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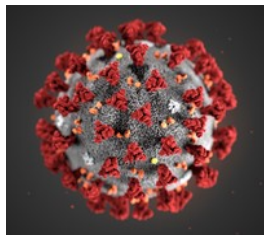
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BCPS Reopening Delayed and Doubtful Amidst Covid-19 Spike

By Logan Dubel



Maryland is facing a Covid-19 surge. Photo courtesy of the CDC.

With one quarter completed in an entirely virtual format, it remains unlikely and unclear when, if ever, Baltimore County Public Schools will reopen its doors to students in some capacity.

Maryland Covid-19 metrics were trending in the right direction for several months but have taken a dark turn over the past few weeks. The positivity rate in Baltimore County currently sits at over 6%, above the 5% mark set by the Maryland Department of Education and BCPS. Even as some experience Covid fatigue and relax their adherence to social distancing guidelines, the virus is continuing to spread, making reopening even more challenging.

The county recently launched a data dashboard, which will be updated every Friday. The dashboard displays a reopening score from 1 to 12 based on new county cases and changes in infections. Currently, the score stands at 12, meaning that virtual learning must continue.

Due to the evolving situation and ever-changing case numbers, nearly every plan set forth by the school system has collapsed. In mid-September, Superintendent Darryl Williams announced that school staff would return on October 19. After receiving significant blowback from across the county, the plans were scrapped. Within the same announcement about faculty, Williams expressed his desire to bring back small groups of students, especially Kindergarteners and those with disabilities.

Up until the beginning of November, students and staff at public separate day schools, Battle Monument, Maiden Choice, Ridge Ruxton, and White Oak, were set to return. Citing alarming spikes, Williams noted that it was impossible to proceed with reopening plans.

"The return of school-based staff to school buildings is also being put on hold until further notice," Williams said. "As the COVID-19 crisis continues to evolve, we will monitor our metrics on a daily basis in coordination with the Baltimore County Department of Health and make adjustments as necessary, always keeping health and safety foremost in our minds."

While schools cannot open their doors right now, it seems as though BCPS has some plans in place. On November 11, the system released updated information about in-person instruction for small groups of preschool through grade 2 students. The county has released countless documents about testing, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), social distancing, cleaning, and protocols for positive cases, though none have been put into action.



Areas with lower Covid-19 metrics have reopened in some capacity. Courtesy of KSAT.

Virtual learning is supposed to continue for all students until at least January 29, with surveys about possible hybrid plans going out to families in December. However, as Williams mentioned in numerous press releases, if the metrics do not constitute reopening, then instruction will remain entirely virtual.

With one quarter under their belt, Franklin students have mixed feelings about online learning. When it comes to reopening, they believe that with the proper protocols, they would feel comfortable returning. "I enjoyed having four classes a day because it allowed me to focus more. They should implement that when we return," said junior Alaina Hetrick. "I am hopeful that we will go back to school, but with cases increasing, I don't think we will be going back any time soon."

I would be hesitant to go back, but I am comfortable wearing a mask throughout the day."

Junior Caylie Franz echoes her classmate's feelings about returning to school. "The first quarter in a virtual format was a lot to get used to, and I still have not completely adjusted. It is unlikely that BCPS will reopen soon, especially with the recent spikes," she said. "I would definitely feel comfortable with going back to school if things were changed to align with social distancing protocols."

Of course, teachers must be on board with returning to the classroom as well. Mrs. Cascio believes that it is an all-around tough situation. "Online learning is an overwhelming learning experience. It has been really interesting to try to adapt to not being face to face and watching my students adjust as well," she explained.

Similar to the students, Cascio does not anticipate a return any time soon. "Based on the current numbers, I don't think we will, but I have no insider knowledge. Things are just not trending in that direction right now. I would feel comfortable going back. There are so many things I miss about having school in person. I hope it is able to happen this year."

Even though there are competing visions across the world about how to deal with the pandemic, one thing is for sure - everyone is desperate for normalcy. Whenever students return, it will surely be exciting. As we have seen this fall, things can change in an instant. Stay tuned for additional updates from BCPS.

