

MCA COVID-19 Summary

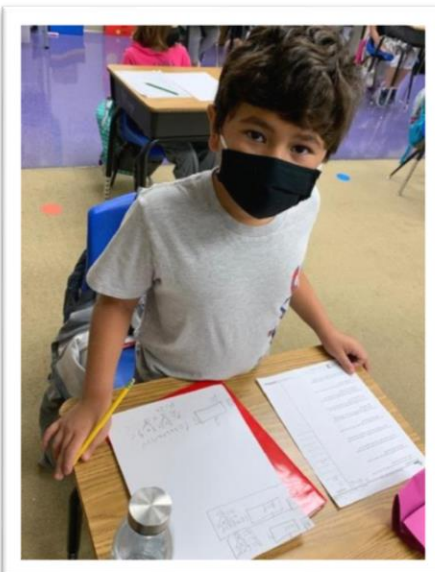
Friday, March 13, 2020, was a pivotal day for Millennium Charter Academy, as well as for all other public schools across the State of North Carolina, when Governor Roy Cooper closed schools for in-person learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, methods of the delivery of educational curricula changed more in just a few weeks than they have over the past fifty years. At MCA, many changes were made to address remote instruction and enhanced safety and health procedures. Some things, however, did not and will not change, and that is the focus of this edition of The Herald.

Since MCA's beginning in the summer of 2000, our number one priority has always been the health and safety of our students. Because of the pandemic, we have established many safety protocols. From March 2020, all MCA students, along with all other public school students in North Carolina and most of the United States, learned from home with teachers conducting classes through software tools such as SeeSaw, Zoom, and Google Classroom. During the summer, the Governor announced that schools could return to in-person learning as long as students were properly socially distanced. MCA gave our families a choice to return to school or continue with remote learning. Around seventy percent of our families chose in-person learning.



In-Person Learning

To help ensure the health and safety of our in-person learnings, we have adopted several new procedures. No one is allowed to board an MCA bus or admitted into an MCA building without a temperature check and without passing some basic screening questions. The screening information gleaned is saved and will be stored for a period of one year. To help expedite the process and prevent our parents and staff from having to complete a paper form each day, students and staff have been assigned a QR code that automatically lists their name in a document where an MCA staff member completes the screening process by recording the answers to the screening questions. To maintain the integrity of the data, no one checks themselves in. Even MCA faculty and staff must be checked in by another employee.



Once inside the building, all persons wear face coverings. All students and employees stay as socially distanced as possible during the course of the whole day. Students and employees sit, stand, and walk six feet apart. Lower school classes remain together, not sharing lunch or recess times with other classes in the same grades. Upper school students have lunch times with only one person to a table, do not use their lockers, and have special walking patterns to ensure as much distance as possible when changing classes. Signage, floor markers, and teachers constantly remind everyone to wash their hands frequently, wait six feet apart, and wear face coverings. So that our students may get a break from wearing their face coverings, teachers are taking advantage of additional outside times for their classes where students may spread out to walk, play, and exercise without their masks. Our goal is to provide at least a ten minute break from face coverings for every hour of the day.



Cleaning procedures are enhanced. Frequently touched surfaces such as door handles, light switches, and remote controls are sanitized multiple times throughout the day. Desks in lower school are cleaned before snack and lunchtime when students will be eating at their desks, as well as at the end of each day. Desks and tables in upper school are cleaned before each class change period. The playground is sprayed with a people-safe disinfectant after each classroom use, as well as at the end of our after school care Lion's Watch program each day. An eighty percent isopropyl alcohol based hand sanitizer is available in every classroom, specialist carts, and activity area in the school and is used frequently throughout the day.

We have worked very closely with Surry County Health and Nutrition on procedures to be taken when a student or employee exhibits symptoms that are associated with the Corona virus. Since we are so careful in the building with everyone wearing face coverings, distancing, and remaining in their cohorts, the goal is that we will not have to quarantine a class or the school in the event that someone tests positive for the virus.

Remote Learners

One of the more challenging aspects of the virus is how to ensure that our remote learners still get the quality education that MCA is known for. Live daily instruction is provided, along with daily office hours so that parents and students may meet individually, albeit virtually, with their teachers as needed. As a school, we have increased our internet bandwidth to help ensure our teachers have good service for streaming their classes, and all teachers have been provided with new high definition web cams with stereo microphones. Our school has subscribed to a robust learning management system, Canvas, to help provide remoter learners with “one stop shopping” in accessing assignments, streaming sessions, and recorded lessons. Even with these new additions, we realize that education via computer is not the same as being in-person. If your child is a remote learner and is struggling with the format or technical issues, please contact us as soon as possible. It is highly important that our remote learners participate in their classes as much as possible. Our goal is that each remote lesson will have clear expectations and delivery of the material at hand. Teachers will update grades no later than every two weeks, and they will provide personal feedback and respond quickly to questions.



What Won't Change

Even with all the changes we've made because of the Coronavirus, there are some things that won't change. We are still dedicated to our vision of creating intelligent, virtuous citizens, who lead and can be led in a constitutional republic, and who seek truth, goodness, and beauty in all that they do. We are still dedicated to maintaining our rich curriculum in the classical liberal arts. Our entire faculty and staff are dedicated to providing an education that fosters thinking, writing, and speaking well, and one that cultivates the very best nature of our students. Our goal of providing our students with a solid foundation for life will never change.