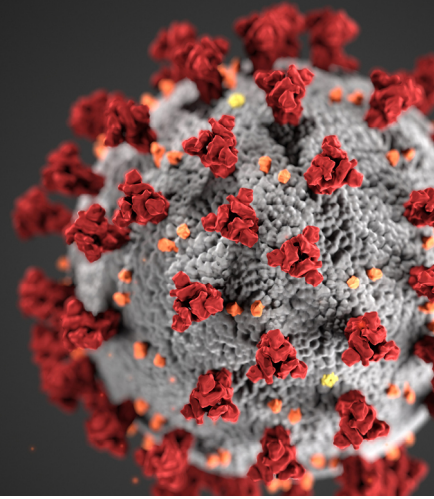




# CORONAVIRUS COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

News to keep our school community up to date during the Coronavirus crisis



## Message from Superintendent Dr. Sharon I. Byrdsong



The first day of school is always an exciting time for students and families. And this year, it promises to be even more exciting with our all-virtual learning format that will be in place for at least the first nine-weeks grading period of the school year.

In looking ahead to this new school year, I think the most important takeaway for families and students is to know that this will not be the same virtual learning experience from the spring. Although central and building-level administrators, teachers, and staff did amazing work in getting our learning materials created and distributing nearly 10,000 mobile devices, this year will come with higher expectations and greater accountability for student learning and engagement.

While we are navigating uncharted waters, we feel confident that our families, students, teachers, principals, custodians, food service workers, and all our NPS community will be able to succeed in taking on the challenges that lie ahead. We are truly all in this together, as we support each other through this time. Have a great start to a new virtual school year!

## SCHOOLS TO REOPEN USING VIRTUAL LEARNING FORMAT

With the health and safety of students and staff in mind, the Norfolk School Board approved the reopening of schools using a virtual format.

“As we considered the options for reopening, we realized that none of them was the perfect solution,” said Superintendent Dr. Sharon I. Byrdsong. “We know that flexibility and patience will be key to a successful school year, and we are committed to helping our students and families every step of the way.”

Feedback gathered during the spring closure indicated that families wanted NPS to provide structure but still have the flexibility to meet their own family’s needs. Thus, schedules have been developed for PreK, elementary, middle, and high school levels that contain blocks of time for learning, teaching time, lunch/breaks, and extra support.

Teachers will be using Zoom daily to deliver new instruction to students and assessing students regularly to ensure they are mastering the new material. In

addition, students will have online access to textbooks.

Schools will be working with their students to ensure that each student has a mobile device, such as an iPad, Chromebook, or laptop, as well as a wireless hotspot (MiFi) to access the Internet before the school year begins. If a student needs a mobile device or MiFi, the school will schedule a pick-up time for the equipment. Should families be unable to get to a pick-up location, then they should contact their child’s principal who will arrange for a home delivery of the equipment before school starts.

There will be flexible learning times for students who have challenges in meeting the schedule due to family work commitments or child-care responsibilities.

Extra support is being planned for any student or family who needs additional help as well as for English Learners, students with disabilities (see page 2), and students of equity and opportunity. For example, families of English

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## Virtual Reopening

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Learners will be able to talk with teachers and school staff through an interpreting service (Voiance). All English Learners will receive additional technology tools to remove instructional barriers due to language including headsets with microphones and translation apps.

Students of equity and opportunity, specifically those who consistently need extra support for success, are already being identified and will receive one-on-one instructional support.

## Virtual Scholars Academy

The Virtual Scholars Academy (VSA) was launched over the summer to provide a virtual learning option for students. More than 7,000 students have enrolled in this school-within-a-school program.

The VSA is a semester-long commitment so parents/guardians will be able to opt-in or opt-out of VSA at the beginning of each school semester (August and January).

Since NPS will be delivering virtual instruction to all NPS students, at least for the first nine-weeks grading period of the school year, the Virtual Scholars Academy will be a continuation of the first quarter that students will experience from September to at least November 2, 2020.

Interested in learning more? Check out the new [VSA website](#).

## Child-Care Programs Planned

NPS is exploring child-care program options for working parents. At this time, four elementary schools will have full-day child-care programs through Champions: Camp Allen, Coleman Place, Little Creek, and Richard Bowling, with other school locations under discussion.