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Adapting to a New Quarter Schedule

By Simone Tillman

Looking back on the end of the 2019-2020 school year, the last-minute changes and cancelled events don't hold a candle to this current semester. It was known that the 2020-2021 school year would be spent primarily online, followed by a second half in person. What seemed to shock students more was the change in the course scheduling. Franklin High School was the last school in its county to hold onto its eight-class daily schedule, but the need to finally switch to a four-class schedule in order to accommodate for new county and state guidelines has thrown both students and teachers in for a loop.

Online school is already quite the hefty challenge on its own. The add-on of accelerated courses and new scheduling has made this new way of learning even more of an obstacle. Contrary to popular belief, the courses are not being cut in half because of the new timeframe. The class material is close to the same; the difference being how quick it is being taught. Units that used to take a month, now take two weeks, which makes sense when looking through the lens of only having two marking periods per course. What's worrying from the student perspective is the workload. School work and homework have no distinction during online schooling and the blurred line is causing quite the panic. Students feel rushed and overwhelmed with the amount of assignments due nightly, so much so, that this newly introduced stress has

become the source of many jokes and memes on social media about how poorly online school is being conducted.

Of course, the belief that online school is currently unsuccessful is a matter of opinion. Certain students are thriving in this new environment and semester schedule while others are barely hanging on. Junior Noveen Awan shares her thoughts on the current school climate. "The sun goes down earlier, and that makes me want to be in bed with a cup of hot cocoa at eight instead of doing homework at my wooden desk." Awan brings up a common issue students are struggling with. Completing work at home is filled with the trivial struggle of choosing to do it on one's own accord when surrounded by distractions twenty-four-seven.

For teachers, the struggles with the new course set-up may vary greatly. Those who have been teaching for a while have to re-learn their craft as they navigate the online environment. While they're getting the hang of resources such as Google Meets and break-out rooms, the new arrangement of the quarters still seems to be an issue as witnessed during the closing of the first marking period. A teacher new to Franklin, Sergeant Major Kappen who teaches the MCJROTC program, shares his look on the process. "The biggest impact on having one-semester courses...is not having any MCJROTC classes in the second half of the year. There are numerous

impacts with this: 1) drill competitions 2) color guard community service 3) next year. With an eight-month gap between the last MCJROTC class this year and the start next year there is a potential that attrition from the program will be significantly impacted." This is not solely an MCJROTC issue; this new class division is affecting all teachers in classes across the board.

It's hard to tell if the four-class semesters will continue once we're through with virtual learning. Whatever the outcome may be, it would be a good time to self-reflect and see how well you've been handling this new way of schooling. The amount of benefits compared to consequences is a matter of personal opinion, but no matter where you stand on the issue it is important to ensure your own success in the end.



A family with both students participating in online school from usnews.com/education/coronavirus-and-schools-guide

Yearbook Interview with Ms. Doll

By Bari Weinstein

Have you ever wondered what it is like inside the yearbook? This exclusive interview with Ms. Doll tells it all, from the adjustments of Covid-19 to how the editors get interviews. Also, if you are looking to buy a yearbook, the link is down below.

Q: What is different about the yearbook this year? How are you working with virtual learning?

A: The yearbook is different because we have the yearbook dedicated to in-person activities such as Homecoming. We must come up with different titles for the yearbook. We had to develop loads of new topics.

Q: How do meetings work with Covid-19? How would meetings usually work?

A: It is a class and a club. Teaching yearbook has not really changed. I really cover the same topics we would in person. It is different to being online. Developing new ways to get content for the yearbook from the students towards other

students. Interviews would be conducted in person from their peers. Less time as well to interview. The students had more control over the topics for the yearbook. Develop their own questions as well.

Q: How would you normally get the word out for yearbook? How are you doing that differently this year?

A: I created a new assignment where I had the yearbook students reach out to their teachers to ask them to get the word out to their students as well. I have had the students put the word out on the announcements and the bulletin, and personally talk to people who have purchased the yearbook. Social media played a big role as well this year. I created a Facebook page, which is fairly new.

