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Norfolk Public Schools' (NPS) Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services - DRAFT

Introduction

The purpose of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) III Fund is to help safely reopen and sustain the safe operation of schools and address the impacts of COVID-19 on students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. This plan describes how Norfolk Public Schools will maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other school and division staff during and following the return to full in-person instruction. Questions about this plan should be directed to the Division of Communications and Community Engagement at 757-628-3459 or TellUs@npsk12.com.

For the 2020-21 school year, NPS developed its return to in-person instruction that was based on guidance from the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Subsequently, Governor Northam relaxed his executive order based on success with immunizations and falling incidences of COVID-19. This allowed NPS to offer in-person instruction twice a week to students who wished to do so. In early March, NPS teachers and staff returned to in-person work with instruction still conducted virtually. The first group of students returned to in-person instruction in mid-March. By late April, all students were eligible to attend in-person two days each week.

In preparation for the Fall of 2021, the announcement was made at the May 5, 2021, School Board meeting that there would be a 5 day a week in-person learning offering to all students. The following plan outlines how this will be accomplished.

Maintaining Health and Safety

Norfolk Public Schools has taken and will continue to take actions to ensure the health and safety of students, educators, and other school and division staff during and following the return to full in-person instruction. A description of actions already taken and additional actions planned is below.

Norfolk Public Schools is committed to ensuring a safe and healthy workplace for all students and employees. In doing so, NPS has asked students and employees take responsibility for monitoring their own health, including possible exposure to others who may be displaying symptoms of COVID-19. Specific information has been kept updated on the NPS website for self-monitoring as well as reporting any possible COVID-19 exposure.

To maintain a safe environment in schools and offices, NPS has required that the following measures be taken:

- Limit gatherings of co-workers to fewer than 10;
- Allow visitors only when necessary or for an emergency;
- Wear a mandatory face covering that prevents the spread of disease;
- Practice physical/social distancing with the recommended 6 feet of space between people;
- Clean and sanitize workspaces with approved disinfectants, including wipes and sprays;
- Wash hands with soap frequently, especially after coming into contact with high-touch surfaces such as doorknobs, elevator buttons, and light switches; and
- If handwashing is not possible, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol is recommended.

As NPS transitions to a full in-person schedule for students in the Fall of 2021, safety measures will be updated to align with the CDC, VDH and Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) guidelines. In addition, NPS has adopted procedures on each of the following safety recommendations established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Universal Wearing of Masks

Universal and correct wearing of masks is in place so that the mouth and nose are securely covered, and the mask remains in place without the constant need for adjustments. All staff members and students are required to wear a mask on busses, in schoolhouses, and as they travel through buildings. Removing a mask to eat their breakfast and lunch is the only exception. Updates to these rules will be provided as new CDC guidelines evolve and amendments are approved by the VDOE for schools to implement.

Physical Distancing

All classrooms were arranged using the 6-foot distancing guidelines recommended by the CDC. Desks were staggered to maintain the 6-foot distance from each direction to their closest neighbor. Additionally, where possible, students remained in cohorts throughout the school day. As students return to school in the Fall of 2021, spacing will be set based on the latest CDC guidelines.

Handwashing

Handwashing signs were placed in restrooms describing the CDC guidelines for proper hand washing procedures. Hand Sanitizing stations were placed in the main office, at each elevator location, in gymnasiums, and along each serving line station in our school cafeterias. Each classroom received hand sanitizing bottles for teacher and student use as well as sanitizing wipes to clean desktops in between each class change.

Cleaning and Maintaining Healthy Facilities

All buildings are sanitized nightly using germicidal cleaning detergents, each desk, chair, and high contact area is cleaned. The custodial staff changes HVAC filters every 30 days to maintain efficient air filtering. Additionally, a sanitizing humidifier has been placed in each classroom that does not have mechanical ventilation providing fresh air into the conditioned air. Using CDC guidelines, NPS developed a plan to evaluate fresh air ventilation in each school classroom. In classrooms that do not have fresh-air ventilation, we require that at least one window remain open during temperate seasons.

