



PORTLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL

745 STORZ AVENUE • PORTLAND, MICHIGAN 48875 • (517) 647-2985

August 6, 2020

Dear Portland MS Parents/Guardians,

Well, August is here. The summer has flown by. I hope everyone has been able to enjoy your summer and time with family. This will be the first letter, of many, for this school year. I will do my best to clearly communicate our building plans and expectations but please feel free to email or call me if you have questions. In this letter I will go into a little more detail about some of our broader plans for Phase 4, in person instruction. As Mr. Heath stated in his letter, students also have the option to choose virtual instruction during Phase 4 if they wish to. Just a reminder that if our region moves to Phase 3, then all students will be educated through distance learning. If we move to Phase 3 at any point in time, please expect further details from me at that time.

As you read through this letter please know that each decision was made with our students best interest at heart. Our goal is to provide a quality education, in a safe environment, while following all of the [MI Safe Schools to Return Roadmap](#) required items.

Please read through the following information about specific items pertaining to the middle school ONLY:

Masks:

According to the [MI Safe Schools to Return Roadmap](#), all grade 6-12 students are REQUIRED to wear facial coverings in Phase 4. This means that all 6th, 7th and 8th grade students will be required to wear a face mask all day except during lunch time. If a student cannot medically tolerate a face mask, a doctor's note is required. All masks must be school appropriate. Any student that does not have a face mask on will be given the opportunity to call home to get a face mask, or will be given one by the MS office staff (with parent permission). If a student refuses to put on a mask they will be sent home. No students or visitors will be allowed to enter the school building without a mask. Also, any students riding a bus will be required to wear a face mask as well. Just a reminder that these stipulations were made a requirement by the state government during Phase 4.

Block Schedule:

This school year, Portland MS will implement a block schedule instead of a traditional schedule. A block schedule consists of fewer classes throughout the day but longer class periods. Here are some of the reasons why we decided on a block schedule for this school year -



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- Less movement throughout the day due to longer class periods, which means less student contact in the hallways.
- Less contact and exposure with other students throughout the day.
- More flexibility within the class period for the following items: differentiated instruction, outdoor instruction, handwashing/bathroom breaks, classroom cleaning time.

To view the daily schedule for MS students please click on the link below (times are subject to change slightly):

[Portland MS "A" & "B" Block Schedule](#)

Cohort Scheduling:

Another way to decrease student contact throughout the school day is cohort scheduling. So, what does cohort scheduling look like and what is it? A cohort is a group of students that will have the same, or similar, class schedule throughout the day. In each grade level, there will be 5-6 different cohorts. Cohorts were created based off of student class requests, class numbers, and master schedule needs.

This means that 25-30 students will be together throughout the day for the same daily schedule. The biggest pro to this decision is that instead of students being exposed to 100-150 other students throughout the day in classrooms, they will only be exposed to 30-50 other students (the # is higher if they have a different enrichment than other students in their cohort, all students will be assigned their enrichment based on their academic needs). The only con to this scenario is that students may not have all of the classes they requested or want. This is a common thing that happens though in a typical year.

Just a reminder that student schedules will be released mid-August. They are subject to change at any point in time. Requests will be honored as much as possible but are NOT required to be honored by the MS. Please do NOT ask to have a student's schedule changed unless there is an absolutely necessary change that must be made. Unfortunately during this crazy time we all have to make sacrifices we may dislike and this may be one of them. In order to make cohort scheduling work many staff and students will have to be flexible with their schedules. Any questions regarding schedules must be emailed to ldavis@portlandk12.org AND ajames@portlandk12.org.

Before/After School:

School doors will open at 7:20 a.m. every morning. Please do your best not to drop students off prior to 7:15 a.m. The first bell rings at 7:30 a.m., school begins at 7:35 a.m. Students will be expected to go



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to their locker and then directly to their 1st hour. If a student is getting breakfast, there will be grab and go breakfast available for students.

At the end of the day students that ride the bus will be released by the order that the busses arrive. The remaining students will be asked to exit the building out of specific doors. Students will be asked to exit the building right after the end of the day bell rings. The school day ends at 2:35 p.m. and all students must be cleared from the building in order to have time to clean and prepare the building for the next school day. Please make sure to plan transportation accordingly.