Q: Were you surprised with anything about the yearbook this year? What and why?

A: So far, none. People are also still submitting things as well.

Q: Since we are not together in-person to take group pictures or pictures of school events, what can we expect to see in the yearbook this year?

A: People can submit screenshots as well for clubs and sports. There are different forms for both clubs and sports. I reached out to advisers for the screenshots.

Q: What is the price and where can we place orders? What's the deadline to get your order in?

A: Sixty dollars. <https://www.jostens.com/apps/store/customer/1066625/Franklin-High-School/> There is not a deadline, but we only print so many books.

Q: Who are the editors?

A: The Chief Editor is Camila Garcia, Design Editor is Kelly Pham, Photo Editor is Molly Bryan, Copy Editor is Hailey Ciufu, and Social Media Manager/Community Outreach is Elijah Morgan.

Order in the Virtual Courtroom: Franklin Mock Trial Prepares for Unique Season

By Logan Dubel

The 2020-2021 season is presenting brand new challenges for an experienced and well-versed Franklin Academy of Law. For a team that is accustomed to traversing the country and arguing cases in high-pressure situations, the Covid-19 pandemic has certainly wrecked all team norms. However, that does not mean that the internationally recognized group will let the whirlwind known as 2020 put a dent in their success.

A typical fall is jam-packed for the student attorneys and witnesses. The team would have had the opportunity to travel to Atlanta, New York, or possibly Chicago for Empire Mock Trial. After the conclusion of those competitions, students would have begun building a case for the local tournament, which spans most of the winter months at the Circuit Court for Baltimore County.

Instead of sitting on airplanes or riding the bus to Towson, students will take a few steps to their bedrooms for a virtual competition. It is quite a shift from the tense theatrics of the courtroom, but it is a sacrifice that must be made. For the next several weeks, the fourteen students and new coach, Ms. Amos, will dive into a new case. They are tasked with analyzing every fact, crafting witness performances, and developing distinctive rationales.

While few details about how the virtual competition will operate are known, undoubtedly, students will face the same technical challenges that millions of people have experienced over the past eight months. Despite the major shift in how trials will run, the facts remain at the heart of the competition.

Virtual mock trial is not something anyone would have wished for, but students are enthusiastic about the return of an activity they love, even though it might not be in a regular format. "Mock trial in a virtual environment is definitely different, and for me, it is hard to go from courtrooms to sitting at my desk in my room, the same desk I already sit at 24/7 for school," said junior Noveen Awan. "But I've learned to be more thankful for modern technology because it brings us closer to experiencing mock trial the best we can, even in these unusual times. I'm just glad that even though there's a pandemic going on, we're still able to come together virtually, practice, and grow, so that when we're back to normal, we'll be prepared."

Sophomore Ricky Bridges echoes his teammate's sentiments. "Usually, you get to walk around a classroom and bounce your ideas off of others, but now we can only unmute and hope we get our messages across," he explained. "Like most things in 2020, I'm taking what's been handed to me and trying to make the most of it. Virtual mock trial wasn't easy and may never feel like the actual thing, but right now, it's going great, and I enjoy it. I just look forward to the day I can safely enter a courtroom again!"

Virtual competition is not the only thing that is new. Ms. Amos, who served as an assistant

coach last school year, has officially taken over the program, in conjunction with the retirement of the legendary Mr. Lambert. She admits that succeeding Lambert will be no small feat. "This year has been crazy in so many respects. Taking over the highly successful program that is Franklin mock trial has also been a whirlwind. I have only had one year to learn all of the ins and outs that come with mock trial and coaching mock trial," she reflected. "I have a lot to live up to; Mr. Lambert was one of the best coaches around and even won national awards for his great work. Despite my nerves, uncertainty, and apprehensions, I have been so excited to start working on this year's case and with our mock trial team. I hope I can set the example for my students and show them that even if you're nervous about something, even if you're unsure, you can still tackle new things with a positive attitude and have fun!"

