

REVISED: July 2020

See Page 9 for more information

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REDESIGNING

RESTART

**20
20**

A comprehensive
plan that moves
Virginia Learners
and Educators
FORWARD



**VIRGINIA
IS FOR
LEARNERS**



VIRGINIA EDUCATION LEADERSHIP



Ralph Northam
Governor of Virginia



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Secretary of Education



Dr. James F. Lane
Superintendent
of Public Instruction



Jenna Conway
Chief School
Readiness Officer

MISSION

The mission of the Virginia Department of Education is to advance equitable and innovative learning.

VISION

Virginia will maximize the potential of all learners.

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CORE SKILLS

The 5-C's are core skills that students and educators should possess:

- Critical Thinking
- Creative Thinking
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Citizenship



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CORE VALUES

Core Values are values that every employee of VDOE should embody:

- Inclusion
- Excellence
- Service
- Optimism



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VIRGINIA IS FOR *all* LEARNERS

FOREWORD

The Commonwealth, like the country, is now wrestling with how to effectively manage the public health risks of COVID-19 while simultaneously resuming the core functions of our society. It is abundantly clear that this public health crisis will ripple through our communities and impact schools and students for years to come. Amidst this, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), Board of Education, and Secretary of Education remain committed to the health and well-being of all school community members, and to supporting the academic progress of all students. It is especially important that we are mindful of the needs of vulnerable student groups including early learners, English learners, students experiencing homelessness, economically disadvantaged students, and students with disabilities. Through this document, we strive to offer guidance, technical support, best practices and alternate solutions as divisions prepare to continue providing instruction to all 1.3 million Virginia students under uncertain and evolving circumstances.

In addition to the previously convened *Continuity for Learning Task Force*, this spring VDOE formed a *Return to School Recovery Task Force* and an *Accreditation Task Force* with practitioners and local leaders to inform state policies on critical topics. Members of the Task Forces included superintendents, principals, teachers, instructional leaders, and content knowledge experts, who came together in recent weeks to identify key considerations, craft comprehensive guidance, and make recommendations to state policy makers. At the core of their considerations was the pressing question about how to equitably serve every student to ensure their safety and their success. The inequities in our education system have been exacerbated by the circumstances, but the extraordinary leadership in our divisions are capable of rising to the challenge if properly resourced and supported. It is critical that we center equity at the core of our planning and take care to ensure that our marginalized student groups remain a priority.

Additionally, Secretary Qarni created *Virginia's COVID-19 Education Response and Recovery Work Group* to develop recommendations to align policies throughout the Commonwealth's PreK-20 education system and ensure continuity of learning in the long term. In recent weeks the Work Group conducted listening sessions with more than 800 stakeholders on a variety of topics. The work of the VDOE Task Forces and the Secretary's Work Group significantly informed the content of this document and numerous state policy decisions during this crisis. Their work is woven throughout this document, and we are grateful to everyone who has shared their time and expertise as part of this incredible collaboration.

Governor Northam has recently announced the beginning of a phased physical reopening of Virginia's PreK - 12 schools, while simultaneously calling on every school to provide a high quality educational experience for every student in the coming school year regardless of the physical or technological setting. This creates significant operational and instructional challenges for schools, as they face the potential of another year of physically disrupted learning. While the phased reopening sets guardrails for all, divisions will have discretion and some flexibility as they implement these policies and procedures in each of their school buildings. In order to support local leaders through that process, this document outlines both the parameters of the phased reopening approach, and offers guiding questions, examples and best practices for consideration during implementation.

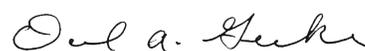
We know this continues to be an immensely difficult time for families, schools, and communities across the Commonwealth and throughout the country. We now collectively face the significant challenge of preparing for the 2020-2021 school year in the face of a persistent public health threat. We are immensely grateful for Virginia's educational leaders, and the tremendous dedication and commitment they have demonstrated in the face of great challenges. Together, despite these circumstances, we can continue to maximize the potential of all of Virginia's learners.



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CONTRIBUTIONS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This volume represents the work of hundreds of people who have contributed their expertise, time, and talents to help all learners and educators in Virginia return to school successfully. This group of contributors included a wide variety of classroom teachers, instructional specialists, parents, school counselors, special education experts, superintendents, independent school representatives and operations and facilities leaders from every corner of the Commonwealth. The complete, diverse list of contributors is included below. It also reflects the insight and discussion conducted by the Secretary's Work Group with more than 800 stakeholders during topical listening sessions. They represent large and small divisions, urban, rural and suburban, and brought an incredible breadth and depth of expertise to the conversations. It is not possible to sufficiently express the appreciation that the Virginia Department of Education's leadership team and state officials have for the contributions of these committed, caring professionals. The list below acknowledges key leaders, but it is important to note that a complete listing of individuals who participated in the various task forces, committees, and advisory groups is provided in the links to the documents these groups generated.

A debt of gratitude is owed to everyone who has been a part of this enormous effort to compile useful information and guidance for schools to recover, redesign and restart to move Virginia learners and educators forward. Whereas we have listed the chairs of the committees below, please note that the document is reflective of the input of a wide variety of classroom teachers, instructional specialists, parents, school counselors, special education experts, superintendents, independent school representatives and operations and facilities leaders. Their perspectives and insights were incredibly helpful in the development of this document.

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WHAT'S IN THIS REVISION?

- Updated Phase Guidance on Pages 16-21, to reflect Phase III updates from VDH and VDOE.
- Updated Phase III content in charts in the School Reopening section (starts on page 23).
- A few names and titles were corrected in the acknowledgments and appendices.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	3
CONTRIBUTIONS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	4
VDOE QUICK LINKS	12
OTHER USEFUL LINKS	12
CENTERING EQUITY	13
Return to School Equity Planning	13
Key Steps to Ensuring Equity during COVID-19	13
Ten Return to School Equity Strategies	14
PHASED REOPENING OF VIRGINIA'S SCHOOLS	15
Return to School Timeline Advisory Panel Considerations	15
Virginia's Phased Reopening of Virginia Schools	16
Virginia's Phased Reopening School Plan	16
Guiding Principles to Keep in Mind	16
Summary of Phases	17
Phase I	17
Phase II	18
Phase III	19
Beyond Phase III	20
LOCAL DIVISION PLANS	22
Health Plans Required of All Public and Private Schools	22
Notification of Public Division's Intent to Vary from Phased Guidance	22
2020-2021 Instructional Plans Required of All Public Schools	22
Additional Guidance and Resources to Print and Display for All Phases	22
SCHOOL OPERATIONS	23
Introduction	23
General Resources/Links Recommended by the Operations Subcommittee	23
Health and Safety Procedures	23
Mitigation Strategies, Health Screenings, and Sick Policies	23
Policies to accommodate Students and Staff who are Safer at Home	24
Health Services	24
School Nurses/Clinic Staff	26
Facilities, Schedules and Transportation Accommodations	28
Physical Distancing	28
Sample Alternative Schedules	30
Cleaning	32
Transportation	34
Technology	35
School Nutrition	36
Before and After School	37
Athletics and Extracurricular Activities	38
Finance and Budget	40
Essential Questions for Budget and Finance	40
Resources for Budget and Finance	41
Communications	41
Essential Questions for Communications	42
Resources for Communications	42
Human Resources	43
Essential Questions for Human Resources	43
Resources for Human Resources	44
STUDENT AND STAFF SUPPORTS	44
Remote Learning and Telework Policies	44
Social Emotional Well-being of Students and Families	44
Essential Questions	45
Resources	45
Identifying Abuse and Neglect	45
Mental Health Supports for School Staff	46
Essential Questions	46
Resources	46
Supports for Students	47
Social and Emotional Learning	47
Key Factors	47
Essential Questions	48
Resources	48

Curriculum Development	49
Students with Disabilities	49
Resources	50
Vulnerable Learners	51
Key Considerations for School Divisions	51
Key Considerations for Teachers	51
Mental Health and Psychological Supports	52
Essential Questions for Planning	52
Key Factors	52
Resources	53
School Discipline	54
Resources	55
INSTRUCTION	56
2020-2021 Mandate for New Instruction	56
Resuming Teaching and Learning	56
Division-Level Considerations	57
Local Attendance Policy Considerations	59
Planning and Preparing for Instruction and Assessment	60
Teaching, Monitoring, and Reflecting	65
Remote and Hybrid Instruction Recommendations	67
Teaching and Learning with Physical Distancing Measures	69
Common Models for Blended Learning	70
Communication	72
Equitable Supports for Students	74
Virtual Virginia Outreach Program	78
Digital Learning	79
Setting Up a Digital Learning Program	79
Computing Devices and Internet	80
Cyber Security	80
PARENT & FAMILY RESOURCES	82
VDOE COVID-19 Parent Handbook	82
Resources	82
WAIVERS AND POLICY CHANGES	83
Graduation Requirements	83
Instructional Personnel Licensure	83
Public Meetings during Declared State of Emergency	84
STATE ACCREDITATION	84
Accreditation for the 2020-2021 Academic Year	84
Recommendations of Virginia’s Accreditation Task Force Regarding School Accreditation in the 2021-2022 Academic Year	84
Impact of School Closures on 2021-2022 Accreditation Ratings	84
Work of the Accreditation Task Force	85
Recommendations for 2021-2022 Accreditation Ratings	85
Next Steps and Future Considerations	86
APPENDIX	87
FOREWORD	87
VDOE QUICK LINKS	87
OTHER USEFUL LINKS	87
CENTERING EQUITY	87
PHASED REOPENING OF VIRGINIA’S SCHOOLS	87
INSTRUCTION	88
Remote Learning Support for Fine Arts Educators	88
Helpful Resources	88
Remote Learning Considerations for Fine Arts	88
Remote Learning Support for World Language Educators	89
Remote Learning Support for Career and Technical Educators	92
Remote Learning Considerations for CTE	92
Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources	93
Architecture & Construction	93
Arts, A/V Technology & Communications	93
Business Management & Administration	93
Education & Training	93
Energy	93
Finance	93
Government & Public Administration	94
Health Science	94
Hospitality and Tourism	94
Human Services	94

Information Technology	94
Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security	94
Manufacturing	94
Marketing	95
Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics	95
Transportation, Distribution & Logistics	95
Remote Learning Support for Health and Physical Education	95
Remote-Learning Considerations for Healthful Living	96
RETURN TO SCHOOL RECOVERY TASK FORCE REPORT	98
Executive Summary	98
Background:	98
R2S Task Force Leadership:	98
Return to School Equity Planning	99
Operations & System Recovery	100
Social Emotional Well Being	101
Student Wellbeing	101
School Staff	102
Families and Communities	102
Academics	103
Staff Support, Retention & Recruitment	104
Guiding Questions:	104
Recommended Strategies:	104
Return to School Task Force Membership	106
VDOE RETURN TO SCHOOL TIMELINE ADVISORY PANEL	109
Final Panel Report and Key Operational Considerations	109
Background	109
Key Topics Considered	109
Timeline I: Traditional Summer Programs Reopen Date (Summer School)	111
Key Points	111
Summary	111
Timeline I.1: Traditional Summer Programs Reopen Date (Summer School)	112
Timeline I.2: Traditional Summer Programs Reopen Date (Summer School)	113
Timeline II: Fall On-Time Reopen Date or Early Calendar Start	114
Key Points	114
Summary	114
Timeline II.1: Fall On-Time Reopen Date or Early Calendar Start	115
Timeline II.2: Fall On-Time Reopen Date or Early Calendar Start	116
Timeline II.3: Fall On-Time Reopen Date or Early Calendar Start	117
Timeline III: Fall Late Reopen Date/Extended Out of School Learning	118
Key Points	118
Summary	118
Timeline III: Fall Late Reopen Date/Extended Out of School Learning	120
Schools remain closed until a pre-determined or undetermined date.	120
Key Questions for Virginia Department of Health (VDH) & Centers for Disease Control (CDC)	121
REPORT OF THE VIRGINIA ACCREDITATION TASK FORCE	122
Introduction and Background	122
Virginia's Accreditation Task Force	122
Charge of the Task Force	122
Membership of the Task Force	122
Impact of School Closures on 2021-2022 Accreditation Ratings	122
Work of the Accreditation Task Force	122
Recommendations for 2021-2022 Accreditation Ratings	123
Schools Open and Remain Open for the Full Academic Year	124
Schools Are Not Open for the Full Academic Year	124
Recommendations to the Recovering Schools Task Force Regarding the Identification of Learning Gaps	125
Next Steps and Future Considerations	125
Membership of the Accreditation Task Force	126
RETURN TO SCHOOL EQUITY AUDIT	127
Planning Equity Audit	127
Plan Development	127
Cultural Competence	127
Meeting Student Needs	128
Student & Family Engagement	128
Communications & Community Engagement	129
Instruction	129
Resource allocation	130
Notes & Next Steps	130

CENTERING EQUITY

RETURN TO SCHOOL EQUITY PLANNING

As we begin planning for return to school, our commitment to ensuring that Virginia’s public education system is one that provides equitable educational opportunities to all students is unwavering. Meeting the needs of all Virginia learners, especially those disproportionately impacted by school closures or learning loss, is especially important during this time. As we transition our guidance at the VDOE from a focus on continuity of learning amid current extended school closures, to return to school recovery planning, equity must remain at the center of our work. Our goal is to provide guidance and support to local schools and division leaders to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on our students to the greatest extent possible. The considerations, key steps and strategies below were informed by the work of the Return to School Recovery Task Force and its Equity Planning Subcommittee.

The extended period of school closures in Virginia have exacerbated previously existing differences in student experiences, levels of support and access to resources. NWEA, a nonprofit organization that develops and offers student assessments, [estimates](#) that students may return to school in the fall (in-person, or virtually) with roughly 70% of the learning gains in reading relative to a typical school year. In mathematics, students are likely to show much smaller learning gains, returning with less than 50% of the learning gains and in some grades, nearly a full year behind what we would observe in normal conditions ([The COVID-19 slide: What summer learning loss can tell us](#), NWEA).

KEY STEPS TO ENSURING EQUITY DURING COVID-19

- Meet Student Needs First
 - Prioritize the physical and social-emotional needs of particularly vulnerable students. Ensure safety, belonging and mental health as a foundation for learning.
- Ensure Equitable Access and Adequate Supports
 - Achieving equity in distance learning is more complex than simply providing equality in access to learning resources and technology. Insufficient support for families and students may widen disparities instead of narrowing them.
- Centralize Communication to ALL Families
 - Be mindful of the needs of vulnerable student groups including early learners, English learners, students experiencing homelessness, economically disadvantaged students, and students with disabilities.
- Develop and Implement a Return to Learning Equity Audit
 - The impact of sustained learning loss during this period of school closures combined with disparities in implementation of continuity of learning models has the potential to exacerbate previously existing gaps in student achievements. Begin identifying students experiencing learning gaps now and developing strategies to mitigate the longer-term impact of school closures on these students.

VDOE QUICK LINKS

[COVID-19 Homepage](#)
[Frequently Asked Questions related to COVID-19](#)
[Virginia Learns Anywhere - Continuity of Learning Report and Recommendations](#)
[Guidance on Graduation Requirements, Awarding of Credits, and Continuity of Learning](#)
[Special Education and Student Services Frequently Asked Questions](#)
[COVID-19 Parent Guide](#)
[Social Emotional Quick Guides – for Parents and Caregivers, Military Connected Learners, and Early Learners](#)
[Joint Guidance on Emergency Child Care during School Closures](#)
[State Regulatory and Statutory Waivers and Relief Measures in Effect](#)
[Information on the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act](#)
[VDOE Staff Contacts by Division](#)
[VDOE Staff Contacts - Alphabetical](#)

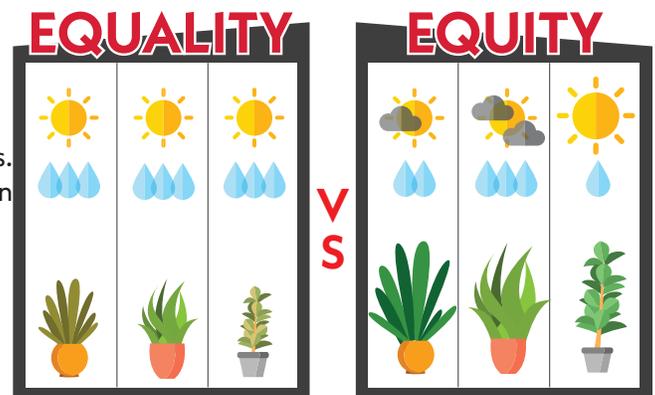
OTHER USEFUL LINKS

[Virginia Department of Health \(VDH\) COVID-19 Web Page for Schools, Workplaces & Community Locations](#)
[VDH Interim Guidance on Screening, Monitoring and Testing Employees Returning to Work: Non-Essential Workforce](#)
[Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) Opening Schools Decision Tree](#)
[CDC Guidance for Schools](#)
[CDC Printable Signs and Resources](#)

TEN RETURN TO SCHOOL EQUITY STRATEGIES



- 1. CENTER EQUITY** - Evaluate whether your plan will improve or worsen disparities between student groups and establish measurable equity goals that are informed by your diagnostic data. Consider conducting a Return to School Planning Equity Audit.
- 2. REFLECT** - Establish processes and accountability levers to facilitate equitable implementation of your plan and mitigate unintended disparate impacts and consequences. Monitor the impact of your plan on underserved groups, including students of color, multilingual students (ELs), students experiencing poverty and homelessness.
- 3. STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS** - Ensure family engagement, student support, instructional approaches, assignments, and learning opportunities are culturally relevant and culturally responsive. Consider implementing protocols to ensure that strategies and initiatives have been evaluated through a cultural and economic competency lens.
- 4. OUTREACH** - Devote adequate resources to outreach, communication, and family engagement, in multiple languages and through multiple channels to ensure that the most vulnerable families have access to information and understand expectations of students. Identify community partners and stakeholders and empower them with information in support of your communication efforts.
- 5. PRIORITIZE** - Prioritize access to learning loss recovery programs/interventions for students who are disproportionately impacted by learning loss during school closures. Before mandating participation and attendance in these programs, evaluate unintended consequences and disparate impact. (i.e. students in low-income families, students whose families have been impacted by unemployment, those whose parents are essential workers, students with disabilities who have struggled to get services remotely, students whose families have been disconnected from school during the school closure, and English learners).
- 6. MITIGATE** - Identify and mitigate barriers to student participation for reasons outside of the student's control (i.e., caring for younger children, housing instability, health concerns, transportation, adult support).
- 7. REFRAME** - Examine discipline/student code of conduct policies to mitigate against bias and embed safeguards to evaluate student trauma manifesting through behaviors. This is especially important for marginalized student groups disproportionately impacted by exclusionary discipline policies.
- 8. SUPPORT STAFF** - Provide professional development and instructional resources to school leaders and teachers related to "student engagement" and "cultural responsiveness" to support their delivery of remote and virtual distance learning instruction. Particular emphasis should be placed on facilitating understanding of the impacts of social determinants of health, poverty, unemployment, and cultural values on student learning post COVID-19 closures.
- 9. CLOSE THE DISTANCE** - Access to devices and the Internet alone are not sufficient to ensure delivery of high-quality distance learning that is available and engaging to all students. Prepare multiple delivery modes for remote learning, avoid an over reliance on technology to facilitate student engagement in learning, and ensure adequate support for families to be partners in student learning.
- 10. DOUBLE DOWN** - Now is the time to double down on equity investments. Examine the use of federal stimulus (CARES Act) funding to address equity gaps (small class size, technology, access to early learning). Prioritize funding to meet the needs of English Learners, students with disabilities, undocumented students, and students living in poverty.



PHASED REOPENING OF VIRGINIA'S SCHOOLS

The decision to reopen schools is a challenging topic for education leaders and public health officials around the world. The academic and social and emotional needs of children, the public health risks and the capacity of schools must be carefully evaluated in a localized fashion. The unique dynamics of COVID-19 also require careful consideration in school settings and dramatically impact the use of facilities, academic instruction, and social and extracurricular activities. Virginia's approach to reopening school buildings is based on the public health data available, and subject to revisions as public health conditions change. As detailed below, the Governor has outlined a phased guidance approach that slowly reopens buildings for in-person instruction and gradually eases physical distancing and capacity requirements as public health conditions improve. In order to minimize the inequitable impact closures have had on students, this approach prioritizes the needs of students who have been most impacted by school building closures, and for whom in-person instruction is most beneficial. It simultaneously recognizes the disruption closures have had on all students and seeks to bring them back to the classroom as soon as is safe and practicable.

The decisions about Virginia's school reopenings have been informed by a variety of public health experts and school leaders tasked with the practical challenges of reopening in these difficult circumstances. In particular, the VDOE Return to School Recovery Task Force provided comprehensive considerations.

RETURN TO SCHOOL TIMELINE ADVISORY PANEL CONSIDERATIONS

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) formed an advisory panel within the framework of the Return to School Recovery Task Force to focus on the key considerations necessary for the development of a timeline to reopen Virginia's public schools. This expert panel consisted of current and past school division superintendents from across Virginia. Over the course of a multi-day convening the *Return to School Timeline Advisory Panel* compiled information regarding essential actions to ensure operations support a safe and organized transition back to classroom instruction beginning with summer school programming being offered across the Commonwealth. These recommendations were provided to the Superintendent of Public Instruction and shared with the Secretary of Education's COVID-19 Education Work Group.

The Advisory Panel evaluated three school opening scenarios related to summer school and the fall calendar. These scenarios included:

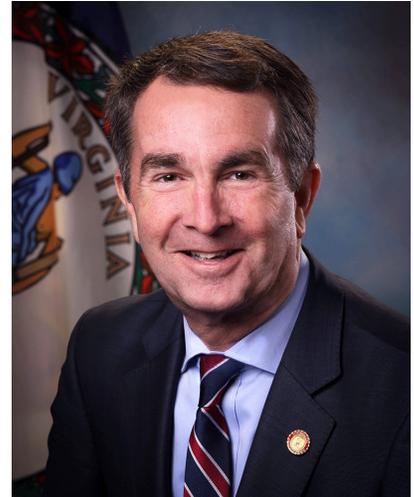
- I. Traditional Summer Programs Reopen Date (Summer School) with options with or without in-person instruction;
- II. Fall On-Time Reopen Date or Early Calendar Start, again with options for traditional in-person instruction or limited in-person instruction with strict physical distancing protocols; and
- III. Fall Late Reopen Date/Extended Out-of-School Learning.

For each of the three scenarios, the Advisory Panel identified key questions that public health and school officials would need to collaborate on and determine answers to. In addition, the Panel identified key topics around which further guidance would need to be developed in each scenario. These topics included student supports, staff support, family engagement and communication, technology needs, school budget and finances, public health guidance, school operations, and student transportation. The key considerations and questions for policymakers helped inform state leaders in their reopening approach and in determining the types of guidance necessary throughout this document to support divisions in navigating these scenarios.

The full report of the Advisory Panel can be found online.

VIRGINIA'S PHASED REOPENING OF VIRGINIA SCHOOLS

On June 9, 2020 Governor Northam released [Phase Guidance for Virginia Schools](#), which recommends gradually opening up in-person instructional opportunities for students as public health conditions permit. This Phase Guidance was updated on July 1, 2020. The guidance for the first three phases of the plan are detailed below. While in-person instruction may vary by division and throughout the summer and next year, all divisions must resume new instruction with all students for the 2020-2021 school year. Regardless of the delivery format, all students are expected to cover the content over the course of the year.



This phased approach closely aligns with those outlined in the [Forward Virginia Blueprint](#) which allow businesses to gradually open up activities. Specific gating criteria, as defined by public health officials, must be met prior to entering into each new school reopening phase. If conditions worsen and the public health data indicates increased risk, school operations may need to revert back to recommendations in earlier phases. At all times, schools should be prepared for intermittent dismissals or closures depending on local public health circumstances. Finally, the guidance and recommendations of each phase are subject to revision and updates as public health conditions evolve in the Commonwealth.

VIRGINIA'S PHASED REOPENING SCHOOL PLAN

The following guidance is intended to mitigate risk of COVID-19 transmission in public and private prek-12 school settings, while supporting the resumption of peer-to-peer learning and providing crucial support for parents and guardians returning to work. Schools, working together with local health departments, have an important role in slowing the spread of diseases and protecting vulnerable students and staff, to help ensure students have safe and healthy learning environments.

These recommendations should be implemented in accordance with the [Forward Virginia Blueprint](#), any existing Executive Orders, [CDC Interim Guidance for Schools and Daycamps](#), [CDC Considerations for Schools](#), and in partnership with local and state public health officials. The school reopening phases are aligned with the existing Forward Virginia phases, through which the state will progress by monitoring public health data and key measures on disease transmission, healthcare capacity, testing capacity, public health capacity to trace contacts of cases, and other relevant factors. Community mitigation strategies (e.g. physical distancing, enhanced cleaning, etc.) will be necessary across all phases to decrease the spread of COVID-19.

This guidance document, which is aligned with the interim CDC guidance for schools, serves as a recommendation for Virginia schools to mitigate risks associated with COVID-19. Divisions should make decisions on implementing such guidance, and assuming additional risk, in consultation with local health departments and school board attorneys. Public health conditions and practical limitations may inform decisions to deviate from the guidance. Resources, such as the [CDC Guidance for Schools](#) may also be helpful to communities with no or minimal community transmission of COVID-19.

This document reflects current guidance and recommendations, and recommendations are intended to reduce, not eliminate, risk of transmission of COVID-19. Because COVID-19 is a novel disease, this literature is growing rapidly, and new information is emerging almost every day. This information is subject to change as more is learned about the prevention and control of COVID-19.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES TO KEEP IN MIND

Per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the more people a student or staff member interacts with and the longer the interaction, the higher risk of potential COVID-19 spread. As such, different activities come with different levels of risk:

- lowest risk: Students and teachers engage in virtual-only classes, activities, and events.
- more risk: Small, in-person classes, activities, and events. Groups of students stay together and with the same teacher throughout/across school days and groups do not mix. Students remain at least six feet apart and do not share objects (e.g., hybrid virtual and in-person class structures, or staggered/rotated scheduling to accommodate smaller class sizes).
- highest risk: Full sized, in-person classes, activities, and events. Students are not spaced apart, share classroom materials or supplies, and mix between classes and activities.

Therefore, schools should consider mitigation strategies detailed in CDC guidance to promote behaviors that reduce spread, maintain healthy environments and operations, as well as prepare for when someone gets sick.

COVID-19 spreads when people are in relatively close proximity, through respiratory droplets generated through coughing, sneezing, or talking to an infected person. The most important preventive measures include masks/face coverings, physical distancing, monitoring for symptoms, handwashing, and cleaning frequently touched surfaces are most effective when used consistently and in combination.

SUMMARY OF PHASES

PHASE I

PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

- Remote learning is still the dominant method of instruction.
- School divisions may elect to provide in-person instruction for students with disabilities in both extended school year services and school year special education services, including private placements, with physical distancing. Students will only attend such programs if the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team agrees it is appropriate and the parent consents. Virtual instruction may remain appropriate for certain students who may be challenged with adherence to the strict physical distancing and safety guidelines as determined by the IEP team and the parents' consent.
- With the approval of the local division superintendent, or private school leader, accommodations may be offered for students to access the school building for critical instructional needs, such as accessing a secure assessment, if all health, safety and physical distancing measures are adhered to.
- Child care for working families may operate in schools but are subject to existing operational requirements for childcare programs and should be focused on providing programming/care to children of working families and limited to children in the local geographic area.
- Divisions should notify VDOE of their intent to provide in-person instruction or programming that varies from the phase guidance. This notification is only required when exceeding the recommended programmatic offerings, or deviating from the recommended health mitigation strategies in any phase.
- No athletics or extracurricular activities may be offered.
- Schools may provide student services such as school meal programs.

HEALTH, SAFETY AND PHYSICAL DISTANCING RECOMMENDATIONS

- Schools should follow operational guidance from the CDC, including enhanced physical distancing measures, physical distancing, and cleaning, disinfecting and other mitigation strategies.
- Physical distance should be created between children on school buses (e.g. seat children one per seat, every other row) limiting capacity as needed to optimize distance between passengers. In Phase I, limit bus capacity to 10 persons to the extent possible.
- The number of persons in a classroom should not exceed 10, and physical distancing of at least six feet should be maintained to the greatest extent possible.
- Other physical distancing precautions should include, but are not limited to:
 - Restrict mixing classes/groups of students.
 - Close communal spaces.

- No large gatherings, assemblies, etc., per the Governor’s Executive Order.
- No athletics or extracurricular activities.

PHASE II

PROGRAMMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- Extended school year and special education services that are allowed in Phase I may continue to operate.
- Emergency child care for working families which are allowed in Phase I may continue to operate.
- Summer camp in school settings may be offered to children of all ages. Programs should ideally be limited to children in the local geographic area.
- Schools may offer limited in-person instruction to preschool through third grade and English Learner students given the unique challenges of providing remote academic and physical emotional support to young learners and English language learners.
- Divisions should notify VDOE of their intent to provide in-person instruction or programming that varies from the phase guidance. This notification is only required when exceeding the recommended programmatic offerings, or deviating from the recommended health mitigation strategies in any phase.
- Schools may continue to ensure provision of student services such as school meal programs.
- Extracurricular activities (such as clubs) may be offered if physical distancing mitigation strategies can be implemented.
- Athletics should be limited to individual or team-based practice, skill-building drills or conditioning activities that allow maintenance of physical distancing at all times.
- It is not recommended that youth recreational/school sports competition take place in Phase II, unless physical distancing can be maintained at all times (e.g. individual swimmers showing up at scheduled times to have their event timed, etc). Competition that involves contact with other athletes should be avoided.
- If physically distanced competitions are taking place, the following conditions should also be met:
 - Outdoor recreational sports are allowable if 10 feet of physical distance can be maintained by all participants and spectators at all times and all shared items can be disinfected between uses. The total number of attendees (including both participants and spectators) cannot exceed the lesser of 50% of the occupancy load of the venue (if an occupancy load exists) or 50 persons.
 - Indoor recreational sports (including practices and classes) may occur if 10 feet of physical distance can be maintained by all participants at all items and all shared items can be disinfected between uses. The total number of attendees (including participants, referees, coaches, etc.) cannot exceed the lesser of 30% of the occupancy load of the room in which the sport is being held or 50 persons. Spectators may not be present except parents or guardians who are supervising children. Spectators must wear face coverings consistent with any active Executive Orders and due to behaviors which may bring greater risk (e.g. cheering), it is recommended that spectators be separated by 10 feet of distance from other persons.

Health, Safety and Physical Distancing Recommendations

- Schools should follow operational guidance from the CDC, including enhanced physical distancing measures, physical distancing, and cleaning, disinfecting and other mitigation strategies.
- [CDC](#) advises that individuals maintain six feet of distance to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. The [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) advises that schools maintain a distance of at least one meter (approx. three feet) between everyone present at school, and is monitoring ongoing research. Additionally, the [American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\)](#) says spacing as close as three feet may have similar benefits if students wear cloth face coverings and do not have symptoms of illness. Physical distancing is not limited to distance between children; physical distancing between adults is a key mitigation measure. It will be important to continue to monitor the community context of COVID-19 prevalence into the fall and winter. In areas where the community transmission of COVID-19 is more substantial, distancing of at least six feet will need to be strongly considered; this guidance may be subject to change as we learn more.
- Therefore, in school settings, schools are encouraged to aim for six feet of physical distance to the greatest extent possible however, if six feet of distance is not feasible (inclusive of buildings and school buses), schools should implement a combination of face coverings and a minimum of three feet distance between everyone present.

- Physical distance should be created between children on school buses when possible (e.g. seat children one per seat, every other row and/or staggered, aisles and windows) limiting capacity as needed to optimize distance between passengers. If three to six feet of distance can not be maintained, wearing of face coverings is strongly encouraged and may help reduce disease transmission. Children (such as siblings) living together may sit together on the bus, and assign seating where possible. If possible given the age of students, weather conditions, etc., consider opening windows to improve ventilation.
- In addition to physical distancing described above, other physical distancing precautions should include, but are not limited to:
 - Restrict mixing classes/groups of students.
 - Close communal spaces.
 - Limited athletics and extracurricular activities.
 - Limit outdoor activities/recess to 50 people, with a priority on physical distancing and restricting mixing of classrooms.
 - No gatherings (assemblies, graduations, etc) of more than 50 people (indoor or outdoor). Indoor gatherings should be held only as necessary, and be limited in duration.

**Please note that for public health disease investigations, VDH will continue to use the standard definition of close contact, i.e. being within six feet of a person with COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more. Per CDC guidance, the use of face coverings are not a factor in the assessment of close contact.*

PHASE III

PROGRAMMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- In-person instruction may be offered for all students, however physical distancing measures should be implemented.
- Remote learning exceptions and teleworking should be options for students and staff who are at a higher risk of severe illness ([as defined by the CDC](#)).
- Mitigation strategies may impact operations and capacity limits. A multi-faceted instructional approach may need to be planned for Phase III.

HEALTH, SAFETY AND PHYSICAL DISTANCING RECOMMENDATIONS

- Divisions should notify VDOE of their intent to deviate from the recommended health mitigation strategies in this phase through the Phase III health plan submission form.
- Physical distancing and other measures will remain important prevention strategies. Additional operational requirements will include measures such as gathering limits (consistent with any existing Executive Order) and other mitigation strategies. Schools should follow all guidance from the CDC to the greatest extent possible.
- [CDC](#) advises that individuals maintain six feet of distance to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. The [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) advises that schools maintain a distance of at least one metre (approx. three feet) between everyone present at school, and is monitoring ongoing research. Additionally, the [American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\)](#) says spacing as close as three feet may have similar benefits if students wear cloth face coverings and do not have symptoms of illness. Physical distancing is not limited to distance between children; physical distancing between adults is a key mitigation measure. In areas where the community transmission of COVID-19 is more substantial, distancing of at least six feet will need to be strongly considered; this guidance may be subject to change as we learn more.
- Therefore, in school settings, schools are encouraged to aim for six feet of physical distance to the greatest extent possible; however, if six feet of distance is not feasible (inclusive of buildings and school buses), schools should implement a combination of face coverings and a minimum of three feet distance between everyone present.
- Physical distance should be created between children on school buses when possible (e.g. seat children one per seat, every other row, and/or staggered, aisles and windows) limiting capacity as needed to optimize distance between passengers. If three to six feet of distance can not be maintained, wearing of face coverings is strongly encouraged and may help reduce disease transmission. Children (such as siblings) living together

may sit together on the bus, and assign seating where possible. If possible given the age of students, weather conditions, etc. consider opening windows to improve ventilation.

- In addition to physical distancing, other distancing precautions should include, but are not limited to:
 - Consider restricting mixing classes/groups of students.
 - Consider closing or staggering the use of communal spaces.
 - Consider limiting the size of groups participating in outdoor activities/recess, with a priority on physical distancing and limiting mixing of classrooms.
 - Large school gatherings are not encouraged and limited to 250 people, per the large group gathering limitation in Phase III of Forward Virginia.
- For school athletics, indoor and outdoor recreational sports may occur if ten feet of physical distancing can be maintained by all instructors, participants, and spectators, with the exception of incidental contact or contact between members of the same household. This applies during instruction, practice, and during competitive events. Competition that involves close contact with other athletes must be avoided.
- For school athletics, the total number of attendees (including both participants and spectators) cannot exceed the lesser of 50% of the occupancy load on the certificate of occupancy, if applicable, or 250 persons. For sports played on a field, attendees are limited to 250 persons per field.
- This guidance is in alignment with the Forward Virginia [Phase III Guidance for Recreational Sports](#).

*Please note that for public health disease investigations, VDH will continue to use the standard definition of close contact, i.e. being within six feet of a person with COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more. Per CDC guidance, the use of face coverings are not a factor in the assessment of close contact.

BEYOND PHASE III

- School divisions will return to a “new-normal” for instructional and extracurricular operations in consultation with public health officials.
- Some restrictions may still be recommended at such a time.
- Additional guidance will be forthcoming as public health data, safety precautions, and guidance evolve.

PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR ALL PHASES

Schools should be prepared for COVID-19 outbreaks in their local communities and for individual exposure events to occur in their facilities, regardless of the level of community transmission. Schools should implement several strategies to encourage behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19, based on [Interim Guidance for Administrators of US K-12 Schools and Child Care Programs](#) and follow all [CDC Considerations for Schools](#) guidance for reopening schools and [CDC Activities and Initiatives Supporting the COVID-19 Response and the President’s Plan for Opening America Up Again](#). Other helpful resources are available on the VDH and DOE websites.

This includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Implement strategies to prioritize the health of staff and students, mitigate disease transmission, and maintain healthy environments.
- Provide remote learning exceptions and teleworking options for students and staff who are at a higher risk of severe illness.
- Schools should strongly encourage families, faculty and staff to self-monitor their signs/symptoms and stay home when ill.
 - If possible, conduct daily health screenings for staff and students. These should be done safely and respectfully, in accordance with privacy laws. Encourage symptomatic individuals to stay home and seek care as appropriate. Health screenings can be achieved via different methods; a school should decide what works best for their community (e.g. via apps or screening questionnaires). Sample school health screening tools can be found on the [DOE website](#).
 - School staff (as well as bus drivers) should observe students throughout the day and refer students or faculty/staff who may be symptomatic to the school healthcare point of contact.
- Public health has case investigation, contact tracing, and outbreak response guidance for school settings. This guidance is available on the [VDH website](#).
- Face coverings for students: Students should use cloth face coverings, when at least six feet of physical

distancing cannot be maintained, as is medically and developmentally appropriate. The [AAP](#) states that “if not developmentally feasible, which may be the case for younger students, and wearing face coverings cannot be done safely (eg, the face covering makes wearers touch their face more than they otherwise would), schools may choose to not require their use when physical distancing measures can be effectively implemented. School staff and older students (middle or high school) may be able to wear cloth face coverings safely and consistently and should be encouraged to do so.”

- Face coverings for staff: Staff should use cloth face coverings when at least six feet of physical distancing cannot be maintained, as is medically appropriate.
- During meetings or gatherings or in narrow hallways or other settings where physical distancing may not be easy to maintain, a face covering would be prudent to wear. Other considerations such as speaking loudly, singing, etc should be considered and may require additional distance.
- The use of cloth face coverings by teachers may inadvertently impede the education process for some populations. In these situations, schools should consider options on a case by case basis, and optimize physical distancing and other mitigation strategies where possible. Examples include students who are deaf or hard of hearing, students receiving speech/language services, young students in early education programs, and English-language learners. Although there are products (eg, face coverings with clear panels in the front) to facilitate their use among these populations, these may not be available in all settings.
- Divisions should also follow the Emergency Regulations to Control, Prevent and Mitigate the Spread of COVID-19 if/when applicable.

LOCAL DIVISION PLANS

HEALTH PLANS REQUIRED OF ALL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Before entering Phase III, every school in Virginia, public or private, is required to submit to the VDOE a plan outlining their strategies for mitigating public health risk of COVID-19; [per an Order of Public Health Emergency from the State Health Commissioner](#). The Virginia Council for Private Education (VCPE) will receive plans submitted by private schools accredited through a VCPE Approved State Recognized Accrediting Association. All private schools must submit health plans, regardless of affiliation with VCPE.

Links to a plan template and online submission forms are on the VDOE website.

NOTIFICATION OF PUBLIC DIVISION'S INTENT TO VARY FROM PHASED GUIDANCE

As part of the public health plan submissions in Phase III, public school divisions should notify VDOE if they intend to vary from the phase guidance by deviating from the recommended health mitigation strategies.

2020-2021 INSTRUCTIONAL PLANS REQUIRED OF ALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Additionally, public school divisions are required to submit a plan to the VDOE outlining the provision of new instruction to all students in the 2020-2021 academic year, regardless of phase or the operational status of the school at the time. This plan must also include strategies to address learning lost due to spring 2020 school closures and plans for fully remote instruction should public health conditions require it. School divisions must also post instructional plans on their websites for public viewing.

Links to a plan template and online submission forms are on the VDOE website.

ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE AND RESOURCES TO PRINT AND DISPLAY FOR ALL PHASES

[Federal Partner Resources](#) (multiple languages)

[CDC What You Need to Know](#)

[CDC Stop the Spread of Germs](#)

[CDC Symptoms of COVID-19](#)

[CDC What Do You Do If You Are Sick](#)

[CDC Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes](#)

[CDC What you Need to Know About Handwashing VIDEO](#)

[Printable Handwashing Signs](#)

[CDC Guidance for Child Cares That Remain Open](#)

[CDC Guidance Keeping Children Healthy While School's Out](#)

[CDC Decision Tree for Schools Reopening](#)

[CDC Decision Tree for Youth Programs and Camps](#)

[VDH Daily Symptom Monitoring Log](#) (in multiple languages)

SCHOOL OPERATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The phased reopening of Virginia's schools will require divisions to conduct operations very differently in order to protect the health of staff and students while public health risks of COVID-19 persist. In addition to implementing the CDC Guidance for Schools and the *Phase Guidance for Virginia Schools*, this section provides essential questions for school divisions to consider during implementation. These considerations were developed by the VDOE Return to School Recovery Task Force and its Subcommittee on Operations.

While the broad parameters of each phase are defined by the state, a great deal of local autonomy exists and school divisions have the flexibility to respond to this guidance within the capacity and resources of the division. In all operational areas, decision-makers should ensure that their policies have been reviewed and are up to date to provide sufficient guidance during unforeseen future challenges.

Many factors will need to be considered to ensure that each phase of reopening is successful. This section includes guiding questions for school leaders to assess relative to sanitation equipment and supplies, transportation and health services.

Additionally, the training of and professional development for all school employees on new policies and practices will ensure that the safest and highest level of service is provided to school division stakeholders.

Another key issue that must be addressed is the need for ongoing and transparent communication to the entire school community. The development of essential questions should provide a guide for communicating with stakeholders to ensure that critical areas are addressed to support the local school division in successful operations. These questions may be organized by what leaders should do first in (Do First), immediately prior to any school opening (Prior to Opening), and when schools are open and operating with students physically present (Open and Operating).

Please note that the *Phase Guidance for Virginia Schools* and Virginia's School Reopening Phases are subject to revision by state officials as public health conditions evolve.

GENERAL RESOURCES/LINKS RECOMMENDED BY THE OPERATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

- [San Diego County Office of Education Planning Assumptions](#)
- [Return to School Roadmap](#)
- [Reopening Recommendations Report from Connecticut \(Higher Ed\)](#)
- [Missouri School Boards' Association's Pandemic Recovery Considerations](#)

HEALTH AND SAFETY PROCEDURES

As COVID-19 continues to present a public health risk to Virginians, schools must implement strong health, safety and physical distancing precautions in order to reduce transmission, minimize risk to students and staff, and promote community health and well-being. This requires a variety of mitigation strategies, health screenings, and generous sick and leave policies. Schools should follow all CDC guidance for schools.

MITIGATION STRATEGIES, HEALTH SCREENINGS, AND SICK POLICIES

Schools are should implement a variety of mitigation strategies that minimize the spread of COVID-19, [as recommended by the CDC](#). This includes, but is not limited to:

- Encourage staff and students who feel sick to stay home, and establish clear policies about when they can return; what happens if a school member gets sick; etc.
- Conduct daily health screenings for symptoms and history of exposure for students and staff, such as those described in [VDH Interim Guidance for COVID -19 Daily Screening of Employees](#) or described in CDC [guidelines for child care](#).
- Provide educational materials to staff, students and families about how to stop the spread of COVID-19, symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if you feel sick, proper handwashing, and physical distancing measures.
- Increase handwashing hygiene among students and staff.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.

POLICIES TO ACCOMMODATE STUDENTS AND STAFF WHO ARE SAFER AT HOME

The public health community has identified populations of individuals who are at greater risk of severe illness from COVID-19, and for whom more stringent physical distancing is necessary. Therefore, per the Governor’s phased reopening plan, divisions should implement policies that provide for remote learning exceptions for students and teleworking for staff who are at a higher risk for severe illness and who are therefore safer at home. [Additional resources about this population of individuals and actions to protect them are online here](#). Divisions should be prepared to adjust these policies as needed as more is understood about COVID-19 and its transmission.

Additionally, divisions will need to be responsive to the evolving needs of students, staff and their families during this pandemic. Some school communities’ members will get sick, need to care for sick family members, and face significant disruptions in their personal lives as the pandemic continues to take a toll on all aspects of our society. Additionally, the mental health of students and staff should remain a top priority during these challenging times. Divisions should consider mental health supports and leave policies for students and staff, in addition to procedures that promote their physical health.

HEALTH SERVICES

The well-being of returning staff and students is predicated on careful planning and the development of safety protocols. The effective deployment of these plans will involve training of staff and communications across stakeholder groups. Essential questions which correspond to the stages outlined in the chart in this section should provide a foundation on which school divisions can build their Health Services response. Links to resources are also provided to support schools in their process to develop reopening plans.

	<i>Do First</i>	<i>Prior to Opening</i>	<i>Open and Operating</i>
<i>Health Services</i>	<i>Plans for responses to suspected cases; confirmation of availability of personal protective equipment (PPE) if necessary; training and professional development to prepare staff; staffing supports to meet the health needs of students and staff</i>	<i>Hygiene protocols established; screening protocols for students, staff and/or visitors to building; essential staffing supports availability</i>	<i>Mental health supports for students and staff as schools reopen</i>

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS FOR HEALTH SERVICES

Do First

- Have you contacted your cleaning supplies vendor(s) regarding the availability of supplies and equipment?
- What is your plan for how you will respond to suspected COVID-19 cases within a school facility or on a school campus to include protocols for communication and quarantine?
- Have you planned protocols to conduct traditional school health services expectations (i.e., immunizations, sports physicals, vision and hearing screening, related health services for special education students etc.)?
- Have you conducted an analysis of the feasibility of conducting screenings of occupants prior to entering buildings? What are the ramifications of this approach?
- Do you have a process for data collection (absenteeism, health office/clinic visits, exclusions due to illness, reporting of COVID-19 incidents)?
- Have your school health personnel completed training on contact tracing?
- Do you have a process to address medically fragile students and employees per physician’s guidance that cannot attend school or work?
- What additional staffing might you need to meet the health needs of students and staff?

Immediately Prior to Opening

- Have you established hygiene protocols for staff, students, and visitors for each school facility prior to opening school?
- Have you considered a screening protocol for arriving students, staff, and visitors prior to entering school facilities?
- What protocols have you planned to ensure the safety and health of all operational personnel as support services are delivered daily (i.e., food service, transportation, custodial, maintenance, etc.)
- Have you established a protocol for reporting suspected cases of COVID-19?
- Do you have enough substitute nurses or clinic assistants to meet potential demand?

Open and Operating

- How will you provide guidance to affected individuals with COVID-19 regarding self-reporting, quarantine and return-to-school expectations?
- What plans do you have to provide mental health support to students and staff as school reopens?

RESOURCES FOR HEALTH SERVICES

- [National Association of School Nurses Coronavirus Disease 2019 Resources](#)
- [Resources for Response to COVID-19](#)
- [Interim Guidance for Administrators of US K-12 Schools and Child Care Programs to Plan, Prepare, and Respond to Coronavirus Disease](#)
- [How to safely reopen schools after COVID-19 closures](#)
- [K-12 education and the coronavirus](#)
- [COVID-19 & Virginia Public Schools](#)
- [New York Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Guidance for P-12 Schools](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - Health Services & School Nursing \(CA Dept of Education\)](#)
- [School Guidance on Novel Coronavirus or COVID-19](#)
- [COVID-19 Resources for Student Health Services - Kentucky Department of Education](#)

SCHOOL NURSES/CLINIC STAFF

As school divisions start planning for a return to school, divisions should continue to collaborate, share information, and review plans with local health officials to help protect the health and safety of all members of the school. School reentry plans should be designed to complement other community mitigation strategies, protect high risk populations, minimize disruption to teaching and learning and protect students and staff from social stigma and discrimination. Plans should build on everyday proactive health strategies such as physical distancing, hand hygiene and face protection and include strategies for before, during, and after a possible COVID-19 outbreak.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOL NURSES/CLINIC STAFF

1. How will schools ensure students, school personnel, and administrators have the necessary training and information related to safe hygiene practices, physical distancing requirements, and stay at home/return to school guidelines?
2. How and where will routine, non COVID-19 related health services be provided? What are the specific considerations required to manage the care of students and/or staff that become ill while at school?
3. Does the division have sufficient staffing of school nurses and/or other school health personnel to meet the potential demand?
4. What is the school plan if a student or staff member is diagnosed or exposed to COVID -19 or the community mitigation status changes?
5. What is the school plan for tracking student or school personnel absenteeism? Will school health personnel be trained or involved in contact tracing?
6. How are schools communicating health concerns to parents, school personnel and/or the community in order to reduce anxiety and concern?
7. What processes are in place to ensure availability of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for school staff?
8. What processes are in place to ensure the availability of cleaning supplies and adequate janitorial staffing to maintain a safe school environment?

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SCHOOL NURSES/CLINIC STAFF

Training: School staff and students will need to be provided information and training to promote proactive health strategies such as handwashing, proper use of facemasks and physical distancing in the school setting. Schools should include appropriate signage for public spaces, reminders about moving in public spaces, and provide mechanisms for physical distancing such as floor marks for adequate spacing. This will be essential for maintaining a healthy school environment. School health staff may require additional training, which may include:

- Revised processes and procedures for clinic visits based on visit type (e.g. routine medication administration; accident or injury; clinical signs of illness);

- Procedures for disposal of contaminated materials;
- Cleaning procedures for nebulizers, ventilators, or similar medication/oxygen delivery systems which may omit aerosolized virus if contaminated.

High Risk populations: Older adults as well as adults and children with chronic disease or who are medically fragile are at high risk for contacting illness or complications associated with COVID-19. These students and employees should check with their healthcare provider before returning to work or school.

Health clinic: Schools should arrange their health clinic space in order to distance students coming to the clinic for routine visits from those who are sick. It may also be necessary to establish new processes to limit the number of students in the clinic at one time. Schools should identify an alternative space for children or staff with symptoms of COVID-19 in order to *immediately* isolate them from the general population and each other. Any alternative space being used for those with clinical signs of illness should be supervised and cleaned thoroughly between uses.

Communication: School health staff, school administrators and local health departments should establish a clear communication protocol regarding concerns of increased absenteeism, identified cases of COVID-19, or those in quarantine due to exposure. Communication with the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) or local health department will help schools identify a course of action, if needed. School nurses may need to assist local health departments in contact tracing.

Similarly, clear communication between schools and parents regarding stay at home/return to school guidelines will be essential in maintaining a healthy school environment. An established, strong two-way communication mechanism between parents and schools will also facilitate identifying when students are absent due to COVID-19.

Schools should implement communication plans prior to the start of school. Keeping parents informed about preparations for school start will reduce fear and anxiety in children and families. Frequent messaging to keep sick children at home, parameters for returning to school and healthy strategies to deal with stress provide clear expectations to parents and confidence for a safe return to school for their children. Equally important are procedures or guidelines for school personnel to follow in order to work or to return to work after an exposure or illness. The CDC provides useful resources for parents and teachers to follow as they plan for school to start or in case of closure.

RESOURCES FOR SCHOOL NURSES/CLINIC STAFF

COVID-19 and Virginia Public Schools: the VDOE provides guidance, support documents, and resources for schools and families relating to COVID-19.

Role of School Nurse in Return to School Planning: from the National Association of School Nurses (NASN).

Physical Distancing: this resource from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides examples of ways to limit contact between people and slow the spread of germs. Available in English and Spanish.

COVID-19: Clinical Presentation in Children (CDC): provides information on the clinical signs and presentation of COVID -19 in children which may vary from adults.

School Mitigation Decision Tree: provides updated guidance for schools to develop policies and procedures to address COVID-19 in schools.

Considerations for School Nurses Regarding Care of Students and Staff that Become Ill at School or Arrive Sick (NASN)

It's a SNAP Toolkit: Handwashing: The Healthy Schools, Healthy People, It's a SNAP! (School Network for Absenteeism Prevention) program is a joint initiative of the American Cleaning Institute and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

CDC Health Promotion Materials: a variety of resources to help learn more about keeping hands clean and preventing illnesses.

FACILITIES, SCHEDULES AND TRANSPORTATION ACCOMMODATIONS

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Given the highly communicable nature of COVID-19, stringent physical distancing measures are recommended during the early reopening phases in order to limit disease transmission. Generally, physical distancing has two components to it: keeping individuals a safe distance from one another (approximately six feet); and reducing the number of people with whom any individual interacts. Virginia's School Reopening Phases provide some parameters for physical distancing in each phase.

These parameters provide the maximum flexibility a division may choose to implement, and nothing prevents a division or region from maintaining more stringent procedures or policies based on local health conditions. These physical distancing requirements may be eased as public health conditions improve and Virginia moves through reopening phases. Finally, it is important to note that the phases and the operations guidance is subject to revision as public health conditions evolve. The terms social distancing and physical distancing are used interchangeably by some. The very nature of schools is social and as leaders determine the parameters around the reopening of schools, the intent should not be to diminish the importance of social interactions but how they occur to maximize the safety of all.

In addition to physical distancing considerations for students, and between students and teachers, school and division leaders should also consider distancing adjustments to internal division and school building functions. This includes considering accommodations to workspaces and offices, faculty meetings, professional development, and staff engagement with parents, families and the broader community.

The *Phase Guidance* provides the following recommendations for each phase:

	<i>Phase I</i>	<i>Phase II</i>	<i>Phase III</i>
<i>In-Person Instruction</i>	<i>In addition to child care programs and schools issued a variance; programs may be offered to special education students</i>	<i>All previously permitted options, plus in-person instruction for Preschool thru third Grade; instruction for English Learners; and summer camp programs in school buildings are permitted</i>	<i>In-person instruction can be offered for all students, however physical distancing measures should be implemented</i>
<i>Gathering Limits (applies to offices, classrooms, cafeterias, auditoriums, graduation ceremonies, etc.)</i>	<i>Max size of 10 individuals per room or bus</i>	<i>Gathering limit increased to 50 if other physical distancing measures are in place</i>	<i>Gathering limit increased to 250 if other physical distancing measures are in place</i>
<i>Physical distancing</i>	<i>Maintain six foot separation between desks, tables and workstations; and between students and staff to the greatest extent possible</i>	<i>Maintain six foot separation to the greatest extent possible</i>	<i>Maintain six feet of physical distance to the greatest extent possible; however, if six feet of distance is not feasible, schools should implement a combination of face coverings and a minimum of three feet distance between everyone present.</i>
<i>Bus Capacity</i>	<i>Six foot distancing with a max capacity of 10 students</i>	<i>Physical distance should be created between children on school buses when possible</i>	<i>Physical distance should be created between children on school buses when possible</i>
<i>Recess</i>	<i>Groups of 10 or less, physically distanced</i>	<i>Groups of 50 or less, physically distanced, and with minimal mixing of groups</i>	<i>Consider limiting the size of groups participating in outdoor activities/recess, with a priority on physical distancing and limiting mixing of classrooms</i>
<i>Health Screenings and Temperature Checks</i>	<i>If possible, conduct daily health screenings for symptoms and history of exposure for students and staff</i>	<i>If possible, conduct daily health screenings for symptoms and history of exposure for students and staff</i>	<i>If possible, conduct daily health screenings for symptoms and history of exposure for students and staff</i>
<i>Face coverings</i>	<i>Cloth face coverings should be worn by staff in times when at least six foot physical distancing cannot be maintained. Schools should encourage the use of face coverings for students as developmentally appropriate in settings where six feet of physical distancing cannot be maintained.</i>	<i>Cloth face coverings should be worn by staff in times when at least six foot physical distancing cannot be maintained. Schools should encourage the use of face coverings for students as developmentally appropriate in settings where six feet of physical distancing cannot be maintained.</i>	<i>Cloth face coverings should be worn by staff in times when at least six foot physical distancing cannot be maintained. Schools should encourage the use of face coverings for students as developmentally appropriate in settings where six feet of physical distancing cannot be maintained.</i>

	<i>Phase I</i>	<i>Phase II</i>	<i>Phase III</i>
<i>Athletics and Extracurricular Activities</i>	<i>Prohibited</i>	<i>Limited athletics and extracurricular activities with physical distancing</i>	<i>Limited athletics and extracurricular activities with physical distancing</i>

SAMPLE ALTERNATIVE SCHEDULES

In order to adhere to the physical distancing requirements, schools will need to consider alternative and innovative schedules for their school buildings. These schedules will need to consider the developmental abilities and academic needs of the students served in each scenario, while maximizing physical distancing of students. For example, the expectations for kindergarteners and high school students vary greatly, as do the academic supports they would most benefit from in-person. In addition, schools should consider staggered drop-off and pick-up times in order to limit contact between individuals or large group gatherings.

While students and staff are in the building, schedules should be arranged to minimize contact between groups. Schools should consider alternatives such as keeping students in the same classroom all day and rotating teachers; closing or staggering uses of communal spaces; and limiting non-essential volunteers, visitors and activities.

In all scenarios, schools are expected to provide remote or virtual learning in addition to in-person instruction to ensure students are covering all necessary content, regardless of the number of hours they receive in-person instruction.

It is also important to note the disruptive nature that these alternative schedules have on families. Divisions should be thoughtful about incorporating family input and perspective in those decisions.

This document provides potential school schedules for reopening schools that could be considered as school divisions develop schedules. While this list of options is not exhaustive, they should serve as conversation starters. School divisions will also need to consider room, hallway, and common area capacities related practical implications of physical distancing requirements.

SAMPLE SCHEDULES

Students physically attend school on reduced days or alternating schedules.

- Students come in to receive direct instruction/download or pick-up assignments/collaborate with one another.
 - *Scenario 1* - students attend physically 1 day/week
 - Student Group 1 attends all classes on Monday
 - Student Group 2 attends all classes on Tuesday
 - Student Group 3 attends all classes on Wednesday
 - Student Group 4 attends all classes on Thursday
 - Fridays are used for teacher planning and/or to receive professional development, have digital meetings with students, or hold office hours while students attend/work digitally/remotely and buildings are cleaned
 - Reduces transportation costs and possibly repurpose drivers 1X per week
 - *Scenario 2* - students attend physically 2 days/week
 - Student Group 1 attends all classes on Monday and Wednesday
 - Student Group 2 attends all classes on Tuesday and Thursday
 - Fridays can be used for teacher planning and/or to receive professional development, have digital meetings with students, or hold office hours while students attend/work digitally/remotely and buildings are cleaned
 - Reduces transportation costs and possibly repurpose drivers 1X per week

Split days - AM and PM shifts

- Provides daily instruction and connection with school/teacher
- Lunch can possibly be served before students leave or when they first come to school
- Provides opportunity for high school students to have workplace/internship opportunities for half a day.
- Cleaning procedures should be considered in between
- Students physically attend only 4 days per week to allow for teachers to plan and/or receive professional development, have digital meetings with students, or hold office hours while students attend/work digitally/remotely and buildings are cleaned
- Reduces transportation costs

Students attend physically on alternating days or weeks. Students are split into two groups by address, grade level, or other to reduce load on buses and support physical distancing requirements.

- *Scenario 1* - staggered attendance by week, alternating days
 - Week 1
 - Student Group 1 attends physically Monday, Wednesday, and Friday
 - Student Group 2 attends physically Tuesday and Thursday
 - Week 2
 - Student Group 1 attends physically Tuesday and Thursday
 - Student Group 2 attends physically Monday, Wednesday, and Friday
 - Students attend/work digitally/remotely on off days
- *Scenario 2* - staggered attendance by week, alternating days - 4-day weeks
 - Student Group 1 attends physically Monday and Wednesday
 - Student Group 2 attends physically Tuesday and Thursday
 - Fridays could be used for teacher planning and/or to receive professional development, have digital meetings with students, or hold office hours while students attend/work digitally/remotely and buildings are cleaned.
 - Reduces transportation costs
- *Scenario 3* - staggered attendance by week, to achieve [pulsing model](#)
 - Student Group 1 attends physically Monday - Thursday during Week 1; works remotely during Week 2
 - Student Group 2 attends physically Monday - Thursday during Week 2; works remotely during Week 1
 - Fridays could be used for teacher planning and/or to receive professional development, have digital meetings with students, or hold office hours while students attend/work digitally/remotely and buildings are cleaned.

Other Considerations

- School divisions may want to consider having older students attend remotely and use their physical building space to serve younger students.
- Child care will be a major consideration in all scenarios. School divisions will need to work with community partners to plan, communicate, and develop options for parents.

Additional Scheduling Considerations for Young Learners (Preschool – Grade 3)

Young children learn best in supportive face-to-face environments filled with adult-to-child interactions and activities that build skills and develop behaviors that carry them through many years of learning. Research shows that when children start behind academically that they often stay behind. School divisions should make it a high priority for preschool through grade 3 children to return to classrooms as soon as safely possible. If group sizes are limited to no more than 10, the following may be considered:

- **Classroom space:** utilize all safe, available rooms within elementary buildings (e.g., resource rooms, library, 4th & 5th grade classrooms) and if necessary, utilize secondary facilities.
- **Staff:** utilize all appropriate, available staff (e.g., resource teachers, ITRTs, counselors, instructional assistants) in flexible groupings and instructional models to provide small group adult supervision.

Looping: consider assigning teachers and staff to instruct children they have already built relationships with from the previous school year.

CLEANING

In addition to physical distancing measures, robust cleaning and disinfecting procedures along with working ventilation and increased air circulation are needed in order to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. [Schools should follow all CDC guidance on cleaning.](#)

	<i>Do First</i>	<i>Prior to Opening</i>	<i>Open and Operating</i>
<i>Cleaning</i>	<i>Cleaning protocols; materials and supplies on hand</i>	<i>Cleaning protocols; adequate staffing to ensure clean spaces; adequate supplies</i>	<i>Cleaning protocols; adequate staffing to ensure clean spaces; adequate supplies; appropriate scheduling for deep cleaning</i>
<i>Large Spaces</i>	<i>Planning for use of facilities/ athletics spaces, before and after school care, extracurricular activities</i>	<i>Determination of community use - allowable?</i>	
<i>VDH Facilities requirements</i>	<i>Evaluation of building and spaces to ensure physical distancing requirements are met; exit/entrance protocols established; appropriate signage</i>	<i>Analysis of building capacity to ensure physical distancing requirements are met; exit/entrance protocols followed; proper signage</i>	

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS FOR FACILITIES

Do First

- What cleaning protocols will be followed to prepare for the reopening of schools? What systems maintenance (ventilation, HVAC, water/plumbing) need to be conducted before buildings can be reopened? And the ongoing operation of schools?
- What types of cleaning supplies and materials will you need? What is the availability for acquisition of necessary products?
- Will you need to make facility modifications to schools, especially to accommodate physical distancing guidelines, prior to the reopening of schools?
- Have you considered traffic flow patterns within school facilities once school opens in order to maintain physical distancing guidelines?
- Are you considering modifications in capital projects plans (i.e., new construction, renovations, etc.) due to COVID-19 and uncertainty with resources or capacity to complete on the original schedule?
- What are your plans to use school facilities, including athletic spaces, for the purpose of providing before school, after school, extracurricular and athletic programs to students once schools reopen?
- Have you conducted an analysis of your building's capacity, given physical distancing requirements that may be mandated? (i.e., X square foot/student) What daily entry protocols will be established to allow employees to enter all facilities?
- What facility entry and exit protocols will be established for employees and visitors?
- What type of signage will be needed to facilitate traffic flow and physical distancing?

Immediately Prior to Opening

- What cleaning protocols will be followed when schools are reopened?
- Will you have adequate staffing to implement the cleaning protocols prior to opening and during the ongoing operations of schools?
- Will you need to implement alternative work and school schedules to accommodate cleaning protocols?
- Do you have enough supplies to meet your future and ongoing cleaning and disinfecting needs?
- Have you reviewed all spaces in schools to declutter environments in order to facilitate physical distancing guidelines?
- Will you allow community use of school facilities during non-school hours?
- Do you have adequate plans in place to accommodate student drivers and a potential increase in students transported by their parents?

Open and Operating

- How will you ensure that all established cleaning protocols will be followed per school division expectations?

RESOURCES FOR FACILITIES

- [CS Webinar April 23 2020.pptx](#)
- [April 30 worksheet Corona Capacity and Reopening Strategies](#)
- [CS_NCSF Webinar April 30 2020](#)
- [Restart Building Cleaning and Safety Resource 5.5.20](#)
- [Minnesota Dept. of Health COVID-19 Cleaning Guidance for Schools](#)
- [Schools Are Opening Worldwide, Providing a Model for the U.S.](#)
- [Reopening Schools in the Context of COVID-19: Health and Safety Guidelines from Other Countries](#)

TRANSPORTATION

When in-person instruction and pupil transportation resumes, physical distancing and cleaning protocols will need to be applied to school buses. All schools should adhere to [CDC recommended guidelines](#). This includes consideration of spacing of passengers, personal safety materials for operators, frequent cleaning/disinfection, and opening windows for ventilation.

Additionally, the *Guidance* places the following capacity limits during each phase:

	<i>Phase I</i>	<i>Phase II</i>	<i>Phase III</i>
<i>Bus Capacity Considerations</i>	<i>Six foot physical distancing and 10 person limit</i>	<i>Physical distance should be created between children on school buses when possible</i>	<i>Physical distance should be created between children on school buses when possible</i>

**This guidance is subject to revision as public health conditions evolve.*

	<i>Do First</i>	<i>Prior to Opening</i>	<i>Open and Operating</i>
<i>Transportation Guidance</i>	<i>Review protocols and make modifications as necessary; staffing levels reviewed to ensure coverage of routes needed to accommodate physically distancing requirements; modifications of school buses to meet physically distancing requirements</i>	<i>Access to transportation to ensure equitable services provided to students; cleaning protocols established; scheduling to ensure deep cleaning is occurring; personal safety equipment provided to transportation staff</i>	<i>Physical distancing guidelines followed with input from VDH; cleaning protocols established; scheduling to ensure deep cleaning is occurring; personal safety equipment provided to transportation staff; continued access to transportation to ensure equitable services</i>

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS FOR TRANSPORTATION

Do First

- Have you established a local advisory team to review protocols and make recommendations pertaining to transportation?
- Do you have stakeholders other than transportation personnel on the local advisory team?
- Have you considered employment contract questions pertaining to classified personnel (i.e., additional hours, overtime, flexible schedules, hourly pay vs. per diem, etc.)?
- Have you considered additional budgetary expenditures that will be incurred by running different routing schedules, maintaining physical distancing, implementing cleaning protocols, etc.?
- Do you expect a transportation staffing shortage (administration, drivers, mechanics, aides, etc.) due to fear of COVID-19 or actual illnesses?
- Will you have to add buses and personnel to increase routes for buses due to the limited number of students that will be allowed on a single bus?
- Within allowable regulations, what modifications may be needed to your buses and vehicles to ensure the safety of all occupants?

Immediately Prior to Opening

- Will all students have access to transportation to ensure the equitable delivery of educational services?
- Will you need to increase transportation staff to accommodate the diverse educational programs (i.e., regional programs, school-sponsored field trips, and athletic programs)?
- Have you considered unique challenges in transporting special education students during the COVID-19 crisis?
- Are you planning to ask certain students to ride bus transportation while asking parents to transport others to

accommodate physical distancing guidance?

- Have you provided training on cleaning processes, timeframes, and physical distancing protocols for transportation employees?

Open and Operating

- Have you established physical distancing protocols in accordance with guidance from health officials (i.e., student ingress/egress on buses, seating arrangements on buses, training of students prior to opening school, car rider protocols, student walkers/drivers, etc.)?
- Have you planned how you will modify transportation schedules, student pick-up and routing plans when circumstances require a quick change in plans?
- Are you planning to support the social and emotional well-being of transportation personnel?

RESOURCES FOR TRANSPORTATION

- [April 30 worksheet Corona Capacity and Reopening Strategies.xlsx](#)
- [What Bus Transit Operators Need to Know About COVID-19](#)
- [Coronavirus/COVID-19 Resource Page for Student Transportation - Management](#)
- [National School Bus Associations Discuss 'New Normal' of Post COVID-19 World - STN Media](#)

TECHNOLOGY

The pandemic has created an opportunity for schools to approach the delivery of instruction in unique and diverse ways. Remote learning has increased in frequency and school divisions are assessing how to maximize the use of technology, in all of its formats, to effectively meet learners' needs and equip staff in their delivery of instruction. The use of technology by schools is further complicated by the availability of Internet resources within a community and the access learners and staff have to those resources. School divisions are urged to bridge the digital divide among their stakeholders by working closely with local leaders. Within resources and internet availability, divisions should provide materials and devices to all students.

	<i>Do First</i>	<i>Prior to Opening</i>	<i>Open and Operating</i>
<i>Technology</i>	<i>Process and procedures for collecting, refreshing and distributing devices to students; providing Internet connectivity, technology and literacy/tech-training for students and families; process and procedure for remote learning; Process/Procedure for collecting, refreshing and distributing student devices; accessibility to Internet, technology and I</i>	<i>Evaluation of cyber security and safety protocols</i>	<i>Provide ongoing support to ensure instructional and operational needs are successful for students, staff and families</i>

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS FOR TECHNOLOGY

Do First

- What are your plans for collecting, refreshing, and distributing devices to students?
- What is your plan for providing greater access to Internet connectivity, technology, and literacy/tech-training for all students/families, particularly subgroups and vulnerable populations?
- What are your plans for the use of technology or remote learning in providing services to students/families/staff who are not returning to school due to COVID-19 risks?
- What technology resources do you need to accomplish your division’s instructional goals?
- Have you assessed and considered all available resources that can support the use of technology (i.e., Cares Act, E-Rate, State’s flexibility funds, etc., state, federal, private funding, or collaborations)?

Immediately Prior to Opening

- Have you assessed cyber security and safety protocols for infrastructure maintenance, fraud, data security, and harassment?

Open and Operating

- What ongoing supports may be needed by students, staff, and families to ensure the ongoing success of the division’s instructional and operational needs?

RESOURCES FOR TECHNOLOGY

- [Learning in the Time of COVID-19](#)
- [CoSN’s 2019 K-12 IT Leadership Survey Report](#)
- [US Dept. of Ed. Office of Civil Rights Brief Webinar](#)
- [PREPARING FOR LIFE IN A DIGITAL WORLD](#)
- [Resources for Teaching Remotely](#)

SCHOOL NUTRITION

Across Virginia, School Nutrition staff have mobilized to feed their communities. This work has required keen attention to the safety of workers, food preparation, delivery stations and pick-up sites. The extended closure of schools and local businesses has created a greater need for food assistance by students and their families in many communities. As schools plan to reopen the chart below and essential questions will help guide the strategic development of School Nutrition programs. In this phased approach to opening schools, even when students are at home, divisions are expected to continue providing meals to students who qualify. To accomplish physical and physical distancing, and avoid congregate gatherings of students, schools will need to consider serving meals in classrooms and in other alternate ways.

	<i>Do First</i>	<i>Prior to Opening</i>	<i>Open and Operating</i>
<i>School Nutrition</i>	<i>Evaluate inventory; evaluate the use of disposable products; evaluate physical distancing scenarios and meal service needed; evaluate the availability of any waivers</i>	<i>Evaluate substitute pool for potential increased absence; develop contingency plans in the event of changes in operations</i>	<i>Evaluate process for menu changes to address any meal shortages; established monitoring for budget, inventory, and revenues</i>

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOL NUTRITION

Do First

- Do you have an accurate inventory of all of your food supplies and equipment needs?
- Are there any benefits to using disposable products in food service operations?
- How will meals be served, given various physical distancing scenarios and thresholds?
- How will students with food allergies be accommodated in physical distancing scenarios?
- How will you discourage sharing of food among students?
- How will you promote handwashing immediately before and after eating?
- Are any waivers needed to meet the nutritional requirements and reimbursement associated with USDA expectations?
- What hygiene protocols will you be using to ensure safe food preparation and food handling practices?
- Have you coordinated with your school nutrition Directors in the development of plans? Are alternative ordering methods available - google surveys, digital online ordering platforms, etc.?

Immediately Prior to Opening

- Do you have alternative contingency plans should your initial plans need to be modified or revised?
- Do you have adequate substitute staffing to meet your operational needs if employees are not able to work?
- Have you considered developing complimentary meal service plans that align to the attendance model in place?

Open and Operating

- How will you handle changes in menus if there is a shortage of food supply?
- What budget and inventory monitoring practices are in place to track revenue and expenditure trends?

RESOURCES FOR SCHOOL NUTRITION

- [School Nutrition Association](#)
- [Institute of Child Nutrition \(ICN\)](#)
- [No Kid Hungry VA](#)

BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL

Many school divisions provide or partner with providers of before and after school programs, which are gradually permitted through the phased reopenings. As reopening plans are developed, school leaders will need to work closely with these providers and local health departments to ensure safety measures are in place and effective communication plans are developed for staff, students, and families.

	<i>Do First</i>	<i>Prior to Opening</i>	<i>Open and Operating</i>
<i>Before and After School</i>	<i>Coordinate with partner providers to review protocols and procedures; communicate with local health department; determine impacts on facilities by allowing partners to share space</i>	<i>Develop or review shared procedures; Establish frequent communication guidelines</i>	<i>Establish any school meal protocols in the event that in-person school sessions are not occurring; develop communication protocols to inform of operational changes</i>

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS FOR BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL

Do First

- Have you coordinated with partner providers to discuss protocols and procedures and alignment with school division expectations?
- Have you coordinated with local health officials and partner providers about different requirements for opening before/after school programs alongside or separate from school opening?
- How will the operation of these programs impact your plans for staffing, facility cleanliness, transportation, and other operational factors?
- Have you discussed overall community-wide child care needs with your community partners?
- Where space is shared, have you considered how cleaning supplies, protective equipment, and protocol can be provided, shared or coordinated?
- Have you discussed overall parent child care needs with your community partners and involved libraries, recreation centers, local higher education, independent providers and other partners in planning?
- Have you surveyed your workforce to identify their concerns related to child care for their own family?
- Will there be an increased need for before school and after school programs under various operating scenarios?

Immediately Prior to Opening

- Is there a need to develop shared use around technology/devices/services to better integrate afterschool providers and coordinate on student supports?
- Have you identified an individual or team who will communicate relevant news regularly?

Open and Operating

- How can community partners and afterschool programs help address school meal needs if students are not attending in-person school daily?
- How will changes in school operating schedules be communicated to partners?
- Will school divisions provide accommodations for services be maintained by partner agencies during closure?

RESOURCES FOR BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL

- [Guidance for Child Care Providers and Families Related to Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [COVID-19 Resource Page – Virginia Out-of-School Time Resource Exchange](#)
- [VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES DIVISION OF LICENSING PROGRAMS COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions: Child Care](#)
- [Afterschool & Summer in the Time of COVID-19](#)
- [Virginia Out-of-School Time Resource Exchange](#)
- [School Settings | COVID-19](#)

ATHLETICS AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Extracurricular activities and athletic programs are an integral part of school life for many students, staff and families. Ensuring the safety of all participants - students, coaches, sponsors, spectators, just to name a few, is paramount to any decision to begin these programs again. Physical distancing guidelines impact practices, rehearsals, and crowd gatherings and consideration of equitable access to resources is critical. Activities and or programs which involve external agencies should be coordinated in partnership with these entities (for example, the Virginia High School League (VHSL). The VHSL, in partnership with NHSL, will provide more detailed guidance in the future.

Additionally, the *Guidance* places the following limits on each phase:

	<i>Phase I</i>	<i>Phase II</i>	<i>Phase III</i>
<i>Athletics and Extracurricular Activities</i>	<i>Prohibited</i>	<i>Limited athletics and extracurricular activities with physical distancing. No competition should occur unless physical distancing can be maintained at all times.</i>	<i>Limited athletics and extracurricular activities with physical distancing. No competition should occur unless physical distancing can be maintained at all times.</i>

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS FOR ATHLETICS/EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Do First

- Have you considered changes to how group physicals are offered to student athletes?
- Are you planning to modify or reduce programs and schedules in accordance with the need to comply with physical distancing guidelines?
- How can you ensure that decisions are made through an equity lens, especially related to access for all students?
- How will you begin to ensure athletes have returned to satisfactory physical shape/condition?
- What activities will be allowable under each phase of the Governor’s Virginia Forward plan?

Immediately Prior to Opening

- How might you continue with athletics/extracurricular activities if distance learning is extended without any face-to-face instruction?
- What mental health supports will have put in place if students are not able to participate in extracurricular or co-curricular activities/events?
- Have you considered webcasting strategies to broadcast events to a larger audience while hosting events with no or limited spectators?
- How will you communicate expectations to Official/Referee Associations?

Open and Operating

- Have you evaluated and analyzed the impact that the inability to conduct after school events will have on your division’s finances, student well-being, and school morale?

RESOURCES FOR ATHLETICS/EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

- [National Federation for High Schools Guidance for Opening Up High School Athletics and Activities](#)
- [Core Principles of Resocialization of Collegiate Sport | NCAA.org - The Official Site of the NCAA](#)
- [Northeast Tennessee Return to Action Plan](#)

FINANCE AND BUDGET

Given the uncertainty surrounding the economic conditions and the potential impact on budgets, it is important to review the following finance and budget related essential questions and resources. School divisions should ensure they are proactive in their approach to communication with their funding partners, contractual suppliers of equipment and supplies, determination of the best use of federal stimulus dollars, and have contingency plans in place for modifications that may be necessary during the course of the fiscal year. A review of existing policies, contracts and expenditures is critical during this time of uncertainty. Additionally, ongoing monitoring is going to be critical to ensure school divisions are meeting anticipated revenue within their budgets. Finally, careful consideration should be given to using one-time federal stimulus funds for ongoing expenses.

	<i>Do First</i>	<i>Prior to Opening</i>	<i>Open and Operating</i>
<i>Budget and Finance</i>	<i>Evaluate short-term or one-time expenditures to determine best use for CARES Act funding; evaluate budget balancing techniques; evaluate FY20 savings that may be carried over into FY21 to support operational budgets; review contracts to determine if there are any revisions needed to align with scheduling changes, etc.</i>	<i>Contingency plans for revenue shortfalls; evaluate supply chain to ensure operational supplies can be obtained and delivered on a frequency to ensure continued operations occurs with no interruptions</i>	<i>Evaluate impact on FY22 budgets - if no additional stimulus funds are provided; communication with supply chain to ensure access to supplies remains</i>

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS FOR BUDGET AND FINANCE

Do First

- Have you determined the best use of federal CARES Act funding to accommodate short-term or one-time expenditures due to expected losses in State and Local revenue?
- What is your ability to utilize savings from FY20 for the purpose of mitigating expected revenue reductions in FY21?
- Have you considered available budget balancing strategies (i.e., classifying expenditures as essential/non-essential, delaying capital projects, delaying one-time expenditures to protect recurring costs, utilizing attrition in personnel to reduce costs in the long-term, requesting carry-over of any identified savings from the FY2020 to governing body, etc.) in planning the 2020-21 budget?
- What impact might a reduction in student enrollment have on state revenues such as Basic Aid and other enrollment-driven state revenues?
- Will your school division be able to use fund balance from FY20 to offset reductions, even one-time costs, in FY21 (i.e., cleaning supplies, personal protective equipment, needed repairs, school safety enhancements, etc.)?
- Have you reviewed the solvency of your food service financial operations to determine if there may be any impact on the school division's operating budget?
- Are you considering systems changes or internal spending controls to manage uncertainty in revenues and expenditures in the future?
- Have you reviewed expenditure deadlines that apply to federal and state resources (grants) as part of your budgetary planning for FY20 and FY21?
- Have you reviewed division contracts to determine if there are any provisions available to allow you to exit a contractual obligation if necessary?
- Is there a need to modify contracts to align with any adjustments in school scheduling?
- Have you reviewed insurance policies, especially workers compensation, as cases may relate to COVID-19?

