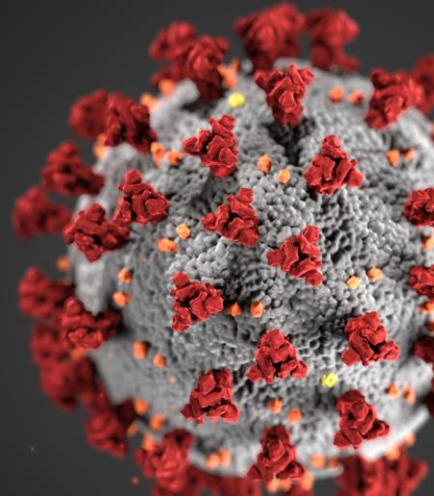




CORONAVIRUS COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

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



Message from Superintendent Dr. Sharon I. Byrdsong



Summer is a great opportunity to take time for creativity and exploring new possibilities! Here in NPS, we have been doing exactly that, as we have crafted a number of options for the safe return of students to school in the fall (see next story).

While we explored options, we kept in mind the feedback from our families as well as the best guidance from our state and local experts. As you know, this is a particularly challenging situation because every day we learn more about the novel coronavirus and how it impacts our community.

We are hearing from many parents/guardians who are grappling with what is best for their children. Please be assured that we remain steadfastly focused on making sound decisions based on the health and safety of our students and staff.

Let's continue to be mindful as we work together by being flexible and resilient. In the meantime, enjoy the rest of your summer break!

FOUR OPTIONS PRESENTED ON REOPENING SCHOOLS IN FALL

After significant work by school leaders and feedback from families, Superintendent Dr. Sharon I. Byrdsong presented four options for school reopening to the Norfolk School Board at its virtual meeting on Wednesday, July 15th.

“We know families are eager to get answers to their pressing questions about what school will look like for their children,” said Dr. Byrdsong. “I want to remind our staff, students, and families that this is a fluid situation that involves extremely complex logistics. We have presented a number of options for the Board’s consideration keeping in mind that the guidance from the Governor, the Virginia Department of Health, and the Virginia Department of Education continues to evolve.”

The first option is to divide elementary, middle, and high school students into two groups. Each group would attend school two days a week, then have virtual instruction three days a week. For example, Group A would attend Mondays and Tuesdays while

Group B would attend Thursdays and Fridays.

Option two remains the same as option one for middle and high school students and proposes clustering elementary school students into two groups. One group would attend in-person school in the morning, and the other group would attend in-person school in the afternoon.

Option three offers a complete return to the traditional, in-person school experience.

Option four proposes a 100% online, virtual learning platform through a new Virtual Scholars Academy (see page 3 for complete details).

The first three options have a number of hurdles in their implementations, which were presented to the School Board. These considerations include social distancing on school buses, child-care challenges, and frequent facility cleaning. Additionally, there is the possibility of virus exposure to students and staff.

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Plans for School Reopening

Con't from page 1

The fourth option, which is 100% online instruction, was presented as the safest choice for both students and staff, but also has some challenges for students who could benefit from face-to-face instruction. These students include, but are not limited to, English language learners, students with disabilities, and younger students who need reading instruction.

Nearly 9,000 responses were received from parents/guardians on the survey last month that asked about their preferences on reopening. Parents/guardians could select more than one preferred option.

Roughly a third of the responses indicated a preference for students attending school four days a week on a split schedule (morning or afternoon), then working remotely the remaining time.

A quarter of the responses indicated an interest in the 100% online option, while a quarter indicated support for students attending school two days per week, then working remotely the remaining time.

After a full discussion of the options and challenges of educating students during a pandemic, the School Board agreed to reconvene at a special meeting on July 22nd to make a final decision on reopening schools.

Following that decision, families will be notified immediately so they may begin to plan for their students' return, arrange childcare if necessary, and organize work schedules. Norfolk Public Schools' first day will be Tuesday, September 8th.

Parents/guardians are invited to read the details of the [Superintendent's presentation](#) on options, including survey results.

News for Families of Students with Disabilities

As Norfolk Public Schools continues to tackle the complex details and processes of reopening, the Department of Learning Support-Special Education Services is also planning for the return of students. School leaders have heard the concerns expressed by many families of students with special needs, which include the need for teacher-directed structure and instruction as well as the hesitation of returning students to school who are medically at-risk.

The mandated school closure in the spring resulted in many educational challenges, including an interruption of child study, Individualized Education Plans (IEP), and eligibility meetings. Concern for the safety of students and staff has been and will continue to be paramount in making these decisions.

However, as pandemic conditions improved, the Learning Support-Special Education Services staff were able to resume some meetings prior to the end of June. These meetings included:

- High school graduates who were eligible to receive standard or advanced diplomas, eligible for locally verified credits, and post-graduate candidates, and students aging out of the special education program requiring referrals and support for post-graduate opportunities;
- Students transitioning between pre-kindergarten and pre-K4/kindergarten, elementary to middle school, and middle to high school who were recommended for a change in their least restrictive environment prior to school closure;
- Students attending private day schools, residential facilities, or SECEP; and
- Students in Extended School Year (ESY) IEP meetings.