Contact Tracing

Individual staff members/students who are suspected of having COVID-19, develop a fever during the workday, or have been significantly exposed to another that is positive for COVID-19 infection, must be separate from others that could possibly be exposed and placed in an isolation room. The employee must notify the supervisor of concerns and prepare to leave the office and go home. The student must be taken to the school nurse who will notify administration and contact the student's parent to pick up the student from school. The nurse will inform the parent of the symptoms and/or possible exposure. The employee must avoid gathering with others in small, enclosed spaces. In the case of a positive COVID-19 case, school buildings will be closed for deep cleaning and disinfection to ensure any areas used by sick/exposed individuals are sanitized. The Chief Schools Officer will notify the building principal to close the building and notify all staff of the reason for closing. Notices issued will protect the confidentiality of any staff and/or students. Once the building has been sanitized, the principal will receive notice to announce the building's reopening for the following business day. Once home, the infected individual will be called by phone to determine who they have been in contact with for the few days prior to infection symptoms. Information gathered will be used to do appropriate contact tracing, if it is deemed to be necessary. The administrator managing the incident will fill out the *Communication Overview – Potential COVID-19 Exposure Checklist Form* with basic information related to the concern and email the form to a specially created email address for reporting health incidents. The *NPS Covid-19 Risk Assessment Form* will then be completed by a Student Wellness representative. This document will be maintained for future reference after completion. The *NPS Covid-19 Risk Assessment Form* will be completed in all potential cases as it helps to determine levels of risk and helps to inform the decision-making process.

Pre-Screening

All staff, students and families have received prescreening information to be used daily before reporting to school sites. If any of the answers in the prescreening tool is yes, then the staff member or student should contact the school and stay home. The components of the prescreening tool are listed below:

Daily COVID-19 Pre-Screening Questionnaire

- Are you currently ill or caring for someone who is ill? (YES / NO)
- Do you have any of the following? (YES / NO)
- Fever or feeling feverish
- Chills
- Sweating
- Shortness of breath
- Cough
- Fatigue
- New loss of taste or smell
- Diarrhea
- Sore throat
- Nausea or vomiting
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache

Vaccinations to School Communities

Norfolk Public Schools has worked with the VDH to provide vaccination clinics in schools in underserved communities throughout the school year. Additionally, vaccination clinics were coordinated and implemented for students ages 16 and over. Currently, vaccination clinics for students ages 12 and older are being planned.

Students with Disabilities and Health and Safety

Any needed accommodations for students with disabilities were put into practice as needed in each educational setting.

Coordination with State and Local Health Officials

The school division has consistently coordinated efforts in addressing stakeholder needs with state and local health officials through informational meetings and through planning vaccination clinics for staff, the community, and students.

Continuity of Services

Norfolk Public Schools has taken and will continue to take actions to ensure continuity of services, including but not limited to services to address students' academic needs and students' and staff social, emotional, mental health, and other needs.

Academic

To ensure sufficient learning time, a schedule was created to maximize class time for all students in the virtual setting. Through lessons learned during the 2020-2021 school year, teachers are prepared in the instance of having to close schools due to an outbreak during the 2021-2022 school year. Norfolk Public Schools will continue to utilize the Canvas learning management system to provide a consistent platform for student assignments and learning materials. This will allow students and parents/guardians to only access one platform for learning tools.

A major component of the instructional plan has included and will continue to include the review of assessment data. Norfolk Public Schools has closely monitored Star reading and math data, PALS data, local division benchmark assessments, and formative and locally made summative assessments at the school level. Additionally, the school division has created a progress monitoring tracking tool required for use by all principals to ensure a focus on data driven decisions being made.

As Spring 2021 SOL results are being compiled, this data will be used to further prepare for learning loss during the pandemic. With a robust summer program in place including in-person learning, students will have opportunities prior to the fall of 2021 to improve academically. NPS will also continue to offer an online option for students in grades four through twelve.