Immediately Prior to Opening

- Have you contacted your cleaning supplies vendor(s) regarding the availability of supplies and equipment?
- What contingency plans have you made for the use of extracurricular and co-curricular funds if these activities do not take place? How can these funds be used to support your division’s operational and instructional needs?

Open and Operating

- Have you contacted your cleaning supplies vendor(s) regarding the ongoing availability of supplies and equipment?
- Have you considered how decisions related to the federal CARES Act in FY21 may impact your FY22 budget?

RESOURCES FOR BUDGET AND FINANCE

- [GFOA Debt Committee Releases Urgent Member Guidance for COVID-19 Debt Service and Disclosures](#)
- [Governor’s Emergency Education Relief Fund](#)
- [COVID-19 and School Funding: What to Expect and What You Can Do](#)

COMMUNICATIONS

Effective communication plans have never been more important than in these unique times. Attention to the use of multiple channels and modalities will increase the effectiveness of messages and the likelihood of reaching the greatest number of stakeholders. Special attention must be given to the diversity of stakeholder groups and their ability to access and assimilate messages. The inclusion of a variety of staff and community members in the development of communication plans is encouraged to ensure stakeholders’ needs are being met, their questions answered, and as a measure of whether communications are being received as intended.

	<i>Do First</i>	<i>Prior to Opening</i>	<i>Open and Operating</i>
<i>Communication</i>	<i>Evaluate and establish appropriate methods for communication; consistent vocabulary; determine frequency of dissemination of information; communication formats to reach all stakeholders (varied languages, underserved communities, special education/504 students); engage stakeholders in relevant decision-making processes</i>	<i>Clear delineation of communication protocols; provide details to ensure that measures have been taken to create a safe environment; establish a communication plan;</i>	<i>Communicate on a frequency established in prior phases; identify key resource who will synthesize daily news and communication; analyze communication methods that will reach your community best and continue with those</i>

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS FOR COMMUNICATIONS

Do First

- Have you established appropriate methods of communication (website, email, newsletter, social media) for each constituent group (parents, students, faculty, building staff, administrative staff)?
- Have you established informal and formal ways to communicate with local/regional health officials, local policymakers, and other stakeholders to collaborate on decisions related to COVID-19 (i.e., local task force)?
- Have you identified what information will be disseminated and the frequency of dissemination of that information? For example, how will new policies be communicated? How will information regarding changes in protocols be communicated? If there is a positive case within the school community (parents, students, faculty, building staff, administrative staff) will you notify the broader community?
- Have you established a consistent vocabulary with which to discuss matters? For example, do you distinguish between school closure and campus closure? How do you refer to online learning (online, distance, remote, virtual, etc.)?
- How will you provide all communications in formats to accommodate all ELL students, select special education/504 students, and underserved communities?
- Have you established a process to involve families in all ongoing messaging in order to amplify the schools' messages within the homes and further build the school/family partnership?
- Have you summarized the steps being taken to create a safe environment for the return to in-building education?
- Have you engaged relevant stakeholders in the decisions associated with opening schools and following the opening of schools?

Immediately Prior to Opening

- Is there a clear delineation of communication protocols within the school district to ensure continuity of messages and clarity to those who receive the messages?
- Are you prepared to provide details of the steps being taken to ensure a safe environment to each of the stakeholder groups?
- How will you communicate clear expectations regarding adherence to new policies and protocols?
- How will you communicate clear expectations regarding academic delivery plans (have you established clear expectations)?
- Have you identified an individual who will monitor and synthesize relevant news daily?
- Have you established an ongoing communications plan to stress the importance of complying with physical distancing and other health related behaviors to continuously inform students, staff and visitors of appropriate behaviors?
- Will tolerance and understanding by all be embedded within communications to reduce the potential for bullying and harassment?

Open and Operating

- Have you identified what information will be disseminated and the frequency of dissemination of that information?
- How can you continually involve families in all ongoing messaging in order to amplify the schools' messages within the homes and further build the school/family partnership?
- Have you identified an individual who will monitor and synthesize relevant news daily?
- Are you analyzing your communication methods to determine their effectiveness?
- Are there trusted community members who can help in communicating your important messages?

RESOURCES FOR COMMUNICATIONS

- [National School Public Relations Association | The Leader in School Communications](#)
- [Communicating COVID-19: A Guide and Panel Discussion](#)
- [Communicate with families during COVID-19 | K-12 Research](#)
- [School Safety and Incident Communications Toolkit](#)

HUMAN RESOURCES

The COVID-19 pandemic is impacting employees in all school divisions. Employees are concerned about their work environments, health care plans, and policies related to sick leave and other forms of leave. Professional development must be developed and delivered to ensure newly-developed protocols are implemented with fidelity and ensure the safety of staff and students. Effective communication of expectations and avenues for support are all critical components for consideration as schools reopen. The chart, essential questions, and links below provide guidelines for school divisions as they consider various employee groups, mental health needs and other HR-related issues. Any decisions made in this area should be made in consultation with school board attorneys.

	<i>Do First</i>	<i>Prior to Opening</i>	<i>Open and Operating</i>
<i>Human Resources</i>	<i>Develop plans for potential shortage of personnel when school opens; develop plans for addressing situations where employees refuse to come to work; Plan for distribution of employee contracts; Consult with legal counsel regarding contracts, worker’s compensation, etc.</i>	<i>Process for onboarding; Communicate any requirements for self-reporting of employees; professional development for staff in preparation for virtual instruction</i>	<i>Plan for supporting staff mental health; plans for payment to hourly, substitutes, coaching stipends, etc. if schools are closed or placed in a modified schedule.</i>

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS FOR HUMAN RESOURCES

Do First

- What are your plans for a potential shortage of personnel when school opens due to illness, fear of returning, and/or have high risk family members or perhaps are in a high risk category themselves?
- How will you handle a situation where an employee refuses to report to work based on their perception that the work environment is unsafe? Are these employees able to access FMLA?
- What is your plan for distributing contracts to your employees?
- Have you included language in your contracts related to a potential furlough or modification of work schedules due to unforeseen circumstances?
- Have you shared your contracts with your school division attorney?
- Will you distribute contracts to all employee groups at the same time?
- What health practices will be mandated? How will you address employees who don’t follow these practices? Have you consulted with your school division attorney to ensure compliance with all applicable laws and regulations?
- Have you consulted with your worker’s compensation provider regarding employee benefits should an employee become ill as a result of COVID-19 exposure?

Immediately Prior to Opening

- How will you handle onboarding of new personnel prior to reopening of facilities?
- What self-reporting expectations can be set forth for self-disclosure by employees? Have you consulted with your school division attorney to establish the parameters for self-reporting and determine how HIPPA guidelines impact these decisions?
- Do you plan to revise your evaluation documents and associated timelines to accommodate for any potential modifications in instructional delivery and operating schedules?
- How will the use of distance learning, video conferencing impact division technology use and boundary policies? Have you consulted with your school division attorney to determine whether modifications to policies are necessary?

Open and Operating

- How will you handle pay for contracted, hourly, substitutes, coaching supplements and stipends if changes in operational schedules are required?
- What are your plans for supporting the social emotional needs of your employees?

RESOURCES FOR HUMAN RESOURCES

- [Here's How Many Teaching Jobs Could Be Lost in Each State in a COVID-19 Recession - Politics K-12 - Education Week.pdf](#)
- [Superintendent's Memo #202-10](#)

STUDENT AND STAFF SUPPORTS

In addition to prioritizing the health and safety of students and staff as school buildings reopen, the social emotional well-being of students, their families and school division staff should be a top priority for division school leaders. School divisions should consider a variety of flexible policies and supports that address a range of student and staff needs in order to implement successful recovery plans.

REMOTE LEARNING AND TELEWORK POLICIES

The public health community has identified a number of populations of individuals who are at greater risk of severe illness from COVID-19, and for whom more stringent physical distancing is necessary. Therefore, per the Governor's phased reopening plan, divisions should implement policies that provide for remote learning exceptions for students and teleworking for staff who are at a higher risk for severe illness and who are therefore safer at home. [Additional resources about this population of individuals and actions to protect them are online here.](#) Divisions should be prepared to consult with school division counsel to adjust these policies as needed as more is understood about COVID-19 and its transmission.

Additionally, divisions will need to be responsive to the evolving needs of students, staff and their families during this pandemic. Some school community members will get sick, need to care for sick family members, and face significant disruptions in their personal lives as the pandemic continues to take a toll on all aspects of our society. Additionally, the mental health of students and staff should remain a top priority during these challenging times. Divisions should consider mental health supports and leave policies for students and staff, in addition to procedures that promote their physical health.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING OF STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

As school divisions plan for an eventual reopening of schools, parents and caregivers are key stakeholders to engage and consider in developing the plan. While many parents are excited to have their children return to school, others may be anxious about the readiness of schools to reopen. School division leaders need to consider the following key areas:

- Parents and caregivers may be concerned about how schools will ensure the health and safety of their children. Some may decide to keep their children at home due to lack of confidence in public health measures. Have you consulted with your school division attorney to ensure that compulsory attendance requirements will be met?
- The economic impact of COVID-19 may create stressors for many families who are struggling to meet their basic needs such as food, housing, or access to medical care.
- Schools have a diverse population of students and their families who may face different barriers. School divisions will need to consider the specific needs of various groups or subgroups, such as students experiencing homelessness, students with disabilities, students in foster care, low-income students, and immigrant or refugee families.
- Depending on school schedules, hybrid instructional models, or rolling closures, parents and caregivers may

face challenges with balancing their work schedules and caring for their children at home.

- In addition to managing their children’s social emotional health, parents and caregivers may also be coping with their own anxieties, grief and loss, or with strained family dynamics exacerbated by changes due to COVID-19.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How do we effectively communicate with and re-engage families? How do we include parent feedback in responding to evolving challenges?
- How do we meet the specific needs of the students and families with diverse backgrounds?
- How do we accommodate the needs of students and families who are most at risk from COVID-19 or who have difficulties with meeting public health guidelines?
- What community resources are available to assist students and their families? How do we help families connect with and support each other?
- How do we connect families with services for children and adults, particularly mental health services, crisis response, and wraparound services?
- What coordination and collaborations with community partners are needed to provide flexible supports for families with out-of-school time?
- Have you consulted with your school division attorney to determine to develop a plan for how to balance protecting students’ and families’ privacy with coordination and communication with stakeholders regarding public health?

RESOURCES

[COVID-19 Parent Guide](#): the VDOE has created a guide to serve as a resource for parents, families, and caregivers on a variety of topics related to COVID-19 and their students.

[Social Emotional Wellness Considerations for Parents and Caregivers](#): quick reference resources for parents and families in supporting their own social emotional wellness.

[Project HOPE-Virginia Resources for Families in Crisis](#): the Office of the State Coordinator for Homeless Education, has created a dedicated resource page for families in crisis.

[Enhancing Family Engagement and Re-engagement](#): the School Mental Health Program at UCLA provides applications designed to engage and re-engage families, focusing on differences among families with respect to resources, motivation and needs, and barriers to involvement with the school.

[Addressing Families’ Social-Emotional Needs During COVID-19](#): the K-12 Info Brief from Hanover Research provides strategies for supporting the social-emotional needs of families, including communication practices for school divisions.

IDENTIFYING ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Teachers are among those most engaged with children and students on a regular and ongoing basis. As such, it is often our teachers that are able to identify when students are having difficulties at home, including instances of abuse or neglect. Even in online or remote settings, teachers should remain cognizant of the importance of their role as mandated reporters of abuse or neglect (per § 63.2-1509). However, it is not always as easy to detect the signs and indicators without regular, face-to-face interaction. Local school divisions should work with their local departments of social services to help ensure that teachers have the tools they need to detect abuse or neglect in all learning environments. School divisions may also consider distributing relevant resources broadly to encourage community engagement in protecting children and students.

[Families Forward Guidance for Counselors and Teachers during COVID19 and Other Crises](#)

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS FOR SCHOOL STAFF

As school divisions prepare to reopen after COVID-19 school closures, school personnel are critical resources and will need significant support to ensure their wellness and safety. A recovery plan that meets a range of professional and emotional needs will help school staff to feel ready to return to teaching. Important issues leaders will need to plan for:

- To be effective instructional leaders, staff may need a comprehensive range of information, professional development, and training to prepare them to meet evolving challenges.
 - New operational procedures and instructional models such as hybrid distance learning strategies may require ongoing education and guidance for staff.
 - To compensate for lost instructional time and due to anticipated increased emotional distress for students after a prolonged school closure, additional and new practices and pedagogy will need to focus on academics as well as social emotional learning for students.
 - Trauma-sensitive practices will be beneficial especially in supporting vulnerable students and reinforcing a positive school climate. Increased mental health knowledge will help staff to identify and respond to stress reactions from others.
 - To be responsive to students' and families' needs, staff will need readily available material to share, from basic needs to mental health resources.
- All members of the school community have been through a crisis. While it is important to focus on the social emotional wellness of students, school staff has also been impacted. Returning staff will have different emotions and abilities to adjust to the transition back to school, meet changing expectations, and manage increased student needs. Staff may also be dealing with their own worries and anxieties for themselves and their families. Some may be grieving losses of family members, colleagues, or students who are no longer with the school or who have succumbed to the illness. Social emotional learning and self-care starts with adults, and leaders should consider making resources available and build well-being activities into daily routines for staff. Staff experiencing more difficulties may need positive coping mechanisms, additional mental health services, or crisis support.
- In addition to the mental well-being of school staff, division leaders need to develop flexible and creative plans for staffing that will reduce stressors for school employees. Many educators may need help with child care in order to perform their jobs. They may become sick or must care for family members. Staff shortages may result from hiring freezes, staff illnesses, increased student needs, or the need for additional personnel based on new operational procedures. School divisions will need to consider a range of staffing options and resource needs in anticipation of various scenarios.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How do we provide a multi-tiered system of supports for staff and recognize when someone needs additional assistance? What resources or services such as Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and telehealth options will be available to school staff?
- How do we prioritize staff self-care to prevent compassion fatigue and burnout?
- What professional learning and training opportunities do school staff need, and what types of collegial support such as mentors or coaches are available?
- What supports are available to teachers who need assistance with classroom behavior management?
- What plans do we have to ensure staffing capacity? What school division policies or regulations need to be updated to support staff, and how do we protect staff who are most at risk from COVID-19?

RESOURCES

[COVID-19 and Virginia Public Schools](#): the VDOE provides guidance, support documents, and resources for schools and families relating to COVID-19.

[Social Emotional Wellness Quick Guides](#): the VDOE has developed a series of guides for educators and families that offer key facts, essential questions, and resources to support their own well-being and that of their students.

[Plan Ahead to Support the Transition Back](#): the Center for Mental Health in Schools at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) highlights essential supports for the transition to schools reopening.

[NCSMH Resources for Staff and Administrators](#): the National Center on School Mental Health (NCSMH) accumulated resources and tips for school staff to protect their health and the health of those around them.

[Trails to Wellness](#): the University of Michigan Trails offers a menu of strategies for self-care, each grounded in empirical research.

[School Mental Health Quality Guides](#): the NCSMH School Mental Health Quality Guides is a series that provides guidance to school mental health systems to advance the quality of their services and supports.

[Resilient Educator COVID-19 Toolkit](#): this toolkit equips teachers with actionable strategies and advice in working with and supporting children, parents, and families during these difficult times. Rich teacher wellness and self-care resources nurture teachers to become more resilient.

[Compassion Resilience Toolkit](#): this offers information, activities, and resources for school leadership and staff to understand, recognize, and minimize the experience of compassion fatigue and increase compassion resilience. It is designed for flexible implementation by facilitators within their school.

[Coping with the COVID-19 Crisis: The Importance of Care for Caregivers Tips for Administrators and Crisis Teams](#): the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) provides tips for how to support themselves and others.

SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS

When schools were closed to mitigate the spread of the novel coronavirus, the lives of students and their families were unexpectedly disrupted beyond what anyone imagined. As the closure due to the pandemic has extended from days to weeks and now months, the stress of the change is being experienced by all but in different ways. Access to resources and a variety of other factors impact the ability of students and their families to manage the strain. Acknowledging and planning for the unique needs of students is part of the daily work of schools. The unique circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic require extra effort on the part of schools to create environments which foster student success.

Due to the extended closure, the normal routine of the school day has become a distant memory for some. As school divisions create plans to reopen schools in phases, routines and expectations will need to be re-established. Care must be taken to accommodate mental health needs of students which may have been exacerbated in these uncertain times. School leaders should anticipate potential student angst and work with staff to establish protocols which reflect restorative practices within Codes of Conduct. Student success is measured by more than test scores and school divisions have the responsibility to ensure students can assimilate into a new educational paradigm.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

The cumulative effects of COVID-19 have had an impact on every student, every family, and every staff member across Virginia. These universal impacts have heightened the need for learning environments that are welcoming to and supportive of all students. We can help students weather this crisis through recognizing and responding to their emotions and leaning on positive, prosocial relationships. Social emotional learning (SEL) is critical to re-engage students, support adults, rebuild relationships and school communities, and create equitable learning environments for all students.

KEY FACTORS

QUALITY OVER QUANTITY: Leaders should carefully select specific and targeted initiatives that can be implemented with fidelity and embraced by school staff. SEL initiatives hinge on manageability of implementation, teacher buy-in,

and authenticity.

COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT: According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), the goal of a social emotional learning (SEL) program is to foster the development of five emotional and behavioral competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

DEDICATED TEAM: Schools may use existing teams focused on multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), student services, student support teams (SST), or social-emotional learning (SEL) for the planning and implementation of social-emotional and wellness curriculum and supports. SEL teams should consist of administrators, teachers, non-instructional staff, after/before-school providers, other community partners, students, and families. School divisions may also wish to establish a specific SEL team to support the return to schooling following COVID-19.

VALUING STUDENT VOICE: Including students in SEL action planning is a key component. School teams must have meaningful conversations with their students to understand their perceptions and gain feedback on future plans and current initiatives.

TEACHER SOCIAL EMOTIONAL WELLNESS: Social emotional learning and self-care starts with adults, and planning for supports for staff can increase the efficacy of the model and training. Leaders should consider making resources available and build well-being activities into daily routines for staff. School leaders should model their interactions with staff how they want their teachers to interact with students. Staff experiencing more difficulties may need positive coping mechanisms, additional mental health services, or crisis support.

PRIORITIZE TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION BETWEEN FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS: Communication between schools, families, and community organizations has always been critical to SEL, but is particularly front and center during this time of uncertainty and transition. That means that to promote SEL, schools and families will need to work closely to learn from and support one another in creating the environments that can support students socially and emotionally, which includes helping families address their own stresses, anxieties, etc. and asking families to inform school and division approaches to SEL.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How are we cultivating an emotionally safe and engaging learning environment that prioritizes relationship building?
- What data sources can we use to examine the development, needs, and perspectives of our students, families, and staff so that we can purposefully select SEL initiatives that align with our needs?
- Do we need to re-examine current staff roles and responsibilities in order to effectively utilize our school counselors and other mental health specialists to enhance the delivery of our SEL initiatives?
- How can we value and foster staff SEL development through purposeful incorporation in meetings, routines, staff-expectations, and professional development?

RESOURCES

The VDOE, Office of Student Services (OSS), has compiled [Instructional Support Mental Health Resources During School Closures](#) (Word) as well as targeted [Social Emotional Wellness Guides](#) to assist division instructional support personnel with mental health and wellness service delivery during school closures.

[Leveraging SEL to Reopen and Renew Your School Community \(CASEL\)](#): This guide positions SEL as a critical underpinning to the success of overall transition planning, recognizing school leaders have multiple other considerations for reopening schools, including academics, operations, access to technology, and physical health.

[Mental Health/Social Emotional Well-Being Resources from PBIS](#): Education and mental health leaders understand the need to establish one system of social-emotional and behavioral supports in schools. The Interconnected Systems Framework (ISF) is a way to blend Positive behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) with mental health supports in schools.

[Guidance for Teachers and Counselors during COVID-19 and other Crises](#): This tool is to provide guidance and support as you continue to be a role-model and champion for students.

[Planning for Virtual/Distance School Counseling During COVID-19](#)

[SEL Three Signature Practices Playbook](#): Practice ways to introduce and broaden the use of SEL Practices in classrooms, schools and workplaces.

[Kernels of Practice for SEL: Low-Cost, Low-Burden Strategies](#): This brief analyzes widely-used SEL programs and provides comprehensive details, transparent information, and provides cross-program analysis about the various in-school and out-of-school time programs that are currently available.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

[Social Emotional Learning at Home](#): Remote Learning Options (MHTTC) This resource provides ways to bring SEL activities into distance learning. There is also a guide to SEL activities that families, students, and teachers can print out or access online.

[Closegap](#) is a free web-based portal that educators can use to assess the social emotional status of their students each day, and provide them with additional support if needed.

[EVERFI's](#) free, online social emotional learning resources are designed to equip educators with tools to nurture skills like compassion, leadership, conflict resolution, self-awareness, and resilience. [Register here](#).

[PATHS](#) is an online social emotional learning program and curriculum that is currently free to educators.

[Rethink Ed Social and Emotional Learning and Mental Health](#): This is an evidence-based program delivered on a digital platform and designed for easy implementation.

[Elementary Book Nook for Dealing with Big Emotions](#)

[Emotional Well-Being Resources for Grades PreK-5](#)

[Emotional Well-Being Resources for Grades 6-12](#)

[SEL Providers Council Free Resources](#): The SEL Providers Council is committed to providing free resources and curriculum to support e-learning efforts across the country. Follow the links to each provider's individual page where the curriculum is located.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

When students return to school after an extended closure, their needs may be very different. To facilitate a successful school opening, local education agencies (LEAs) should create guidance in order to be proactive when considering, planning, and implementing both procedural and substantive aspects of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for students with disabilities. School division guidance should focus on the following: safety, health, and welfare of all students; provision of FAPE; identification of the need for and provision of compensatory services; consistent and detailed documentation of services and supports; and consistent communication with families regarding the Individualized Education Program (IEP).

School divisions are encouraged to maximize leadership to align the priorities, supports and services of special education with general education. These priorities should focus on academic as well as auxiliary supports needed to close achievement and opportunity gaps that existed before and may have been exacerbated by the extended school closure. Special Education Administrators need to be at the table in order to make plans from a division level perspective and communicate next steps to building level leadership.

COVID-19 or any response initiatives be it professional development, technical assistance, or training opportunities should include all staff who play a role in the provision of services to students with disabilities. This includes but is not limited to special education teachers, bus drivers, general education co-teachers, and classroom aides.

The [Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia](#) (Regulations) are the state requirements that outline obligations under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Public schools are required to follow the Regulations. However, they do offer latitude for adjustments per student needs such as parents agreeing to an IEP amendment without convening a meeting. The VDOE's Department of Special Education and Student Services developed a guidance document for Special Education Directors to assist them in preparing school staff and parents for the return of students with disabilities to school settings. The document entitled, "Special Education Students After COVID-19 – Key Considerations," This document addresses potential topics, issues, and impactful factors divisions may encounter as they prepare for students' return to school. Some of the considerations in this document recommend division changes that will have a direct effect on all students. It is important to note that some changes could have a financial impact on local educational agencies (LEA). In addition to providing guidance to local school divisions, this document identifies opportunities for projects and initiatives to be supported by the CARES Act funding. Planning for students with disabilities should be conducted alongside general education to utilize other funding sources as well as assist in a cohesive unified approach for all students.

The school closures have also had varying impacts on students previously attending private day schools. As private day and public schools gradually reopen, all parties should collaborate to ensure the unique needs of each student are met. Local school divisions should work with their local Community Policy and Management Teams (CPMT), local CSA office and partnering private schools to discuss this matter as transitions through the reopening phases occur. Ongoing communication by all parties will be critical to ensure the needs of students are met as public health conditions evolve.

RESOURCES

- [VDOE Special Education and Student Services' Frequently Asked Questions](#) (Word) – This document provides school divisions and stakeholders with information and solutions around the provision of services for special education and student services.
- [Instructional Resources Supporting Students with Disabilities](#) (Word) – This repository of resources has been compiled to support Virginia school divisions as they endeavor to meet the continuing learning needs of their students with disabilities during the COVID-19 school closures.
 - [TTAC ONLINE](#)
 - [Accessible Instructional Materials Virginia \(AIM-VA\)](#)
 - [Autism Center for Excellence](#)
- [Virtual IEP Meeting Tip Sheets](#) – This resource was developed by the U. S. Department of Education's grant funded centers to support parents in understanding how to hold and participate in virtual IEP meetings.
- [Special Education Regulatory Resources](#) - This webpage from the Virginia Department of Education provides information on a variety of special education topics to include Fast Facts, Procedural Safeguards, Service and Staffing as well as Outside Resources.
- [SSEAC Statement on Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) (Word) – This document was created to serve as an additional resource for school divisions, parents, and stakeholders with information related to COVID-19.
- [National Center for Systemic Improvement](#) (NCSI) - This webpage hosts COVID-19 Resources for supporting students with disabilities.
- [Supporting Individuals with Autism Through Uncertain Times](#) - This guide from the UNC Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute contains evidence-based strategies to support students with changes in routines and expectations.

VULNERABLE LEARNERS

Schools should be taking a proactive approach to identify and prioritize acceleration needs for learning due to the COVID-19 school closure. Effective schools will support their stakeholders as they work together to navigate new territories, formats, and systems of learning to provide students with a meaningful education that prepares them for a successful future. In this, schools must adjust supports to meet the needs of identified groups of vulnerable learners, focusing on equity and quality over quantity and the status quo prior to school closures. Recognizing that traditional bell-to-bell teaching is no longer feasible in distance learning environments that may extend into the fall; schools need to maximize contact, communication, and instruction in a way that does what is best for students.

Vulnerable students in particular may experience more drastic declines in their motivation, connection to school, and self-efficacy, compared to their peers. Educators should be prepared for the possibility that the students who benefit the most from the structures and support from schools may feel abandoned and not see the benefits anymore. An opportunity from this crisis is the opportunity to reimagine school for true equity; to implement innovative and best educational practices that build students' identities, agency, and Virginia's 5 C skills, as described in the [Virginia Learns Anywhere document](#) (page 23).

What are the various populations of students who will need targeted attention throughout all phases, as they may be the most impacted by the extended school closures?

- Early learners, English Learners, students experiencing homelessness, students from low socio-economic backgrounds, and students with disabilities, and students with social/emotional needs
- Students experiencing food, housing, or healthcare insecurity
- Students under state care, including foster care, detention facilities, and hospitals
- Students requiring Therapeutic Day Treatment Services
- Students with auditory or visual impairments
- Students experiencing trauma as a result of COVID-19, including those who have been personally impacted by personal or family illness, family death or job loss
- Academically vulnerable students, including students that need additional support to reach the academic standards necessary for promotion to the next grade level or graduation
- Students with a previous history of inconsistent attendance
- Students in transitional years of their education (transitioning to middle or high school).
- First-generation college-bound students, including those participating in AVID and other programs that promote equitable access to rigorous coursework
- Students with medical conditions
- Students 18 years of age and older
- Accelerated and gifted students

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR SCHOOL DIVISIONS

- Establish **measurable goals and monitoring systems** for student access and engagement.
- Establish **measurable goals and monitoring systems** for students' social-emotional and academic learning.
- Develop a **data analysis plan** to determine periodic progress towards the goals.
- Plan and ensure that **IEP services** are reflective of the school's new general education plan/schedule.
 - Consider Specially-Designed Instruction (SDI) plans (e.g. specific to virtual learning, meet virtually with case managers, sharing screenshots, students/families need to know that the virtual supports are there).
 - Develop a protocol/checklist for LIEP services, based on WIDA standards and proficiency level descriptors and performance definitions, for ELs (per civil rights guidelines), curriculum, and focus on language development rubrics, using content as a means for practicing and using academic English.
- Conduct ongoing needs assessments from all stakeholders

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR TEACHERS

- **Identify individual students** within classes who may need extra resources and targeted supports, in

addition to the identified groups above.

- **Collaborate with school counselors** to quickly support the expressed needs of vulnerable students, as they arise or are discovered.
- Implement **instruction consistent with IEPs/504 plans**.
- **Differentiate instruction and materials** for a variety of proficiency levels of ELs.
- Connect with [Training and Technical Assistance Centers \(TTACs\)](#), who offer regional support to school divisions and teachers for students with disabilities.
- Refer to [Virginia Tiered Systems of Support COVID-19 update](#) to inform revisions to curriculum and instructional practice.

MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORTS

School closures due to COVID-19 have created stress, anxiety, fear, depression, and trauma for some students and adults. For some, symptoms that existed before COVID-19 may have been exacerbated by these closures. As we prepare for a transition back to school instruction, planning must focus on how schools can address barriers to learning and re-engage disconnected students. Schools know that emotional, behavior, and learning problems are interconnected and can negatively impact even the best instruction and teachers. To address the varying levels of impact, a multi-tiered approach to mental health supports and services may be the best way to provide equitable learning opportunities for our students. Tier 1 or universal supports and practices are provided for all students in all classrooms. Some students, though, may require additional intervention (Tier 2) and mental health treatment (Tier 3).

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS FOR PLANNING

Identification Do we have a data driven systematic approach (e.g. progress monitoring or mental health screening) in place to identify students that require Tier 2 and Tier 3 mental health supports? If not, what needs to be in place for schools to determine when students require additional support?

Personnel What school staff are available to provide mental health supports and services to students? Are there ways to ensure that current staff can be available to provide that support? If not, do we need to consider additional personnel?

Practices What current evidence-based or other practices do we have in place to support the mental health needs of students? Are there ways to expand those practices to meet the needs of more students?

Telehealth Are we providing mental health consultation and counseling services virtually to our students during the school closure? How might those services look when schools reopen? What do we need to put in place to offer those services?

Collaborate How can we collaborate with community agencies and private providers to ensure that all students have access to effective Tier 2 and Tier 3 mental health supports and services?

Equity How will we provide supports for (and not punish/re-traumatize) those not adjusting well?

KEY FACTORS

Positive School Climate - In a positive school climate, students feel safe, connected, and engaged in learning. Schools need to consider what practices are currently in place (e.g. Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports, Social Emotional Learning, Trauma Informed Practices) and could be expanded on in order to strengthen their school climate. By expanding these practices, students are more likely to respond favorably to universal supports and there may be fewer students that require Tier 2 and Tier 3 mental health supports.

Student Groups at Increased Risk for Mental Health Concerns- Each school community has unique needs. In order to prepare for school reopening, schools need to identify which students may be at risk for needing Tier 2 or Tier 3 mental health supports and services. Students at increased risk may include, but are not limited to students with

existing mental health concerns, students experiencing significant changes (e.g. youth in military families, youth that are homeless or in foster care), students in violent homes or experiencing trauma, LGBTQ students, and students who have experienced loss.

Mental Health Early Intervention and Treatment - At Tier 2, students continue to receive universal supports but also receive early intervention, which may include group intervention with students with similar needs, mentoring, or additional classroom support, such as daily check-ins with the teacher or a home-school note system. Students who continue to struggle, may require additional Tier 3 mental health treatment. This treatment is individualized and provided by school-based or community mental health providers.

Mental Health Personnel - School counselors, school psychologists, and school social workers have the education and training to provide mental health services and supports to students in schools. They are also assigned additional responsibilities. In planning for the increased mental health needs of students, schools need to determine how available those personnel will be to address mental health needs.

Community Resources - Each school community has different resources to draw from in order to provide mental health services. Collaboration between schools and community mental health is essential to meet the needs of students.

Virtual Delivery - During the school closures, schools have provided learning, counseling, and consultation with parents through virtual platforms. Although much of that may change with schools reopening, there may still be opportunities to use telehealth services to meet the mental health needs of students. Identifying the community needs (i.e. bandwidth and availability of technology) of families is important to provide equitable access to mental health services.

RESOURCES

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES FOR SCHOOLS

[MHA: Tools 2 Thrive Toolkit](#) (Mental Health America)

[Responding to COVID-19 | School Mental Health Resources](#) (Mental Health Technology Transfer Center, MHTTC)

[Supporting Student Mental Health: Resources to Prepare Educators](#) (MHTTC)

[Mental Health Framework](#) (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction)

[COVID-19: Crisis and Mental Health](#) (National Association of School Psychologists, NASP)

MENTAL HEALTH AT TIER 2 AND TIER 3

[Early Intervention and Treatment Services Guide \(Tier 2 and 3\)](#) (National Center on School Mental Health, NCSMH)

[NCSMH Telehealth Guidance and Training](#): Technology to support school mental health at Tier 2 and Tier 3.

[Standards for Technology in Social Work Practice](#): A collaborative report by the National Association of Social Workers, Council on Social Work Education, Association of Social Work Boards, and Clinical Social Work Association.

[HIPAA and FERPA Infographic](#) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

[Planning for Virtual/Distance School Counseling During COVID-19](#) (American School Counselor Association, ASCA)

SPECIFIC MENTAL HEALTH TOPICS

[Comprehensive Suicide Prevention and Intervention During Distance Learning](#) (NASP)

[A Tip Sheet for School Counselors: Supporting LGBTQ Students During the Coronavirus Quarantine](#) (Human Rights campaign Foundation and ASCA)

TRAUMA SENSITIVE SCHOOLS

[Trauma Sensitive Schools \(TSS\) Online Professional Development System](#) (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction)

[Trauma Sensitive Schools: Helping Traumatized Children Learn](#) (Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative)

SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

Planning for and developing division and schoolwide positive and preventative disciplinary practices is a priority for local school divisions when returning to school following the COVID-19 school closures. School divisions can do this by developing a trauma-sensitive approach to discipline practices. A schoolwide positive behavior approach teaches appropriate behavior and ensures student safety in a supportive learning environment. Students who feel safe and supported are better equipped to learn, and learning is the fundamental goal for all students in all schools. The U.S. Department of Education recommends these guiding principles in an approach to improve school climate and discipline:

1. Create positive school climates that focus on prevention;
2. Develop clear appropriate and consistent expectations and consequences to address disruptive student behaviors; and
3. Ensure fairness, equity, and continuous improvement.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), a school environment that is warm, friendly and rewarding promotes cooperation rather than competition; facilitates supportive, open communications; views the provision of creative opportunities as important; and prevents physical punishment, bullying, harassment and violence.

As students and staff return to school, it is important to remember that behaviors communicate needs. Understanding what the behavior is communicating is more important than ever in the aftermath of a pandemic that has impacted many facets of children's and adult's lives. It is the adults' responsibility to understand what is being communicated and to respond with appropriate interventions to meet those needs. If a student does not understand that $2 + 2 = 4$, we teach. The same is true with behavior. When students don't understand the harm their behavior causes, we should teach, not through punitive means, but through approaches that are known to work and based on sound evidence – social emotional learning, restorative practices, and trauma-informed care.

Developing clear, consistent, equitable school-wide behavior expectations with a plan to teach and reteach expectations to all students is an important first step towards creating a trauma sensitive approach and to preventing potential discipline issues. A leadership team representative of all stakeholders should be formed to develop a school-wide discipline plan (many schools and local divisions already have such a mechanism). That team should consider the traumatic experiences and the safety of students and staff as they set the behavior expectations for reopening. Teams should consider these questions:

How have the behaviors we expect to see in our school changed? What has stayed the same? What new behaviors do we need to teach? How can those new behaviors be related to our previous expectations?

1. What are our school-wide behavior expectations? What are the routines we need to explicitly teach and reteach students?
2. Are the expectations, routines, and related behaviors free from implicit bias?
3. How can we build social emotional learning (SEL) skills through routines and explicit instruction?
4. How can we improve our capacity to provide a trauma-sensitive school environment related to behavior expectations and discipline practices?
5. Do our policies and practices avoid excluding students from school and provide for opportunities to teach behavior expectations while students continue to engage academically?
6. When behavior incidents occur, what process will we follow to address them? What social emotional, behavioral, and academic supports are needed to change the behavior and continue academic progress?
7. Do we consistently meet to discuss school-wide data and analyze hot-spots related to behavior in the school?
8. How do we ensure that all students and staff are treated equitably?
9. How can we measure our success at creating a safe, warm, friendly place to learn? What data will we gather? How will that data be used?

Establishing behavioral expectations that are clear, consistent, and equitable is the foundation for creating a safe,

supportive school climate where each student is able to achieve and grow. Teaching and reteaching ways to meet those expectations, providing appropriate support, and acknowledging success are key to preventative discipline. Through genuine, supportive relationships, processes that restore when harm is done, and instruction in social emotional learning skills, every student can achieve in a school that is safe, warm, friendly, and rewarding.

RESOURCES

Virginia Board of Education's [Model Guidance for Positive and Preventative Code of Student Conduct Policy and Alternatives to Suspension](#)

[Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports: Defusing Disruptive Behavior](#)

[Responding to the Novel Coronavirus Outbreak through PBIS](#)

[Getting Back to School after Disruptions: Resources for Making Your School Year Safer, More Predictable, and More Positive](#)

[Teaching Expectations and Reinforcement Systems](#)

[Embedding Culturally Responsive Practices in Tier 1](#)

[Trauma Sensitive School Training Package](#)

[Mid-Atlantic PBIS Community Conversation Webinar Series](#): In this video webinar, Dr. George Sugai explores how to leverage multi-tiered systems to plan for return to school.

[CASEL CARES](#): A new initiative from The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) that connects the global community with experts to address how SEL can be most helpful in response to today's circumstances.

INSTRUCTION

2020-2021 MANDATE FOR NEW INSTRUCTION

Governor Northam announced a plan for phased reopening in Virginia’s school buildings which gradually allows in-person instructional opportunities for students as public health conditions permit. Balancing health and safety as key priorities, the Superintendent of Public Instruction is also committed to providing local school divisions with the support they need to ensure the maintenance of instructional rigor and compliance with state-level requirements. All divisions must resume new instruction with all students for the 2020-2021 school year. While in-person and virtual instruction delivery will vary by division, all schools are expected to provide instruction in new content over the course of the year.

Phases I, II, and III of the reopening framework may require local school divisions to make adjustments to their school days and school calendars to meet physical distancing requirements and implement mitigation strategies. As such, requests to waive the 180-day/990-hour length of school term requirement as provided in § [22.1-98](#) of the *Code of Virginia* will be generously considered assuming instructional quality for all learners is guaranteed. Division superintendents will be required to certify the following are being implemented in their divisions:

- New students are being enrolled;
- Students in need of specialized instruction, whether English learners, special education, or gifted, are being identified early and accommodated appropriately;
- All students are receiving new instruction;
- Students with disabilities are being served and their IEPs are being fulfilled;
- Students greater risk of health complications who are safer at home are offered robust remote/virtual learning opportunities at all times;
- Remediation opportunities exist for students who need them; and
- Instruction/curriculum and pacing include thoughtful response to recovery/ learning loss.

When school divisions transition back to full school days for all students, they will be required to meet length of school term and instructional time requirements, proportionate to time adjustments in earlier phases. No additional waivers of teaching time requirements will be considered unless there are extenuating circumstances and in such cases, local school divisions will need to adhere to the waiver request process outlined in § [22.1-98](#) of the *Code of Virginia*. While normal school operations may have resumed, the Superintendent of Public Instruction will still provide flexibility on average daily membership counts as not all parents and students will be comfortable returning to the classroom at the same pace as reopening.

In order to ensure students move forward in their education, nothing in this guidance prevents a division from enforcing the compulsory attendance requirements set forth in § [22.1-254](#) of the *Code of Virginia*, which permits participation in educational programs and courses at a site remote from the school with the permission of the school and in conformity with applicable requirements. Thus, participation in remote and virtual learning would be required, but divisions should plan for flexibility in the time required.

RESUMING TEACHING AND LEARNING

On March 13, 2020, Virginia’s public schools were closed to students and teachers for in-class instruction for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. Teachers across the Commonwealth adapted their instruction in accordance with [Virginia’s Continuity for Learning Framework](#) to provide opportunities for students to continue learning from home. The abrupt interruption and shift in instructional approaches have illuminated a number of unique challenges.



