



DIGITAL EDUCATION CENTER (DEC) MIDDLE SCHOOL INFORMATION SESSION

School Year 2021-2022



Good morning / afternoon / good evening. My name is Bob Cole and I am the Coordinator of Digital Education for HCPSS and I am joined by Dr. Caroline Walker, Executive Director of Program Innovative and Student Well-Being. Welcome to the Digital Education Center **middle school** information session webinar. **We are very excited to share this opportunity with you!**

The information shared in the this webinar is also available on the [DEC webpage](#) and through general and student [FAQs](#).

Before we begin, let's review the webinar tools used in this session.

DEC General Information Webinar

Digital Education Center – Parent Information Session

← Digital Education Center Overview



Transcript



Slide 1

Welcome to the Digital Education Center information session webinar. We are very excited to share this opportunity with you!
The information shared in this webinar is also available on the DEC webpage and through general and student FAQs.

If you were unable to attend the March 31st DEC General Information Session, the recording and transcript are available on the DEC webpage

<https://www.hcpss.org/schools/dec/parent-information-session/>

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A blue-tinted graphic showing a laptop screen with a calendar or schedule, a stack of papers, and a white icon of three people. The text "Session Breakdown" is overlaid in white.

Session Breakdown

- Section 1
 - DEC Overview
 - Timeline
 - Section 1 Q&A
- Section 2
 - Academics
 - Courses/Schedules
 - Section 2 Q&A
- Section 3
 - Priority enrollment process
- Final Q&A

During this session, we will provide information to help you decide if the DEC is a good option for your child. The webinar is broken down into three sections; which includes breaks for questions as well as a final Q&A at the end.

First we are going to talk about the overall design of the Digital Education Center.

Next, we will look at middle school implementation, including academics, courses, and schedules.

Last, families will learn how to complete the Priority Enrollment form that will be available in Synergy today at 4 p.m.

Future Decisions

- The HCPSS Board of Education will make decisions about the 2021-2022 academic school year later this spring
- Final budget decisions will be made at the end of May 2021 to determine program availability and course offerings
- If the budget does not allow for the DEC, students will remain enrolled at their designated home school for 2021-2022

While the DEC is currently in the planning and design phase, we acknowledge that there are still many decisions to make for next school year.

The decision for students to return to in-person, hybrid or virtual learning have not yet been finalized. This information will be shared by the Board as soon as it is available.

Final Board of Education budget approval will take place in May which will determine the final **DEC scope and course options**. If the DEC is not funded, students will remain enrolled in their designated home school.



The Digital Education Center (DEC) is...

- A year-long, **FULLY VIRTUAL** option
- Real-time, **SYNCHRONOUS** instruction
- **DIGITAL** assignments
- **SUPPORT SERVICES** from DEC and designated home school

The DEC program provides an alternate option for students entering grades K-12 who are **not ready or not able to return** to in-person learning, as well as those who have found success during virtual instruction and prefer a virtual instruction model.

The DEC is a **full-time** program and students would be enrolling for the **entire 2021-2022 school year**, with the option to participate in future school years.

DEC students will access real-time, synchronous instruction and complete digital assignments while receiving support services from both the DEC and the student's designated home school.

Comparing the DEC with Other HCPSS Models

Proposed DEC Program (2021-2022)	Current Hybrid Model (2020-2021)	Traditional School Program
Virtual <hr/> Synchronous virtual instruction and digital assignments; during or outside the school day	Hybrid <hr/> Concurrent teaching during the school day (in-person and virtual)	Face-to-Face <hr/> In-person instruction during the school day

How does the DEC compare with other HCPSS instructional models? The main difference is the delivery of instruction which will be a virtual model.

The proposed DEC has real-time, synchronous virtual instruction while the current hybrid model has concurrent teaching where teachers have both in-person **and** virtual students during the school day.

DEC Program and Student's Designated Home School

Digital Education Center	Designated Home School
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Receive virtual instruction with a DEC teacher; not the student's current school	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Participate in extracurriculars (schedule dependent)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Receive some special education and related services (as needed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Receive some special education and related services (as needed)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Classes have students from many HCPSS schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Access to meals

It is also important to understand that the DEC is an education center but will operate like a school. DEC students will receive their instruction from DEC teachers and receive support services from DEC staff. Students from many HCPSS schools will be enrolled together in the virtual program.

As an education center, students will still maintain a relationship with their designated home school through extracurricular activities, support services as needed, and access to meals.

Digital Education Center Timeline - Spring 2021



This week we are offering **level-specific information sessions** which will provide more details about the DEC option.

Once parents/guardians have reviewed all of the information and have determined that the DEC is the best plan for their child, they can submit a priority enrollment form through Synergy starting **today** at 4 p.m.