The group hopes to replicate the feeling of sitting inside the courtroom, but they recognize that not everything will be the same. While legally sound arguments are most paramount to judges, charisma and personality also play a crucial role in the outcome of mock trials. It remains to be seen whether the emotion and character created in-person can be portrayed through a screen.



Several generations of Franklin Academy of Law students gathered at the Circuit Court for Baltimore County in December 2019. Courtesy of the Franklin Academy of Law.

"Competing virtually means that we will have to change the way we play and rely more on having a perfect, well-written case, with tight direct and cross-examinations and captivating closing arguments, rather than worrying about how we physically present ourselves in the courtroom," Amos said. "I always tell those unfamiliar with mock trial that it is 60% law and 40% theatre. A team's physical presence in the courtroom could be the difference between winning a national title or going home with a second-place trophy. This year, we won't see that aspect of mock trial. This will allow us (a team fielded by mostly underclassmen) to learn how to prepare the perfect case on paper so that next year we can focus entirely on perfecting our other 40%."

Regardless of their angst, there is universal agreement that getting back into mock trial has been nothing short of exciting. The new case, *State v. Gardner*, chronicles a robbery at the Walters Art Museum. Late one night, two individuals disguised as police officers were allowed into the museum by guards. Once they were permitted to enter, they tied up the guards and stole three precious pieces of art. A young former museum employee, Izzy Gardner, is suspected of taking part in the robbery. She is charged with theft along with the assault of the two museum guards. Is Gardner really one of the culprits? It will be up to the attorneys and witnesses to craft compelling cases for both the prosecution and defense.

Amos and the students feel that this criminal situation is more realistic and interesting than previous cases they have litigated. "For this year's case, I am most looking forward to learning more about criminal law. The cases I had experience with last year were civil law, and there are some pretty big differences between the two," Amos said. "Our case will also be interesting because it is basically set in Baltimore City. Although the case uses a fake name, Chesapeake City, the details and exhibits are accurate, and it is neat to try a case that really could happen just down the road from us, using the exact same federal rules of evidence, Maryland Criminal Pattern Jury Instructions, and Maryland statutes that attorneys would use."

Bridges is confident that this year is going to be a successful one. "I'm looking forward to seeing who walks out the winner. I may be biased, but I think Franklin is going to have an amazing season."

For team updates, visit franklinacademyoflaw.com and follow @franklinacademyoflaw on Instagram.



Students competed at Penn State University in January 2020. Courtesy of the Franklin Academy of Law.

Next Step: College Planning

By Christina Okoli

For freshmen starting high school or seniors leaving high school, and those in between, the question of what to do after high school is something that can be simple or a complicated decision. There's a lot more to it than what college to go to.



*UMBC is most known for Life Science.
Taken from Google images.*

The best time to look for colleges is your junior year according to collegexpress.com. "Many high school students wait until spring semester to start searching for colleges, and plenty of students push their college search into fall of senior year. But keep in mind that there's little to lose by starting earlier." Also, the later you begin can impact the quality of your search and result in missed opportunities.

The first thing to do is to take the SAT or ACT test. SAT scores are required in some colleges. People can still apply for the SAT at CollegeBoard.org under 'SAT' and then clicking 'Register for the SAT'. Find the testing dates available, along with registration deadlines. The next important thing to do is join some sports or an extracurricular activity. Colleges look for students that are involved in many activities beside just be-

ing involved in classes. Taking on leadership roles is really helpful, too.

Start looking into colleges. They don't necessarily have to be college that you're interested in. Going to those campuses can help get a feel for college life. Finding scholarships is hard and with so many available. It's best to speak to your school counselor and do your own research into scholarships. Also, talk to your parents or guardians about financial aid to see what you and your family can pay for. When you begin



CCBC
The Community College
of Baltimore County

CCBC offers cost-effective courses. Taken from Google images.

your search, you may wonder what you want in your college like the size, religious affiliations, or location. To better understand what your *dream* college might be, consider the following from collegexpress.com, "It should be where you're comfortable to be yourself but still be challenged to be better. Have opportunities to study things that fascinate you. Learn *how to learn*, communicate well, and solve problems, no matter the industry. Education that shouldn't put you into large student debt."