More programs and locations will be announced when available.

## News for Families of Students with Disabilities

In recent weeks, the Department of Learning Support-Special Education Services has been working to resume all the IDEA meetings that were postponed during the mandated school closure. Concerns for the safety of students and staff remain paramount as well as NPS' ability to maintain the integrity and effectiveness of special education processes.



All IDEA meetings will be held and brought current by December 1, 2020, and will be scheduled based on the priority level of the meeting type and circumstance. All parents/guardians with students with disabilities can expect communication from their child's school throughout the summer and fall about resuming these meetings. Immediate meeting priorities will include:

- IDEA meetings already held and requiring parent/guardian consent signatures only;
- Eligibility determination meetings with all testing completed;
- Initial IEP meetings required as a follow-up to already held eligibility determination meetings;
- Transfer IEP meetings;
- Annual IEP review meetings due through September 30<sup>th</sup>; and
- IEP meetings that include related services evaluations and placement change recommendations where the observation and evaluation components have already been completed.

School staff will contact parents/guardians to schedule appointments at mutually agreeable times in designated school locations, under social distancing guidelines and with appropriate health mitigation practices in place.

To prepare for the new virtual school year opening, the staff of the Department of Learning Support-Special Education Services are working on:

- Coordination of special education teachers, paraprofessionals, related service professionals and other staff to provide a virtual learning experience with increased opportunities for teacher/staff directed instruction;
- Clear expectations around the roles of various special education staff, their effective use, and communication standards with parents/guardians during a virtual learning experience to benefit students with disabilities;
- Exploration of teletherapy options to provide speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and other appropriate related services to our students; and
- Opportunities to support parents/guardians in maximizing the virtual learning experience for our students through workshops, information sessions, and parent/guardian groups.

For continuing updates, please visit the [Learning Support-Special Education Services webpage](#).

## Meal Distribution Schedule Will Change for Back to School

Beginning on the first day of school, September 8<sup>th</sup>, grab-n-go meals will be distributed at school sites across the city. The list of sites and pickup times will soon be released and posted on the [NPS School Nutrition webpage](#).

The current summer meal distribution will continue only until August 31<sup>st</sup> on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 11:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. at these 17 food distribution sites: Azalea Gardens Middle School, Booker T. Washington High School, Camp Allen Elementary, Coleman Place Elementary, Crossroads School, James Monroe Elementary, Lake Taylor School, Little Creek Elementary, Norview Elementary, Ocean View Elementary, Oceanair Elementary, P.B. Young Elementary, Southside STEM Academy, St. Helena Elementary, Suburban Park Elementary, Tanners Creek Elementary, and Tidewater Park Elementary.

Delivery of meals via NPS school buses also continues at these sites and hours: Titustown Recreation Center (11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.); Huntersville Community Center (12 noon – 12:30 p.m.); and Grandy Village Recreation Center (1:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.).

Grab-n-go cold meals are still being offered at three Norfolk libraries from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. every day except Monday: Jordan-Newby Anchor Branch, Pretlow Anchor Branch, and Slover Library.

Applications to receive free/reduced priced meals are now available at [this webpage](#). No application is needed for students who are enrolled at a CEP school, and/or receive SNAP or TANF. Eligibility from last year will be extended for 30 school days or until a new application is processed.

## There's Still Time to Register Students for All Grades, Pre-K

Families with new students can still enroll them by visiting the school their child is zoned to attend between the hours of 10 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays. To see school zones, visit [Find My School webpage](#).

Parents/Guardians must schedule an appointment through e-mail with the building principal before reporting to the school.

Parents/Guardians must complete a registration packet and submit it to the school. All required documentation must be provided at the time of enrollment: birth certificate, school entrance physical and immunization certificate, and expulsion statement, if applicable. Once these documents are submitted, staff will complete registration by

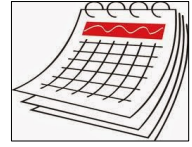
the following week. Parents/Guardians should schedule an appointment soon with their child's doctor or clinic for physicals and immunizations.