Currently, the Learning Support-Special Education Services team is working diligently to schedule child study, IEP, and eligibility meetings that were postponed during the mandated school closure. The team looks forward to planning and communicating with families both about the reopening of schools and a return to collaborative discussions and procedures. For updates, please visit the [Learning Support-Special Education Services webpage](#).

Summer Graduation Update

Seniors who complete their high school requirements through the summer school program will be celebrated in a virtual graduation ceremony on August 4, 2020, at 4:00 p.m. The ceremony will be pre-recorded and aired on Channel 47 as well as through NPS' live streaming, which can be accessed from the [NPS homepage](#). Students can schedule an appointment to pick up their diplomas on August 6th from their assigned schools.

Unfortunately, an in-person graduation that was previously scheduled for early August at the Chartway Arena for the Class of 2020, will be unable to be held.



Meal Distribution Continues with New Library Locations

Norfolk Public Schools continues to distribute meals over the summer on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 11:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. at the 17 current 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. In July, these sites feature a hot entrée for lunch.

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 now 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.

Please note that masks should be worn by all customers as a courtesy and protection for our students, the food servers, and community members. Thank you!

New Students Should Register Now for All Grades and Pre-K

Families with new students should enroll them before August 15th 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 30th, 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.

Virtual Scholars Academy: A New Online Learning Option

Norfolk Public Schools' teachers, students and families adapted quickly to an online teaching environment during the spring school closure. Building on this experience, NPS school leaders are creating the Virtual Scholars Academy (VSA), a robust, flexible, and innovative option for the delivery of instruction to all K-12 students.

The VSA will use the Virginia Department of Education's Virtual Virginia content along with the NPS curriculum and pacing guides, which will enable online learning students to keep pace with their in-school classmates. The VSA will give parents/guardians an option if they choose to keep their students at home during the coming school year as well as ensure that the division will be fully prepared to shift completely online again if health experts deem it necessary.

The state's Virtual Virginia courses offer a rich multimedia learning environment that appeals to a variety of learning styles and includes online Advanced Placement, world language, elective, and core academic courses. Each course contains video segments, audio clips, whiteboard interactions, multimedia activities, and online discussions, as well as texts. Teachers will be available for telephone and online communication with students throughout the day. Virtual Virginia courses can be scheduled flexibly throughout the day, so students can customize their schedule to maximize their learning style.

A website now under development will include frequently asked questions, guidelines, sample schedules, and student applications. Look for more details soon!

Ideas and Resources for an Active, Healthy, and Safe Summer

As the summer continues, it is important for children to stay healthy, busy, and engaged, especially as they practice social distancing and safer-at-home strategies. Here are some great ideas and resources for parents/guardians to use in helping children stay socially connected and in managing stress.

Help Your Child Stay Socially Connected

- Reach out to friends and family via phone or video chats.
- Write cards or letters to family members they may not be able to visit.
- Explore these social and emotional websites for ideas:
 - ✓ [BrainPOP](#) provides movies with social/emotional learning components that students can watch and respond to.
 - ✓ [CASEL](#) has collected a number of resources to assist in addressing students' social and emotional needs.
 - ✓ [Centervention](#) has game-based behavior interventions that help students practice social and emotional skills.
 - ✓ [NEWSELA](#) offers social/emotional learning lessons students can complete remotely.
 - ✓ [Second Step](#) is offering free social and emotional learning activities for ages 5-13, a podcast for families and a mindfulness program.

Help Your Child Cope with Stress

Mental health experts agree that these are stressful times for both children and adults. Not all children and teens respond to stress in the same way. Some common changes to watch for include:

- Excessive worry or sadness
 - Unhealthy eating habits
 - Unhealthy sleeping habits
 - Difficulty with attention and concentration
- ✓ Parents can find more information about supporting their children during a COVID-19 outbreak on CDC's [Stress and Coping](#) page.
 - ✓ [Talk with your child or teen about the COVID-19 outbreak](#). Answer questions and [share facts](#) about COVID-19 in a way that your child or teen can understand.
 - ✓ Learn more about common reactions that children may have and how you can [help children cope with emergencies](#).

Calling All Inventors and Creators: Check Out Pharrell Williams' Summer of Innovation

Do you have a new business idea, art or music project, a unique invention, or a helpful service? If so, check out the Summer of Innovation, an online campaign to foster creativity and entrepreneurship in students across the country. Running from July 6th to August 7th, the Summer of Innovation encourages students to explore their interests with an entrepreneurial mindset to make a positive difference in their communities.

A panel of esteemed judges will review every student's pitch and ultimately select winners in three categories: Elementary (3-5), Middle (6-8), and High (9-12). Prizes will be awarded to the winners, which includes the support to bring their ideas to life.

The Summer of Innovation is powered by YELLOW, a non-profit social venture founded by Pharrell Williams. To get started, please visit the [Summer of Innovation website](#).