The May 5th priority deadline ensures that our staff have time to begin reviewing student course requests, support needs, and potential schedules. We will not meet with families until after the final DEC budget is determined on May 27th. We anticipate meetings with families throughout June and July.

Priority Enrollment Commitment Follow-Up

Before enrolling a student in the DEC, HCPSS staff will...

1. Review course requests with the family
2. Discuss and review student supports (if applicable)
3. Discuss scheduling needs
(Will courses be scheduled outside of the school day?)



Completing the priority enrollment form is the first step in committing to the DEC. Once we receive this commitment, we will NOT change your student's current home school assignment for the upcoming school year.

Instead, HCPSS staff will review course requests with our school counselors and present options to each family. We will discuss and review any student supports with case managers that are needed, including special education, 504, EL, and related services. We will also discuss if there are any unique scheduling needs for your child, including if they need to take classes outside of the school day.

Only after we have received a final "sign off" on the student's courses and schedules will we enroll them into the DEC.



Q&A - Section 1



Interest Survey Follow-Up

Based on the interest survey we are designing a program to serve students at all grade levels:

Elementary School	650
Middle School	500
High School	500

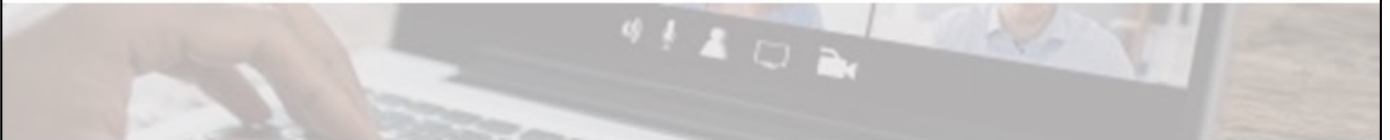
Final DEC enrollment is based on student commitment and BOE budget approval

In this section, we are going to talk more about the academic program and how to submit the priority enrollment form.

Last week, we collected and reviewed the DEC interest survey data and are designing a program based on those projections. The final DEC program enrollment will be based on the final commitment **and** the Board of Education budget approval on May 27th.

DEC Middle School Courses




- Core content classes that meet COMAR and high school graduation requirements
- Electives and extensions are based on the number of students requesting those courses
- Not all courses in the Middle School catalog will be available in the first year



Based on the projections, DEC middle school courses will focus on core content classes that meet COMAR and high school graduation requirements. Electives, acceleration, intervention will be based on the number of students who are requesting, or qualify, for those courses.

In the first year of the DEC, **not all middle school electives will be available**. Therefore, HCPSS staff and will review course requests with the family before moving forward with final enrollment.

MS Courses Dependent on Number of Course Requests

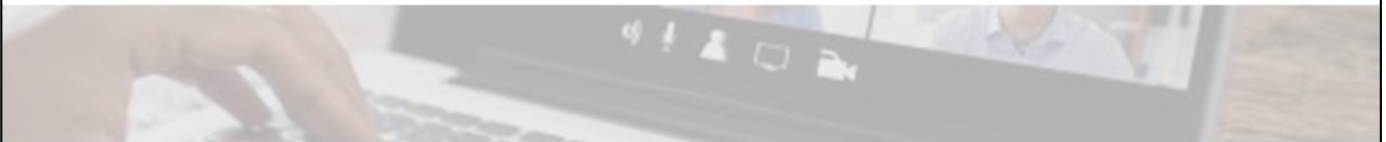
Academic Courses 	Related Arts 	Acceleration/ Intervention 
ELA Mathematics* Science Social Studies Spanish*	Art Careers/Technology* Fine Arts* Health Physical Education	GT Enrichment* ESOL Reading/Math Seminar

Core content classes in English Language Arts, math, science, social studies, and an option for Spanish will be available for middle school students. Required related arts and some supplemental related arts and extensions will be available based on the number of course requests for the students who enroll in the DEC.

Student supports and extensions include ESOL, reading and math seminars, special education support, and GT enrichment, when available.

Other Options for Courses Not Offered in the DEC

- HS-level fully online course with an MSDE approved vendor
- During the day, after school or evening concurrent instruction from an HCPSS school



For students interested in taking high school level courses not offered in the DEC, they may schedule high school level fully online courses through an MSDE approved vendor, or participate in synchronous instruction outside the school day or in evening.

DEC Schedule Considerations

- Most classes are scheduled during the school day
- Allow time for interventions and services
- After school or evening courses may not allow for some extracurricular activities
- Families can review the schedule before enrolling



The proposed DEC will operate 5 days a week, Monday through Friday, with middle school courses available between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.