Social-Emotional Learning

Norfolk Public Schools is committed to all students' social and emotional learning (SEL), which can be described as the focus of helping students to understand and manage their emotions, set and achieve positive goals, develop the ability to feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and be able to make responsible decisions. The pandemic has prompted the staffs of schools to be more focused on their efforts to support children as they work through processing the stress and confusion associated with the extended closure of schools.

Current efforts to support social and emotional learning include:

- developing an SEL curriculum that will supplement the academic curriculum;
- access to SEL instructional materials and resources through programs for students with disabilities, teachers supporting students with disabilities, and parents;
- creating screening instruments for identifying students who are at risk;

- carving out additional time for school level mental health professionals to provide direct support;
- increasing collaboration with appropriate outside agencies;
- and improving the referral process when additional outside resources are needed.

The school division is also refocusing its efforts on the systematic development of a Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) framework. Under the Virginia Tiered Systems of Support (VTSS) umbrella, the PBIS framework facilitates the use of tiered interventions that align with the needs of NPS' students. This framework promotes data-driven, proactive layers of support for academic, behavioral, social/emotional, and psychological needs. At the heart of PBIS is a focus on relationship building and the intentional teaching of behavioral expectations. Each school has developed a PBIS plan that will be embedded into the academic program and implemented throughout the school year.

Mental Health

For the provision of mental health services, the Departments of Student Support Services, Student Wellness, and School Counseling will be available to provide mental health support. When mental health service needs rise above what can be provided by the school, mental health staff member, will provide support through the employee assistance referral process (e.g., EAP, COMP PSYCH) to access services through appropriate community agencies.

Food Services

NPS school cafeterias have organized to continue to provide meals to students daily. Breakfast has been served on carts and students are able to eat in classrooms. Lunch has been served in the cafeteria as well as in classrooms across the division to accommodate physical spacing needs. As NPS returns to a full in-person learning schedule in the fall of 2021, accommodations will be updated to meet any new guidelines.

Technology

Support will be provided to families that chose to keep their students in a virtual learning environment through the distribution of Chromebooks, MiFi, and providing technical assistance to families as needed and through the creation of a virtual academy. The adoption and continuation of the Canvas Learning Management System (LMS) will assist teachers in the organization and housing of division curriculum and additionally provide students and families with easier access to learning modules and assessments. Moving forward into next school year, with the support of various departments in the district, assistance in the design, development, and implementation of a district-wide Canvas course professional development program will be complete. Should the need to return to virtual learning arise, schools are prepared to provide virtual learning in a hybrid or full virtual model.

Opportunity for Public Comment

In developing the ARP ESSER Plan, Norfolk Public Schools sought public input and took such input into account as described below.

Each phase of planning to return to in-person learning has been presented at public Board meetings and open to public comment. They have also been posted on social media platforms where commenting is also allowed. As the reopening plan for the fall is updated based on up-to-date guidelines from the VDOE, CDC and the VDH the presentations will again be made available for public comment. Additionally, once the ARP ESSER Application is completed it will be presented to the Board and a public input period will be created.

Periodic Review and Revision of Plan

During the period of the ARP ESSER award (until September 2023), Norfolk Public Schools will periodically review and as needed, revise its plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services. The plan will be reviewed at least every six months, and Norfolk Public Schools will seek and take into account public input during the review process. Plan revisions will address updated CDC guidance on safely reopening schools, if any are issued.

Making the Plan Available to the Public

Norfolk Public Schools has taken the following steps to make this plan available to the public:

- The plan is posted at www.npsk12.com
- The plan is available in multiple languages Spanish, French, and Filipino (via the translate option on the school division's website);
- The plan may be orally translated for parents. Contact the Division of Communications and Community Engagement at 757-628-3459 or TellUs@npsk12.com to request translation; and
- Upon request, a parent who is an individual with a disability as defined by the ADA may be provided with the plan in an alternative format accessible by contacting the Division of Communications and Community Engagement at 757-628-3459 or TellUs@npsk12.com.