As Virginia transitions from extended school closures into the 2020-2021 school year, school divisions need to shift from planning for providing continuity of learning to planning for continuity in equitable new instruction for ALL students.

- Dr. James F. Lane



Between March 13, 2020, and the return to school for 2020-2021, learning loss will be a major factor in recovery for all students. Students will have been out-of-school longer than they normally are for summer vacation. Research supports the fact that attrition will be even greater for some groups of students than others, especially for disadvantaged students.

“Schools do matter, and they matter the most when support for academic learning outside school is weak. . . . The powerful role of schools in fostering achievement of all children is one lesson informed by a seasonal perspective on learning. A second is that disadvantaged children, on the whole, are capable learners. They keep up during the school year, but before they start first grade and in summers between grades, the out-of-school resources available to them are not sufficient to support their achievement.”
Alexander, K.L., Entwistle, D.R., Olson, L.S. (2001)

School divisions will need to plan and implement efficient and effective ways to determine learning gaps that have manifested and grown during the extended school closure, address learning gaps through revisions to curricula and pacing, and prepare teachers and students for various models of instructional delivery. The recommendations found in this section will assist in planning and implementing curriculum, instruction, and professional development in accordance with their unique reopening conditions.

School divisions will need to prepare for various instructional delivery methods including:

- Traditional Instruction - face-to-face;
- Remote Instruction - online learning, student packets, pre-loaded computers and/or thumb drives; and
- Hybrid Instruction - both face-to-face and remote learning.

As school divisions begin to explore options for traditional or remote learning, careful consideration should be made to provide equitable access and support for a variety of student learning needs. Care should be taken not to exacerbate existing gaps in student achievement. It is critically important that all educators are mindful of the needs of vulnerable student groups including early learners, English Learners, students experiencing homelessness, students from low socio-economic backgrounds, and students with disabilities. Achieving equity in remote learning requires leaders to be intentional about ensuring support for student populations that often already have reduced opportunities for academic success in our traditional in-person education model. As you review the recommendations and resources provided, please take care to keep equity at the forefront of your planning. Educators are equity champions in our communities, and we must ensure that the needs of ALL learners remain our priority during this time.

The recommendations for Instruction fall into four sections:

1. [Division-Level Considerations](#)
2. [Planning and Preparing for Instruction](#)
3. [Teaching, Monitoring, and Reflecting](#)
4. [Equitable Supports for Students](#)

Each section includes key considerations for successful recovery for students and recommendations for professional development to support the needs of faculty and staff, students and their families, and the community.

DIVISION-LEVEL CONSIDERATIONS

As students prepare to return to learn during the summer and fall, the following considerations are provided to guide division-level efforts. These critical elements have been identified to focus planning conversations: Community Engagement and Communication, Technology Needs, Lost Instruction, Needs of Special Populations, and Local Policy.

Community Engagement and Communication - Establish communication lines with parents and communicate plans and expectations.

- Develop consistent and transparent communications with families, including providing communications to:

- Families that are non-English speaking, with consideration to those who are not literate in their native language;
- families that require telephone communication; and
- families who require alternative methods of communication due to a disability.
- Develop a streamlined approach to communications that is consistent between buildings, grade levels, and teachers.
- Establish communication helplines for frequently asked questions.
- Develop a plan to identify and monitor students and families who need social and emotional learning (SEL) support.
- Consider ways to reaffirm with families who may feel disenfranchised or vulnerable the importance of education and of participating in remote learning.
- Develop a plan to collaborate with school communities on delivery of educational information and provide supports to enhance community engagement.
- Consider creative options for students who are difficult to reach, such as for those who may be difficult to reach: safe home visits, apartment complex partnerships for common space with different times for different age groups, flyers with QR codes dropped at doors, working with refugee/religious organizations that may have more access to or relationships with families, mail or deliver printed activities to students whose families do not have access to transportation and/or technology.
- Develop communications to identify school safety procedures, precautions, and measures related to COVID-19 to reinforce a safe school environment.
 - Physical distancing measures
 - Face covering policies and procedures
 - Cleaning and sanitation procedures
- Develop reflection teams on the COVID-19 pandemic that focus on:
 - What worked well?
 - What did not work well?
 - What possibilities exist for improvement?
 - What plan of action will be put into place to ensure a strong position for similar future events?
 - What lessons were learned that should be incorporated into teaching and learning going forward?
 - What are effective ways to survey families regarding technology accessibility?

Technology Needs - Identify technology assumptions and needs.

- Identify divisionwide needs (e.g., devices and Internet service).
- Distribute devices and/or Internet hot spots.
- Identify and establish areas for community access to WIFI.
- Work with local Internet providers to identify current access service areas.
- Partner with providers to improve and provide wireless Internet access points in remote communities.
- Develop plans to train families to use technology tools that support remote learning, with special attention provided to vulnerable populations, including families that require translation and/or interpreting services and those with housing insecurity.
 - Web-based resources can assist teachers and families in modifying online instruction to meet the needs of vulnerable populations, including special education and EL students. ([Loudoun County Public Schools example](#))
- Provide a Learning Management System (LMS) to deliver instructional content.
 - Verify that the necessary number of users are supported through the current contract.
 - If the school division does not currently have a LMS, then consider utilizing the expansion of the [Virtual Virginia](#)'s LMS services. School divisions may also import content from Virtual Virginia into their own LMS.
 - Consider how to monitor student instructional engagement remotely.

Lost Instruction - Identify the school division's approach to mitigate lost instruction.

- Identify impacted courses and programs.

- Choose methods for mitigation of lost instructional content in each course or program by
 - Developing learning modules (no-tech, low-tech, or high-tech/remote); and/or
 - Revising curricula to integrate missing content.

Needs of Special Populations - Supports for vulnerable groups (See [Equitable Supports for Students](#)).

- Ensure that all division- and school-level communications are provided in multiple languages spoken by the community.
- Develop a plan to revise Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)/504 plans to adjust learning goals due to lost instruction and address the potential for continued distance learning.
- Plan for the adaptation of collaborative teaching practices and supports to ensure that students with disabilities continue to be educated in the least restrictive environment.
- Ensure that English Learners (Levels 1-4.3) have contact with a Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP) specialist to the extent possible.
- Plan for safe and effective delivery of instruction for homebound students.

Local Policy - Identify local policy needs to support instructional and operational changes.

Potential areas for local policy reflection may include:

- 140 clock-hour requirement flexibility;
- Requirements for fire, tornado and lockdown drills;
- Expectations for student conduct in remote settings;
- Student attendance definitions to allow for remote attendance;
- Flexibility in dress codes to allow for protective face coverings;
- Impacts related to special populations;
- Grading and GPA calculation; and
- Transcripts and class ranking.

LOCAL ATTENDANCE POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Monitoring and tracking attendance in an online or remote environment is more challenging than in the brick and mortar school settings since teachers and administrators are not able to gauge attendance based on a visual observation or face-to-face interaction.

Local school boards will need to evaluate their policies on student attendance to allow for all potential learning environments. Among some of the key considerations local school boards should weigh are:

- What constitutes “in attendance” for either the brick and mortar or remote setting? Is it measured by time, engagement, or performance? Some focused questions might be whether attendance is measured by roll call, minutes of instruction, number of keystrokes, time logged in, participation, work product, or another measure?
- What are the equity considerations in your definition of attendance? For example, if measuring attendance by virtual engagement, would students with limited internet access or slower speeds be counted? How is attendance considered if the student does not have internet access at home but is using approved paper packets or is limited to time online at a public access point (such as a library)?
- When defining attendance, are there notable differences between “virtual”, “online” or “remote” settings that need to be addressed in local policy?
- What instructional delivery methods will the school division be employing and what are feasible and reasonable methods of measuring attendance?
- What are the data collection and reporting considerations?
- How are teachers and staff identifying truant students in an online or remote environment and how are supports being provided to those students?

Divisions should consult their school board attorney to ensure that nothing in their guidance shall be construed to excuse a parent or guardian from the compulsory attendance requirements set forth in § 22.1-254 of the Code of

Virginia, which permits participation in educational programs and courses at a site remote from the school with the permission of the school and in conformity with applicable requirements.

Additional VDOE guidance on attendance and related topics such as average daily membership, calculating instructional time, etc. is forthcoming.

Student Privacy: As instructional delivery methods and school administrative processes continue to evolve and adapt in response to the pandemic, school divisions should remain aware that the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99), or FERPA, and other applicable federal and state laws for the protection of a student’s personally identifiable information and maintenance of student education records remain in effect even in virtual and remote settings.

The U.S. Department of Education (USED) has provided guidance and a number of resources in helping to navigate FERPA in online and remote settings. An overview of FERPA can be found on the [USED page for protecting student privacy](#). Specific to FERPA and COVID-19, USED has also provided educational institutions with the following:

- [Frequently Asked Questions on FERPA and COVID-19](#);
- [FERPA and Virtual Learning Resources](#); and
- [FERPA and Virtual Learning PowerPoint](#).

PLANNING AND PREPARING FOR INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT

ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

Overall Assessment Considerations

A primary consideration in determining assessment strategies is that assessment should not be interpreted to mean a “testing event.” Rather, assessment is a process of data collection that is ongoing, formative, and low or no-stakes. In addition, consider student readiness when planning for assessment processes (e.g., addressing SEL needs first to help promote student confidence and competency). The following is a list of reminders to school divisions as they plan to identify student needs and instructional gaps.

- **Consider a combination/balance of broader diagnostics with “just-in-time” formative assessments** that inform immediate instructional needs.
- Consider the physical conditions under which students return, if **physical distancing** is required. Will classrooms, computer labs, and other instructional spaces be able to accommodate all students simultaneously?
- Consider ongoing **strategies to collect information from families** regarding their experiences during the school closure:
 - Many families were “thrust” into distance learning with little or no pre-planning. What new or additional supports/flexibilities for students and families are needed if distance learning is necessary or desired?
 - Accessibility and equity considerations: How can schools ensure that in-class and at-home experiences are comparable, if some families request a continuation of learning-at-home?
 - Specially-Designed Instruction (SDI) must be facilitated, especially if families are unable to provide learning support.
- **General considerations**
 - Determine what data from local assessments or other standardized assessments will be useful in evaluating student progress.
 - Consider creating an inventory of assessments used within the schools and determine their effectiveness by analyzing the data available that will assist with remediation and acceleration efforts.
 - Consider the use of “just-in-time” formative assessment prior to instruction to identify gaps in understanding instead of administering comprehensive assessments as the school year begins, and determine what professional development is needed to support this approach.
 - Utilize tools like Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) [guide to](#)

reopening schools.

- Utilize content progression tools to pinpoint targeted areas for individual student remediation (e.g., classroom remediation, intervention strategies, before/after school remediation or acceleration, expedited retakes, etc.) or acceleration.

Planning for Assessments to Identify Student Needs and Learning Gaps

As school divisions plan for assessing students to identify their social-emotional learning (SEL) needs or instructional gaps, the following list provides planning considerations.

- Consider, given the potential variability in school start dates, **calendar adjustments**, and the likelihood that some students may return to school at different times. Division- and school-based teams should consider utilizing existing student performance data from 2019-2020 (and prior) to help assess student learning needs and readiness.
 - Reading levels
 - Prior local/unit assessments and diagnostics
 - Mid-year assessments
 - Feedback from previous year's teachers through vertical team meetings
- Consider the ability to do **pre-assessments and/or surveys for SEL needs and potential instructional gaps** prior to the return to school:
 - Using online and/or at home pre-assessments or surveys
 - Scheduling small, staggered groups in the school
 - Assessing close to the return to school to capture most recent data
 - Accounting for individuals not reached in the summer
 - Using adaptive diagnostic assessments with remote proctoring features
- Consider **assessment variance by subject area and grade level** (e.g., assessing continuity gaps between grade 3 and grade 4 mathematics is different than between Algebra I and Geometry)
- Consider how "anecdotal" information could be leveraged to determine **SEL wellness**.
 - How can we help our teachers to be able to do this?
 - Consider open-ended questions on a Google form that maximizes responses from students.
 - Focus the in-person time on SEL and use virtual in a balanced way to address content.
 - How are we capturing student participation and engagement in the current reality as SEL data?
 - How do we define and track engagement?
 - Consider developing a communication/interaction "chain of contact" (with administrators, school counselors, the school psychologist, teachers, the school nurse, etc.) to connect with the most vulnerable students who have inconsistent attendance, poor technology access, health concerns, etc. Recognize that much of this effort will require a direct, 1:1 contact strategy (e.g., pre-arranged alternatives such as designated meeting place, schedule options, etc.). Utilize a "feeder" strategy to locate siblings who may be able to assist with contact.
- Consider **providing all students an SEL assessment**. This can be accomplished through morning meetings (elementary) or advisory meetings (secondary) to re-establish norms and assess mental wellness of students over an extended period of time.
- Consider how **assessment results should inform master scheduling**.
 - Consider compacted/stripped down curricula to address essentials.
 - Consider the appropriateness of selected teachers "looping" with students from the previous year to the next grade in elementary grades.
 - Consider what transitions may look like in the effort to isolate or put physical distance between students.
 - Consider a transition period at the elementary level that allows the previous year's teacher to welcome students back to school and support the new teacher in getting to know student strengths.
- Consider how reopening conditions may impact **testing windows and local resources for assessments** (Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS), Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP), locally implemented assessments, etc.)
 - Accessibility of devices if distance learning continues, and
 - Fewer students returning at a time/modified attendance schedule.
- Consider **identifying the students in the vulnerable populations** that we do not always capture (e.g. COVID-19 related trauma, parents not sending back to school, previous significant summer slide, other risk

factors, etc.). [Virginia's Continuity for Learning Framework](#) provides helpful resources (e.g., Appendices C and D) for schools with important considerations for vulnerable student populations.

- Children entering Kindergarten
 - Many students may be new to school or classroom setting; authentic assessment may take longer in order to fully evaluate children's skills
 - Assessment of social-emotional skills including self-regulation and social skills is essential
- English Learners
 - Translation/Interpretation services
 - How to use 2019-2020 WIDA ACCESS Data to inform support
 - Engaging and supporting families with English acquisition in the absence of "formal" school
- Students with Disabilities (SWD)
 - SWD Specialized Instruction that families are unable to provide
 - Continuation of testing accommodations
- Rural Students and Those with a Lack of Technology
 - Connectivity issues
 - Enough broadband or hotspots to serve
 - Consider providing learning/assessment opportunities that do not require connectivity.
 - Small groups come into the school to assess
 - Assessment brought to communities in small groups (Community centers, places of worship, etc.)
- Students Experiencing Poverty and/or Homelessness
 - Assessment brought to communities in small groups (Community centers, places of worship, etc.)
- Students Marginalized by Race
 - Provide culturally relevant instruction
 - Focus on high expectations for all and a growth mindset
 - Avoid using data to separate, rather to inform instruction
 - Consider how COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted the African-American community--more deaths
 - Consider that more Hispanic families are impacted by factors related to COVID-19 than other groups
 - Be sensitive to how different cultures may view and react to the COVID-19 crisis and returning to school
- Accelerated or Gifted Students
 - Consider learning needs for students who did not receive enrichment during the period of school closure
 - Consider curriculum compacting for students who do not need review, additional diagnostics, and are immediately ready for new/advanced learning

Implementing Assessments

Incorporate ongoing, formative diagnostic assessment into the first few weeks of school to support social-emotional learning (SEL), Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and fostering student confidence and competence.

- **Balance** the urgency of needing to know where students are academically with making them comfortable coming back to school.
- Consider **informal strategies for SEL assessments** and/or executive function screenings. This may include utilizing morning meetings, advisory periods, PBIS strategies, etc.
 - Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports (VTSS) schools may consider utilizing the [Tiered-Fidelity Inventory \(TFI\)](#) to identify a narrow set of school-wide strategies/practices to promote a consistent, inclusive, motivating, and safe return environment.
- Pre-assess students using small, frequent, "**just-in-time**" formative assessments.
 - Use "just-in-time" formative assessment prior to instruction to identify gaps in understanding instead of administering comprehensive assessments as the school year begins, and determine what professional development is needed to support this approach.
- **Engage families to support learning** by providing appropriate, leveled resources and support in how best to

utilize them.

- Account for how each plan includes and addresses the **specific needs of vulnerable populations** including:
 - English Learners
 - Translation/Interpretation services
 - How to use 2019-2020 WIDA ACCESS Data to inform support
 - Engaging and supporting families with English acquisition in the absence of “formal” school
 - Students with Disabilities (SWD)
 - SWD Specialized Instruction that families are unable to provide
 - Consider how to maintain and provide necessary accommodations under each of the reopening scenarios
 - Rural Students and Those with a Lack of Technology
 - Connectivity issues
 - Enough broadband or hotspots to serve
 - What can be done offline
 - Small groups come into the school to assess
 - Assessment brought to communities in small groups (Community centers, places of worship, etc.)
 - Students Experiencing Poverty and/or Homelessness
 - Assessment brought to communities in small groups (Community centers, places of worship, etc.)
 - Students Marginalized by Race
 - Focus on growth mindset and high expectations for all
 - Avoid using data to separate, rather to inform instruction
 - Avoid deficit mindset
 - Accelerated or Gifted Students

Resources to Consider

- [Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program](#)
- [Responsive Lesson Planning Template](#)
- [Sample Data Analysis Matrix Template - CCPS](#)
- [Sample Mathematics Pre-assessment Vertical Articulation Guide \(K-Algebra I\) - Hampton City Public Schools](#)
- [Sample Mathematics SPBQ Report - Hampton City Public Schools](#)

INSTRUCTION

Revising Curricula and Pacing

It is essential that school division curricula and pacing guides be revised to address missing content as a result of the extended school closures in Spring 2020. School divisions may want to consider regional solutions to curricula and pacing. This may include developing regional curricula, pacing, and instructional resources, as well as aligning school division professional development days to provide regional training.

There are four major components of curricula and pacing revision work - identification of instructional groups for which curricula/pacing may need to be revised, identification of the missing content, identification of content connections and progressions, and revision of curricula and pacing.

- **Identification of Instructional Groups** – Groups in need of revised curricula/pacing might include students in accelerated, adapted, or other programs, in addition to the majority groups in each grade level or course. Special consideration should be given to accelerated groups, particularly during the 2020-2021 school year, to ensure that students have sufficient time to recover unfinished learning from the previous school year while still allowing adequate time for the development of knowledge, skills, and processes in the new grade level. Rushing students through missed content from the previous school year, while attempting to instruct in new content at an accelerated pace, could have detrimental results in student understanding.
- **Identification of Missing Content** - The identification of missing content will include input from teachers and administrators, in conjunction with school division pacing guides.
 - Instructional Content Tracking Tools - VDOE has provided Standards of Learning instructional tracking logs to help teachers, schools and divisions track content.

- [English and Reading](#)
- [History and Social Science](#)
- [Mathematics](#)
- [Science](#)
- **Identification of Content Connections and Progressions** - Reflection on how the depth or complexity of instructional content progresses from grade level to grade level and course to course is imperative in assisting teachers with making connections that improve retention.
 - Content Progression Charts - VDOE has provided Standards of Learning content progression charts that will assist with making connections that are vital to revising content to address missing content. Hampton City Public Schools provides an [example](#) of how mathematics progressions can be utilized to assist teachers in understanding content connections.
 - English Progression Charts - Identify the grade/course at which specific skills are formally introduced in the 2017 English Standards of Learning (SOL) for [Communication](#), [Reading](#), [Writing](#), [Grammar](#), and [Research](#).
 - [History and Social Science Progression Charts](#) - Identify the grade/course at which specific skills are formally introduced in the 2015 History and Social Science SOL.
 - [Mathematics Progression Chart](#)s - Identify concepts aligned to the 2016 Mathematics SOL that articulate across mathematics grade levels or courses.
 - Science Progression Charts - Currently in development based on the 2018 Science SOL, however the [SOL and Curriculum Framework](#) documents will provide relevant information.
 - Fine Arts Progression Charts - The [2020 Fine Arts SOL](#) were approved in May 2020 by the Virginia Board of Education and progression charts are in development.
 - [World Language Progression Charts](#) - Based on the 2014 World Language SOL.
- **Revision of Curricula and Pacing** - Thoughtful work to review and revise curricula and pacing is essential to minimizing the long-term impact of extended school closures for all students. Utilizing content tracking tools and considering content connections and progressions, the revision of curricula and pacing will need to occur with the school division's approach to addressing missing content in mind. Some school divisions will be incorporating missing content into the next year's curricula and some will be developing instructional learning modules delivered by a self-paced, face-to-face, or blended (combination of self-paced and face-to-face) model.
 - Key considerations when developing instructional learning modules
 - Develop no tech, low tech, and high tech virtual and/or remote learning modules.
 - Provide for student choice and empower students - aimed at creating personalized learning opportunities with individualized assessments of and for learning that focus on deeper learning.
 - Integrate essential knowledge and Virginia's 5 C's - critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, collaboration, and citizenship.
 - Ensure instructional plans address the specific needs of diverse populations including early learners, English learners, students experiencing homelessness, economically disadvantaged students, and students with disabilities.
 - Use instructional models and tools with innovative approaches to teaching and learning, as outlined in the [Virginia Learns Anywhere](#) publication: learner centered, teacher centered, hybrid.
 - Ensure that assessments for learning are included that allow students to choose how they can demonstrate their ability to apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate.
 - Consider providing consistency in resources and tools including those used for communication to students and parents.

[Planning and Implementing Professional Development](#)

Sustained professional development is key to effective implementation. In the planning phases, it is imperative to consider the professional development needs of all primary stakeholders - teachers, students, and parents and the community. Ideas for professional development for each of these groups is provided.

- **Teachers**
 - Understanding and addressing the social and emotional needs of students
 - Understanding and addressing the needs of special populations including students with disabilities,

- English Learners, students that are economically disadvantaged, and others
- Understanding curriculum revision and pacing updates
- Learning Management Systems (LMS) - how to use a LMS to develop courses, manage content, manage assignments, develop assessments, and communicate effectively
- Teaching in an online and/or blended setting - classroom management, developing lessons that support deeper learning, integrating the 5 C's, and performance assessments. Consider providing templates/samples for lesson planning in remote learning.
- Accessing tools or resources for translation/interpretation services
- **Students**
 - Learning online
 - Digital citizenship, including expectations for student behaviors and etiquette in a virtual setting
 - Getting assistance with technology
 - Scheduling a learning day
 - Expectations for returning to a graded learning environment
- **Parents/Community**
 - Options for Internet access outside of the school building
 - Getting assistance with technology
 - Communicating with teachers, administrators, and school officials
 - Supporting children during remote learning
 - Scheduling/organizing a child's day
 - Understanding remote learning
 - Advocating for school division needs (necessary initiatives including the need for devices)
 - Providing social-emotional support
 - Providing information on changes to internal processes and systems (IEPs, school counseling, forms, fees, etc.)
- **Administrators**
 - Flexible scheduling
 - Teaching in an online and/or blended setting - classroom management, developing lessons that support deeper learning, integrating the 5 C's, and performance assessments. Consider providing templates/samples for lesson planning in remote learning.
 - Supporting and evaluating teachers in situations requiring remote or hybrid instruction
 - Understanding curriculum revision and pacing updates
 - Understanding and addressing the social and emotional needs of students
 - Understanding and addressing the needs of special populations including students with disabilities, English Learners, students that are economically disadvantaged, and others
 - Learning Management Systems (LMS) - how to use a LMS to develop courses, manage content, manage assignments, develop assessments, and communicate effectively while protecting student privacy ensuring their safety online.

TEACHING, MONITORING, AND REFLECTING

When students and teachers return to school, teachers will need to be prepared to provide instruction traditionally, through remote learning, and perhaps a hybrid of both. Instruction must continue to be student-focused, highly engaging, relevant to students' lives, and offer students choice and voice. Learning should focus on social-emotional needs of students, be equitable in practice, and focus more on deeper learning than rote memorization.

FROM VIRGINIA ASCD'S PROFILE OF A VIRGINIA CLASSROOM, HIGHLY EFFECTIVE TEACHERS:

- Design worthwhile and relevant experiences
- Leverage interdisciplinary thinking
- Utilize collaborative structures
- Develop purposeful checkpoints
- Consult with students
- Cultivate a classroom community
- Tailor learning experiences

ADDITIONAL VASCD RESOURCES

Implementing Quality Instruction
Planning for Deeper Learning
Redefining Student and Teacher Roles
Creating a Culture of Respect
Embedding Assessment and Feedback

TRADITIONAL FACE-TO-FACE INSTRUCTION RECOMMENDATIONS

- Students have been through a lot in the past few months, so when we return to school, teachers should focus on students' **social and emotional needs first**, and then focus on academics.
- There is a potential that in teachers' classrooms, there will be large gaps in individual student's learning readiness and skills; hence, **learning opportunities need to be differentiated** in ways that provide access for all students.
- Teachers should seek to integrate cross-curricular teaching of the essential knowledge with Virginia's **focus on the 5 C's**. This could provide the opportunity for teachers to promote personalized and deeper learning experiences to demonstrate workplace readiness by creatively solving complex problems, thinking critically, collaborating, and communicating
- Teachers should seek to design and implement **authentic learning experiences**. Authentic learning is a term used to describe instructional strategies that are designed to connect the subjects students are taught in school to the real world. Authentic learning can: prepare students for the real world; help students make informed career choices; bridge skill gaps; enhance critical thinking; improve creativity; increase engagement; motivate students; boost retention of information; provide multiple perspectives on issues; and help build 21st Century skills.
- While many school divisions have their own definition of **deeper learning**, the Virginia Department of Education defines it as "[demonstrating] knowledge through six competencies: mastering core academic content, thinking critically and solving complex problems, working collaboratively, communicating effectively, learning how to learn, and developing academic mindsets." Deeper learning provides opportunities for students to: create communities of learning; lead their own learning; connect learning to larger themes, concepts and across multiple subjects; apply learning to real-world issues and problems; network beyond the school walls; personalize learning; and use technology as a tool to support learning.
- Teachers may also design a variety of learning experiences that **integrate technology into daily instruction** including: authentic learning experiences; inquiry-based learning; online course work; online research; project-based learning; simulations; virtual games; and virtual learning experiences.
- Teachers should implement effective and **student-focused teaching practices**:
 - Inquiry-based learning
 - Project-based and/or performance-based assessments
 - Integration of the 5Cs
 - Personalization and differentiation through instructional practices, including performance assessments
 - Build in opportunities for student choice, voice, pace, and place options
 - True student engagement occurs when students are allowed agency and self-direction in their learning. Student choice allows students to determine how they want to demonstrate mastery of the skills they have learned (i.e., choice of projects, choice of problems or prompts, student-developed rubrics, etc.), who they work with or if they work independently, and/or what they would be most interested in learning about within a defined unit.
 - Student-focused classrooms also allow student voice to be the center of the learning experience. When student voice is centered in a classroom, the students' opinions, beliefs,

- interests, cultural perspectives, and values are considered when planning instruction.
- To further enhance student-focused learning, teachers can allow students to decide the pacing of their work, and the place where they complete their work (i.e., does it have to occur in the classroom, does it have to occur in assigned seating, does work have to be turned in on a certain date or it's considered late/penalized, etc.).
- Teachers will need to **collaborate** with school counselors, co-teachers, administrators, and other support staff to meet the expressed needs of students.
- Teachers need to identify individual students within their classes who need extra resources and supports. Collaborate with colleagues within the building to address solutions and support individual students. For example, a Special Education/IEP teacher should work in tandem with a core classroom teacher when developing weekly lessons. Together, lessons can be adapted to meet the specialized needs of their student populations.

The Virginia Learns Anywhere recommendations provide detailed examples of [instructional models and resources for elementary and secondary courses](#) and instructional resources for learner-centered, teacher-centered, and hybrid instructional models in each core discipline area.

REMOTE AND HYBRID INSTRUCTION RECOMMENDATIONS

While instruction across the state transitioned from traditional to remote on short notice in March 2020, school divisions and their teachers now have a little more time to plan and prepare for this contingency or new approach to education. **One of the keys to transitioning to remote or hybrid settings is thinking about the most efficient ways to leverage technology to support continued learning when not in a face-to-face instructional setting.**

- Students have been through a lot in the past few months, so when we return to school, teachers should focus on students' **social and emotional needs first**, and then focus on academics.
 - Pose a question when you communicate with students (for example, what is one fun thing you did today?).
 - Social-emotional learning and equitable teaching practices are always important, but perhaps most important during periods of distance learning.
 - Provide students plenty of grace during periods of distance learning. That might include flexible deadlines, lots of choice in assignments, the opportunity to participate in your class asynchronously, etc. Consider recording classes for students to access on their own time.
 - However, teachers need to make themselves available for synchronous instruction, as that is key to building classroom community. If all students don't show up for the synchronous lesson, it doesn't mean teachers aren't successful. Office hours are also a beneficial time to connect with students one-on-one or in smaller groups.
 - If students do not have access to the Internet, teachers must consider what they send home for students to complete: Is it self-explanatory? Does it address essential learning needs? Is it equitable to what is being taught online?
- **Ensure instructional plans address the specific needs of diverse populations** including early learners, English Learners, students experiencing homelessness, economically disadvantaged students, and students with disabilities. Encourage gifted students to go deeper in learning and provide opportunities to extend their learning.
- **Identify essential knowledge** in grade levels and content areas at a division level. Design distance learning instruction to address the most essential knowledge first. Pare down instruction; distance learning is not business as usual. It takes children longer to do assignments at home, so be mindful of assignments you are posting on learning management systems for students to complete independently.
- **Choose an instructional model** to support teaching and learning based upon your level of comfort and students' needs ([learner-centered](#), [student-centered](#), [hybrid](#)).
- **Choose instructional strategies that leverage technology to supplement face-to-face instruction.**
 - Providing students with weekly or biweekly assignments and instructional resources like videos and interactive activities delivered through a learning management system can support ongoing work regardless of physical location.
 - Providing students with choices in learning resources and ways to demonstrate their understanding will improve engagement and assist them with determining the best way that they learn in a digital

environment. In addition, learning remotely helps students develop independence and persistence.

- Face-to-face interactions with students should focus on teaching content that might be more challenging to present in a digital environment, reteaching content, enrichment activities, and activities that require access to physical equipment or resources.
- Providing online formative assessments prior to classroom instruction is key to optimal use of face-to-face instructional time. Students should be provided communication tools to reach out with questions, and teachers should be provided with time to respond prior to face-to-face instructional time.
- Teachers may want to work through virtual grade level or content-area **professional learning communities (PLCs)** to determine what essential knowledge and skills need to be addressed during an extended school closure.
- Teachers may want to consider assigning work to students that integrates **cross-curricular teaching** of the essential knowledge with **Virginia's focus on the 5 C's**. This could provide the opportunity for teachers to promote personalized and deeper learning experiences to demonstrate workplace readiness by creatively solving complex problems, thinking critically, collaborating, communicating.
- Extended school closure is a time to consider **innovative approaches to learning**. Consider exploring the following innovative learning opportunities for students:
 - Activities that require student reflection;
 - Authentic learning experiences;
 - Career exploration;
 - Creativity in learning;
 - Critical thinking exercises;
 - Game-based instruction;
 - Inquiry-based learning;
 - Outside investigations/explorations;
 - Play-based learning;
 - Project-based learning;
 - Problem-solving activities;
 - Reading a variety of genres;
 - Technology-based direct instruction;
 - Voice and choice for students (choice boards);
 - Workplace readiness preparation; and
 - Writing for a variety of purposes.
- **Provide guidance for students and families as to learning expectations and timelines.**
- **Check in with students** about how they are doing using emails, Google Docs, letters to students, notes, phone calls, postcards, videos, video-conferencing, texts, and other means.
- **Establish a time to host virtual class meetings** or office hours with students using a variety of electronic means, and call students who may not have access to technology.
- **Communicate to students** regularly and consistently.
 - Use age- and language proficiency-appropriate communication to students.
 - Consider setting "office hours" for students to contact teachers.
 - Coordinate communication with collaborating teachers including English learner teachers, special education teachers, gifted resource teachers, and others.
 - Obtain feedback from students on the effectiveness of communication.
 - Contact students with class messages at least once per week using: emails, Google Docs, a Learning Management System, phone calls, mailings, school websites, social media platforms, texts, and video-conferencing.
 - Provide critical communication in languages reflecting those spoken by student populations.
 - Communicate entire classroom expectations for learning but also communicate with individuals when needed for additional support.
- Establish and **utilize a Learning Management System** from the beginning of the school year so that if periods of distance learning are required, all students are proficient in how to utilize their school's learning management system. This is usually a division-level decision.
- Utilize [Virtual Virginia](#) and [#GoOpenVA](#) for a cache of **educational resources**, many of which are ready for online learning.

- **Utilize effective and student-focused teaching practices:**
 - Inquiry-based learning
 - Project-based and/or performance-based assessments
 - Integration of the 5Cs
 - Personalization and differentiation through instructional practices including performance assessments
 - Build in opportunities for student choice, voice, pace, and place options
- **Collaborate** with school counselors, co-teachers, administrators, and other support staff to meet the expressed needs of students.
 - For remote learning to be successful, teachers need to identify individual students within their classes who need extra resources and supports. This is the best time for educators to collaborate with colleagues within the building to address solutions and support individual students. For example, a Special Education/IEP teacher should work in tandem with a core classroom teacher when developing weekly lessons. Together, lessons can be adapted to meet the specialized needs of their student populations. Another example, school staff could deliver learner printed activities to students whose families do not have access to transportation and/or technology.
 - Teachers' key role for addressing the needs for students with disabilities is to collaborate with each other and related services specialists/therapists to adapt individual student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) services for a virtual or distance learning environment. All teachers should recognize and accept that learning outcomes will vary for the students they serve and understand that they are responsible for implementing instructional accommodations and modifications as needed. Therefore, teachers should have access to students' IEPs. If the continuation of learning includes co-teaching, then the expectations for those teachers should be to co-plan together to reach all of the learners.

The Virginia Learns Anywhere recommendations provide detailed examples of [instructional models and resources for elementary and secondary courses](#) and instructional resources for learner-centered, teacher-centered, and hybrid instructional models in each core discipline area.

TEACHING AND LEARNING WITH PHYSICAL DISTANCING MEASURES

As students return to school for the 2020-2021 school year, school divisions may have students returning in reduced student capacity scenarios. These scenarios will include strict physical distancing based on CDC and VDH recommendations. These physically-distanced settings will require schools to adopt new instructional delivery models. In addition, some students will choose not to return to school physically, which will require remote learning approaches.

School divisions will need to prepare for various instructional delivery methods including:

- Traditional Instruction - face-to-face;
- Remote Instruction - online learning, student packets, pre-loaded computers and/or thumb drives; and
- Hybrid Instruction - both face-to-face and remote learning.

Schools may need to transition from one method to another throughout the year.

Learning management systems (LMS) are necessary to support the entire range of teaching and learning - from traditional to remote and/or a hybrid of both. Teaching using hybrid instruction may be considered one type of blended learning.

UNDERSTANDING BLENDED LEARNING

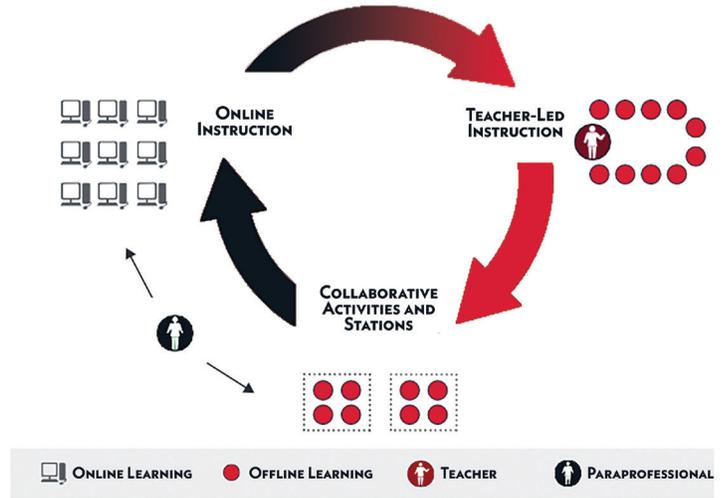
Definition

Blended learning combines face-to-face learning supported by meaningful, online learning. The online portion typically utilizes a LMS to direct instruction.

COMMON MODELS FOR BLENDED LEARNING

STATION/LAB ROTATIONS

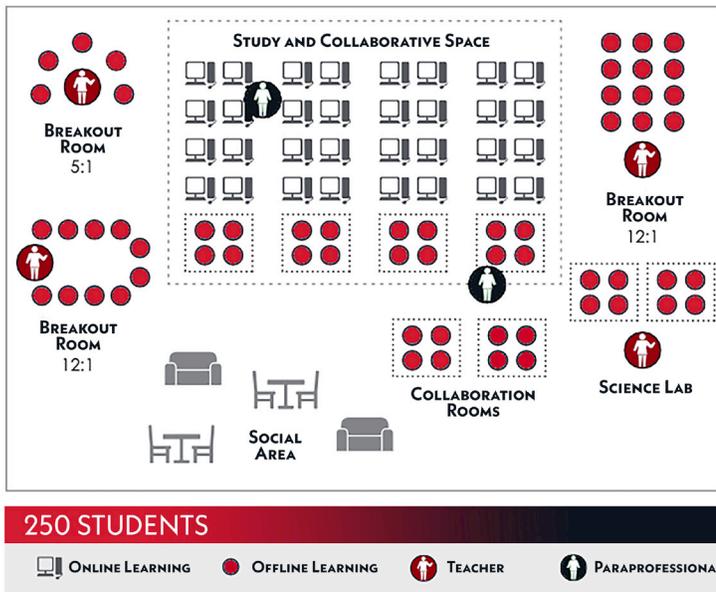
Students rotate through a teacher-led station, collaborative work, and independent online instruction within a class period. The online station may be in a computer lab or in a classroom utilizing one-to-one devices, or a bank of devices, where students complete assignments or instructional explorations at their own pace.



Used with permission from the [Christensen Institute](#).
 Staker, H., & Horn, M. B. (2012). *Classifying K-12 blended learning*. Christensen Institute.

FLEX MODEL

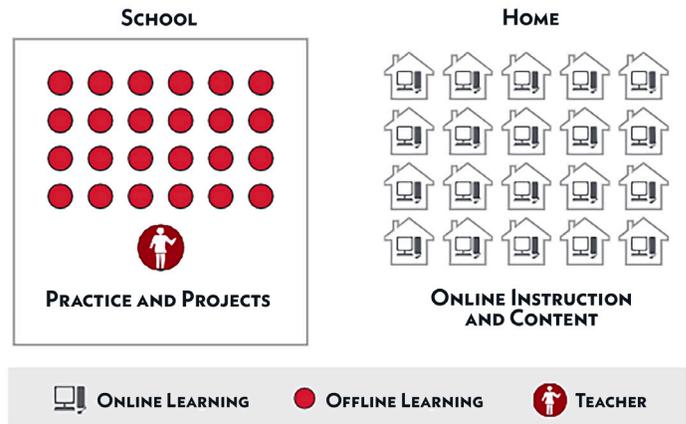
A 'Flex' model uses a LMS to deliver instructional content and activities. Student learning can be completed at their own pace and choice in online activities allows for differentiation. Student learning is supported by face-to-face instruction that is varied based on data. Teachers use flexible grouping to provide differentiated activities.



Used with permission from the [Christensen Institute](#).
 Staker, H., & Horn, M. B. (2012). *Classifying K-12 blended learning*. Christensen Institute.

FLIPPED CLASSROOM

In 'Flipped' classrooms, students use online instructional resources that have been assigned through a LMS. Teachers support online learning with face-to-face instruction. The face-to-face time is structured to include activities, practice with feedback, and collaborative tasks/projects.



Used with permission from the [Christensen Institute](#).
 Staker, H., & Horn, M. B. (2012). *Classifying K-12 blended learning*. Christensen Institute.

