what constitutes close contact but we have seen people infected at longer ranges because we know that the longer a person spends in a particular space, that 6-foot margin dissolves. So, it's not just students within desks around the infected person- anyone that has shared airspace for that long of time.

Dr. Rossman: CDC guidelines: People within 6 feet over 15 minutes but remember that people should be wearing their face coverings at all times within the classroom except when eating which poses the most risk.

Q: What is the risk if a child can't wear a mask? Can we have kids back in schools without masks? Will that be a concern to other parents?
A: Dr. Fitzpatrick: The risk is higher both to others and from others to themselves. The terms: to the best extent as possible, not every person will behave exactly as planned. The expectations need to be 6 feet and mask wearing which need to be reinforced. I can't speak to the legality of if you can inform other parents if a child is not wearing a mask. You should take every measure possible to either make sure that student has more space from others or provide face shields, plexiglass barriers or move several children who are unable to wear masks to a smaller classroom with each other.

Dr. Rossman- yes, that is why is states "to the extent possible." We have experience of real kids participating in daycare and Rec and Park programs. There, right now, are less rates and transmissions among younger students. I am less concerned with younger children and the facial coverings than the older b/c they behave more like adult in infections/transmission.

Q: If a child can't wear a mask can we ask them, or make it a requirement, to be tested?
A: Dr. Rossman: Masks will prevent transmission. Testing will identify, so you can't substitute a test. I am not a legal advisor but I would not recommend that b/c if someone tests negative, they could still have infection that hasn't been detected yet b/c the viral load wasn't sufficient. We are seeing cases like this in small and large gatherings in households.

Q: Will there be cleaning and disinfecting when classes transition, is there enough time for that and is that an issue in terms of providing a safe environment?
A: Dr. Rossman: The primary mode of transmission is respiratory and aerosolization. There is some risk of contact with frequently touched surfaces. The cleaning products the school system uses are sufficient in disinfecting.

Q; How often should bathrooms be cleaned and disinfected?
A: Dr. Rossman: As frequently as possible. It is not recommended between users but you still have to maintain 6 feet of distance which may mean closing stalls or allowing one in at a time.

Q: What is the impact of the flu on COVID cases?
A: Dr. Rossman- We should be concerned and have gotten flu shots. The problem is how do you detect the difference between the two? They do have different protocols.

Q: Will this strain the health staff of 1.5 per school? Will any child presenting flu or COVID be isolated?
A: K. Wagaman: Any symptomatic child (flue or COVID) will be isolated. If the isolation room is in another space, we would need another staff member to monitor that until family picks child up (which should happen quickly).

Operational:
Q: How much will this model, over virtual, increase student interaction with teachers?
A: J. Novak: We expect the classrooms to be dynamic as possible in a very sterile environment.

Q: Why do students need to bring computers in? that still looks like virtual learning?
A: J. Novak: We have a challenge with limited staffing. The teacher is responsible for teaching students that are learning virtually and students coming in, simultaneously. Teachers would have to come up with an assignment where virtual students can access the materials. If the F2F students don't have their devices, they would have to come up with hard copies or sharable materials which requires the teacher to double plan. Students would have to log in to access the same digital platform that we already purchased. This also minimizes the materials that have to be shared.

Q: How will we manage this workload for teachers with hybrid and virtual when we know they are already working many hours/days? And how will the number of teachers, that may not come back (possibly 30% of certificated staff- 1600), affect operations and delivering instruction? How can we help them (create virtual content)?
A: D. Larner: This is a difficult process and not ideal for instruction. One challenge is staffing. If we even have 20% the number of staff members who don't return it would be over 1,000. It will be challenging. Pre-COVID, on a good day, we would have 300-400 sub jobs filled. Although we will be recruiting subs, we don't know how many will return. Not looking at daily absences, let's say we get 400 – now we are down to 600 unfilled jobs. It is not reasonable to think we will get new teacher candidates to fill these jobs, they don't exist. And, there are other districts that will be taking any available candidates. 600 jobs divided over 75 schools is about 8 empty per school which is significant. But, it's hard to tell. If one person from each HS didn't come back it would be different than if an entire math department didn't come back. If an entire administrative team didn't come back, that would be more impactful. Without question, there would be many jobs we would not be able to fill even with subs because they may do day to day- but we would need them long term. If, or when, the Board approves the plan to return to hybrid, we will survey staff with commitments and schools will know what they are looking at. We have a leave office of two people so they don't have the ability to process 800 requests at one time. This will not be quick or easy and will have an impact on our ability to deliver the educational program.