Details can be found on the [NPS student registration webpage](#).

NPS provides a full-day, high-quality preschool program to help prepare students for success in kindergarten and beyond. If your child lives in the City of Norfolk and will be 3 or 4 years old by September 30<sup>th</sup>, please visit the [NPS preschool webpage](#) to download an application. Parents/Guardians can e-mail a completed application and supporting documents, seek information, and/or request a paper copy of the preschool enrollment application at [preschool@npsk12.com](mailto:preschool@npsk12.com).

## 2020-2021 Calendar Dates

Families and students should note these important dates:



- Schools will be closed on Labor Day, September 7<sup>th</sup>.
- The first day of school will be Tuesday, September 8<sup>th</sup>.
- Election Day, November 3<sup>rd</sup>, will be a virtual teacher day and schools will be closed.
- Veterans Day, November 11<sup>th</sup>, will be a holiday for students and staff.
- The Thanksgiving Break will be observed November 26<sup>th</sup> and November 27<sup>th</sup>.
- The Winter Break will extend two full weeks, December 21-31<sup>st</sup>.
- Schools will be closed to students and staff on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, January 18<sup>th</sup>, and on President's Day, February 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Spring Break will be observed April 5-9<sup>th</sup>.
- Schools will be closed to students and staff on Memorial Day, May 31<sup>st</sup>.
- The last day of school for students will be June 17<sup>th</sup>.

## Election Day Details

The deadline to register to vote for the November 3<sup>rd</sup> election is Tuesday, October 13<sup>th</sup>. Effective July 1<sup>st</sup>, Virginia offers no-excuse absentee voting. Also, voters may now request to be put on the Annual Absentee Ballot List.

Registering to vote, updating voter information, and/or requesting an absentee ballot is simple to do by visiting the [Virginia Department of Elections website](#).



## Tips for Getting Students Ready for the Virtual Start of School

The first day of school is quickly approaching and this year's school reopening will be like no other. To prepare your child for the new year start with all-virtual learning, check out these tips below.

- **Keep to the school schedules established by your child's school.** Every NPS school will be sharing a schedule with students that will include blocks of time for learning, teaching time, lunch/breaks, and extra support. A schedule will help establish routine and familiarity with what is expected for student learning.
- **Make sure they have any materials necessary to complete all assignments.** Whether its pencil and paper, a mobile device or a stable internet connection, now is the time to ensure your child has the right materials for learning (see page 1 for mobile device distribution details).
- **Provide a space conducive to learning.** This isn't always easy. If they're too isolated, it's difficult to check in with them. If they're at the kitchen table, depending on the child or their environment, they may be too distracted. This is even more challenging when everyone is home and the house is full.
- **Create a daily plan.** Discuss and decide with your child what time they will get out of bed, get dressed, and eat breakfast so they have time to get settled before their school schedule begins.
- **Make sure all work is completed.** Discuss with your child their work assignments and deadlines, and help them to organize their time to complete the assignments.
- **Help them check messages and communicate with school.** Check for messages daily from your child's teachers and make sure to reply to any messages that require a response.
- **Learn to identify your child's barriers.** You know your child better than anyone else. If your child is struggling, try to determine whether it is focus? Motivation? Too much or too little structure? Do they need a hug or finger-wagging or for you to sit with them? And if it's a knowledge deficit, exactly what do they not understand? When students say, "I don't get it," the first step is to identify exactly what "it" is, and this isn't always easy. Most students don't know what they don't know. That's why you and your child's teacher are there to help them.
- **Stay connected with your child's teacher.** Contact your child's teacher anytime you feel that you or your child may need some extra support. NPS stands ready to help with a variety of resources.

### Parents/Guardians Invited to Share Child-Care Challenges

EVMS Minus 9 to 5 and Smart Beginnings Virginia Peninsula are working together to find collaborative approaches to solving some of the child-care needs that families are experiencing. They invite parents/guardians of children under the age of 13 across the Hampton Roads region to complete [this short \(3-5 minute\) survey](#) about their child-care needs, learning supports, and their choices for care during the pandemic. Survey responses will help to create solutions through a regional Child Care Task Force. The survey will remain open until August 21<sup>st</sup>.