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN BLENDED LEARNING

In blended learning settings, teachers begin by examining curricular goals and identify desired student outcomes. Teachers leverage technology to provide online instructional activities and resources to engage students. Teachers identify what instructional activities, supports, and enrichment are appropriate for the face-to-face setting versus what content and learning activities are best completed online. Typically, face-to-face interactions with students should focus on teaching content that might be more challenging to present in a digital environment, reteaching content, enrichment activities, and activities that require access to physical equipment or resources.

It is a common and effective practice in blended learning to provide students with weekly or biweekly sets of assignments and instructional resources such as videos and interactive activities delivered through a learning management system. These activities can support continuity of learning regardless of physical location. It is imperative for teachers to spend time helping students understand what is expected during their online learning from home and how to access the online resources.

Providing students with choice in learning resources and ways to demonstrate their understanding improves student engagement and assists them with determining the best way that they learn in a digital environment. In addition, learning remotely helps students develop independence and persistence.

Providing online formative assessments prior to classroom instruction is key to optimal use of face-to-face instructional time. Students should be provided communication tools to reach out with questions, and teachers should be provided with time to respond prior to face-to-face instructional time.

Teaching and Learning with Reduced Daily Numbers of Students

When teaching in a reduced student capacity scenarios, the teacher may only see students up to a few times per week. The teacher will have to rely on instructional activities and online applications delivered through a LMS for the majority of instruction, as is commonly found in flipped classrooms. Face-to-face instructional time should be used to provide big-picture overviews and connections. The limited face-to-face instructional time should not be focused on answering questions. Teachers are encouraged not to attempt to deliver a week's worth of content in one class interaction with students. As the number of face-to-face instructional time increases, teachers should provide time for collaboration adhering to physical distancing requirements and community building.

Seeing students multiple times during the week provides for the ability to split students into smaller groups and provide differentiated instruction, based on instructional data and through formative assessment. As students adjust to this instructional model, class time may be used to deliver instruction to develop knowledge and understanding that is difficult to convey through online learning or to access necessary physical equipment or resources. Students should be provided communication tools to reach out with questions, and teachers should be provided with time to respond prior to face-to-face instructional time.

SUPPORTING BLENDED LEARNING WITH DIFFERENTIATED, SMALL GROUP INSTRUCTION

Traditional building spaces can be used to support blended learning with differentiated, small group instruction. The keys to space utilization to support blended learning include identifying areas:

- In which teachers can provide small group, differentiated instruction;
- Where groups of students can work independently on assigned coursework; and

Where groups of students can work collaboratively.

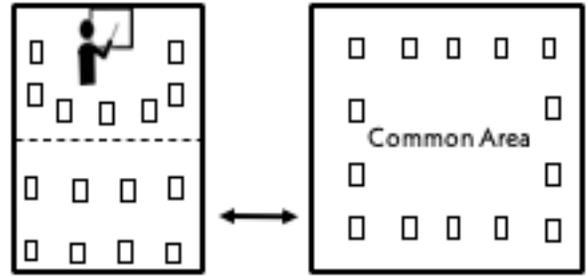
In addition to identification of space, consideration will need to be given to student behavior expectations when working independently and collaboratively and processes for collaborative area use. Depending on physical distancing requirements and recommendations, common areas, hallways, and libraries/media centers may be used to support smaller classroom capacity requirements, and collaborative and/or independent work.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF BLENDED LEARNING

Processes, Procedures, and Expectations

As your staff becomes more focused on providing differentiated, small group instruction that allows for independent and collaborative student work, school administrators and teachers will need to develop detailed processes, procedures, and expectations for students working independently or in a collaborative setting. Use of collaboration areas can be challenging to monitor.

Reduced Student Loads - small group instruction with others working independently



While small group instruction is occurring, students from multiple classrooms could work independently in their own classroom or in a common area

COMMUNICATION

The importance of communication between students and teachers is paramount to the academic success of students. Students working independently or remotely will need the ability to communicate directly with teachers. The most effective way to establish these communication lines is via email, electronic request form, online help forum, or communication through the LMS. Schools should develop a system for consistent communication to students and parents. To support all learners, teachers should consider providing both written and video communication.

Professional Development

- Teachers
 - Understanding a blended learning model
 - Using a LMS - building courses (different approaches to course organization); sources of quality instructional resources including videos and interactive activities; copyright awareness; collaboration features
 - Understanding processes, procedures, and expectations for working independently or in collaborative settings
 - Identifying methods of communication between teachers and students
 - Creating teacher-created instructional videos
 - Using data to organize flexible groups and identify instructional needs
- Students
 - Understanding a blended learning model
 - Using a LMS - accessing and navigating courses, uploading assignments, using task lists/ calendars, and grades
 - Understanding processes, procedures, and expectations for working independently at school or from home or in collaborative settings
 - Requesting help or communicating with teachers, when working independently at school or from home
 - Structuring a remote learning environment to support learning
- Parents/Guardians
 - Understanding a blended learning model
 - Using a LMS - accessing and navigating courses, assignments, task lists and/or calendars, grades
 - Supporting students with learning from home (space set-up, time management, scheduling work time)

Blended Learning Model Images

[Staker, H., & Horn, M. B. \(2012\). *Classifying K-12 blended learning*. Christensen Institute.](#)

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR YOUNG LEARNERS (PRESCHOOL – GRADE 3)

Throughout a child's early years, adults play a major role in his or her physical, social-emotional, and cognitive development. To maximize learning using a hybrid model for instruction the following strategies should be considered when using different delivery methods:

- **Face-to-Face Instruction**

- Plan for intentional opportunities to build adult/child relationships and foster meaningful back-and-forth conversations around important concepts.
- Help children develop self-regulation and persistence by scaffolding various hands-on activities.
- Introduce children to new academic concepts and provide many opportunities for guided practice.
- Assess children’s background knowledge and skill levels during discovery learning activities and individualize instruction accordingly.
- Address any learning gaps or deficits in reading, writing, or mathematical concepts.
- **Online or Learning Packet Instruction**
 - Individualize online instruction and learning packets aligned to children’s learning needs.
 - Reinforce concepts taught during face-to-face instruction.
 - Provide many opportunities for independent practice of concepts.
 - Design learning activities that provide for student’s voice and choice (e.g., choice boards, tiered assignments/activities).

RESOURCES TO CONSIDER

- [Improving Adult-Child Interactions in Preschool](#)

GUIDANCE FOR TEACHING ELECTIVE COURSES THROUGH REMOTE INSTRUCTION

Decisions about elective course offerings are determined at the local division level and must adhere to requirements in the Standards of Accreditation (SOA) and Standards of Quality for Virginia Public Schools. There are no plans to waive requirements for any instructional program, including electives, specials and resource classes, required in the SOA. The Governor, in conjunction with the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) will issue health and safety requirements and guidance for Virginia public schools for the 2020-2021 school year. Once the Governor’s guidelines and requirements are released, both core and elective courses may need to evaluate and adjust curriculum in order to meet the guidelines.

It is the VDOE’s position that divisions should ensure continuity of learning in core and elective classes whether students are instructed remotely, face-to-face, or with a hybrid approach. Elective courses in Virginia are important to the overall goals and mission for public education in Virginia and for the realization of the Profile of a Virginia Graduate. Elective courses can have an important role in promoting and maintaining student mental and physical wellness, as well as allowing students to continue preparing for workplace, college, and career goals. The VDOE staff can assist local divisions in developing solutions for challenges associated with Virginia’s plan for reopening schools.

APPENDIX

Additional supports for courses in fine arts, health and physical education, world languages, and career and technical education are available in appendices accessible by the following links:

- [Remote Learning Support for Fine Arts Educators](#)
- [Remote Learning Support for Healthful Living](#)
- [Remote Learning Support for World Language Educators](#)
- [Remote Learning Support for Career and Technical Education Educators](#)

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR ADVANCED PLACEMENT, INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE, AND DUAL ENROLLMENT COURSES

School divisions should work with the sponsoring organization or college to determine the parameters for offering courses in instructional settings, which may vary based on health and safety recommendations.

ASSESSING AND MONITORING

One of the hallmarks of masterful teaching is the use of assessment for learning. Teachers should be in the practice of frequently using formative assessments to monitor students’ learning and adjusting their instruction accordingly. Summative assessments should be given when students are demonstrating proficiency in skills to be assessed, and assessments should allow students agency in how they demonstrate skills. Project-based learning and performance-based assessments provide students greater leverage in demonstrating what they know, as opposed to traditional rote memorization and/or multiple-choice exams. Below are some examples of ways to assess and monitor students.

- Weekly assignments, projects, and video check-ins during periods of distance learning are all **methods to assess learning**. Asynchronous assignments give students choice in when and where they complete their learning.
- Conducting **synchronous learning sessions, in coordination with asynchronous assignments**, during periods of distance learning allows teachers to conduct direct instruction and/or to hold discussions and to ask and answer student questions to assess for learning.
- It is helpful for students and families if teachers/school divisions utilize just one instructional delivery platform to **make student learning and assessment of/for learning more efficient**.
- Review student work with a formative lens and provide feedback to students. **Teacher feedback to students is powerful**. Hattie identified the effect size of teacher feedback as 0.701 (Hattie, 2017), which is very strong. Feedback can be provided through a variety of means including:
 - Computer-based and web-based assessments (games, simulations, computer adaptive assessments);
 - Creative assessments (flip boards, blogs, vlogs, collage sketches, performances);
 - Discussion groups;
 - Exit slips;
 - Forms;
 - Group assessments;
 - Journal reflections;
 - Meaningful writing assignments;
 - Open-ended questions that allow students to think critically and write;
 - Peer-to-peer feedback;
 - Performance-based assessments;
 - Portfolio feedback
 - Rubric-based assessments;
 - Sentence stem-based assessments;
 - Virtual presentations and demonstrations; and
 - Virtual whiteboards.
- Develop and implement **equitable learning measures**
 - Diagnostic assessment should be given in the beginning of the year to determine students' individual needs.
 - Assessment for learning should be utilized daily (increase use of formative assessments).
 - Descriptive feedback related to academic skills should be prioritized over traditional grades.
 - Individual growth-measurements for students, rather than standardized achievement benchmarks, should be prioritized.
- Utilize **performance-based assessments** rather than standardized achievement benchmarks.

REFLECTING AND ADDRESSING STUDENT NEEDS

At the end of any unit, whether in a brick or mortar school or during remote learning, teachers should reflect on what went well and what might need to be revisited or modified to improve student achievement and retention. Teachers may also find that they need additional professional development in targeted areas to better meet the needs of their students.

EQUITABLE SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS

IDENTIFYING VULNERABLE STUDENTS

Schools should be taking a proactive approach to identify and prioritize acceleration needs for learning due to the COVID-19 school closure. Effective schools will support their stakeholders as they work together to navigate new territories, formats, and systems of learning to provide students with a meaningful education that prepares them for a successful future. As such, schools must adjust supports to meet the needs of identified groups of vulnerable learners, focusing on equity and quality over quantity and the status quo prior to school closures. Recognizing that traditional bell-to-bell teaching is no longer feasible in distance learning environments that may extend into the fall, schools need to maximize contact, communication, and instruction in a way that does what is best for students.

Vulnerable students in particular may experience more drastic declines in their motivation, connection to school, and

self-efficacy, compared to their peers. Educators should be prepared for the possibility that the students who benefit the most from the structures and support from schools may feel abandoned and not see the benefits anymore. An opportunity from this crisis is the opportunity to reimagine school for true equity; to implement innovative and best educational practices that build students' identities, agency, and Virginia's 5 C skills, as described in the [Virginia Learns Anywhere document](#) (page 23).

What are the various populations of students who will need targeted attention throughout all phases of reopening, as they may be the most impacted by the extended school closures?

- Early learners, English Learners, students experiencing homelessness, students from low socio-economic backgrounds, students with disabilities, and students who may require additional support in the area of social/emotional development and supports
- Students experiencing food, housing, or healthcare insecurity
- Students under state care, including foster care, detention facilities, and hospitals
- Students eligible to receive Therapeutic Day Treatment Services
- Students with auditory or visual impairments and sensory disabilities
- Students experiencing trauma as a result of COVID-19, including those who have been personally impacted by personal or family illness, family death, or job loss
- Academically vulnerable students, including students that need additional support to reach the academic standards necessary for promotion to the next grade level or graduation
- Students with a previous history of inconsistent attendance
- Students in transitional years of their education (transitioning to middle or high school).
- First-generation college-bound students, including those participating in AVID and other programs that promote equitable access to rigorous coursework
- Students with medical conditions
- Students 18 years of age and older
- Accelerated and gifted students

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR SCHOOL DIVISIONS

- Establish **measurable goals and monitoring systems** for student access and engagement.
- Establish **measurable goals and monitoring systems** for students' social-emotional and academic learning.
- Develop a **data analysis plan** to determine periodic progress toward the goals.
- Plan and ensure that **IEP services** are reflective of the school's new general education plan/schedule.
 - Consider Specially-Designed Instruction (SDI) plans (e.g., specific to virtual learning, meet virtually with case managers, sharing screenshots, students/families need to know that the virtual supports are there).
- Develop a protocol/checklist to use for Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP) services, based on WIDA standards and proficiency level descriptors and performance definitions, for **English Learners** (per civil rights guidelines), curriculum, and focus on language development rubrics, using content as a means for practicing and using academic English.
- Conduct ongoing needs assessments reflective of all stakeholders

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR TEACHERS

- **Identify individual students** within classes who may need extra resources and targeted supports, in addition to the identified groups above.
- **Collaborate with school counselors** to quickly support the expressed needs of vulnerable students as they arise or are discovered.
- Implement **instruction consistent with IEPs/504 plans**.
- **Differentiate instruction and materials** for a variety of proficiency levels of ELs.
- Connect with [Training and Technical Assistance Centers \(TTACs\)](#), which offer regional support to school divisions and teachers for students with disabilities.
- Refer to the [Virginia Tiered Systems of Support COVID-19 update](#) to inform revisions to curriculum and instructional practice.

VIRTUAL SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Schools should offer the same level of services to students with disabilities that they are providing to other children. If an LEA continues to provide educational opportunities to the general student population during a school closure, the school must ensure that students with disabilities also have equal access to the same opportunities, including the provision of a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). According to a Fact Sheet entitled "[Addressing the Risk of COVID-19 in Schools While Protecting the Civil Rights of Students](#)" published by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, "Accessible technology may afford students, including students with disabilities, an opportunity to have access to high-quality educational instruction during an extended school closure, especially when continuing education must be provided through distance learning."

School divisions should ask themselves a series of questions to identify the need and scope of virtual supports for students with disabilities. Are students with disabilities able to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services in an equally effective integrated manner and with substantially equivalent ease of use as a learner without a disability? Are the curriculum and instruction programs available to every learner, including specially-designed instruction materials? Are the curriculum and instruction programs accessible to every student? Can every student use the curriculum and instruction programs? For example, how can students receive information from a device, interact with, and express or provide input into a product or a device (i.e., speech to text, keyboard options, etc.)?

School leadership/recovery teams should also consider the impact of this work on their faculty and staff and the support needed to ensure effectiveness and efficiency. Specific concerns include: how to train teachers, paraprofessionals, and related service providers in creating and obtaining accessible materials (WCAG2.0); needed technological resources for educators/staff and students/families; division contact information; which additional areas teachers will need to address (social/emotional, academic); which staff have/do not have access to WiFi; and how the school division can support WiFi in certain regions/neighborhoods (i.e., busses with WiFi hotspots). Many factors can also affect the division's plan in responding to the areas of need. Areas that should be considered are: access to technology, access to assistive technology, and the changing role of Assistive Technology (AT) in various environments including students' homes.

The [World Wide Web Consortium's Web Accessibility Initiative](#) developed a model with four components for educators to consider when planning for virtual instruction. The "POUR" model describes considerations for establishing and maintaining a virtual educational environment that is Perceivable, Operable, Understandable, and Robust (refer to AEM/CAST web site in the Resources section for additional information).

- PERCEIVABLE - School leaders should consider options that diverse students with special needs use, such as tactile (refreshable Braille), tablet (to change text size), screen (audio text), smart phone (alternative and spoken aloud)
- OPERABLE - Materials and programs, including teacher made documents, should have a table of contents, which helps students navigate books, worksheets, etc. Alternate input peripherals such as switches and voice recognition may be needed by students with physical disabilities.
- UNDERSTANDABLE - Language translation software options should be considered for English learners and students that use visual communication (i.e., sign language, cued speech interpreters).
- ROBUST - The curriculum and instruction programs, including specially-designed instruction, should work on a variety of platforms and with assistive technologies.

Accessible instructional materials (AIM) are printed textbooks and educational materials that are converted to alternate formats, such as Braille, large print, electronic text, and audio recordings, which are requested by a local school division for use by students with disabilities in the classroom. These materials include core instructional materials: textbooks, trade books, reading interventions, test preparation materials, worksheets, etc., in accessible formats. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), all states are required to adopt and use the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS) when producing accessible instructional materials for students who are blind or who have other print disabilities. NIMAS is a technical standard used by publishers to produce source files that may be used to develop multiple specialized formats for instructional use. While IDEA requires all state educational

agencies (SEAs) to adopt NIMAS, SEAs and local education agencies (LEAs) may choose whether to coordinate with the [National Instructional Materials Access Center \(NIMAC\)](#), a national repository.

A valuable resource to supporting virtual supports for students with disabilities is the [Accessible Instructional Materials \(AIM-VA\)](#) center. AIM-VA is a service of the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) through a grant to The Kellar Institute for Human disabilities at George Mason University. AIM-VA provides accessible instructional materials to Virginia K-12 students who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP). AIM-VA is able to accept any curriculum-based material submitted in electronic form and paper formats. This can assist schools in providing materials in an accessible format so eligible students can independently complete work assigned by their teachers on Chromebooks, iPads, and computers. The Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI) continues to provide Braille formats of needed hard copy and curriculum-based materials for eligible students ordered through the [AIM-VA Ordering Portal](#).

Resources

- [Distance Learning Support for Virginia Schools](#)- Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM-VA). AIM-VA provides accessible instructional materials to Virginia K-12 students who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP).
 - [Support Library](#) - The AIM-VA Support Library provides its users with information and support for using and integrating Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM).
 - [COVID-19 Support Resources](#)
 - Chrome and Chromebook accessibility trainings
 - Continuity of Learning support materials
 - [Accessibility Features of Common Programs and Platforms](#)
 - [AEM: Resources for Access and Distance Education](#) Includes information about creating accessible documents, slides, and videos.
 - Training and Technical Assistance Centers (TTAC) Online <http://ttaonline.org/>
 - [Instructional Resources Supporting Students with Disabilities](#) – This repository of resources has been compiled to support Virginia school divisions as they endeavor to meet the continuing learning needs of their students with disabilities during the COVID-19 school closures.
- [SETT Framework](#) - Returning to school will present another transition for students who may have difficulty adjusting to change. The SETT Framework is a way to consider assistive technology by discussing the **S**tudent, **E**nvironment, **T**ask, and **T**ools. In many ways, when schools reopen, there will be changes in each of these areas. The SETT Framework can help identify these changes and guide teams in identifying solutions
- [Guidelines for School Division Transfer of Assistive Technology Devices](#) (PDF) – includes frequently asked questions and sample forms.
 - [Guidance on the Transfer of Assistive Technology](#) (M4V) – [Video transcript](#) (PDF)
- Captioning Programs (e.g., [Streamer](#)) provide options for closed captioning and open captioning across multiple platforms (e.g., Zoom) during meetings, online instruction and videos
- American Sign Language (ASL) interpreting services can be embedded into live online instruction, meetings and videos through multiple platforms (e.g., Zoom) [Remember Accessibility in the Rush to Online Instruction: 10 Tips for Educators](#)
- [How to Host Effective and Accessible Online Meetings with Deaf Participants](#)
- Early Intervention to Preschool: Supporting the Transition from Part C to Part B for Young Learners during COVID-19

ENGLISH LEARNER CURRICULUM REVISION CONSIDERATIONS

English Learners (ELs) at any linguistic level can develop important language skills within face-to-face and virtual classes, as well as through offline means of calls and paper materials. Strategies to help English Learners and their families engage in and benefit from remote learning are included in many sections of this document.

Teachers who support English Learners are often given the opportunity to educate ELs who have had interruptions in their education, or lack of access to consistent, formal educational experiences. Therefore, the circumstances surrounding “Return to School” are not entirely unfamiliar. The same strategies recommended for ELs who are newcomers coming with beginning levels of literacy in English and their primary language are appropriate and supportive of any student who now has experienced an extended school interruption.

Instruction for English Language Development, delivered by Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP)

teachers/EL Specialists within an ESL/ELD dedicated time/block, face-to-face, online or offline, should:

Integrate [WIDA's ELD Standards](#);

Incorporate four language domains: Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing;

Use a variety of content topics and themes from across all disciplines (Fine Arts, Language Arts, History/Social Sciences, Mathematics, Science) to explicitly teach academic language and discourse/communication; and

Articulate language objectives focused on language functions and features of the content topic and skill.

Language Instruction promotes competencies within Virginia's 5 C's. Language and cognition are intertwined and necessary for cross-cultural communication and collaboration. By focusing curriculum on language connected to specific analytical and thinking processes, divisions/schools/teachers can help students build cognitive skills as they build language skills.

While divisions have the autonomy to create curriculum and instructional materials that meet the needs of their local context, the VDOE EL Instruction Program recommends a genre and key uses of academic language-organized curriculum framework like the one below:

Unit 1: Language to Narrate and Describe

Sub-units: Sequencing, Describing in detail

Lesson Topic Examples: Self (Identity) and Community; Cultural stories, historical events, figures, literature, or art from home country

Unit 2: Language to Inform and Explain

Sub-Units: Comparing/Classifying, Identifying Causes/Effects

Lesson Topic Examples: Career paths, science in everyday life, country features and common practices, works of art

Unit 3: Language to Argue and Persuade

Sub-Units: Justifying, Comparing Perspectives

Lesson Topic Examples: Community engagement, stances on current events, ways to solve real-world problems

VIRTUAL VIRGINIA OUTREACH PROGRAM

The Virginia Department of Education's Virtual Virginia Program (VVA) offers **online courses**, **professional learning** opportunities, and **digital content** to schools, students, and educators across the Commonwealth.

A core service of Virtual Virginia, [The VVA Outreach Program](#), is designed to assist Virginia public school divisions, teachers, and students by providing access to **instructional resources** via the Virtual Virginia learning management system **at no cost**. The VVA Outreach Program is available to support all Virginia public school divisions with content, resources, and the online learning environment.

Currently high school content is available to public school divisions through the Outreach Program, and elementary and middle school learning modules are also now available. All Virginia public K-12 educators have the ability to use online resources with their students through the VVA LMS at no cost to the school division.



Virtual Virginia can provide:

- A solution to provide scaled online content delivery to a school division's students, by a school division's teachers
- A Learning Management System (LMS) platform
- Onboarding - schools, teachers, and students
- Content - High school (currently) and K-8 Expansion (May 2020 and beyond)
- Support - Tiered to support administrators, school counselors, educators, students and parents/guardians

Participating divisions benefits include:

- K-12 Learning Modules including fully-developed lessons and a selection of teacher-graded assignments

- Local teacher autonomy to use, modify, and develop modules from the provided learning resources to address missing content or provide new instruction
- Local school teachers are enrolled in a statewide Professional Learning Network of Virginia educators, and may participate in workshops and statewide training

DIGITAL LEARNING

SETTING UP A DIGITAL LEARNING PROGRAM

Does your division have the capability to equitably educate all students while they are learning remotely from home during school closures? How far has your digital learning program evolved since the COVID-19 pandemic began? Have you stood up the appropriate technologies and are you prepared to provide continuity of learning to students if closures or intermittent closures persist in the months ahead?

In March 2020, Virginia’s Continuity of Learning Committee (C4L) provided guidance and considerations for establishing a digital learning plan. [Appendix E on pages 46 and 47](#) of the C4L document includes very specific considerations in the areas of:

1. Equity
2. Computing devices and considerations when issuing to students
3. Communication about your digital learning plan
4. Use of digital resources
5. Student privacy
6. Online Learning Environments
7. Expectations

The C4L guidance regarding digital learning and technology can be found here:

<http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/c4l/virginia-learns-anywhere.pdf>

Additionally, state education agencies (SEAs) are sharing guidance documents across the country in order to support one another, while maximizing resources and not recreating the wheel whenever possible. Thankfully, our good friends at the Mississippi Department of Education produced a comprehensive checklist and guiding questions document that all school divisions throughout the country can use to assess and stand up exemplary digital learning programs. The VDOE has thoroughly reviewed Mississippi’s “Digital Learning District Guidance” document and believes it is a tremendous resource and a step-by-step guide to establishing an exemplary digital learning plan. While a one size fits all approach is never possible when it comes to technology integration, it is suggested that all divisions have their technology and instructional teams review this document to determine their capacity for digital learning and any additional technology needs they may have in the weeks and months ahead.

The following four steps are recommended to help school divisions assess where they are as well as how to ask the right questions, develop a plan, budget, and evaluate how the digital learning plan is working.

1. Digital Learning Capacity - Use these tools to determine, on a scale of 1-5, how close your division is to a 5, which exemplifies an exemplary digital learning plan.
2. Digital Learning Guiding Questions - These questions will help divisions know which questions to ask to develop a comprehensive digital learning plan.
3. Digital Learning Next Steps and Supports - This section will help divisions develop/enhance a digital learning plan.
4. Digital Learning and Budget Questionnaire Form - This section will assist divisions in building a budget and prioritizing key components that act as building blocks for digital learning.

Access the Mississippi Department of Education’s “Digital Learning District Guidance” for a comprehensive and strategic approach to standing up an exemplary digital learning plan using the following tool:

https://mdek12.org/sites/default/files/documents/digital_learning_district_guidance.pdf

COMPUTING DEVICES AND INTERNET

It has been well documented that one of the greatest challenges to implementing exemplary continuity of learning plans during school closures has been a lack of computing devices and Internet connection for certain students and staff. This is not a new phenomenon. School divisions have been dealing with this problem for years, which has frequently been referred to as the “homework gap.” This problem is no longer just about equity for students when doing homework, but it is affecting tens of thousands of children throughout Virginia in their ability to connect to the school and learn while school is closed for long periods of time. While the enormity of this challenge differs from division to division, it has limited every school division in its ability to implement an exemplary digital learning plan for ALL students.

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) is working on two fronts to overcome this significant issue.

1. The first is coordinating efforts with the State’s Chief Broadband Advisor to understand and explore long-term solutions to this problem. It is well understood that the only real solution to the “Internet for ALL” problem is to ensure the remaining 300,000 businesses and residences in Virginia without high speed Internet access are connected through modern infrastructure improvements. The Commonwealth has a plan to work with local communities to connect all Virginians to the Internet over the next five years. That work and plan can be found at <https://www.commonwealthconnect.virginia.gov/>. The VDOE will continue to coordinate and advocate for the most expedient plan to permanently connect all homes to high speed Internet.
2. The most immediate work being done by the VDOE is to coordinate efforts with local school divisions to gather data and develop a plan to connect as many students with devices and an Internet connection as possible during school closures. This plan so far has included a statewide data collection to assess the enormity of the problem, as well as webinars, guidance documents, and examples of home grown, movable WiFi solutions being deployed across the state.

There are generally three reasons why a student or staff member cannot connect to the Internet: lack of a computing device (iPad, Chromebook, laptop, etc.), lack of Internet due to expense, and/or lack of Internet due to infrastructure (networking, fiber, strong cellular service, etc.). The following are action steps that the VDOE and school divisions should be taking to mitigate the above constraints:

1. The VDOE will be employing consulting services for school divisions to use to help coordinate an “Internet for All” plan in their division. A strategic, realistic plan to connect as many students and staff as possible to the Internet is crucial in moving toward an exemplary digital learning plan. These consultants will also assist the VDOE in understanding the complexity of the “Internet for All” problem throughout the state so resources can be effectively allocated. More information will be shared with school division superintendents as the VDOE expects these services to be available for school divisions beginning in July 2020.
2. In an effort to assist local school divisions in providing students with computing devices and personal and portable community hotspot capabilities as well as training on how to use them, the VDOE is recommending that CARES ACT funds be used in grants to all 132 school divisions for these purposes. A grant application will be provided in June 2020 that will allow grant funds to be used in coordination with local money/CARES Act funds to provide as many students with devices and an Internet connection as possible.
3. It is recommended that all school divisions have an understanding of every student’s access to a computing device and the Internet, as well as what technological infrastructure improvements are necessary to add more devices and network capacity within the school system.
4. School divisions should also inform all students about low cost/free Internet programs that are being offered for students through major Internet and mobile phone carriers.

CYBER SECURITY

Cyber security requires everyone to participate and make informed decisions about information access, sharing, and retention. The state is stronger when everyone works together to protect students and technology environments from harmful activity. The beginning of the school year is always a good time to review and update the security of a school division’s technology environments. It is even more important than ever to review and strengthen cyber security programs now, as there are new and increased risks in our teleworking and remote learning environments.

- **Strength in Updated Software**
 - Allow Windows and web browsers to update your computer. Don't skip or delay installs and updates. If your school division manages patches and updates through central software, make sure that critical patches are pushed to devices as soon as possible.
- **Passwords and Authentication**
 - It is always a great time to change passwords if not already required to change them on a regular basis. Change your passwords for frequently used systems, services, and websites. Employ tricks such as passphrases to help remember passwords.
 - Be sure to choose a complex password containing both letters and numbers. Some systems may require special characters to be used.
 - Allow and encourage users to configure two-factor authentication such as a text message or email to verify identity.
- **Approved Software**
 - The IT team should publish a list of vetted, paid, and approved software titles as well as website resources.
 - Remind staff that only approved software should be installed on physical computers and only approved websites and services should be used with students.
 - Teachers should encourage students to be critical of websites and online services and not to share personal information with unknown vendors.
 - Teachers should discourage student sign up for websites that have not been locally vetted for student data privacy and basic cyber security precautions.
- **Email Scams and Phishing**
 - Teleworking across the nation has sparked a new wave of phishing, spam, and malicious emails and websites. Be critical of emails that create a sense of urgency, contain errors, or require you to verify information for services or systems that you don't recognize. When in doubt, delete the email.
 - Do not respond to emails that ask for personal information or make unbelievable claims.
- **Email Distribution**
 - Owners and managers of email distribution lists should take time to verify membership and roles for accuracy and account for staff movement between buildings and functions.
 - Send sensitive information only to school officials with legitimate educational interests as permitted by FERPA. It may be easier to email to the entire school or division, but sensitive information should be protected.
- **User Account Maintenance**
 - The IT team should take time to cull user accounts from major systems and directories. Users with no further need for access should be disabled or deleted as appropriate.
 - The IT team should audit user privileges and role-based security on major systems including financial and student information systems.

PARENT & FAMILY RESOURCES

VDOE COVID-19 PARENT HANDBOOK

The first priority for local school division consideration when returning to school following the COVID-19 school closure is to keep families and students safe. School divisions can do this by ensuring that parents have access to resources that will provide them the most up-to-date information on what the expectations are when schools are permitted to reopen. Families need to be able to clearly articulate to their child what is meant by physical distancing and the other guidelines that will be in place when schools reopen. Additionally, families need to know where they can find information as they seek out meaningful supports for their children. Local school divisions should ensure an environment exists that is positive, patient, and collaborative for all stakeholders and be compassionate in the understanding that everyone; administrators, teachers, staff, students, and families are going through this together. Virginia's public schools will need to ensure their communication with parents, families and caregivers regarding a return to the school building and classroom instruction is accurate and timely.

Children may be anxious and will look to adults for guidance on their concerns about COVID-19 and its impact on school closure and reopening. The [National Association of School Psychologists \(NASP\)](#) and the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#) provide helpful resources for parents on talking to their children about COVID-19. Teaching children positive preventive measures, talking with them about their fears, and giving them a sense of some control over their risk of infection can help reduce anxiety. Specific guidelines include:

- Maintain a normal routine to the extent possible.
- Discuss new practices with your child to include activities that improve emotional health such as taking walks, calling a friend, exploring online educational or cultural opportunities, or creating an art project.
- Practice and model basic hygiene and healthy lifestyle practices.
- Be honest and accurate while remaining calm, easing fears, and reassuring for your child.
- Limit exposure to news and media stories that may be upsetting.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offer additional tips for [managing stress and anxiety](#). Additional [coronavirus resources and tips for parents, children, and others](#) are available from Prevent Child Abuse America for staying connected, engaged as a family, and managing stress and anxiety.

RESOURCES

The VDOE has developed numerous resources focused on supporting parents, families and caregivers during extended school closures as well as assisting in planning and preparing for a return to the classroom environment.

- The VDOE has created this guide to serve as a resource for parents, families and caregivers on a variety of topics related to COVID-19 and their students.
 - [COVID-19: A Parent Guide for School-Age Children](#)
 - [COVID-19: Una Guía para Padres de Niños en Edad Escolar](#)
- [What Families of Students with Disabilities Need to Know](#) (PDF) - This document shares tips and resources for families of students with disabilities and areas to consider when working with school teams.
- [COVID-19 Guidelines for Military Families](#) (Word) - This document was developed to assist school personnel on how to support military-connected students and their families during the pandemic.
- [Social Emotional Wellness Considerations for Parents and Caregivers](#) (PDF) - Quick reference resources for parents and families in supporting their own social emotional wellness.
- [COVID-19 - Family Resources](#) (PDF) - This document provides a "one-stop" resource for parents to access information by bringing all of the COVID-19 resources specific to parents together in one place. Parents will not have to navigate through multiple websites. Resources on the document include links to general information about COVID-19, frequently asked questions related to special education services, opportunities for training, informational resources related to social emotional/mental health, nutrition, managing behaviors at home, assisting your child with distance learning, etc. This document is housed on the VDOE COVID-19 webpage under the [COVID-19 Resources for Parents, Families & Caregivers](#) section.

WAIVERS AND POLICY CHANGES

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Governor Northam's [Executive Order Fifty-One](#) (EO51), issued on March 12, 2020, declared a state of emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and authorized heads of executive branch agencies to waive any state requirement or regulation on behalf of its regulatory board. [Chapter 1283](#) and [Chapter 1289](#) of the 2020 Acts of Assembly (or the Appropriation Act) gave the Superintendent of Public Instruction the additional authority to grant temporary flexibility or waivers for certain deadlines and requirements as provided in the [Title 22.1](#) of the *Code of Virginia* and Appropriation Act that cannot be met for fiscal year 2020 (school year 2019-2020) or fiscal year 2021 (school year 2020-2021) due to the state of emergency and subsequent school closures. With this authority, the Superintendent of Public Instruction provided a number of waivers and relief measures for state-level mandates that could not be resolved through existing pathways or flexibilities and where inaction would have caused irrevocable harm to students, families, and teachers.

An early and urgent concern when considering which waivers and relief measures to pursue was ensuring those students graduating with the 2019-2020 cohort were able to earn their diplomas. The Superintendent of Public Instruction waived any verified credit requirement, as set out in [8VAC20-131-50](#), that was a barrier to graduation for students who were enrolled in the Virginia public schools as well as the requirement to complete training in emergency first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and the use of automated external defibrillator, including hands-on practice of the skills necessary to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (§ [22.1-253.13:4.D.7](#)) and a virtual course (§ [22.1-253.13:4.D.9](#)). The Superintendent of Public Instruction also made modifications to the award of diploma seals for the 2019-2020 graduating class and worked with the Virginia Board of Education to provide flexibility for issuing standard units of credit for the spring 2020 term.

For students who were enrolled in high-school credit-bearing courses at the time of the closures but not graduating with the 2019-2020 cohort, the Superintendent of Public Instruction and Virginia Board of Education provided waivers and flexibility for the award of both standard and verified units of credit, including options for recovering instructional time and how locally-awarded verified credits could be earned. Additional guidance and resources on these items are provided in the Virginia Department of Education's [Guidance on Graduation Requirements, Awarding of Credits, and Continuity of Learning](#).

Other key waivers and relief measures were provided to parents, schools, and school divisions in order to remain compliant with other state-level mandates, addressing areas such as assessment requirements, accreditation, evidence of progress requirements for home instruction parents, reporting, and deadlines, among others. A full list of waivers and relief measures can be found on the [Virginia Department of Education's dedicated COVID-19 page](#).

INSTRUCTIONAL PERSONNEL LICENSURE

Alongside public school students, teachers, other licensed personnel, and administrators were among those in the public school community to be significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Both the extended school closures and general closures in the community limited teachers' and other licensed instructional personnel's ability to meet licensure requirements, such as testing and professional development requirements. The Superintendent of Public Instruction made immediate modifications to the educator preparation program requirements. Additional flexibility provided in [Chapter 1283](#) of the 2020 Acts of Assembly allowed the Superintendent of Public Instruction to waive the hands-on Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) requirement for initial licensure and license renewal, extend for one year renewable licenses of individuals unable to meet renewal requirements, as well as offer a One-Year License to those individuals who were unable to meet certain requirements for full licensure due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Beyond state-level waivers and relief measures, the Virginia Department of Education has also received a number of federal waivers from the U.S. Department of Education that provided flexibility in how federal funding was spent, state-level accountability measures, and the operation of School Nutrition Programs, including National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program. As School

Nutrition Programs will continue to evolve, additional waivers and flexibilities will be made available on the [Virginia Department of Education's page for school nutrition](#).

PUBLIC MEETINGS DURING DECLARED STATE OF EMERGENCY

Budget amendments recommended by the Governor and approved by the General Assembly at the Reconvened Session provide authority, subject to specified conditions, for public bodies, including school boards, to conduct electronic meetings during a declared state of emergency when it is impracticable or unsafe to assemble a quorum in a single location. See [Item 4-0.01](#) of the 2020 Appropriation Act for all requirements. The budget language requires that the purpose of the meeting be to discuss or transact the business statutorily required or necessary to continue operations of the public and the discharge of its lawful purposes, duties, and responsibilities. The budget language further provides that, “[i]f the means of communication allows, [then public agencies shall] provide the public with an opportunity to comment.” Therefore, public bodies are required to take public comment if the communication platform supports public comment, even if no other law or policy requires public comment. Divisions should consult with school division counsel to review their local policies and to determine the implications of the budget language for regular meetings of the school board as well as other meetings and proceedings convened by the school board, including, but not limited to, student disciplinary proceedings and teacher grievance and licensure hearings.

STATE ACCREDITATION

ACCREDITATION FOR THE 2020-2021 ACADEMIC YEAR

On March 13, 2020, Governor Northam closed schools for a minimum of two weeks (March 16 until March 27). Subsequently, on March 23, 2020, he announced that all schools would cease in-person instruction for the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic year in order to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus.

Due to the impact of these closures, school accreditation for the 2020-2021 academic year based on data from 2019-2020 will be waived. The accreditation rating assigned to all public schools for 2020-2021 will be “Accreditation Waived.”

RECOMMENDATIONS OF VIRGINIA'S ACCREDITATION TASK FORCE REGARDING SCHOOL ACCREDITATION IN THE 2021-2022 ACADEMIC YEAR

IMPACT OF SCHOOL CLOSURES ON 2021-2022 ACCREDITATION RATINGS

Since schools closed prior to the spring 2020 administration of the Standards of Learning (SOL) tests in reading and mathematics, there are no baseline data to compare to spring 2021 SOL test scores to measure student growth. The administration of the ACCESS for ELs test, used to measure the progress of English Learners (ELs) in learning English, was almost complete at the time of the school closures. Some school divisions had completed the administration of the ACCESS for ELs assessment to all students but others had not. Therefore, the availability of spring 2020 English language proficiency data for ELs varies across school divisions.

Because the accreditation ratings are based on a “combined rate” which includes student growth for those who continue to fail the SOL tests in reading and mathematics and the progress of English Learners in learning English, the lack of test data from spring 2020 impacts accreditation ratings for 2021-2022.

It should be noted that barring a federal waiver, VDOE expects all divisions to administer SOL assessments in the spring of 2021. This assessment will establish a baseline for growth measures in the 2022-2023 school year if accreditation is waived for the 2020-2021 year.