For most middle school students, classes will be taken during the school day and time will be built in for interventions and services. There are options for students to take classes in the afternoon and evening as needed, but taking courses during these times may limit extracurricular activities.

HCPSS staff will review the student's schedule with their parent/guardian before they are enrolled.

Sample Schedule - Middle School (Grade 7)

Time	Fall Semester Courses	Spring Semester Courses
Period 1 (8:00-8:50)	Q1 Physical Education Q2 FACs	Q3 Physical Education Q4 Health
Period 2 (9:00-10:20)	Geography/World Cultures	Life Science
Period 3 (10:30-12:30) <small>Includes lunch break</small>	A Day: Grade 7 ELA (Year-Long)	
	B Day: Grade 7 Math (Year-Long)	
Period 4 (12:30-1:30)	Seminar C Reading/Math Seminar 7	
Period 5 (1:30-2:30)	Fine Arts (Visual Arts, Theater, or General Music)	
After School	Extracurricular Activities at Designated Home School	

This sample schedule of a typical 7th grade student again shows some core courses on a semester schedule and math and English Language Arts on a year-long schedule. This student would receive additional reading and math support in their DEC schedule and would finish their instructional day with enough time to participate in extracurricular activities at their designated home school.

Instructional Standards

*DEC students will be held to the same instructional standards
as ALL HCPSS students*



Use **Canvas** and other essential
and supplemental digital tools
(for each grade level)



Expectations for student engagement:

- Attend all synchronous instruction
- Complete asynchronous work on time
- Participate in whole/small group discussion
- Camera on when appropriate



Appropriate amount of
“online” and “offline”
work time

DEC students will be held to the same instructional standards as all HCPSS students. They will use Canvas, Google Meet, and approved digital tools appropriate for their grade level.

Students will also be expected to engage with their teachers and other students by attending synchronous classes, completing digital assignments, actively participating in activities, and providing visual cues by using their camera when appropriate.

We also understand parent concerns about screen time. We are working with staff to design instruction that will provide an appropriate balance of online and offline work.

DEC Community Building



Orientation Activities

Opportunities to meet DEC teachers and students



Student Recognition

Recognition for student achievements within and outside the virtual classroom



Field Trips

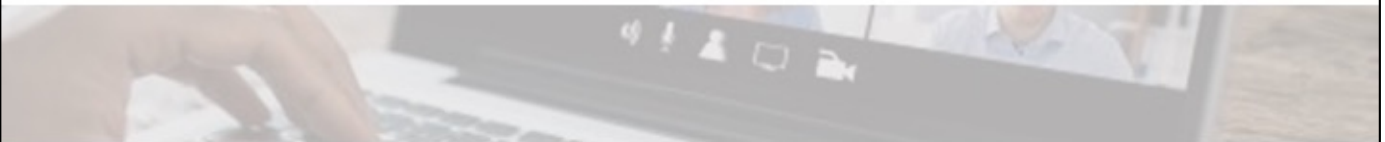
Participate in virtual and in-person experiences where possible

As a new program, it will be important to build community and engage students. Students and parents/guardians will be invited to attend orientation sessions prior to the start of the school year. After the school year begins, the DEC will hold activities that build relationships and promote community within the school.

Students will also be recognized for their academic achievements, character, and personal accomplishments. Additionally, students are still encouraged to participate in activities and events, like virtual and in-person field trips, from their designated home school.

DEC and Student Testing

- DEC students will be responsible for taking national, state and local assessments
- Some assessments can be taken virtually
- Others will be required to be taken at the student's designated home school



Similar to all HCPSS students, DEC students are responsible for taking all required assessments. While some local assessments can be taken virtually, others must be taken in-person at the student's designated home school.

DEC staff will coordinate testing dates and information with families and the student's home school in advance.



Q&A - Section 2



Is the DEC a Good Fit for My Child?

Reflect on the following statements for your child:



My child is having academic success with virtual learning and would like to continue their education this



The flexibility and independence of virtual learning best meets my child's social/emotional needs.



Healthcare concerns make virtual instruction the best option for my family.

We encourage our students and families to take a moment to reflect on the following statements to see if the Digital Education Center could be a great fit for your children.

Is your child experiencing success academically or does the flexibility and independence of virtual learning meet their needs? Do healthcare concerns make this the best option for your child?

Talk with your children about their experiences this year during virtual learning and use the information provided to help make the best decision possible, with the understanding that not all courses and programs will be available, and that it is a full year commitment.