In order to mitigate student congregation, students will be asked to enter at different locations in the building. Please look at the maps linked in below to see where your student(s) should plan to enter and leave the building (Please don't judge my artwork skills, it looks like my 4 year old son drew it, videos to come) -

[Portland MS Student Entry into/Exit from Building](#)

Visitors & Office Area:

To the extent possible, all outside visitors will be asked to keep all school-related business to a bare minimum. All outside visitors must be scheduled in advance. Meetings will be conducted virtually (i.e. Google Meet or Zoom). If a meeting must take place in person, it will be scheduled and assigned a room. All visitors must wear a mask upon entering the building and will be directed to head to their meeting room immediately. The room will be completely sanitized after a meeting takes place.

The Middle School offices will be as contactless as possible for the time being. Front office staff will have plexiglass partitions to provide an additional layer of protection. Students will not be allowed to use the office phone, but office staff can place a call for students, if needed. Students will also be able to utilize their cell phone in the office if they need to place a phone call home (with office staff permission).

Late Arrival - If a student arrives late to school, they should enter the main office alone. The person dropping them off should call the main office and excuse the student. Please do not enter the office to sign them in.

Early Pick Up - If a student is being picked up from school early, the person may come to the outside and the office staff will send the student out through the main entrance. Parents/Guardians will not be able to wait inside the building for their student. It is encouraged that parents/guardians call the front office to send the student outside in order to avoid all contact.



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Lunch:

There are several changes with lunches at Portland MS this year. There will be more specific details to come but please read through the overall specifics below:

- Due to our block schedule there will only be 2 lunch times versus 3 lunch times.
 - Cafeteria tables will be placed in the cafeteria and the gym to support social distancing of students.
 - Students will sit at assigned tables.
 - Students will be seated at every other seat if possible to support social distancing.
 - Students are not required to wear a mask when sitting at their lunch table.
 - Students will have the opportunity to go outside for the last 10 minutes of lunch.
 - Please attempt to refrain from sending students with microwaveable food. Microwaves will be available but must be sanitized in between every use.
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Portland MS School Supply List:

[Portland MS School Supply List](#)

Please consider the following factors when purchasing supplies -

1. It is crucial that ALL students have the necessary supplies for school (and extra to have on hand). Staff typically have students share certain supplies within a classroom, this will not be allowed this fall due to it being impossible to clean every supply a student touches. So, it is very important that students have adequate supplies for their daily work in class. Please consider purchasing multiple items on the supply list as students tend to misplace items or go through them quickly.

2. Students will need to purchase calculators for each grade level, please see recommendations below (we will have graphing calculators available to rent but they will be on a first come, first serve basis. More information to come) -

6th Grade - Regular calculator

7th & 8th Grade - Students will need graphing calculators. They will utilize this type of calculator through college so it is worth the money spent. I would recommend posting on rummage sites or asking family friends if they have one that you can purchase for cheap first. If you cannot find one there, then be on the look out for several coupons in the next month.

3. If you are able to purchase extra supplies to donate, we would gladly take them. Our office staff will be creating supply bags for students that are unable to provide their own supplies. Supplies can be



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dropped off to the main office starting on August 10th. We will utilize any supplies on the supply lists.

Lockers/Backpacks:

Our common protocol is no backpacks in classrooms. In order to reduce student congregation in the hallways, we will be temporarily changing school policy to allow student backpacks in the classrooms. Students will only be allowed to visit their locker

before school, before/after lunch, and after school. They will not be allowed to access their locker in between classes.

Random Information:

- **Portland MS Kick Start (our open house) is cancelled.** Student registration packets will be mailed. More information will be sent out about getting students familiar with the building prior to school.
 - PE courses will take place outside unless there is inclement weather.
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Well, hopefully you're still reading at this point. I know this is a lot so please take the time to reread this letter after you have digested it once. I will be sending out more information over the next couple of weeks about specific areas. Please know that all plans are subject to change based on changes in legislation, additional Executive Orders from the Governor, and/or additional Health Department policies and recommendations.

As always, please let me know if you have any questions! My email is ldavis@portlandk12.org.

Sincerely,

Leanna Davis
Principal