CHARGE OF THE ACCREDITATION TASK FORCE

In April 2020, Dr. James Lane convened the Accreditation Task Force to recommend changes to the 2021-2022 accreditation calculations to mitigate the lack of assessment data from spring 2020. In particular, he asked the task force to consider how to account for the student growth in reading and mathematics and the EL progress components of the combined rate. The work of the Accreditation Task Force is intended to inform the recommendations of the larger Recovering School Task Force which is meeting concurrently.

WORK OF THE ACCREDITATION TASK FORCE

The task force was led by three co-chairs: Dr. Rosa Atkins (Charlottesville City), Dr. Scott Brabrand (Fairfax County), and Dr. Alan Seibert (Salem City). The membership has representation from many stakeholder groups including: superintendents, the Virginia Board of Education, division level directors and coordinators, principals, teachers, and professional education organizations. [A full roster is in the Report in the Appendix.](#)

The Task Force met a number of times and explored seven potential solutions for accreditation in 2021-2022. These included:

1. Measure growth of non-consecutive years, 2019 to 2021.
2. Apply an adjustment for growth and EL progress to each school based on statewide trend data.
3. Apply an adjustment for growth and EL progress to each school based on individual school level trend data.
4. Use local assessments from commercially available tests to measure student growth.
5. Administer the SOL assessments in early fall 2020 as a baseline for growth in 2021-2022.
6. Waive accreditation ratings for the 2021-2022 accreditation year.
7. Calculate the combined rate for accreditation without student growth or EL progress calculations.

These options served as a starting point for the discussions. Task Force members were encouraged to offer additional options beyond the seven presented and members of the task force were sent a survey to gather reactions to these seven options.

The results of the survey were shared with the team as well as more detailed information around three of the options that received favorable comments on the survey. Two options, 1) using a rate for achievement that did not include growth or EL progress and 2) administering the SOL assessments in early fall 2020 as a baseline for growth in 2021-2022, were removed from consideration.

In discussing the options and refining its final report, task force members noted that, if accreditation ratings are calculated in 2021-2022, the role of the other indicators such as chronic absenteeism, the graduation and completion index, and the dropout rate will need to be determined. Based on the charge of the task force and the limited number of task force meetings held, specific recommendations for these indicators were not discussed. However, should accreditation not be waived again for 2021-2022, the task force recommends that it be reconvened to address the additional indicators.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2021-2022 ACCREDITATION RATINGS

Considering the need to focus on the well-being of students and staff in 2020-2021, the task force's primary recommendation is that accreditation be waived for the 2021-2022 academic year, whether or not schools are able to offer in-person instruction to all students. The considerations behind this recommendation is outlined in greater depth in their full report. Additionally, the task force outlined a number of alternative options based on a range of potential instructional settings for students during the upcoming school year. These are outlined in more detail in the full report. The task force recommends that divisions maintain a primary emphasis on the social-emotional well-being for all students and staff. Schools should consider implementing strategies to encourage engagement, create a sense of routine in a potentially new atmosphere, and develop or create a sense of connectedness between students and their learning.

The task force also noted the need to assist school divisions that may not have assessment tools to inform individual student growth in reading and mathematics to acquire and use student growth measures. Criteria for recommending/ selecting these measures should be their ability to reveal learning gaps before new instruction occurs. Finally, they recommended that resources be provided to school divisions to identify potential learning gaps as part of

new instruction. To accomplish this, the Department could engage experienced teachers to identify prerequisite skills needed for the successful mastery of new content and recommend formative assessment strategies and tools. The VDOE would provide professional development opportunities to teachers on the proper use of these strategies and tools. The use of such informal assessments would allow a focus on moving forward to the next level of instruction as it occurs rather than focusing on the identification of all missed content at the beginning of the 2020-2021 academic year.

NEXT STEPS AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

The recommendations of the Virginia Accreditation Task Force are now under consideration by state policy makers as they work towards a final determination. At this point in time, VDOE anticipates that strong consideration will be given to waiving accreditation for 2021-2022 based on student data from 2020-2021. Information about a final decision will be forthcoming.

It should be noted that barring a federal waiver, VDOE expects all divisions to administer SOL assessments in the spring of 2021. This assessment will establish a baseline for growth measures in the 2022-2023 school year accreditation.

Additionally, in the course of the task force's discussions about the scope of accreditation for the 2021-2022 school year, some items arose that may inform long-term accreditation changes in Virginia. The task force chairs are compiling those secondary considerations and will issue a follow up letter outlining those issues for state policy makers.

APPENDIX

FOREWORD

[Virginia's COVID-19 Education Response and Recovery Work Group](#)
[VDOE Continuity for Learning Task Force Report](#)
[VDOE Return to School Timeline Advisory Panel Report](#)
[VDOE Accreditation Task Force Report](#)
[VDOE Return to School Recovery Task Force Report](#)
[Task Force, Work Group, and Advisory Group Members](#)

VDOE QUICK LINKS

[COVID-19 and Virginia Public Schools Homepage](#)
[Frequently Asked Questions related to COVID-19](#)
[Virginia Learns Anywhere - Continuity of Learning Report and Recommendations](#)
[Guidance on Graduation Requirements, Awarding of Credits, and Continuity of Learning](#)
[Special Education and Student Services Frequently Asked Questions](#)
[COVID-19 Parent Guide](#)
[Social Emotional Quick Guides – for Parents and Caregivers, Military Connected Learners, and Early Learners](#)
[Joint Guidance on Emergency Child Care during School Closures](#)
[State Regulatory and Statutory Waivers and Relief Measures in Effect](#)
[Information on the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act](#)
[VDOE Staff Contacts by Division](#)
[VDOE Staff Contacts - Alphabetical](#)

OTHER USEFUL LINKS

[Virginia Department of Health \(VDH\) COVID-19 Web Page for Schools, Workplaces & Community Locations](#)
[VDH Interim Guidance on Screening, Monitoring and Testing Employees Returning to Work: Non-Essential Workforce](#)
[Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) Opening Schools Decision Tree](#)
[CDC Guidance for Schools](#)
[CDC Printable Signs and Resources](#)

CENTERING EQUITY

[Return to School Planning Equity Audit](#)

PHASED REOPENING OF VIRGINIA'S SCHOOLS

[Phase Guidance for Virginia's preK-12 Schools](#)

INSTRUCTION

REMOTE LEARNING SUPPORT FOR FINE ARTS EDUCATORS

During times where remote learning may be required in order to provide continuity of learning, fine arts courses can adjust and adapt curriculum to be delivered online. The following websites and recommendations may assist fine arts educators in delivering their programs more effectively.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

- The VDOE's [Distance Learning Webinar](#) provides support for teachers to move instruction online.
- [Virginia Learns Anywhere](#) contains resources from Virginia's Continuity of Learning Task force and includes specific considerations and resources for elementary and secondary fine arts programs.
- National Art Education Association (NAEA) - [Position Statement on Distance Learning](#)
- NAEA - [Remote Learning Toolkit](#)
- National Association for Music Education (NAfME) - [Virtual Learning Resources](#)
- Arts for Learning Virginia - [Take 10 Video clips](#)
- Educational Theatre Association (EdTA) - [Distance Learning Resources](#)
- National Dance Educators Association (NDEO) - [Resources for Teaching Dance Online](#)

REMOTE LEARNING CONSIDERATIONS FOR FINE ARTS

All Fine Arts

- Distance learning for arts classes can focus on essential knowledge related to the 2020 [Fine Arts Standards of Learning](#), including:
 - **Creative Process** - Students can create, devise, script, improvise, compose, or arrange. Students can be guided through a process to draft, refine, share ideas, and document their work to demonstrate growth and learning.
 - **Critical Thinking and Communication** - Students can learn to describe, analyze, interpret, and evaluate visual and performing arts. Students learn essential elements of the artform, as well as vocabulary.
 - **History, Culture, and Citizenship** - Students explore historical and cultural connections of fine arts, as well as how the arts are part of life and community events.
 - **Innovation in the Arts** - Students view and explore ways that artists are innovating art forms with and without technology. Students explore and demonstrate connections between fine arts disciplines and other fields of knowledge.
- **Pacing guides** - Teachers can maintain a pacing guide for the year's instruction to stay organized amidst changing learning environments.
- **Lesson planning for changing learning environments** - Plan for the possibility that modes of instruction such as remote, hybrid, and face-to-face could switch at intervals throughout a week or the year. Consider which learning targets have the best chance of success in remote learning environments and plan accordingly.
- **Project-based Learning (PBL)** - Students can have the opportunity to build and create a student-focused project that includes a peer and adult review, revision, and feedback loop. Virtual learning can allow the inclusion of more people than just their teacher or class.
- **Diversity** - When using video clips, audio sources, and visuals, ensure that diversity is represented.

Dance

- **Minimize safety risks** - Having students practice at home can pose safety risks as the teacher is not there to make corrections and adjustments to poses.
- **Provide at-home adaptations** - Show students how they can work at home, for example, using a chair as a ballet barre.
- **Keep practice journals** - Students may have limited ability to provide video of dance practices and routines. A practice log can be kept to demonstrate growth and learning during at-home practice sessions, and to communicate progress and challenges with the teacher.

Music

- **Empower student creativity, voice, and choice** - Students can be guided to arrange, compose, and improvise music.
- **Keep practice logs** - Give students opportunities to document and share their practice sessions. Provide specific examples and questions to guide their thinking, such as:
 - What specific skill were you focused on during your practice session?
 - How does a musician, dancer, or performer get better at this skill?
 - What strategies will you take to practice?
 - Then, reflect on the session by explaining what went well and what didn't go well. What questions do you have, or what particular skills could you use assistance with?
- **Maintain a Listening Log** - Have students keep a record of the music they listen to or sing each day, including the title, artist and other information about the recording. Depending on level, students can:
 - Respond to the music with written statements describing musical aspects such as tempo, meter, instrumentation, etc.
 - Respond with a description of the way the music makes them feel.
 - Draw a picture or create movement to interpret their response to the music.
 - Create engaging virtual lessons focusing on performance skills that can be practiced at home.

Theatre

- **Keep students active and creative** - Distance learning activities can encourage students to create, interact, perform, and respond.
- **Work within copyright requirements for viewing and performing** - Attain necessary rights when streaming performances.
- **Video lessons** - Teachers can create short video lessons on techniques that can be practiced at home.

Visual Arts

- **Guide students through creative processes** - Beyond providing choice boards, teachers can guide students through steps for brainstorming, planning, creating, and sharing their ideas and artwork.
- **Video demonstrations** - Show students visual art skills using short video clips. Research shows that video clips should be kept under 6 minutes for optimal learning. Break long demonstrations down into a series of shorter videos.
- **Art Analysis** - Show students how to analyze an artwork that they choose from a digital collection, such as the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, in ways such as:
 - Facilitate a process where students describe, analyze, interpret, and evaluate aspects of the work.
 - Ask students to reflect on and justify their personal opinions of the work, and to respectfully listen to/respond to the diverse opinions of others.
 - Ask students to pick out and explain relevant vocabulary terms related to the work.
 - Complete a "See/Think/Wonder" chart individually or as a class. This allows students to think deeply and notice details that they may have missed at first.

REMOTE LEARNING SUPPORT FOR WORLD LANGUAGE EDUCATORS

World language learning prepares students to use their language and literacy skills to communicate with intercultural and global competence within our local and global communities. World language learners use their language and cultural knowledge to:

- Understand authentic spoken, printed, or visual communication, information or entertainment
- Engage in communication with others about information, ideas, feelings or opinions
- Share information and ideas to explain, persuade, or impact outcomes
- Investigate and interact across cultures to build understanding and relationships
- Engage with others to improve conditions in our local and global communities

WORLD LANGUAGE STANDARDS

- [Virginia Standards of Learning for World Languages](#)

- [ACTFL World Readiness Standards for Learning Languages Video](#)

HELPFUL RESOURCES

- [Virginia Learns Anywhere, World Language Instructional Models](#)
- The VDOE's [Distance Learning Webinar](#) provides support for teachers to move to instruction online.
- [Supporting World Language Learning for Students with Disabilities](#)
- [National Network for Early Language Learning Resources for Home Learning](#) (NNELL)
- [National Council of State Supervisors for Languages COVID-19 Resources](#) (NCSSFL)
- [LinguaFolio Can Do Statements and Evidence of Progress Toward Language Proficiency](#)
 - LinguaFolio® Online is FREE to Virginia teachers and students
 - [Virginia LinguaFolio® Website](#)
 - Online [PDF tutorials](#)

CONSIDERATIONS FOR REMOTE LEARNING

- **Backwards Planning** – Focus on building towards communication and literacy goals. Use the [Standards of Learning](#) to guide instruction and [progression charts](#) to stay organized amidst changing learning environments.
- **Lesson planning for changing learning environments** - Plan for the possibility that modes of instruction such as remote, hybrid, and face-to-face could switch at intervals throughout a week or the year. Consider which learning targets have the best chance of success in remote learning environments and plan accordingly.
- **Project-based Learning (PBL)** - Students can have the opportunity to build and create a student-focused project that includes a peer and adult review, revision, and feedback loop. Virtual learning can allow the inclusion of more people than just their teacher or class.
- **Diversity** - When using video clips, audio sources, and visuals, ensure that diversity is represented.

SUPPORTING ALL LANGUAGE LEARNERS

- Use Can-Do statements and performance targets to support continuity of language learning in remote learning environments. Keep in mind the performance abilities and proficiency expectations that determine what students will be able to do with the language as they progress.
- Focus on building communication and literacy skills. Encourage risk-taking with the language by recognizing that errors in grammar and syntax are a sign of learning progress.
- Use a language learning portfolio system to help document student progress towards meeting proficiency targets. [Virginia LinguaFolio® Online](#) is correlated to the Virginia World Language SOL and teachers can create customized Can-Do statements to match local curriculum themes and topics.
- Provide multiple examples of audio and/or video recordings using comprehensible input for students to hear/view. Ensure students have significant time with input before moving to language production tasks. Vary the length and complexity of recordings to match content and proficiency targets.

SUPPORTING LEARNERS IN LEVELS I AND II

Learners in Level I and II classes typically function in the novice-mid to novice-high proficiency range. Novice-level language learners comprehend and communicate basic information about familiar topics and daily life using practiced words, phrases and simple sentences. They can:

- Identify information from things they read, listen to, or view
- Exchange information, ideas, and feelings with others
- Present information, descriptions, ideas, and preferences with a purpose

Novice-level language learners need:

- A strong focus on comprehensible input
- Multiple repetitions spaced over time
- Activities that build basic vocabulary and lead to real-world tasks

Some sample novice-level remote-learning tasks might include:

- Students make a map of their neighborhood or city, label places of interest and write or state three places they like and what they do there.

- Students create a children’s book about five countries in the world with images and captions describing their languages, people, famous landmarks, and more.
- Students make a vocabulary journal of feelings using language and visual images/art from around the world to illustrate how the emotion feels.
- Students choose a social or global issue and make a public service announcement with a slogan and action items.

SUPPORTING LEARNERS IN LEVELS III AND IV

Learners in Level III and IV classes typically function in the intermediate-low to intermediate-mid proficiency range. They will often exhibit characteristics of higher proficiency levels during performance tasks on practiced topics and in familiar contexts. Intermediate-level language learners communicate main ideas related to familiar topics using a series of sentences, simple paragraphs, and questions to manage interactions and tasks from daily life. They can:

- Demonstrate understanding of big ideas and related information from things they read, listen to, or view
- Engage with others to request and provide information, ideas, and preferences to meet needs, provide advice, and share opinions
- Present information, descriptions, ideas, and preferences with a purpose

Intermediate-level language learners need:

- Opportunities to explore and take risks with the language
- Continued comprehensible input with repetitions spaced over time
- Encouragement to engage in unrehearsed conversations that require negotiation of meaning

Some sample intermediate-level remote-learning tasks might include:

- Students research and draft an itinerary for a five-day trip to a country in which the target language is spoken.
- Students research and create an infographic describing how the target language is used in Virginia and the United States.
- Students create a mini-lesson in the language for viewers.
- Students create a list of feelings or emotions accompanied by what they do when they feel that way and add images or drawings to illustrate their approach to expressing or releasing emotions. When I feel (sad) I (listen to music).
- Students choose a social or global issue to research and summarize their learning on a poster with facts, resources and ideas.

SUPPORTING ADVANCED-LEVEL LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Students in programs with long sequences of study, who participated in elementary dual language/ immersion programs, or who are heritage language learners can often reach an advanced level of proficiency by the end of their high school course of studies. Advanced learners communicate to inquire, describe, discuss, and reflect on topics of interest using extended language with connections to past, present, and future contexts. Advanced-level language learners can:

- Understand main ideas and analyze related information from diverse topics of interest based on what they read, listen to, or view
- Sustain discussion to exchange, support and debate ideas related to social issues and other topics of interest
- Make presentations to inform, describe, persuade, or entertain

Advanced-level language learners need:

- Opportunities to explore complex topics in areas of interest to the learner.
- Gap analysis and targeted instruction. Heritage learners and fluent speakers will often have gaps in literacy and in academic language.

Some sample advanced-level remote-learning tasks might include:

- Students create a travelers' guide to foods, dining, and food culture in their community for speakers of the target language.
- Students interview others about what they do to express or manage emotional tides and present their findings along with their analysis, conclusions, and recommendations.
- Students choose a social or global issue to research and present a speech (in-person or video-recording) with their findings and proposal for personal and community action.

REMOTE LEARNING SUPPORT FOR CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATORS

During times where remote learning may be required in order to provide continuity of learning, Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses can adjust and adapt curriculum to be delivered online. It is recommended to flip the classroom as much as possible to maximize face-to-face time. A **blended learning** or blended course takes the “best of both worlds” by combining the best of face-to-face learning with the best of online learning. Technology may better facilitate some types of learning, and class time can be shortened and/or used for activities that better lend themselves to face-to-face interaction. An integrated course model accommodates a wider range of learning styles by offering flexibility, more options for learning, and integration of learning activities that lead to deeper learning.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

- The VDOE's [Distance Learning Webinar](#) provides support for teachers moving instruction online.
- [Virginia Learns Anywhere](#) provides resources from Virginia's Continuity of Learning Task force and includes specific considerations and resources for career and technical education.
- ACTE - [Distance Learning Resources](#)
- AdvanceCTE - [Distance Learning in Rural Communities](#)

REMOTE LEARNING CONSIDERATIONS FOR CTE

[All CTE Program Areas](#)

Distance learning for CTE classes can focus on essential knowledge related to the specific course competencies. Sample teaching strategies and activities include:

- **Flipping the Classroom** - Flipping the classroom (also known as “inverting” a classroom) is a “pedagogy-first” approach to teaching in which course materials are introduced outside of class, and in-class time is re-purposed for inquiry, application, and assessment in order to better meet the needs of individual learners. Course materials might include readings, pre-recorded video lectures or research assignments. In-class activities might involve helping students work through course material individually and in groups, among other active learning strategies for students to gain practice applying knowledge gained prior to class.
 - The main goal in flipping a class is to cultivate more deeply [engaged learning experiences](#) for students when the instructor is present to coach and guide them. Emphasis is on higher-order thinking skills and application to complex problems.
- **Pacing guides** - Teachers can maintain a pacing guide for the year's instruction to stay organized amidst changing learning environments.
- **Lesson planning for changing learning environments** - Plan for the possibility that modes of instruction such as remote, hybrid, and face-to-face could switch at intervals throughout a week or the year. Consider which learning targets have the best chance of success in remote learning environments and plan accordingly.
- **Project-based Learning (PBL)** - Students can have the opportunity to build and create a student-focused project that includes a peer and adult review, revision, and feedback loop. Virtual learning can allow the inclusion of more people than just their teacher or class.
- **Diversity** - When using video clips, audio sources, and visuals, ensure that diversity is represented.
- **Keep students active and creative** - Distance learning activities can encourage students to create, interact, perform, and respond.
- **Video lessons** - Teachers can create short video lessons on techniques that can be practiced at home.
- **Guide students through creative processes** - Beyond providing choice boards, guide students through steps for brainstorming, planning, creating, and sharing their ideas and artworks.
- **Video demonstrations** - Show students visual art skills using short video clips. Research shows that video clips

should be kept under 6 minutes for optimal learning. Break long demonstrations down into a series of shorter videos.

Specific Ideas by Career Cluster

AGRICULTURE, FOOD & NATURAL RESOURCES

Digital lesson content, computer simulations, audio recordings, online discussion questions, online research, watching instructional videos, listening to podcasts, digital assessments, development apps, coding assignments, web conferences, chat sessions, online group discussions, blogs, digital portfolios, digital submission of assignments, learning management systems

ARCHITECTURE & CONSTRUCTION

Online animation and simulation software, virtual job shadowing, Construction Industry OSHA 10- and 30-hour course ([CareerSafe](#)), safety and pollution prevention ([S/P2](#)) training, Workplace Readiness Skills credentialing, Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSO) resources, webinars, scenarios, tutorials and seminars, and virtual mentorship opportunities

ARTS, A/V TECHNOLOGY & COMMUNICATIONS

Online mail service for contact with students, apps, blogs, podcasts, webinars, online discussion forums, video clips, simulations, Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSO) digital classroom resources, CTSO virtual competitions, virtual proctoring for credential testing, and rubrics for eLearning tool evaluation

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT & ADMINISTRATION

Enhance networking and professional development through participation in virtual conferences and meetings; Workplace Readiness Skills tutorials (such as those available at www.ctelearn.org/tutorials.php); interactive virtual labs; alternative assessment; online simulations or scenarios; global collaborative projects; developing Workplace Readiness Skills through virtual Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSO) activities; self-paced online courses and resources; using rubrics to enhance online learning; video clips and demonstrations; leadership enhancement through virtual leadership institute (funded in 2020 by Virginia FBLA Foundation); online proctoring for credentials; utilizing team workgroups for student and co-teaching using online discussion forums; blogs for sharing teacher resources and teaching tips, such as VBEA's Facebook Live Blog entitled "Business and Information Technology Resources and Collaboration"; virtual speakers bureau, such as that offered free through Junior Achievement of Central Virginia, to showcase a variety of industries and local professionals

EDUCATION & TRAINING

Use [Bloom's Taxonomy – Learning In Action](#); create a bulletin board, posters, graphics using [Canva](#); incorporate credential requirements in instruction, such as [Education Childhood Education Assessment Bulletin](#) and [Education Fundamentals Assessment Bulletin](#); incorporate Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSO) Resources such as [Competitive Events](#) and [Observations](#); assemble portfolios; use Process Skill Questions included in [VERSO](#) for each course competency; incorporate [rubrics](#), [scenarios](#), [simulation](#), [virtual field trips](#), [virtual tutoring resources](#), or [Work-Based Learning](#)

ENERGY

Online animation and simulation software, virtual job shadowing, general Industry and construction industry OSHA 10- and 30-hour course ([CareerSafe](#)), Safety and Pollution Prevention ([S/P2](#)) Training, Workplace Readiness Skills credentialing, Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSO) resources, webinars, scenarios, tutorials and seminars, virtual mentorship opportunities

FINANCE

Free Stock Market instructional games; free online resources from numerous organizations, such as EverFi, Next Gen, Federal Reserve Banks, Virginia Credit Union, Junior Achievement; free ECONEDLink Membership to browse lessons, tools, and videos by grade level; online proctoring for credentials through Working in

Support of Education (W!se); utilizing instructional and student centered resources from TeachingMoneyVA.org, Workplace Readiness Skills tutorials (such as those available at www.ctelearn.org/tutorials.php); Interactive Virtual Labs; alternative assessment; online simulations or scenarios (available free of charge from numerous banks and credit unions and the VDOE Curriculum Frameworks for scenarios); Global Collaborative Projects; developing Workplace Readiness Skills through virtual Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSO) activities; developing Workplace Readiness Skills through virtually supervised work-based learning opportunities; self-paced online courses and resources; use rubrics to enhance online learning; online proctoring for credentials; utilize team workgroups for student and co-teaching using online discussion forums; blogs for sharing teacher resources and teaching tips, such as VBEA's Facebook Live Blog entitled "Business and Information Technology Resources and Collaboration"; Virtual Speakers Bureau, such as that offered free through Junior Achievement of Central Virginia, to showcase a variety of industries and local professionals

GOVERNMENT & PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Digital lesson content; computer simulations; audio recordings; online discussion questions; online research; watching instructional videos; podcasts; digital assessments

HEALTH SCIENCE

Virtual component of CPR training; online animation and simulation software; Workplace Readiness Skills credentialing; HOSA resources; webinars; scenarios; tutorials and seminars; virtual mentorship opportunities

HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM

Online mail service for contact with students; apps; blogs; podcasts; webinars; Google Hangout for online discussion forums; video clips; simulations; Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSO) digital classroom resources; CTSO virtual competitions; virtual proctoring for credential testing; rubrics for eLearning tool evaluation

HUMAN SERVICES

Use [Bloom's Taxonomy – Learning In Action](#); create a bulletin board, posters, graphics using [Canva](#); incorporate credential requirements into instruction using [Nutrition, Food, and Wellness Assessment Bulletin](#); Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSO) Resources for Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA): [National Programs](#) and [Competitive Events](#); portfolio; Process Skill Questions included in [VERSO](#) for each course competency; rubrics; scenarios; simulation; virtual industry tours; [Work-Based Learning](#)

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Online proctoring for credentials; Workplace Readiness Skills tutorials (such as those available at www.ctelearn.org/tutorials.php); Interactive Virtual Labs; alternative assessment; online simulations or scenarios; Global Collaborative Projects; developing Workplace Readiness Skills through virtual Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSO)-provided activities; developing Workplace Readiness Skills through virtually supervised Work-based Learning opportunities; self-paced online courses and resources; using rubrics to enhance online learning; video clips and demonstrations; utilizing teamwork groups for student and co-teaching using online discussion forums; blogs for sharing teacher resources and teaching tips, such as VBEA's Facebook Live Blog entitled "Business and Information Technology Resources and Collaboration"; virtual speakers bureau, such as that offered free through Junior Achievement of Central Virginia, to showcase a variety of industries and local professionals; enhance networking and professional development through participation in virtual conferences and meetings

LAW, PUBLIC SAFETY, CORRECTIONS & SECURITY

Use [Bloom's Taxonomy – Learning In Action](#); incorporate credential requirements in instruction; Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSO) Resources: [Skills USA](#); portfolio; Process Skill Questions included in [VERSO](#) for each course competency; rubrics; [scenarios](#); [simulation](#); [Work-Based Learning](#)

MANUFACTURING

Online animation and simulation software; virtual job shadowing; General Industry OSHA 10- and 30-hour

course ([CareerSafe](#)); Safety and Pollution Prevention ([S/P2](#)) Training; Workplace readiness skills credentialing; Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSO) resources; webinars; scenarios; tutorials and seminars; virtual mentorship opportunities

MARKETING

Online mail service for contact with students; online discussion forums; video clips; simulations; Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSO) digital classroom resources; CTSO virtual student competitions; virtual proctoring for credential testing; rubrics for eLearning tool evaluation

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING & MATHEMATICS

Design briefs: engineering design notebook and design briefs using household items. Students with phone access could team with a few others to work on a project from a design brief, reverse engineer a product that they believe they can take apart and put back together. Give instructions to take photos as they go and carefully track parts as they take them out. Last out goes back in first. Online access: all should know a CAD program. Sources like AutoCAD free software for students and schools also have tutorials. Or the teacher can assign an object to be drawn and provide video lessons on the process, perhaps using Sketchup. After a lesson on certain aspects of the program, give them something they should be able to draw using the tools studied. An example is a series of lessons using the tools on a block. Then have them draw an airplane using the tools. Online Geospatial software is also available from ESRI with tutorials. Circuit simulation [software](#); science and mathematics simulations; free Game Design [Software](#). Age 13 and up: Technology Student Association (TSA) activities, and [VTTEA](#) online learning resources

TRANSPORTATION, DISTRIBUTION & LOGISTICS

Online animation and simulation software; virtual job shadowing, General Industry OSHA 10- and 30-hour course ([CareerSafe](#)); Safety and Pollution Prevention ([S/P2](#)) Training; Workplace Readiness Skills credentialing, Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSO) resources; webinars, scenarios, tutorials and seminars, virtual mentorship opportunities

DISTANCE-LEARNING LINKS FOR CTE EDUCATORS

- [Code.org](#) provides a K-12 Computer Science curriculum.
- [Girls Who Code](#) aims to support and increase the number of women in computer science by equipping young women with the necessary computing skills to pursue 21st century opportunities.
- [Kahoot](#) is a game-based learning platform where teachers can interact with students synchronously or students can play at their own pace to understand content knowledge.
- [Khan Academy](#) provides expert-created content resources to extend learning.
- [Live Binders](#) is a site where students can create portfolios and incorporate various materials within the portfolio.
- [Place-Based Education](#) (PBE) is anytime, anywhere learning that leverages the power of place, and not just the power of technology, to personalize learning.
- [Quizlet is a mobile and web-based study application that allows students to study information via learning tools and games.](#)
- [Scratch](#) is a free programming language and online community where you can create your own interactive stories, games, and animations. [Southern Regional Education Board](#) (SREB) includes virtual labs, simulations and interactive learning objects that allow STEM and CTE students to engage with and explore the world of science and technology in an online setting.
- Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) provides [CTE Distance Learning Lesson Plan Resources for Multiple Sectors](#).

REMOTE LEARNING SUPPORT FOR HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

During times when remote learning may be required in order to provide continuity of learning, physical and health

education courses can adjust and adapt curriculum to be delivered online.

- The VDOE's [Distance Learning Webinar](#) provides support for teachers to move instruction online.
- [Virginia Learns Anywhere](#) contains resources from Virginia's Continuity of Learning Task force and includes specific considerations and resources for elementary and secondary fine arts programs.

REMOTE-LEARNING CONSIDERATIONS FOR HEALTHFUL LIVING

All Healthful Living

- Distance learning for healthful living content can focus on essential knowledge related to the [2020 Health Education](#) and the [2015 Physical Education](#) Standards of Learning:
 - **Comprehending Concepts:** Helping students comprehend key concepts related to health promotion, disease and injury prevention.
 - **Analyzing Influences:** Allowing students to analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology and other factors on health behaviors.
 - **Accessing Resources:** Allowing students to research, gather and assess health information, and develop support systems to take action on improving or maintaining their health.
 - **Interpersonal Communication:** Providing opportunities for students to learn and practice effective communication skills and develop a sense of belonging.
 - **Decision Making:** Providing activities to help students understand the decision-making process and how it can be applied to optimize performance and enhance health and safety.
 - **Goal Setting:** Allowing students to learn and assess their current behaviors and to identify things they want to change and set realistic, specific and measurable goals for improvement.
 - **Practice Health-Enhancing Behaviors:** Allowing students to apply the knowledge and skills they are learning and take action to establish healthy behaviors.
 - **Advocacy:** Providing opportunities for students to be advocates for personal, family and community health.
- **Pacing guides** - Teachers can maintain a pacing guide for the year's instruction to stay organized amidst changing learning environments.
- **Lesson planning for changing learning environments** - Plan for the possibility that modes of instruction such as remote, hybrid, and face-to-face could switch at intervals throughout a week or the year. Consider which learning targets have the best chance of success in remote learning environments and plan accordingly. Ensure all files, images and videos are accessible, and consider variations in student access to computers and stable internet service.
- **Diversity** - When using video clips, audio sources and visuals, ensure that diversity is represented.
- **Inclusion and equity** - Ensure all students develop a sense of belonging with opportunities to develop friendships. Be accessible to students with special needs. Have flexible policies, activities and assessments. Be identity-conscious and use equity-minded teaching, acknowledging students' vastly different experiences and social identities. Be proactive about supporting struggling students. Be relational by encouraging interpersonal relationships.

Physical Education

Physical education is unique in that it focuses on learning about and learning through physical activity. It offers many opportunities for students to build positive interpersonal relationships, improve self-esteem, communicate effectively, set goals, apply strategies to enhance performance, exercise self-management skills, collaborate, and develop a sense of social responsibility. Virginia's Physical Education Standards of Learning are grouped into five overarching content strands: Motor Skill Development, Anatomical Basis of Movement, Fitness Planning, Social Development, and Energy Balance.

- **Minimize safety risks** - Having students practice at home can pose safety risks as the teacher is not there to

provide error-correction feedback. All physical activities must be age-appropriate and carefully selected to minimize the risk of injury.

- **Provide at-home adaptations** - Providing live or recorded video demonstrations on how to properly exercise at home using little to no equipment will enhance understanding. Videos will show how to adapt each exercise for maximum participation and safety of students (i.e., students can choose to perform a seated plank or full upright plank).
- **Focus on developing physically literate students** - Remote learning will emphasize increasing student knowledge, skills and confidence to enjoy a lifetime of healthful physical activity.

Health Education

Virginia's Health Standards of Learning are designed to provide a core body of knowledge (i.e., Body Systems, Nutrition, Physical Health, Disease Prevention/Health Promotion, Substance Abuse Prevention, Safety/Injury Prevention, Mental Wellness/Social and Emotional Competence, Violence Prevention, Community and Environmental Health), while also allowing flexibility for students to develop personal values and beliefs and shared positive group norms and for individual school communities to address local health issues and emerging health concerns.

- **Provide a personalized learning approach** -
 - Allow student "choice and voice" through a variety of assignment options that promote foundational skills like empathy, critical thinking and expression.
 - Incorporate self-reflection and goals setting.
 - Use digital content and tools in a purposeful way.
 - Involve students in grading conversations: students know exactly what they need to work on and what they are doing well.
- **Provide a Skills-Based Health curriculum** - Students will deepen their knowledge, attitudes and health skills by using a variety of web tools to apply their learning. For example, students may choose to create a podcast, blog, digital storybook, audio slides, infographic, sketch notes, or a public service announcement to demonstrate depth of knowledge and healthful living skills.

DISTANCE-LEARNING LINKS FOR HEALTHFUL LIVING EDUCATORS

- National SHAPE America: [Guidelines for K-12 Online Physical Education](#)
- National SHAPE America: [Virtual Resources for Health and Physical Education](#)
- Centers of Disease Control: [Guidance for School Settings](#)
- CASEL CARES: SEL Resources: https://casel.org/sp_faq/distance-learning/

RETURN TO SCHOOL RECOVERY TASK FORCE REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND:

As public school divisions begin planning for a return to brick and mortar schools, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) brought together a diverse group of school leaders and education stakeholders to provide areas of focus, key considerations and supports that may be needed by public schools in order to prepare for students and staff to safely return to school buildings. The Return to School Recovery Task Force (R2S Task Force) met over the course of a few weeks to develop essential questions, action items, and recommendations for school leaders to consider in the development of their return to school plans. The recommendations set forth in the R2S Task Force final report will be shared with key state policy makers, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and with the Virginia Secretary of Education's Task Force.

The Task Force was divided into five sub committees as follows:

1. Return to School Equity Planning
2. Operations & Systems Recovery
3. Social Emotional Wellbeing
4. Academics
5. Staff Recruitment, Retention & Support

R2S TASK FORCE LEADERSHIP:

Dr. Scott Kizner, Superintendent, Stafford County Public Schools
Mr. Rodney Robinson, Richmond City Public Schools, 2019 National Teacher of the Year
Dr. Jeffery Smith, Superintendent, Hampton City Public Schools
Dr. Samantha Hollins, Assistant Superintendent, Special Education & Student Services, VDOE
Leah Walker, Director, Equity & Community Engagement, VDOE

This summary report provides an overview of each of the five subcommittees' recommendations and the essential questions that informed their work.

RETURN TO SCHOOL EQUITY PLANNING

SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRS

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2019 National Teacher of the Year

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Director
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As planning begins for the reopening of schools, centering equity must be foundational to the development of a return to school plan. Inequitable access to technology, learning supports and resources will disproportionately impact many students, especially those who have historically been marginalized. The unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 pandemic affects all students, but will likely exacerbate already existing gaps in opportunity and achievement for historically underserved student groups. The impact of sustained learning loss during this period of school closures, combined with disparities in implementation of continuity of learning models, will have a lasting impact on our most vulnerable students. The recommendations outlined by this committee are meant to serve as a guide for practitioners to mitigate against these disparate impacts in the development of return to school plans. This moment provides opportunity for school and division leaders to thoughtfully re-design the public school experience to be one that increases opportunities for students and ameliorates the disparate impact of learning losses caused by this period of school closure.

The committee recommended four steps to ensure that equity is centered and that student are prioritized in return to school planning:

1. Form a diverse and representative return to learning team that includes specialized student group experts, community based partners, wrap around service providers, and representatives from state operated programs.
2. Evaluate existing data to identify students and student groups most vulnerable to learning loss disproportionality.
3. Design diagnostic systems to evaluate student learning growth for vulnerable students and establish accountability measures to monitor progress.
4. Prioritize the use of federal stimulus funds to address equity gaps.

To support the facilitation of equity minded decision making, the committee further recommended a list of guiding questions leaders should ask themselves to ensure that equity is centered in all return to school planning. These questions are grouped as “immediate” and “ongoing”. Immediate questions are those leaders should ask at the onset of planning, while ongoing questions should be considered at the beginning, during planning, and throughout implementation. The major distinction is that some aspects of planning can be completed in a single instance, while others, such as cultural competence, take time to develop and require ongoing attention and resources.

Immediate Essential Questions:	Ongoing Essential Questions:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have we convened a representative and diverse planning team of subject matter experts, including students and included all diversely representative populations in planning, implementation, and monitoring of programs, policies, and procedures? • Is our planning team working with the various departments and wrap around organizations to ensure the immediate needs of students are met at onset and then on an ongoing basis? • Have we developed measurable goals in order to monitor progress that narrows gaps between the least and most advantaged children? • Have we provided professional learning opportunities for all staff on meeting Maslow's hierarchy of needs before we begin instruction? • Have we planned to support students and teachers in alternative settings (students under state supervision)? • Have we embedded social-emotional learning (SEL) in our plan? • Does our funding/resource/staffing models and allocations align with the needs of vulnerable student groups? • Have we identified internal and external barriers to student success by student group? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did we conduct a needs assessment of our stakeholders to include their needs in our planning? • Did we make assumptions about student groups in planning and if so, were they void of stereotypes? • Did we evaluate our plans to ensure that they do not perpetuate systemic inequities, discrimination, and/or lower expectations for particular student groups? • Have we planned to address the digital divide and mitigate the negative effects of lack of technology on students and families? • If choosing to include digital learning options, have we adequately supported and educated families on proper use? • Have we designed a plan in which it is evident that we see diversity as an asset? How? (think school culture) • Does our plan ensure that curriculum and instruction (including remote delivery) is culturally affirming? Do students see their culture reflected and celebrated in our instructional model? • Are culture and cultural competence principles embedded in the strategic planning, program design, and service delivery of your recovery plan? • Does our plan create a safe and supportive environment for all families? Have we evaluated what students consider safe and supportive looks like for them? How do we know? • Does our plan include high expectations for all students while providing proper scaffolds and supports? • Have you considered the digital literacy needs of families? • Are we being inclusive of the language, dialects, and literacy needs of all families? • Have we evaluated current grading expectations, practices and course placements?

The full report also includes recommended action items to aid in the operationalization of division plans in ways that center equity in both access to opportunity and prioritize student social, emotional, and instructional support. The actions are separated into four categories according to the four aforementioned core steps. They, too, are categorized as immediate and ongoing actions. In this section, immediate actions are those that should be completed first in the spring and summer, while ongoing actions should be completed in the summer, fall, and into the school year as needed.

OPERATIONS & SYSTEM RECOVERY

The work of the Operations Subcommittee of the Recovery Task force is intended to support and inform local school division superintendents and their teams in planning for the reopening of school in 2020-21. Local school divisions are encouraged to follow the guidance in this document, as well as guidance from national, state, and local health officials, as well as other state agencies in considering their reopening plans. The health and safety of all is paramount in local decision-making regarding the reopening of school.