Completing the Priority Commitment Form in Synergy

- Available at 4 p.m. on April 21 in Synergy
- May select a different option for each child
- Your response indicates a **commitment** for the 2021-2022 school year

1 Log in to [HCPSS Connect Synergy](#)

2 Select **More Options** from the left panel

3 Select **Digital Education Center Commitment** from the bottom of the menu

4 Complete the question and review/check the four acknowledgements for each child

The Priority Commitment form is a one-question survey with four acknowledgement statements. Answering this question indicates a **commitment for the 2021-2022 school year** for that child. You will need access to your Synergy account to complete the survey and there are four easy steps.

Completing the Priority Commitment Form in Synergy

Calendar

Attendance

Class Schedule

Course History

Fee

Report Card

School Information

Student Info

More Options (Family File, Report Cards,)

» Federal Impact Aid

» **Digital Education Center Commitment**

» JumpStart

Before answering the survey question, review the [details on the Digital Education Center](#), in addition to [answers to frequently asked questions](#). Next steps and more information also can be found online.

Families who answer yes below will be contacted by DEC staff in the coming weeks to review student courses prior to final enrollment for the 2021-2022 school year.

*Question: My student would like to enroll in the DEC for the 2021-2022 school year:

✓ [None Selected]

Yes

No

I understand and acknowledge by typing and saving my name in the signature textbox that it acts as my intent to sign and represents my signature.

Save

Again, to complete the Student Interest Form,

1. First, log in to [HCPSS Connect Synergy](#)
2. Second, select **More Options** from the left panel
3. Third, select **Digital Education Center Commitment** from the bottom of the menu, and
4. Fourth, complete the single question and the four acknowledgement checkboxes in the form for each child. If you have more than one child, **use the dropdown to view each child, choose your option** for that child, and then select Submit.

Please contact your school if you require assistance completing the form.

Completing the Priority Commitment Form in Synergy

In committing to the DEC, parents/guardians acknowledge that:

- This is a commitment that your child will attend the DEC for the 2021-2022 school year, and that students will need to go through the reassignment process if they choose to return to their home school for instruction.
- Not all course requests may be able to be honored in the DEC environment.
- There are attendance requirements that will apply in the DEC environment.
- The implementation of the DEC is pending funding from the HCPSS Board of Education. Should funding not be provided, students automatically will be returned to their assigned home school.

Here is the text for the required acknowledgement checkboxes in the commitment form. A SchoolMessenger communication with instructions will go out to all families this afternoon at 4 p.m.

What's Next?

NOW

Complete Priority Enrollment Form in Synergy by
May 5

UPCOMING

Families who complete the priority enrollment will
receive follow-up communication from HCPSS staff

- Review course requests and draft course schedule
- Review student support needs (if applicable)
- Parent "sign-off" on child's instructional plan



To summarize our current and next steps:

1. Complete the Priority Enrollment form which will open today at 4 p.m. through May 5th - **this is a commitment** that staff will use to develop a schedule for the 2021-2022 school year.
2. Families who commit to the DEC for their children will receive follow-up communication from HCPSS staff late May, June, and July.

Learn More...

- Info: www.hcpss.org/schools/dec
- FAQs: help.hcpss.org/dec
- Email: DEC@hcpss.org


Digital Education Center

[Jump to: Overview](#) | [Design and Planning](#) | [Enrollment](#) | [FAQs](#) | [Timeline](#) | [Comparison Chart](#) | [Requested Budget](#)

The Howard County Public School System is planning for a full-time virtual option for students entering grades K-12 who wish to learn virtually for the 2021-2022 school year. Once finalized, the Digital Education Center (DEC) program will give students the opportunity to take classes and earn credit virtually, while receiving support services from both the DEC and their districted home school. DEC students will continue to be "enrolled" in their districted home school and will be able to participate in athletics and activities at that school.

The DEC is intended to function as an additional, separate K-12 center, which will continue to operate even after fully in-person learning resumes at all other HCPSS schools.



DOWNLOAD ONE-PAGER 

 HCPSS / HELP

 SEARCH

Digital Education Center (2021-2022): General Information

[What is the Digital Education Center? →](#)

[How can I learn more about the Digital Education Center? →](#)

[Where can I find Digital Education Center information specific to students? →](#)

More details on the [Digital Education Center](http://www.hcpss.org/schools/dec) can be found on the website and [answers to frequently asked questions](http://help.hcpss.org/dec) will be continually updated as new information becomes available. Families and staff can also email questions to DEC@hcpss.org.



Final Q&A



As we were presenting, questions that have already been answered are visible in the Q&A window. Questions that we are not able to address at this time may be added to the FAQs on the HCPSS website as well as incorporated into the level-specific information sessions we'll be offering on April 20th through the 22nd.

We will now address some additional questions from the Q&A.

This will conclude today / tonight's webinar. Thank you for your time!