Dr. M: One local school system had upwards of 400 staff not return. There are many examples nationwide where there are not enough teachers to teach in the in-person model so children are coming into school and being taught virtually by the teacher at home to allow for staff coverage.

D. Larner: The HCEA survey presents legitimate issues with coming back. It will not be easy. This is just the best hybrid model but not perfect.

J. Novak- staff are continuously developing resources with limited staff but teachers still have to personalize them. Both virtual and hybrid requires more planning which presents significant challenges. We are not trying to hide anything; we know that a hybrid model is a challenge. There are limited resources. Teachers will, at most have 90 minutes of planning a day so we will try to keep Wednesday's as open as possible, but it will be a challenge.

Q: The proposed AB model said that it may need to be an ABCD model to accommodate in person requests. How many actual classrooms cannot accommodate a 6-foot distance with the 70% of students that want to come back?
A: Dr. Martirano: we need young people to be in the virtual environment to make this mathematically work.

Ms. Dennis: We need more than 1/3 of our kids to be virtual for others to come in two days a week. If the numbers are higher, it would be an ABCD model. The number varies based on the different classrooms b/c they are different sizes. This is happening in other districts as well.

S. Rheul: We don't know yet. We need to see the class size, how many desks fit and then which students in each class would want to come in.

D. Larner: In K-2 max of 25 kids so that is 8 students. A class would handle 8. In intermediate with a class max of 30, a third is 10 and many classrooms could handle 10. However, it will not be even because the students wanting to come back will not be 70% of every classroom. This issue will be when 85% at one school wants to come back and 55% at another school. Or, even 70% of the school wants to come back but it's 90% of grade 2 and 30% of grade 5. Or, even within a grade, it's 70% of the grade but it's 90% of Ms. Jones' class and 40% of Ms. Smith's class. In the forest view, the numbers work. In the tress view, the numbers become a problem.

Ms. Mallo: I am not hearing we have the ability to accommodate 70% in person, staffing, physical space, co-horting, I am struggling to see this as an effective means to deliver instruction safely.

Q: Where are we with evaluating where we are with virtual learning so that parents may choose it, if it improves?
A: Ms. Novak: We are always looking at feedback, teacher & student workload, challenges. We are collaborating with administrators to mitigate concerns, through PD for more planning time and address concerns. As we look at this hybrid model, students would be online for the entire (6 hour) day so would need built in breaks. However, although the longer assignments during the week would be shortened there would still be additional work outside of the classroom (about 1-2 hours more per day). Thus, up to 8 hours a day online.

Ms. Cutroneo: So, the reality is that students would be at home virtually with no support, for a longer period of time, because the teacher is teaching…for two days a week.

Q: We spent a tremendous amount to time getting ready for virtual instruction and we see teachers overwhelmed. With the HCEA survey we see teachers wanting to stay virtual and we are now proposing a model they would deliver simultaneously. What is the plan for PD to handle the overwhelmed feelings educators have right now and getting ready for this?

A: Dr. Martirano: The reality is that we are not taking a week off. In August, we provided a lot of support but there were not children. As we build up in January, instruction needs to continue while staff is gearing up for hybrid. We are lifting it up and acknowledging the demands we are putting on our teachers. I am greatly concerned about having enough staff to do what we need to have happen.

Ms. Dennis: Each feedback group (ES, MS, HS) stated they are just getting comfortable and are nervous about a new model.

Q: Will having meals only available at HS decrease the amount of meals being provided?
A: B. Ralph: There is not a reduction of meals. Without three times the staff, we can't provide meals 4 days a week at schools and the meals we are doing now at all sites. Parents are now collecting meals for multiple days and that can continue. We are planning to have meal distribution at 12 HS sites.

Q: How can we expect students to bring in Chromebooks if we don't have one to one coverage right now and have distributed the ones at the school sites already? There will still be a deficiency of upwards of 9,000 if we don't get the deliveries in time.
A: J. Benedict: There is a shortage of Chromebooks but we have been giving Dell's out at the secondary level (2,200 have been distributed already and have another 2,000 to distribute). 6,523 Chromebooks are due in December for MS and 11,000 in February for HS but the manufactures will not commit to this timeframe.