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DR. BEN KISER,
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Virginia Association of School Superintendents

DR. MICHAEL THORNTON
Retired Division Superintendent

CHRISTINA BERTA,
Assistant Superintendent
Budget and Finance, VDOE

In addition to ensuring the health and safety of students, employees, and visitors by school divisions, the following core issues must be addressed by schools before making any operational decisions:

- Prior to opening schools for any option where students and staff will be in one physical location, it is imperative that clear guidelines on social distancing are established.
- There must be a sufficient supply of personal protective

- equipment (PPE), to include gloves, masks, gowns, and face shields both now and in the future.
- Schools' operational status will be influenced by sufficient current and future access to sanitation equipment and supplies.
- Issues related to access to broadband, funding support, and logistics must also be considered.

The format of this guidance consists of essential questions to be answered by local school divisions in the following major operational and system categories:

- Finance and Budget
- Health Services
- Technology
- Facilities
- Pupil Transportation
- Food Services
- Human Resources
- Athletics/Extracurricular Activities
- Communications
- Before and After School Programs

The guiding assumption is that local autonomy exists in all categories and that school divisions will have flexibility to respond to this guidance within the capacity and resources of the division. In all categories, decision-makers should ensure that their policies have been reviewed and are up to date to provide sufficient guidance during unforeseen future challenges. Clear practices related to social distancing and cleaning protocols must be established. The professional development of all employees related to the industry-based best practices for all employees will ensure that the safest and highest level of service is provided to school division stakeholders. Another key issue that must be addressed in each category is the need for ongoing and transparent communication to the entire school community.

A special thank you and appreciation is extended to all members of the operations subcommittee for their engagement, information sharing and development of guidance to support all Virginia public schools.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL WELL BEING

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Assistant Professor in Clinical and School Psychology, University of Virginia

DR. SCOTT KIZNER

Superintendent, Stafford County Public Schools

MARIBEL SAIMRE

Director, Student Services

COVID-19 has changed the landscape of schools and communities within the span of a few short months. Every student, every family, and every staff member have been impacted in some way. While much uncertainty remains regarding the return to school, we know that focusing on social-emotional wellness will be critical to re-engage students, rebuild relationships and school communities, and create equitable learning environments for all students.

The work of this committee focused on providing recommendations and resources related to the social-emotional wellbeing of three groups: Students, School Staff, and Families and Communities. These are inextricably linked to one another and addressing their collective needs are necessary to co-create learning environments where students can learn and thrive.

STUDENT WELLBEING

Because of the universal and cumulative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative that schools plan for the social-emotional needs of all students. This will involve not only considering how to provide interventions for students with demonstrated higher levels of concern, but will entail providing services for every student. As such, it is recommended that plans for the reopening of schools include the following components:

- A dedicated time in each school’s master schedule for the delivery of social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum and supports.
- A minimization to the extent possible of administrative duties assigned to school counselors, school psychologists, and school social workers. This will allow them to use more of their time in providing direct supports and services to students.
- Training for all school staff in the areas of mental health with a focus on the inclusion of trauma-informed strategies.

SCHOOL STAFF

Supporting staff wellness is critical, not only as a result of the impact of COVID-19, but in achieving safe and supportive learning environments. A recovery plan that meets a range of professional and social-emotional needs will help school staff to be ready to return to teaching and promote the social-emotional wellbeing of their students. These key considerations are offered when planning for the social-emotional wellbeing of staff in the reopening of schools. These considerations focus on:

- Ensuring access to mental health support resources for all school staff. This includes those staff members that provide mental health supports and services to students as they bear heavy emotional responsibilities.
- Training for all school staff to prepare them to promote student social-emotional learning, implement self-care strategies, build strong relationships, and identify mental health concerns in their students and colleagues.
- Clear communication regarding plans and allowable flexibilities to address personal health and safety issues.

FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Engaging families and communities as partners is essential in providing safe and supportive learning environments that maximize the potential of all learners. Key considerations include:

- **Collaboration:** Strengthen existing, or develop new, relationships with families and community agencies. Community assets may shift as a consequence of the pandemic; working with other agencies to assess needs can reduce the burden on any single agency to address all wellbeing related concerns.
- **Communication:** Engage community agencies and families in two-way communication to give stakeholders an opportunity to provide input into the decision-making processes. In particular, consider how a communications strategy is inclusive of historically underrepresented or minoritized communities, to include languages spoken at home.
- **Diversity:** Consider how the consequences of the pandemic have differential effects on sub communities within the school or division. As a consequence, families and students may have different needs in order to support wellbeing. When supporting student wellbeing, consider what and how to also support the family.

ACADEMICS

SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRS

DR. JEFFERY SMITH

Superintendent,
Hampton City Public Schools

DR. TINKHANI WHITE,

Director of School Improvement,
Chesterfield County Public Schools

DR. CHUCK WAGNER,

Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Services,
Gloucester County Public Schools

MICHAEL BOLLING,

Assistant Superintendent
Learning and Innovation, VDOE

DR. SAMANTHA HOLLINS

Assistant Superintendent
Special Education and Student Services

The work of the Academics Subcommittee of the Recovery Task force is intended to support and inform local school division superintendents and their instructional leadership teams in planning for the reopening of school in 2020-2021. Local school divisions are encouraged to consider the guidance in this document, as well as guidance from national, state, and local resources, organizations and officials.

The recommendations provided in the document address four main areas:

- Division-Level Considerations
- Planning and Preparing for Instruction
- Teaching, Monitoring, and Reflecting
- Equitable Supports for Students

School divisions will need to plan and implement efficient and effective ways to determine learning gaps that have manifested and grown during the extended school closure, address learning gaps through revisions to curricula and pacing, and prepare teachers and students for various models of instructional delivery. The recommendations found in this section will assist in planning and implementing curriculum, instruction, and professional development in accordance with their unique reopening conditions.

School divisions will need to prepare for various instructional delivery methods including:

- Traditional Instruction - face-to-face;
- Remote Instruction - online learning, student packets, pre-loaded computers and/or thumb drives; and
- Hybrid Instruction - both face-to-face and remote learning.

As school divisions begin to explore options for traditional or remote learning, careful consideration should be made to provide equitable access and support for a variety of student learning needs. Care should be taken not to exacerbate existing gaps in student achievement. It is critically important that all educators are mindful of the needs of vulnerable student groups including early learners, English Learners, students experiencing homelessness, students from low socio-economic backgrounds, and students with disabilities. Achieving equity in remote learning requires leaders to be intentional about ensuring support for student populations that often already have reduced opportunities for academic success in our traditional in-person education model. As you review the recommendations and resources provided, please take care to keep equity at the forefront of your planning. Educators are equity champions in our communities, and we must ensure that the needs of ALL learners remain our priority during this time.

STAFF SUPPORT, RETENTION & RECRUITMENT

SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRS

DR. CINDY REASONER

Director of Instruction and Human Resources
Amelia County Public Schools

MS. SHERRY SAUNDERS,

Executive Director of Human Resources and Instruction
Buckingham County Public Schools

TARA MCDANIEL

Director
Teacher Education, VDOE

DR. DAVID MYERS

Assistant Superintendent
Data, Research and Technology, VDOE

In an effort to support Virginia public schools upon the return to school, this committee addressed four overarching areas to address the needs of supporting, recruiting and retaining school staff. The Staff Support/ Retention/ Recruitment committee consisted of teachers, school and division leaders, parents, support staff, and other key stakeholders across Virginia. While this committee recognizes the burdens COVID-19 has placed on students, it has also placed many, if not more, of the same burdens on school staff. This committee researched and made recommendations for guiding questions and strategies to facilitate staff support, retention and recruitment.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

1. What are the best practices for hiring staff remotely?
2. What resources can we provide to staffers who may be struggling whether from depression, anxiety or loss of a loved one? How do we deploy trauma informed and mental health refresher training for staff?
3. What type of return to learning professional development should be considered/offered to teachers/school leaders?
4. How best might administrators facilitate communication with all employees to share information and maintain a sense of connection during school closures and all potential return to school options?

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES:

- Conduct virtual interviews, virtual mentoring plans, and bring community stakeholders into the mentoring relationship with new teachers.
- Onboard new teachers virtually, conduct a new employee needs assessment for working remotely, including new COVID hiring/teleworking policies and regulations.
- Plan virtual social interaction events for new teachers, including a virtual division Convocation, share weekly newsletters with critical communication and best practices.
- Plan for virtual PD, including how families might “meet teachers” in a virtual environment, develop guidelines on remote/distance learning regulations.
- Create safe and reliable environments where people who have experienced adversities and trauma feel supported, develop positive relationships, and have access to mental health supports they need.
- Establish a crisis response team, assess natural resources (personnel, existing partners) to determine internal and external supports.
- Create a list of outside providers and designate a mental health liaison (school based).
- Develop and staff a direct communication channel for district stakeholders to address mental health.
- Consider a procurement of additional mental health assessment services and acquire a mental health screener to establish ongoing screening/reporting protocols for mental health status.
- Include trainings on self-care, mindfulness, stress management, recognizing signs of potential mental health problems, social emotional challenges, and provide resources to assist.
- Assess technology needs of students and staff, assist teachers in learning to use remote learning platforms, identify where PD can be accessed to support teachers of students with special needs.
- Utilize Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and evaluate existing data to identify students most vulnerable to learning loss, design diagnostic systems to evaluate and monitor learning growth, consider utilizing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to differentiate instruction, and create flexible instructional/planning schedules to support vertical instruction.

- Develop a strong communication plan that is regular and on-going, emulate in-person communication as much as possible and train staff on video conferencing.
- Include all employees in the communication plan and identify any employees that are not connecting through the established communication channels, provide individual support/and or accommodations for employees. Include an evaluation and self-reflection component.

RETURN TO SCHOOL TASK FORCE MEMBERSHIP

Member		Title	School Division	Organizational Affiliation	Sub Committee
Robert	Arnold	Superintendent	Amherst County	Region V Superintendents	Academics
Roxana	Bandes M.	Director, Equity and Accountability	Stafford County Public Schools	VESA President, VAFEP board Member	Equity
Scott	Belako	Principal	Spotsylvania County Public Schools	VASCD	Academics
Gina	Bellamy	Coordinator of school health	Prince William County School	Virginia Assoc School Nurses	Staff Support
Sindy	Benevides	CEO	LULAC	LULAC	Equity
Derrick	Brown	Principal	Amherst County Public Schools	Amherst County High School	Equity
Andrew	Buchheit	Dr. Principal. President	Prince William County	Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals	Student Well Being
Kerry	Chilton	Attorney	N/A	disAbility Law Center of Virginia	Equity
Donna	Colombo	President	Loudoun County Public Schools	Virginia PTA	Student Well Being
Jelisa	Coltrane Wolfe	Executive Director of Student Services	Staunton	PK-12 public school.	Student Well Being
Casey	Conger	Principal	Virginia Beach City Public Schools	VAESP	Student Well Being
Steve	Constantino	Advisory member - Executive Professor	NA	The College of William & Mary	Academics
Jessica	Costa	EL Instruction Specialist	VDOE	VDOE	Academics
Grace	Creasey	Executive Director	n/a	Virginia Council for Private Education	Operations
Andrew	Daire	Dean	VCU School of Education	VCU School of Education	Student Well Being
Susan	Danielson	Principal	Prince William County	VAESP	Student Well Being
Pamela	Davis-Vaught	Principal and BOE member	Bristol Virginia	BOE	Staff Support
Yesenia	De La Cruz	Head Start Program Director	Roanoke	TAP	Staff Support
Sarah	Deel	Science Teacher	Smyth	Smyth County Public Schools	Academics
Blaire	Denson	Executive Director	NA	Virginia Partnership for Out-of-School Time (VPOST)	Operations
Judy	Diggs	Director, Equity and Diversity	Montgomery County Public Schools	Montgomery County Public Schools, VA	Student Well Being
Katrina	Dolak	School Psychologist	Newport News Public Schools	Virginia Academy of School Psychologists	Staff Support
Eric	Dragan	School Psychologist	Campbell County	NASP, VASP	Academics
Dr. James J.	Fedderman	Teacher	Accomack County	Virginia Education Association	Staff Support
Laura	Feichtinger McGrath	Director of English Learner Services	Harrisonburg City Public Schools	na	Student Well Being
Ta'Neshia	Ford	Principal	Richmond Public Schools	State Operated Programs	Equity
Kelly	Forsythe Acevedo	School Psychologist	Buckingham County Public Schools	Virginia Academy of School Psychologists	Student Well Being
Dan	Gecker	President	N/A	Virginia Board of Education	Operations
Adriane	Graham	Teacher-Coordinator	Newport News Public Schools	Virginia ACTE	Student Well Being
Amy	Griffin	Superintendent	Cumberland County Public Schools	Cumberland County Public Schools	Academics
Sidney	Gunter	Response to Intervention Coordinator	Richmond	RPS	Academics
Royal	Gurley	Assistant Superintendent	Dinwiddie County	Public School	Equity
Bernard	Hairston	Assistant Superintendent	Albemarle County	Yes	Academics
Grady	Hart	Community Partnerships Coordinator	Richmond Public Schools	RPS	Equity
Monica	Hatchett	Director of Communications	Henry County Public Schools	HCPS	Equity
Phillip	Hawkins Jr.	Teacher	Norfolk City Public Schools	Virginia Education Association	Equity
Christine	Hill	Associate. Supt.	Northampton	Central office	Equity
Joan	Hite	Director of Elementary Instruction	Mecklenburg	NA	Academics
Naila	Holmes	Human and Civil Rights Director	N/A	Virginia Education Association	Staff Support

Member		Title	School Division	Organizational Affiliation	Sub Committee
Michelle (Shelly)	Howell	Special Education Teacher	Mecklenburg County Public Schools	Teacher	Student Well Being
Denise	Huebner	Associate Superintendent for Special Education and Student Services	Prince William County Public Schools	Prince William County Schools	Student Well Being
Carolyn	Jackson	Supervisor, Office of Equity and Excellence	Arlington	APS	Equity
Kimberly	Jackson-Davis	Assistant Principal	APS	Washington Liberty	Operations
Hollie	Jennings	Supervisor of Discipline and Compliance	Amherst	NA	Student Well Being
Andrea	Johnson	Teacher/Department Chair	Salem Coty Schools	NBCT	Academics
Stacy	Johnson	Assistant Superintendent	King William	King William County Public Schools	Equity
Jeffrey	Johnson	Principal	Chesapeake	VASSP	Staff Support
Virginia	Justus	Special Education Teacher	Tazewell County	Richlands Middle school	Equity
Ben	Kiser	Executive Director		VASS	Operations
Scott	Kizner	TF Chair	Stafford County Public Schools	Superintendent	Student Well Being
Stephanie	Krauss	Advisory Member - Director Special Projects	NA	JFF	Equity
Amy	Lamb	Director of Instruction	Northumberland	Northumberland County Schools	Staff Support
Maria	Lawson-Davenport	Supervisor of Advanced Instruction	Suffolk Public Schools	N/A	Staff Support
Latasha	Lee	Teacher	Northumberland County	VEA	Staff Support
Gregory	Lyndaker	Teacher	Henrico County	Henrico High School	Staff Support
Michael	Lyons	Assistant Professor in Clinical and School Psychology	UVA	UVA	Student Well Being
Amy	Mallow	Teacher	Bedford County Public Schools	Elementary/2nd grade	Equity
Monica	Manns	Chief Equity and Diversity Officer	Henrico County Public Schools	HCPS	Student Well Being
Gennifer	Miller	Director of Childhood Learning	Bedford County Public Schools	Bedford County Public Schools	Academics
Brenda	Muse	Director of Curriculum & Instruction	Franklin County	School System	Academics
Tom	Nichols	Chief Academic Officer for High Schools	Stafford County Public Schools	NASSP, VASSP, VaLIN 2020 Cohort, VASCD	Equity
Keith	Perrigan	Superintendent	Bristol	Region VII	Operations
Debbie	Pfeiffer	Director, State Outreach Services	VA School for the Deaf and the Blind	VSDB	Staff Support
Sheli	Porter	Director of Secondary Teaching & Learning	Chesapeake Public Schools	Region 2 Equity Leadership Team, GWU	Student Well Being
Indira	Quarles	Principal Director, Elementary	Richmond City	Chief of Schools	Academics
Jeremy	Raley	Superintendent	Goochland		Operations
Rachel	Rasnake	Special Education and Student Services Coordinator	Charlottesville City Schools	None	Academics
Cynthia (Cindy)	Reasoner	Director of Instruction and HR	Amelia County Public Schools	VASCD	Staff Support
Caitlin	Reynal	Special education teacher	Chesterfield county	n/a	Student Well Being
Melvina	Robinson	CTE Coordinator	Middlesex County Public Schools	VA ACTE	Equity
Rodney	Robinson	TF Chair	Richmond City	NTOY	Equity
Jennifer	Rodgers	Teacher	Loudoun	Jennifer Rodgers/Dominion High School	Academics
Cristóbal	Rodríguez	Associate Professor of Educational Leadership & Policy	Equity & Access	Howard University	Operations
Sal	Romero	Director of Equity and Community Engagement	Harrisonburg City Public Schools	Harrisonburg City Public Schools	Equity
Carl	Rush	Division Equity Specialist	Winchester Public Schools	Winchester Public Schools	Operations
Darrell	Sampson	Director, K-12 School Counseling	Alexandria City Public Schools	ACPS	Student Well Being

Member		Title	School Division	Organizational Affiliation	Sub Committee
Dr. Aaliyah	Samuel	Advisory Member - Executive Vice President Government Affairs & Partnerships	None	NWEA	Academics
Ginger	Sanderson	School Board Chairman	Cumberland County	Cumberland County School Board	Equity
Sherry	Saunders	Executive Director of Human Resources and Instruction	Buckingham County Public Schools	Buckingham County Public Schools	Staff Support
Clara James	Scott	Education Committee Chairperson	Various	NAACP	Equity
Robin	Shepherd		JSRCC		Academics
Jeff	Smith	TF Chair	Hampton City		Academics
Leona	Smith	Director of Equity & Family Engagement, Office of Professional Learning and Family Engagement	Fairfax County Public Schools	Fairfax County Public Schools	Equity
Aaron	Spence	Superintendent	Virginia Beach City Public Schools	Virginia Beach City Public Schools	Operations
Taisha	Steele	Executive Director of School Counseling and Equity	Roanoke City Public Schools	Virginia School Counselor Association and several other educational and community affiliations	Student Well Being
Sandy	Strayer	Superintendent	Henry	HCPS	Academics
Rachel	Thompson	IB Spanish and AP Seminar teacher	Virginia Beach City Public Schools	VBCPS	Academics
Michael	Thornton	Retired Superintendent (Retired)	Surry County (Retired Superintendent)	Retired Superintendent	Operations
Stephanie	Totty	Instructional Coach	Appomattox County Public Schools	Appomattox Public Schools	Academics
Chad	Triolet	Assistant Principal	Chesapeake Public Schools	Sparrow Road Intermediate	Student Well Being
Janet	Turner-Giles	VSBA President Elect	Nelson County	VSBA	Staff Support
Chuck	Wagner		Goochland County		Academics
Emily	Webb	Director of Board Relations	N/A	Virginia Department of Education	Operations
Tinkhani	White	Director of School Improvement	Chesterfield County		Academics
Tina	Williams	President	FCPS	Fairfax county Federation of teachers (AFT Local 2401)	Staff Support
Eric	Williams	Superintendent	Loudoun	Loudoun County Public Schools	Operations
Dr. Patrice	Wilson	Principal	CCPS	Bensley ES	Staff Support
Kimberly M	Wilson	Career and Technical Education Teacher	Alexandria City Public School System	ACTE	Staff Support

VDOE RETURN TO SCHOOL TIMELINE ADVISORY PANEL

FINAL PANEL REPORT AND KEY OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

BACKGROUND

As public school divisions begin to consider the timeline for a return to school the options for a reopen date present unique challenges and opportunities for school division's leadership to address. In considering the three main options for a return to brick and mortar schools the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) has brought together a diverse group of school leaders to provide areas of focus, key considerations and supports that may be needed by public schools in order to prepare for students and staff returning to school buildings.

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) advisory panel within the framework of the Return to School Recovery Task Force to focused on a timeline for a return to classroom instruction for Virginia's public schools. This expert panel consisted of current and past school division superintendents from across Virginia and was convened to address the multitude of areas and considerations regarding a return to the school building. Over the course of a multi-day convening the Return to School Timeline Advisory Panel compiled information regarding essential actions to ensure operations support a safe and organized transition back to classroom instruction beginning with summer school programming being offered across the Commonwealth. These recommendations will be provided to the Superintendent of Public Instruction and shared with the Governor's Task Force.

RE-OPENING TIMELINE OPTIONS

I. Traditional Summer Programs Reopen Date (Summer School)

- Face-To-Face Instruction Allowed (with or without a variance)
- Face-To-Face is not an option, or needs to be limited

II. Fall On-Time Reopen Date or Early Calendar Start

- Schools open with students and face-to-face instruction
- Schools open with limited face-to-face instruction and/or social distancing requirements
- Schools remain closed until a pre-determined or undetermined date. Once open, face-to face instruction may be limited or social distancing guidelines may still be in place

III. Fall Late Reopen Date/Extended Out Of School Learning

- Schools remain closed until a pre-determined or undetermined date. Once open, face-to face instruction may be limited or social distancing guidelines may still be in place

COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP:

AARON SPENCE,
Chair, Superintendent,
Virginia Beach City Schools

ERIC WILLIAMS
Vice Chair, Superintendent,
Loudoun County

MEMBERS:

ANNETTE BENNETT,
Superintendent,
Appomattox County

SARAH CALVERIC,
Superintendent,
Caroline County

BILLY HAUN,
Executive Director,
Virginia High School League

OLWEN HERRON,
Superintendent,
Williamsburg James-City County

GREG HARROW,
Director of Operations and Transportation,
Middlesex County Public Schools

DAISY HICKS,
Superintendent,
Buckingham County

MARK JONES,
Superintendent,
Pittsylvania County Is

BEN KISER,
Executive Director,
Virginia Association of
School Superintendents

SCOTT KIZNER,
Superintendent,
Stafford County

KEITH PERRIGAN,
Superintendent,
Bristol City

JEFF SMITH,
Superintendent,
Hampton City

JAMES THORNTON,
Superintendent,
Isle of Wight County

MICHAEL THORNTON,
Retired Superintendent

KEY TOPICS CONSIDERED

TECHNOLOGY NEEDS

- Devices
- Access to internet

STUDENT NEEDS

- School nutrition
- Physical and Mental Health
- Social Emotional Supports
- Instructional Supports

STAFF NEEDS

- PD – Distance Learning Pedagogy
- Retention Issues
- Health & Safety Considerations

SOCIAL DISTANCING WHILE IN SCHOOL BUILDINGS

- Schedules
- Building Access
- Differentiated access for vulnerable student populations (ELL, SPED, etc.)

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT/COMMUNICATION

- EL Families
- SPED Families
- Families Experiencing financial/food insecurity
- Disconnected Students

TIMELINE I: TRADITIONAL SUMMER PROGRAMS REOPEN DATE (SUMMER SCHOOL)

Over the course of a multi-day convening the Return to School Timeline Advisory Panel compiled information regarding essential actions to ensure operations support a safe and organized transition back to classroom instruction beginning with summer school programming being offered across the Commonwealth.

Two scenarios were evaluated to ensure compliance with possible executive orders associated with the reopening of schools for traditional summer programs;

- Timeline 1:1: Face-to-face instruction allowed with or without a variance
- Timeline 1:2: Face-to-face instruction limited or needs to be limited

KEY POINTS

Public school divisions in Virginia will require significant guidance from state agencies and the Office of the Governor. The timeline for decision making for development of summer semester instructional offerings is immediate. There are significant needs in the area of training, communication and logistical supports needed to implement compliance with any social distancing requirements or guidelines.

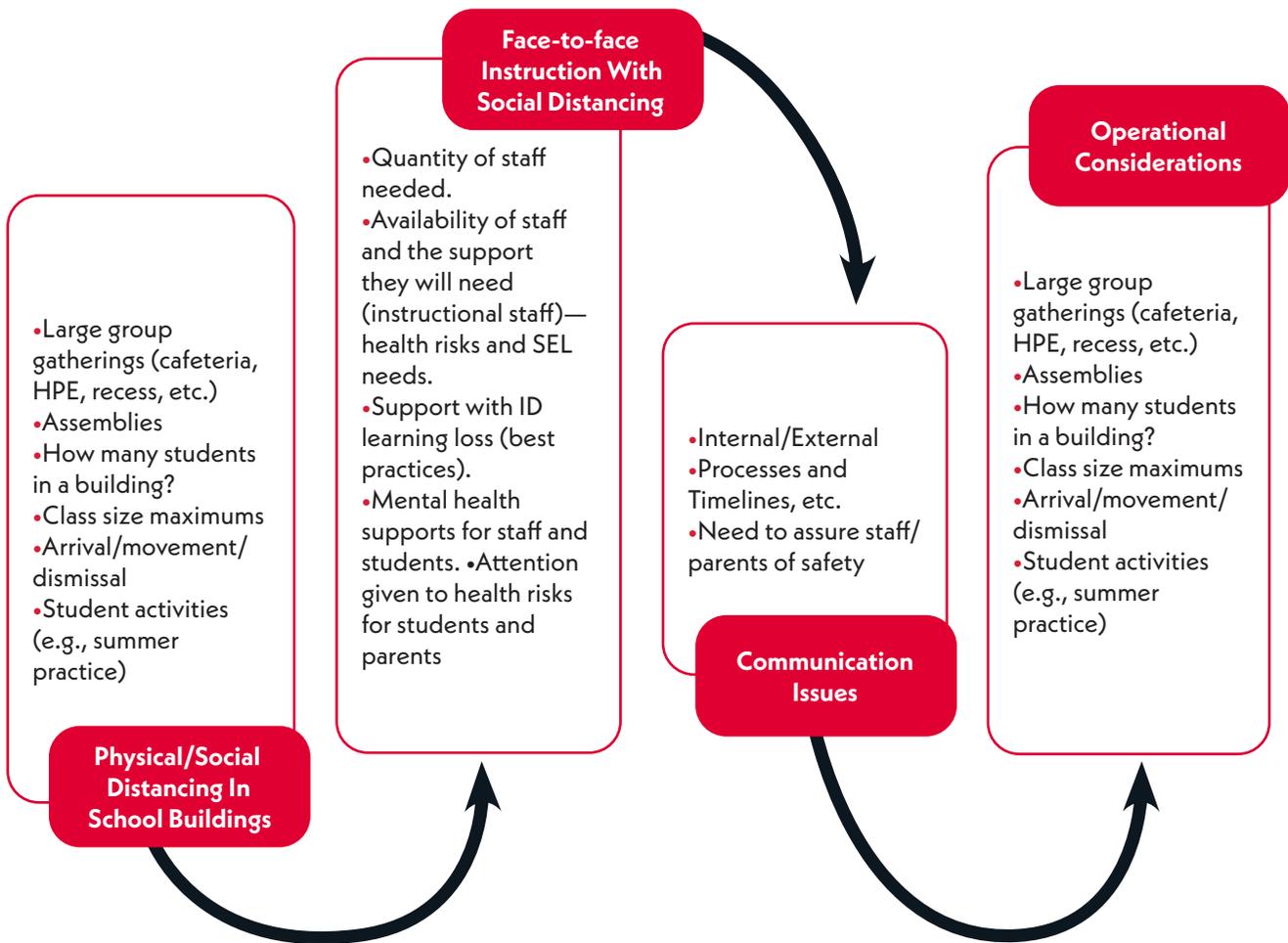
SUMMARY

Public school divisions will need significant guidance from state agencies as well as their local health departments in order to be prepared to address not only situational concerns but also the significant preparation of facilities, operations and communications. The timeline for development, dissemination and consumption of this guidance will need to be expedited to ensure the ability of summer programming to be offered.

When planning for how to reopen schools for summer instruction schools will need time to plan for what implementation at the school level will look like, time to train staff accordingly and communication with parents, students and stakeholders. Significant logistical challenges may also need to be addressed in order to ensure full compliance with guidance and orders. Specific supports such as student transportation, food service, facilities, protocols (the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and mitigating the impact on human resources will be key in ensuring that schools will be ready to reopen as soon as public health officials signal it is safe. Local school divisions may also require flexibility on requirements due to the lack of access and services for public health for example; physical health exams for students and employees would need to be considered in order to provide educational settings for summer instruction.

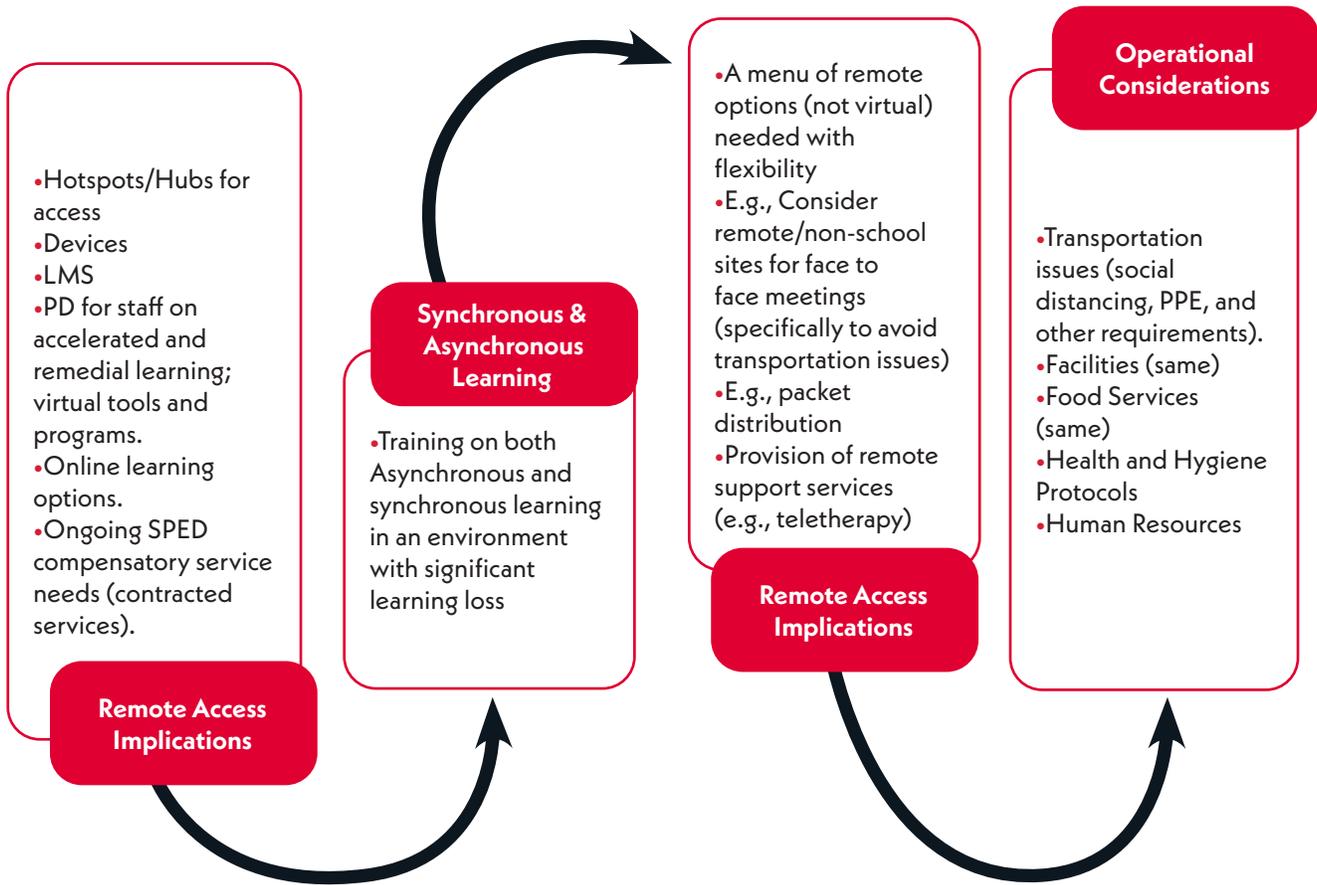
Once open, school divisions throughout the Commonwealth will need ongoing support in order to maintain compliance with executive orders and guidance from the state health department. Guidance may need to be individualized to regions and the impact in specific areas and communities. Additional resources and funding to support alternative methods of instruction and support for specific populations may be required in order to ensure the safety of all staff and students. Ensuring that supplies will continue to be available to maintain compliance with executive orders and guidance (PPE) and to ensure implementation of essential functions maintaining the health, safety and feeding of students and staff while on campus.

**TIMELINE I.1: TRADITIONAL SUMMER PROGRAMS REOPEN DATE (SUMMER SCHOOL)
FACE-TO-FACE INSTRUCTION ALLOWED (WITH OR WITHOUT A VARIANCE)**



KEY QUESTIONS	
•	Is it ten or less students per class or building?
•	Will local health departments make guidance on opening/social distancing regionally or will it be statewide?
•	Will VDH provide or assist with communications?
•	When will the AG return an answer on bus driver physical flexibility?
•	What would be recommended for indoor air quality (IAQ/EAQ)?

TIMELINE I.2: TRADITIONAL SUMMER PROGRAMS REOPEN DATE (SUMMER SCHOOL)
FACE-TO-FACE NOT AN OPTION, OR NEEDS TO BE LIMITED



KEY QUESTIONS	
•	Is it ten or less students per class or building?
•	Will guidance on opening/social distancing be made regionally by local health departments or will it be statewide?
•	Will VDH provide or assist with communications?
•	When will the AG return an answer on bus driver physical flexibility?
•	What will be the Medicaid requirements for determining eligibility for services (former/new)?

TIMELINE II: FALL ON-TIME REOPEN DATE OR EARLY CALENDAR START

Over the course of a multi-day convening the Return to School Timeline Advisory Panel compiled information regarding essential actions to ensure operations support a safe and organized transition back to classroom instruction beginning with a fall on-time reopen date that would include the public school divisions around the Commonwealth that begin their academic year in August.

Three scenarios are presented to ensure compliance with possible executive orders associated with the reopening of schools for the fall of 2020;

1. Timeline 2:1: Schools open with student and face-to-face instruction
2. Timeline 2:2: Schools open with limited face-to-face instruction and/or social distancing requirements
3. Timeline 2:3: Schools remain closed until a pre-determined or undetermined date.

KEY POINTS

- Public school divisions in Virginia will require significant guidance from state agencies and the Office of the Governor.
- There are significant needs in the area of training, communication and logistical supports needed to implement compliance with any social distancing requirements or guidelines.
- Considerations for regulatory and instructional program flexibility will be key to addressing the effect of extended school closures on students.

SUMMARY

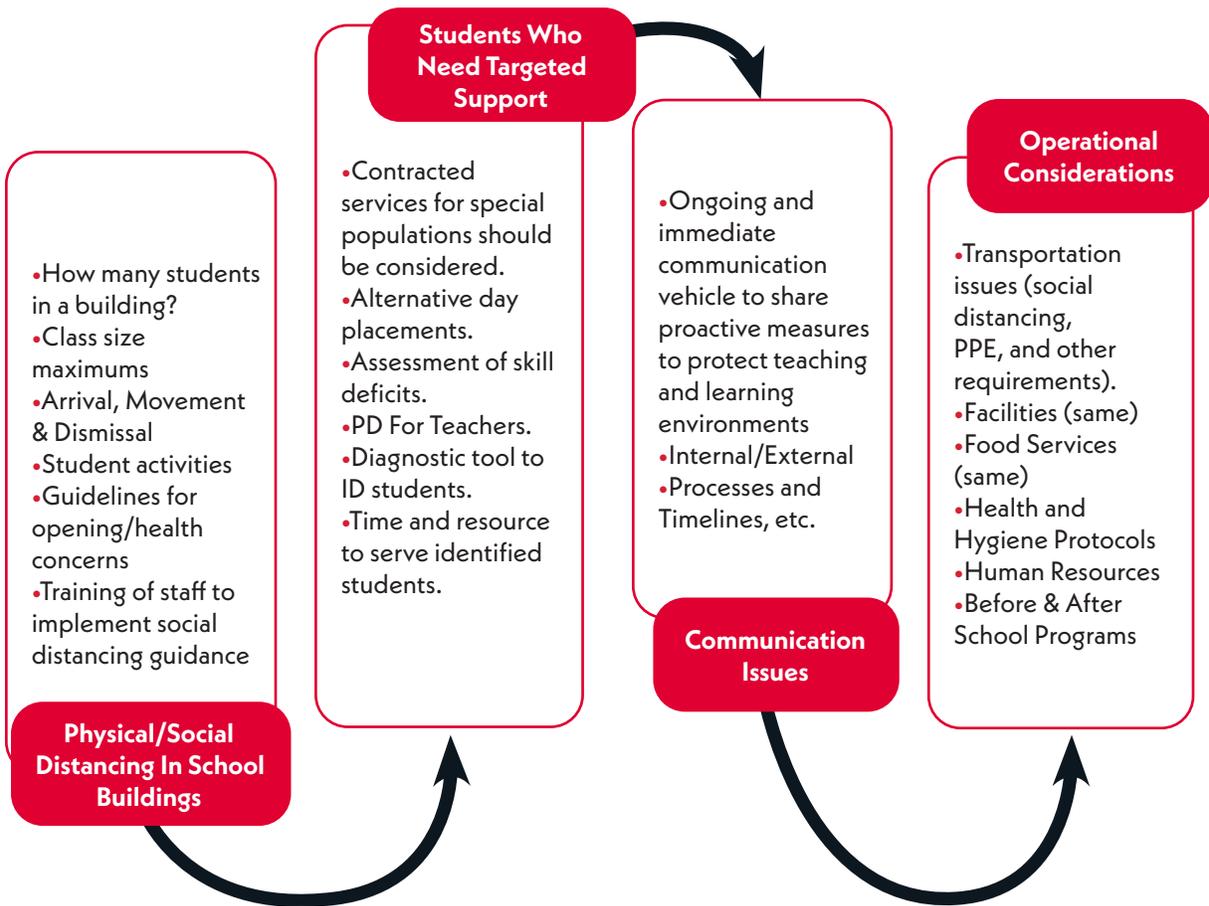
Public school divisions will require the support and guidance of state agencies, the state department of health as well as their local health departments in order to plan for a reopening of schools at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year. The communication will need to include any requirements that the local education agencies (LEA) will have to meet in order to reopen as well as the requirements for any social distancing guidelines. These guidelines will have a direct impact on schedules, staff availability, student transportation services, and overall capacity of public schools. Logistical issues for public school buildings will also have to be addressed such as; hand sanitizing stations and capacity of temporary physical isolation/separation spaces based on conditions. Schools will need continuing access to preventative equipment (including personal protective equipment) and products to prevent spread.

When planning for how to reopen schools for the fall divisions will need time to plan for what implementation at the school level will look like, time to train staff accordingly and models for communication with parents, students and stakeholders. Communication will need to be widespread and focused on the safety of the school campus and the provision of protocols to ensure the security for students and staff. Once open, school divisions throughout the Commonwealth will need ongoing support in order to maintain compliance with executive orders and guidance from the state health department. Guidance may need to be specific to regions in order to address the impact in specific areas and communities. Additional resources and funding to support alternative methods of instruction and support for specific populations may be required in order to ensure the safety of all staff and students. Ensuring that supplies will continue to be available to maintain compliance with protective orders and guidance (PPE) and to ensure implementation of essential functions maintaining the health, safety and feeding of students and staff while on campus.

Significant logistical challenges may also need to be addressed in order to ensure full compliance with guidance and orders. Specific supports such as student transportation, food service, facilities, protocols (the use of personal protective equipment (ppe)) and mitigating the impact on human resources will be key in ensuring that schools will be ready to reopen as soon as public health officials signal it is safe. Additional or extensions of a virtual delivery system for instruction and student learning involve a variety of complex factors for LEA across the Commonwealth. Disparate access to broadband internet services as well as the impact on students with more intensive support needs would continue to cause concerns for school divisions required to continue online and/or virtual classroom instruction.