NAVIANCE

Naviance allows students in Baltimore County access to valuable information about colleges. Taken from Google Images.

When speaking to your school counselor, you should also talk about your schedule for the next year. If you have chosen a career field, your school counselor can help put you in classes for the next year that can help align you to your career path. Look into teachers, mentors, and coaches that may be willing to write a recommendation letter for you. They will become handy when mailing to colleges that you're interested in to show why you are a good candidate for that college.

If you are still unsure about what to do, Franklin's college counselor is also available to help in giving you a more accurate path personalized to you. Finally, Collegepress.com gives this advice, "Remember your future success is largely determined by you, not your college. College is what you make of it. So you can go to any number of the thousands of colleges and universities in the United States and graduate ready for whatever the real world throws at you. Otherwise, borrowing lots of money to attend a "name-brand" school isn't really necessary—or worth it."



The Gazette Est. 1935
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Style Sustainably: How to shop both ethically and inexpensively

By Linnie Ulick

Have you ever heard the term, “fast fashion?” Fast fashion is the mass overproduction of trending clothing that consumers can buy for cheap, then readily throw out as the next vogue wave comes about. This toxic cycle is a large contributor to global pollution and silences many voices.

Fast fashion is, well, fast. The industry cuts a lot of corners environmentally to keep up with the trends. Not only does fashion largely contribute to human carbon emissions, but, according to the New York Times, “about 85 percent of textile waste in the United States goes to landfills or is incinerated; it will not decay.”



Here is a visual of what textile waste looks like. It's a mountain of clothes in a landfill which is extremely damaging to the global community. Photo credit: The New York Times

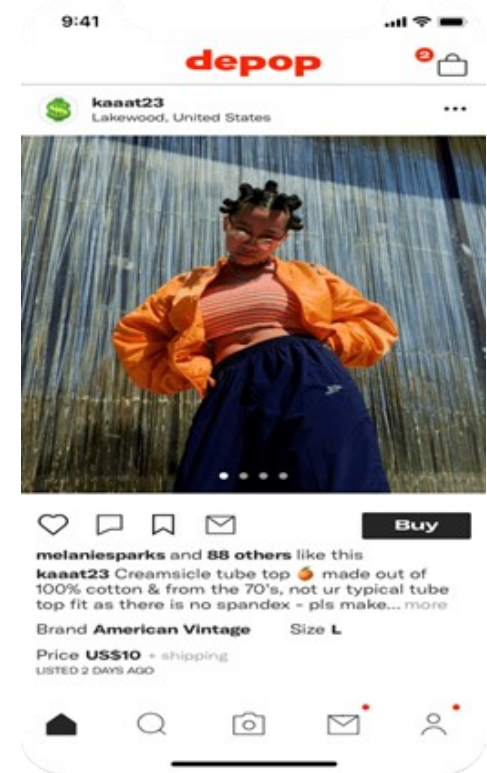
The fashion industry has a history of exploiting factory laborers with little to no income, brutal workplace conditions, and no breaks. The list goes on. This didn't end after the Industrial Revolution; it continues today.

An obvious counter to fast fashion is slow fashion where materials are sourced organically and sold domestically or on a small

scale, with little to no waste. It's the environmentally-friendly and humanitarian way to shop. The downfall: it's expensive. Similar to buying groceries from stores like Whole Foods or Mom's, it's not in most people's price range nor is it readily accessible to most communities. Clothing brands that are contributors to the fashion industry's environmental and social impacts are usually convenient so it's completely understandable that a majority of people are going to buy from them.

