

December 16, 2020

Dear MCPS Community:

The purpose of this communication is to provide an update on the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) interscholastic athletics program. As [previously communicated](#), if metrics allow, in-person activities and engagement may begin when the first student groups return for in-person instruction in school buildings. County COVID-19 metrics continue to be elevated, and at its Dec. 15 meeting, the Board of Education delayed the return of students for in-person learning to Feb. 1, 2021, on the condition that health metrics are met. As a result, the return of in-person activities and engagement for MCPS Athletics is now scheduled to occur in alignment with the return of the first student groups to in-person learning on Feb. 1, 2021.

Due to this delay, the winter competition season for MCPS Athletics has been canceled. As members of the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA), MCPS must operate MPSSAA-administered sports and seasons within the confines of the approved state [calendar](#), which requires that the winter competition season conclude by Feb. 13, 2021. Unfortunately, this timeline does not allow for the winter competition season to occur. Please note the following points of clarification regarding the cancellation of the winter competition season:

- Bocce will replace team handball in the fall competition season; team handball will not be conducted during the 2020-2021 school year. There are two major reasons for this action: significantly lower risk levels for participants and greater potential participation opportunities for student-athletes (all 25 schools field bocce teams, while 10 schools field team handball).
- Poms and cheerleading will only occur during the fall season.
- Indoor track and field will not be conducted during the 2020-2021 school year.
- Opportunities for engagement in basketball, wrestling and swimming and diving *may* be provided later in the school year, per MPSSAA rules, pending facility availability and health metrics. Details on participation opportunities would be provided later in the school year.

In the meantime, please note the following regarding the operations of MCPS Athletics:

- MCPS will continue with operations as outlined in the [R.A.I.S.E. Reimagined](#) Framework for virtual athletics, including the virtual spring athletic season that is currently in session through the end of January.

- The initial return of in-person activities will only occur in the high school program. Updates regarding the operations for middle school athletics during the second semester will be provided later in the school year, when more information is known regarding health metrics and the return of students to schools.
- MCPS will proceed with planning for the return of in-person activities for fall sports, in alignment with the start of the fall competition season, scheduled for Feb. 13, 2021.
- Students in both virtual and in-person instructional settings will be eligible to participate in athletics and extracurricular activities for the duration of the school year.
- Student-athletes interested in participating in fall sports should ensure that they have an updated [physical](#) (physicals are valid for one calendar year). Note: All new physicals (dated after July 20, 2020) must include the COVID-19 Pre-Participation Page.
- More information regarding registration and operations for fall sports will be provided in January, in advance of the season.

MCPS will continue to monitor the metrics and provide updates regarding interscholastic athletics and extracurricular activities moving forward, along with the plans for the safe return of students to schools. The COVID-19 Task Force for MCPS Athletics will continue preparing for the return of in-person activities and will provide additional updates and recommendations to MCPS leadership for consideration and review, in alignment with the next Board of Education meeting on Jan. 12, 2021.

We know the cancellation of the winter competition season is devastating for student-athletes, coaches and stakeholders across MCPS. However, we continue to be inspired by the resiliency of our student-athletes, coaches and families during these challenging times. While these decisions and actions come with great frustration and disappointment, the safety of our students, staff members, stakeholders and communities remains our utmost priority. We are committed to returning to in-person activities and engagement and look forward to the return of our student-athletes and coaches when health metrics allow.

Together, We RAISE MCPS Athletics!

Montgomery County Public Schools