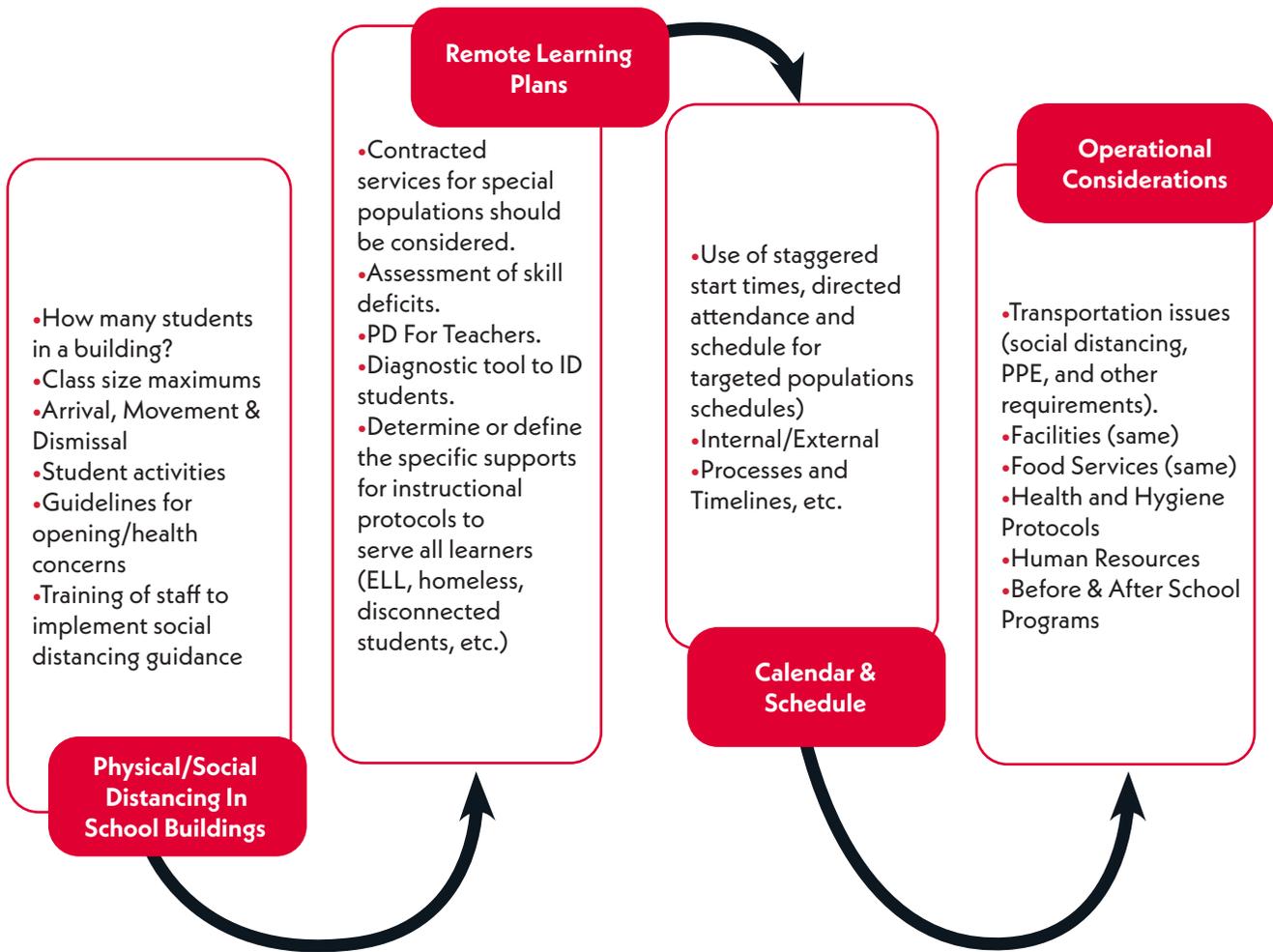
Local school divisions may also require flexibility on requirements such as mandatory attendance and instructional hours for programs and coursework. This flexibility could support the focus of schools to identify students who may need targeted supports based on extended learning loss. Time for staff development is also key in ensuring equitable supports are provided to students who may have been disproportionately affected by the extended school closures.

TIMELINE II.1: FALL ON-TIME REOPEN DATE OR EARLY CALENDAR START
SCHOOLS OPEN WITH STUDENTS AND FACE-TO-FACE INSTRUCTION



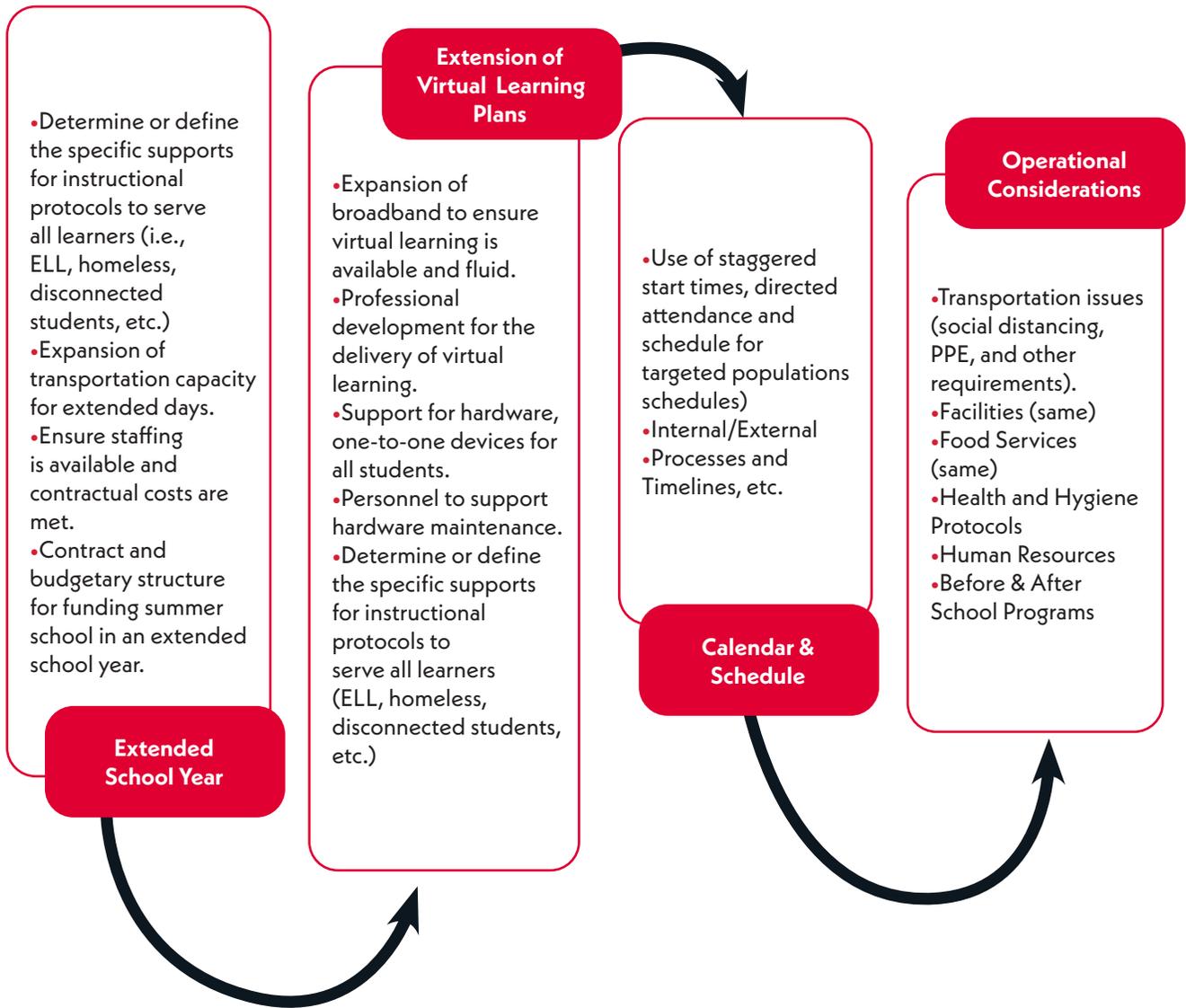
KEY QUESTIONS	
•	Is it ten or less students per class or building?
•	Will guidance on opening/social distancing be made regionally by local health departments or will it be statewide?
•	Will VDH provide or assist with communications?
•	When will the AG return an answer on bus driver physical flexibility?
•	What will be the Medicaid requirements for determining eligibility for services (former/new)?

TIMELINE II.2: FALL ON-TIME REOPEN DATE OR EARLY CALENDAR START
 SCHOOLS OPEN WITH LIMITED FACE-TO-FACE INSTRUCTION AND/OR SOCIAL DISTANCING REQUIREMENT



KEY QUESTIONS	
•	State requirements for distance learning in the SOA?
•	Clarity on Definition of ADM
•	Waiver of Accreditation
•	Definition of a "school day"?
•	SOLs – What is essential?

TIMELINE II.3: FALL ON-TIME REOPEN DATE OR EARLY CALENDAR START
SCHOOLS REMAIN CLOSED UNTIL A PRE-DETERMINED OR UNDETERMINED DATE.



KEY QUESTIONS	
•	State requirements for distance learning in the SOA?
•	Clarity on Definition of ADM
•	Waiver of Accreditation
•	Definition of a "school day"?
•	SOLs – What is essential?

TIMELINE III: FALL LATE REOPEN DATE/EXTENDED OUT OF SCHOOL LEARNING

Over the course of a multi-day convening the Return to School Timeline Advisory Panel compiled information regarding essential actions to ensure operations support a safe and organized transition back to classroom instruction. The scenario presented here is the final option and contains information and details related to a delayed start of the 2020-2021 school year. This delay would necessitate the need for extended out of school learning on a virtual or other alternative basis.

One final scenario is offered to ensure compliance with possible executive orders associated with a delayed reopening of schools for the fall of 2020;

1. Timeline 3: Fall Late Reopen Date/Extended Out Of School Learning

KEY POINTS

- Public school divisions in Virginia will require significant guidance from state agencies and the Office of the Governor.
- Additional extension of school closures into the 2020-2021 school year will require significant support and flexibility in order to assist public school divisions in meeting the needs of students, their families and staff.
- There are significant needs in the area of training, communication and logistical supports needed to implement compliance with any social distancing requirements or guidelines.
- Support and resources to develop, continue and evaluate student learning in a virtual or alternative delivery method will be required in individualized ways to meet the needs of school communities throughout the Commonwealth.
- Considerations for regulatory and instructional program flexibility will be key to addressing the effect of extended school closures on students.

SUMMARY

Public school divisions will require the support and guidance of state agencies, the state department of health as well as local health departments in order to plan for a delayed reopening of schools during the 2020-2021 school year. The anticipated impact of the possible extension of remote or virtual learning plans and supports will be a significant concern for many local education agencies (LEA) in Virginia.

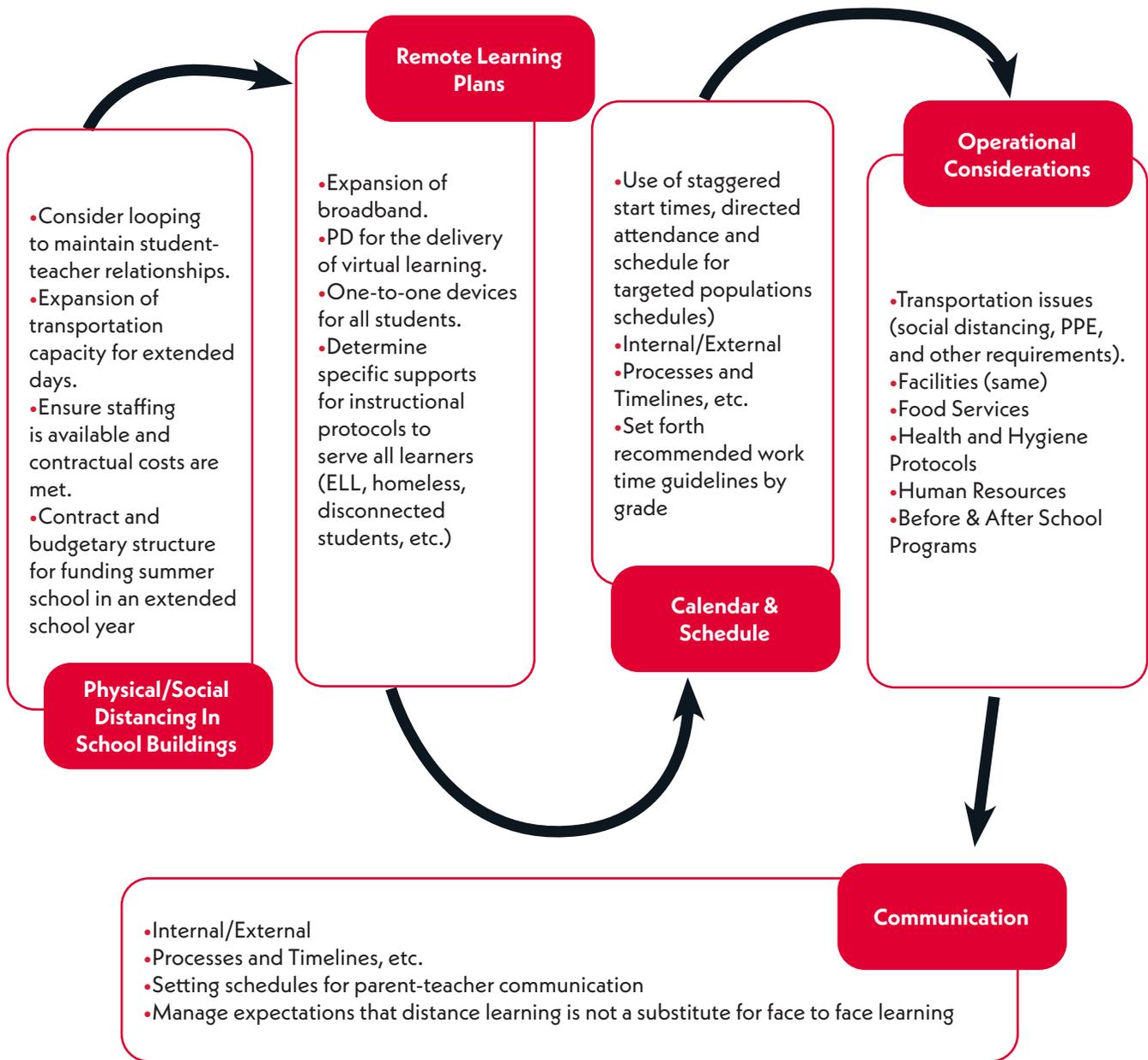
Communication dissemination to school communities regarding a delayed re-opening will need to include any requirements that the local education agencies (LEA) will have to meet in order to reopen as well as the requirements for any social distancing guidelines. These guidelines will have a direct impact on schedules, staff availability, student transportation services, and overall capacity. Logistical issues for public school buildings will also have to be navigated such as; hand sanitizing stations and capacity of temporary physical isolation/separation spaces based on conditions. Schools will need continuing access to preventative equipment (including personal protective equipment) and products to prevent spread.

When planning for how to reopen schools for a delayed fall start schools will need time to plan for what implementation at the school level will look like, time to train staff accordingly and communication with parents, students and stakeholders. Communication will need to be widespread and focused on the safety of the school campus and the provision of protocols to ensure the security for students and staff. Once open, school divisions throughout the Commonwealth will need ongoing support in order to maintain compliance with executive orders and guidance from the state health department. Guidance may need to be specific to regions and the impact in specific areas and communities. If schools re-open late with limited face-to-face or social distancing requirements, there will be the impact of school calendar and scheduling issues to address. School divisions may also seek to use staggered start times, directed attendance and specific schedule for targeted student populations. Each of these decision making points for local school divisions will increase the complexity of the issue.

Ensuring that supplies will continue to be available to maintain compliance with protective orders and guidance (PPE) and to ensure implementation of essential functions maintaining the health, safety and feeding of students and staff while on campus. Additional significant logistical challenges may also need to be addressed in order to ensure full compliance with guidance and orders. Specific supports such as student transportation, food service, facilities, protocols (the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and mitigating the impact on human resources will be key in ensuring that schools will be ready to reopen as soon as public health officials signal it is safe.

Local school divisions may also require flexibility on requirements such as mandatory attendance and instructional hours for instructional programs and coursework. Requirements for the school calendar and school year timeline could also be considered; offering a shorter school year, a reformatting of learning to compensate for the additional and extended closures, and extension of the school year beyond typical closure dates (spring/summer 2021). This flexibility would also include portions of the Standards of Accreditation and requirements related to Career and Technical Education. Any flexibility offered could support the focus of schools to identify students who may need targeted supports based on extended learning loss. Time for staff development is also key in ensuring equitable supports are provided to students who may have been disproportionately affected by the extended school closures. School divisions may also seek flexibility and consideration in the development of the division/school budgets and allowances for identification and encumbrances of funds to support the above areas.

TIMELINE III: FALL LATE REOPEN DATE/EXTENDED OUT OF SCHOOL LEARNING
SCHOOLS REMAIN CLOSED UNTIL A PRE-DETERMINED OR UNDETERMINED DATE.



KEY QUESTIONS	
•	Revise SOA – School day, hours, ADM, Accreditation
•	Teacher 200 day contract (length and possible extension into a new fiscal year).
•	Define Continuity of Learning & New Learning in SOA
•	Revise IDEA so that we work to support SWD with realistic expectations for all
•	Definition of a “school day”?
•	SOLs – What is essential?

KEY QUESTIONS FOR VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH (VDH) & CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL (CDC)

- Virginia has set forth metrics for Phase 1 Reopening:
 - What metrics would be used to determine that schools could reopen with significant physical distancing and other public health mitigation strategies?
 - What metrics would be used to determine that schools could reopen without significant physical distancing or other public health mitigation strategies?
- What infrastructure and resources will exist to test, trace, and isolate new cases both generally AND in schools specifically?
- What evidence based public health measures should be implemented in schools?
- How can we align those measures with necessary instructional and well-being strategies that meet the needs of students and staff?
- What entry process/screening measures are recommended for schools?
- Can VDH provide training materials to train staff, parents, and students on these matters?
- Can VDH help schools apply general health recommendations specifically for physical education and interscholastic sports upon return to school?

CONCLUSION:

The *Return to School Timeline Advisory Panel's* report is designed to inform policy makers' decisions and aide in the development of the planning that must happen in advance of Virginia students return to school. Reopening schools in a manner that is timely, safe, and equitable will be challenging. The following considerations are critical to the safe and equitable reopening of schools:

- Public school divisions will require the support and guidance of VDOE, VDH and local health departments in order to plan for a delayed reopening of schools.
- Communication will need to be widespread and focused on the safety of the school campus and the provision of protocols to ensure the security for students and staff.
- There are significant logistical issues that local schools will need guidance on in addition to adequate time to plan and deliver professional training on.
- Specific supports such as student transportation, food service, facilities, protocols (the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and mitigating the impact on human resources will be key in ensuring that schools will be ready to reopen.
- Local school divisions may also require flexibility on requirements such as mandatory attendance and instructional hours for programs and coursework.
- Support and resources to develop, continue and evaluate student learning in a virtual or alternative delivery method will be required in individualized ways to meet the needs of school communities throughout the Commonwealth.
- Time for staff development is key to ensuring equitable supports are provided to students who may have been disproportionately affected by the extended school closures.
- There are significant needs in the area of training, communication and logistical supports needed to implement compliance with any social distancing requirements or guidelines.

Schools serve as important community assets and serve as a safety net for our most vulnerable students. Schools connect students with their peers and caring adults, teach critical life skills and essential knowledge, and provide enrichment opportunities while serving as community hubs. Virginia's leaders must carefully weigh all of the considerations outlined by the Return to School Timeline Advisory Panel before charting the course forward.

REPORT OF THE VIRGINIA ACCREDITATION TASK FORCE

May 2020

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In March 2020 Virginia schools were required to cease all in-person instruction for the 2019-2020 school year due to the public health threat of COVID-19. While students and schooling changed dramatically as families and divisions responded to the crisis, state policies had to be adjusted to reflect the changing dynamics.

Due to the impact of these closures, it was decided that school accreditation for the 2020-2021 academic year based on data from 2019-2020 would be waived. Therefore, the accreditation rating assigned to all public schools for 2020-2021 will be "Accreditation Waived."

However, determinations for school accreditation for the 2021-2022 academic year remain undecided as the public health situation continues to change and schools adjust to provide instruction in a new way. This report reflects the recommendations a Task Force made to state policy makers on proceeding with changes to state accreditation.

VIRGINIA'S ACCREDITATION TASK FORCE

CHARGE OF THE TASK FORCE

In April 2020, Dr. James Lane convened the Accreditation Task Force to recommend changes to the 2021-2022 accreditation calculations to mitigate the lack of assessment data from spring 2020. In particular, he asked the task force to consider how to account for the student growth in reading and mathematics and the EL progress components of the combined rate. The work of the Accreditation Task Force was intended to inform the recommendations of the larger Recovering School Task Force.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE TASK FORCE

The task force was led by three co-chairs: Dr. Rosa Atkins (Charlottesville City), Dr. Scott Brabrand (Fairfax County), and Dr. Alan Seibert (Salem City). The membership had representation from many stakeholder groups including: superintendents, the Virginia Board of Education, division level directors and coordinators, principals, teachers, and professional education organizations. A full roster is at the end of this report.

IMPACT OF SCHOOL CLOSURES ON 2021-2022 ACCREDITATION RATINGS

Since schools closed prior to the spring 2020 administration of the Standards of Learning (SOL) tests in reading and mathematics, there are no baseline data to compare to spring 2021 SOL test scores to measure student growth. The administration of the ACCESS for ELs test, used to measure the progress of English Learners (ELs) in learning English, was almost complete at the time of the school closures. Some school divisions had completed the administration of the ACCESS for ELs assessment to all students but others had not. Therefore, the availability of spring 2020 English language proficiency data for ELs varies across school divisions.

Because the accreditation ratings are based on a "combined rate" which includes student growth for those who continue to fail the SOL tests in reading and mathematics and the progress of English Learners in learning English, the lack of test data from spring 2020 impacts accreditation ratings for 2021-2022.

WORK OF THE ACCREDITATION TASK FORCE

Thursday, April 23, 2020: At this initial meeting, Dr. Lane outlined the charge of the Task Force and Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) staff provided an overview of seven potential solutions for accreditation in 2021-2022.

- Measure growth of non-consecutive years, 2019 to 2021.
- Apply an adjustment for growth and EL progress to each school based on statewide trend data.
- Apply an adjustment for growth and EL progress to each school based on individual school level trend data.
- Use local assessments from commercially available tests to measure student growth.
- Administer the SOL assessments in early fall 2020 as a baseline for growth in 2021-2022.
- Waive accreditation ratings for the 2021-2022 accreditation year.
- Calculate the combined rate for accreditation without student growth or EL progress calculations.

These options served as a starting point for the discussions. Task Force members were encouraged to offer additional options beyond the seven presented. After this initial meeting, members of the task force were sent a survey to gather reactions to these seven options.

Tuesday, April 28, 2020: The results of the survey were shared with the team as well as more detailed information around three of the options that received favorable comments on the survey. Two options:

1. Using a rate for achievement that did not include growth or EL progress; and
2. Administering the SOL assessments in early fall 2020 as a baseline for growth in 2021-2022, were removed from consideration.

Tuesday, May 5, 2020: The task force reviewed a draft outline of its report based on recommendations prepared by task force co-chair, Dr. Alan Seibert. The members provided reactions to the report and offered additional suggestions and concerns. In particular, task force members noted that, if accreditation ratings are calculated in 2021-2022, the role of the other indicators such as chronic absenteeism, the graduation and completion index, and the dropout rate will need to be determined. Further, members noted the potential need for changes to the accreditation rating methodology beyond 2021-2022. At the end of the meeting, several task force members volunteered to prepare a revised draft of the report for consideration by the larger group. The members of this subcommittee included: Thomas Taylor, Diane Watkins-Edwards, Dana Norman and Laurie McCullough. This draft was provided to the task force by email for review and comment prior to the May 12 meeting.

Tuesday May 12, 2020: Task force members reviewed and discussed a version of the final report that was prepared by this subcommittee following the May 5 meeting.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2021-2022 ACCREDITATION RATINGS

Considering the need to focus on the well-being of students and staff in 2020-2021, the task force offers the following recommendations for the 2021-2022 accreditation ratings.

Task force members recognize there are other indicators that would contribute to school accreditation calculations in 2021-2022 that are not specifically addressed in these recommendations. These indicators include: chronic absenteeism, the graduation and completion index, and the dropout rate. Based on the charge of the task force and the limited number of task force meetings held, specific recommendations for these indicators were not discussed. However, should accreditation not be waived again for 2021-2022, the task force recommends that it be reconvened to address the additional indicators.

The recommendations provided below are based on whether school is open for face-to-face instruction for the entire 2020-2021 school year or whether additional school closures occur.

SCHOOLS OPEN AND REMAIN OPEN FOR THE FULL ACADEMIC YEAR

If schools open and are in session for the required 180 days/990 hours, the task force recommends the following options:

OPTION 1: WAIVE ACCREDITATION

Waive Accreditation again for the 2021-2022 accreditation year. The SOL tests and the ACCESS for ELs assessments would be administered as usual in the 2020-2021 academic year and would serve as a baseline for student growth and EL progress for the 2022-2023 accreditation year.

OPTION 2: IF ACCREDITATION IS NOT WAIVED, USE THE FOLLOWING ADJUSTMENTS IN CALCULATING THE COMBINED RATE. THE TASK FORCE SUPPORTS USING A COMBINATION OF THESE ADJUSTMENTS IF THE RESULT IS ADVANTAGEOUS TO SCHOOLS.

STUDENT GROWTH ON THE SOL TESTS IN READING AND MATHEMATICS

1. Use the progress tables to compare 2019 and 2021 SOL assessment data to determine individual student growth.
 - The task force recommends that the Department explore modifying the criteria for meeting growth. This change could account for the potential of slower student growth over these two years due to the current instructional setting.
 - Because there will be no growth data available for students in grade 3 or grade 4 in 2020-2021, the task force recommends that the Department consider an adjustment to the student growth data for elementary schools.
2. Use historical student growth data for each school to determine an individualized school level adjustment for the 2021-2022 accreditation year only.

Allow schools that do not meet the accreditation benchmarks with these adjustments to submit evidence of student growth from locally administered commercial assessments. Assessments used for this purpose would need to undergo alignment studies to evaluate the extent to which they measure the Standards of Learning and linking studies to relate their results to the SOL test scale.

PROGRESS IN LEARNING ENGLISH FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS

The task force recommends delaying a decision on how to address the EL progress component of the combined rate until more information regarding the availability of the ACCESS for ELs data from 2020 is obtained. The school closures took place with only a week remaining of the ACCESS for ELs administration window and many schools finished testing. Because of this timing, many schools will have ACCESS for ELs data from spring 2020 that can be used for EL progress in the combined rate for the 2021-2022 accreditation ratings. If sufficient data from spring 2020 are not available, 2019 scores on the ACCESS 2.0 could be compared to those from spring 2021 or historical data from each school could be used to derive an adjustment for EL progress.

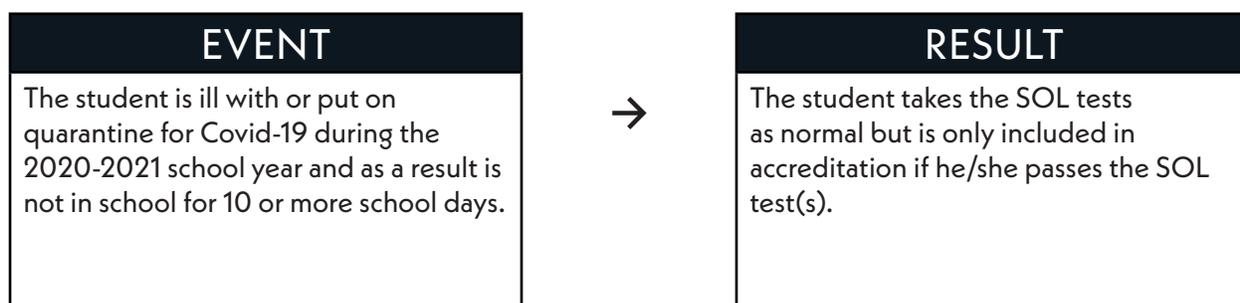
SCHOOLS ARE NOT OPEN FOR THE FULL ACADEMIC YEAR

If schools are not open for face-to-face instruction for the entire 2020-2021 academic year the task force recommends that accreditation be waived again for the 2021-2022 accreditation year. The SOL tests and the ACCESS for ELs assessments would be administered as usual in the 2020-2021 academic year and would serve as a baseline for student growth and EL progress for the 2022-2023 accreditation year.

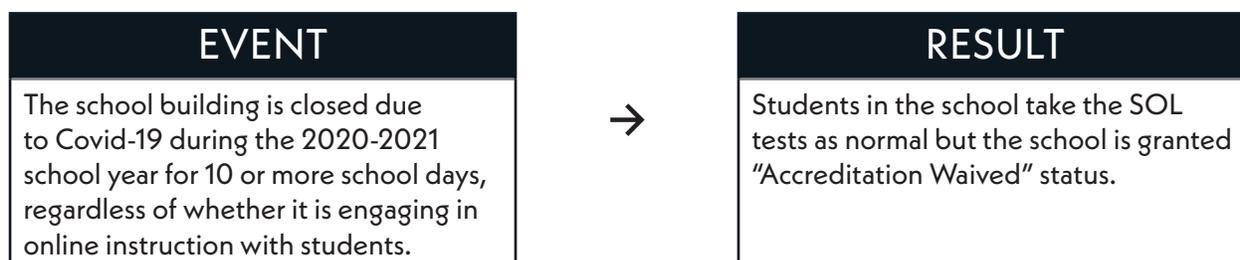
The task force recommends further discussions regarding the criteria that will be used to determine that a school is not open for the full academic year. Additionally, the task force recommends flexibility in determining school accreditation recognizing that individual students and schools may experience different impacts from Covid-19 in the 2020-2021 school year, from no impact at all to long-term interruptions in face-to-face instruction.

The graphic below provides an example of more individualized flexibility in accreditation if student or school level disruptions occur in 2020-2021. It keeps a system of accreditation in place, but takes into account different student and school events.

Student Level Event



School Level Event



RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE RECOVERING SCHOOLS TASK FORCE REGARDING THE IDENTIFICATION OF LEARNING GAPS

The Accreditation Task Force recommends that the Recovering Schools Task Force consider:

1. Encouraging a primary emphasis on the social-emotional well-being for all students and staff. Schools should consider implementing strategies to encourage engagement, create a sense of routine in a potentially new atmosphere, and develop or create a sense of connectedness between students and their learning.
2. Assisting school divisions that may not have assessment tools to inform individual student growth in reading and mathematics to acquire and use student growth measures. Criteria for recommending/selecting these measures should be their ability to reveal learning gaps before new instruction occurs.

Providing resources to school divisions to identify potential learning gaps as part of new instruction. To accomplish this, the Department could engage experienced teachers to identify prerequisite skills needed for the successful mastery of new content and recommend formative assessment strategies and tools. The VDOE would provide professional development opportunities to teachers on the proper use of these strategies and tools. The use of such informal assessments would allow a focus on moving forward to the next level of instruction as it occurs rather than focusing on the identification of all missed content at the beginning of the 2020-2021 academic year.

NEXT STEPS AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

The recommendations of the Virginia Accreditation Task Force are now under consideration by state policy makers as they work towards a final determination. Information about a final decision will be forthcoming.

Additionally, in the course of the task force's discussions about the scope of accreditation for the 2021-2022 school year, some items arose that may inform long term accreditation changes in Virginia. The task force is compiling those secondary considerations and will issue a follow up letter outlining those issues for state policy makers.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE ACCREDITATION TASK FORCE

We are grateful for the time and expertise of the following individuals who participated in the Task Force. Additionally, VDOE staff support was provided by Shelley Loving-Ryder, Assistant Superintendent for Student Assessment, Accountability and ESEA Programs.

Member	Region/Organization	Position	Division
Rosa Atkins (Chair)	Region 5	Superintendent	Charlottesville City
Scott Brabrand (Chair)	Region 4	Superintendent	Fairfax County
Alan Seibert (Chair)	Region 6	Superintendent	Salem City
Thomas Taylor	Region 1	Deputy Superintendent	Chesterfield County
Diane Watkins-Edwards	Region 2	Division Director of Testing	Chesapeake City
Amy Siepka	Region 3	Division Director of Testing	King William County
Angie Neely	Region 4	Special Education Director	Culpeper County
Jim Yurastis	Region 4	Division Director of Testing	Orange County
Dana Norman	Region 5	Chief Academic Officer	Amherst County
Sarah Robertson	Region 5	Division Director of Testing	Campbell County
Doug Straley	Region 5	Superintendent	Louisa County
Corey Alder	Region 6	ELL Coordinator	Roanoke City
Ben Williams	Region 6	Division Director of Testing	Roanoke County
Greg Mullins	Region 7	Superintendent	Wise County
Cynthia Whitaker	Region 8	Division Director of Testing	Greensville County
Diane Atkinson	Virginia Board of Education	Member	
Matt Hurt	Comprehensive Instructional Program	Director	
Jamill Jones	Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals	President-Elect and Principal	Portsmouth
Jenna Alexander	Virginia Parent Teacher Association	Vice President of Advocacy	
Laurie McCullough	Virginia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development	Executive Director	
Tom Smith	Virginia Association of School Superintendents	Legislative Liaison	
Timothy Healey	Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals	President-Elect and Principal	Prince William County
Barbara Valentine	Virginia Education Association	Teacher	Montgomery County
Chantea Wright	Virginia Education Association	Instructional Technology Resource Teacher	Richmond

RETURN TO SCHOOL

PLANNING EQUITY AUDIT



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

PLAN DEVELOPMENT



Did we use disaggregated data to inform our planning? **YES NO**
(Select or circle)

If not, what are your next steps?
(write in the space provided)

Did we engage representative stakeholder voices in the development of our plan: (Select or circle all included members)

- SPED Specialist EL Specialist School Nutrition Homeless Specialist Trauma Specialist
School Nurses Student Services (School Counselors, Psychologist, etc.) Students & Families
Community Stakeholders; including state operated programs Culturally Diverse Representation

If everyone is not included, what are your next steps? (write in the space provided)

Did we conduct a needs assessment of our community to inform our planning?
(Select or circle)

YES NO

If not, what are your next steps?
(write in the space provided)

Did we evaluate our plan to ensure that it does not perpetuate lower expectations for particular student groups?
(Select or circle)

YES NO

If not, what are your next steps?
(write in the space provided)

CULTURAL COMPETENCE



Didn't check all boxes? What are the next steps?
(write in the space provided)

DOES OUR PLAN: (check all completed)

Reflect that we value diversity? (think school culture)

Ensure that curriculum and instruction (including remote delivery) is culturally affirming?

Ensure that our instructional model (Remote/virtual/blended etc) reflects and celebrates students' cultures?

Include a process to ensure that cultural competency principles are executed in the delivery of our recovery plan?

Utilize strategies/interventions that rely on assumptions about student groups?

If yes to question above: Are these assumptions void of stereotypes and data informed?

MEETING STUDENT NEEDS



Didn't check all boxes?
What are the next
steps?
(write in the space provided)

Does our plan:

- Include a process to assess each student and tier services to meet their needs?
- Include a process and procedures for engaging wrap around service providers to meet student/family needs?
- Assess the ways in which social determinants of health and health inequities affect our school(s) and communities?
- Evaluate our student code of conduct and student discipline referral process to ensure it includes safeguards that assess student trauma manifesting through behaviors (especially for students disproportionately impacted by exclusionary discipline policies and economic insecurity)?
- Include a review of our student code of conduct and student discipline referral process?
- Include strategies to foster safe and supportive school climates for all students and families?
- Include measurable goals to monitor progress that narrows gaps between the least and most advantaged students?
- Place an emphasis on high expectations for all students while providing proper scaffolds and support?
- Include providing ongoing support for student social and emotional needs?
- Specify provisions for students with disabilities and students in need of specialized instruction, related services, or other supports?
- Specify supports and instructional strategies to meet the needs of English Learners (ELs)?
- Include a process for measuring student progress?

STUDENT & FAMILY ENGAGEMENT



Didn't check all boxes?
What are the next
steps?
(write in the space provided)

Does our plan:

- Allocate resources to engage families?
- Include an assessment of student and family needs?
- Include built in processes for ongoing evaluation of family needs?
- Include staff training on engaging with families post COVID?
- If yes to the question above: Is this training inclusive of strategies focused on communicating with marginalized groups (especially families marginalized by language, poverty, race, and ability)?
- Include targeted engagement strategies? (especially families marginalized by language, poverty, race, and ability)
- Establish protocols to ensure that family engagement strategies and initiatives are developed and implemented through an economic and cultural competency lens?
- Include resources to build the capacity of caregivers to support instruction?
- Include providing ongoing support for student social and emotional needs?
- Specify provisions for students with disabilities and students in need of specialized instruction, related services, or other supports?
- Specify supports and instructional strategies to meet the needs of English Learners (ELs)?
- Include a process for measuring student progress?

VIRGINIA IS FOR *all* LEARNERS

COMMUNICATIONS & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Does our plan:

- Specify established channels of communication with community partners?
- Assess the effectiveness of our communication channels with community partners?
- Include an assessment of the resources available in the community?
- Include a coordinated plan and point of contact overseeing community engagement?
- Include strategies to engage non-traditional education stakeholders (i.e., civil rights organizations, out of school providers, health agencies, etc.)?
- Include a process to ensure that engagement and communication strategies are inclusive of the language, dialects, and literacy needs of all families?
- Include an accessibility review process for all communication materials?
- Appear in publicly available spaces (accessible through district and school websites, email, and U.S. mail)?
- Include communication strategies to inform students and families of student progress and measures?
- Leverage multiple communication channels, strategies, and partners (email, social media, television, school and local media outlets)?
- Specify supports and instructional strategies to meet the needs of English Learners (ELs)?
- Include a process for measuring student progress?

Didn't check all boxes?
What are the next
steps?
(write in the space provided)

INSTRUCTION



Does our plan:

- Provide instruction to students previously and currently enrolled in alternative settings (i.e., state operated programs, specialty programs, alternative schools, etc.)?
- Establish targets and indicators of success that will answer the question; are we adequately meeting the needs of all student groups?
- Does our instructional plan incorporate tiered and scaffolded supports for all learners?
- Structure instructional time to meet the needs of students with varying levels of access to the internet and technology?
- Include strategies for providing at home learning support?
- Include professional development and instructional resources for teachers to support student engagement and cultural relevance?
- Include professional development to support increased efficacy in delivery of remote and virtual distance learning instruction for teachers?
- Identify internal and external barriers to student learning and success by student group?
- Include remote instruction delivery for students unable to access internet/virtual learning resources?
- Provide access to translated instructional materials or translation services for non-English speaking caregivers to support student learning?
- Specify supports and instructional strategies to meet the needs of English Learners (ELs)?
- Include a process for measuring student progress?

Didn't check all boxes?
What are the next
steps?
(write in the space provided)

RESOURCE ALLOCATION



Didn't check all boxes?
What are the next
steps?
(write in the space provided)

Does our plan:

- Prioritize the needs of marginalized students and vulnerable student groups?
- Align budget allocations to the prioritization of marginalized and vulnerable students?
- Utilize CARES Funding to close equity gaps?
- Address teacher retention and recruitment and its impact on teacher assignment in high need schools specifically?
- Allocate human and collateral resources to deploy new and targeted communication strategies?
- Allocate resources to improve communication with students and families (interpretations services, multilingual collateral)?
- Allocate resources to mitigate the impact of gaps in access to technology/internet connectivity?
- Allocate resources to develop a division Distance Learning Plan that includes coordination of instruction across schools and assurance of equitable access for all students?
- Does our plan allocate resources to deploy devices and internet connectivity to students in need?
- Provide access to translated instructional materials or translation services for non-English speaking caregivers to support student learning?
- Specify supports and instructional strategies to meet the needs of English Learners (ELs)?
- Include a process for measuring student progress?

NOTES & NEXT STEPS



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IS FOR
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