Thrifting, the practice of buying preloved clothes from others, is rising in popularity. There are many small businesses, corporations (like Goodwill), and even apps or websites that you can shop from that are very accessible. “You can get high end clothes for lower prices,” says junior Bari Weinstein. Buying from places like these puts your money into businesses that aren't problematic, and it also supports people who may need the money more than the higher-ups in the fast fashion industry. Locally, Reisterstown has its own consignment shop on Main Street. Wear It's At has a variety of preowned clothes in great condition for low prices. Depop is a thrifting app with the same idea. In this online community, anyone can be a seller and sell clothes or other items, and anyone can be a buyer.

Senior Toni Pelingon sums up sustainability pretty well, “If you can afford clothes that have been made from environmental-friendly companies, then please buy from them, but if you struggle financially, then thrifting is definitely a better option because there are a lot of great finds in those sea of clothes. But, before you do go thrifting, do your research because there can be



The image shown is what one's home page on the Depop mobile app looks like. This app, as well as others such as Poshmark or Ebay, are very user friendly and free. The community is always nice which is another plus when you're shopping online. Photo credit: Depop.com

thrift shops that might treat their employees unethically.”

It's always beneficial to shop sustainably, to put your money in positive places, and to not spend it wastefully. And lastly, another plus side is that these clothes are one of kind!

The Current State of Sports in BCPS

By Lea Glaser

As Covid-19 cases continue to rise, the fate of high school sports hangs in the balance. While county leaders announced plans to bring back in-person sports beginning on November 16 with an extensive re-engagement program, the proposals never came to fruition. Superintendent Darryl Williams announced a delay in reopening on November 4, and ever since, conditions have gotten even worse.

As cases in Maryland rise to nearly 7% positivity rate, the idea of returning to sports is still questioned by many.

Team BCPS released the full rundown on October 27, detailing various dates and plans. Small group sessions (of 20 students or fewer) were set to begin with trainings for winter sports on November 16, which did not happen. The same goes for fall and spring trainings, which were to follow in December and the beginning of January.



The Girls Varsity Field Hockey Team vs. River Hill. Courtesy of the Baltimore Sun.

Winter sports were supposed to begin play on January 4, running through February 13. Fall sports were supposed to begin play on March 5 and continue until April 17. Spring sports were supposed to begin play on May 7 and conclude on June 19. However, after BCPS received pushback for attempting to start involuntary trainings, it is unclear if these start-to-play dates are even accurate.

Other components of the program were proposed in the press release, including the encouragement of receiving the flu vaccine, and the completion of pre-participation physicals. No tryouts are required. Such implementations are most likely going to be carried out whenever officials announce the real start date. Officials constantly remind the public that the health of students is more important than returning to in-

person activities. Dr. Williams is still working for BCPS sports to happen, stating "We have worked closely with our athletics and health services staff... to bring back student-athletes to school campuses for conditioning."

Many student athletes feel hopeless about sports returning anytime soon, while others just wonder whether they will even get to see the field one more time. Sophomore Keira Hardesty plays for the girl's soccer team and loves everything about playing with the group. "I miss being a part of a team," she said. "I've made so many friends through high school sports that I don't get to see or talk to as much now since sports aren't happening."



The Franklin Varsity Football Team. Courtesy of the FHS Boys Varsity Football Hudl.

Others were even unsure of their commitment to playing sports in a global pandemic and the dangers of competing against people from different towns in the county. Junior Luca Romeo plays for the boy's soccer team and finds the sport to be one of his favorite parts of the high school experi-

ence. "I would hope that it would be outside as I am a soccer player, however, I acknowledge there is a risk, but it is a risk I am willing to take," said Romeo.

The alternative has been the virtual sports season, which consists of coaches and players discussing trainings through a Google Meet session. These meetings dictate whether or not that athlete will make the team upon resumption of in-person sports.

Freshman Kaitlyn Whitman, who was looking forward to playing with the girl's soccer program, had to delay her on-field play, and instead, began her high school career online. She stated, "It was nice getting to talk to people and meet new people, but it was boring because I was just looking at a computer screen. I guess it's just that we didn't really do anything productive."

As BCPS looks to implement even more plans or possible start dates, student athletes all around cross their fingers and wait for their time to shine. Look for future updates as the situation evolves.



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