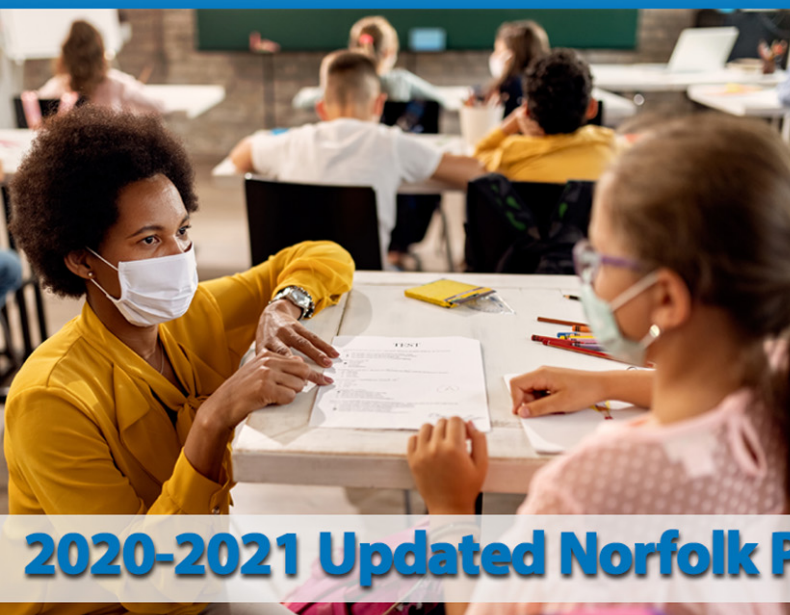




Norfolk Public Schools

The cornerstone of a proudly diverse community



2020-2021 Updated Norfolk Public Schools' Reopening Plan

March 2021

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Introduction and Background

On March 13, 2020, Governor Ralph Northam made the executive decision to close all schools in an effort to mitigate the spread of the novel virus, COVID-19. This led to a need to implement emergency plans to continue learning and instruction for Norfolk Public Schools for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. To best prepare for the opening of schools for the 2020-2021 school year, planning started during late spring of 2020 to address several fall opening scenarios. Of course, the primary focus for reopening in the fall of 2020 was the safety of our students, staff, and overall community. Therefore, in alignment with the phased guidance from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) found in the [Recover, Redesign, Restart document](#), Norfolk Public Schools created four scenarios and presented them to the Norfolk School Board on July 15, 2020. Following further review and additional data and information, the Norfolk School Board voted to open schools fully virtual.

At the October 21, 2020 Business Meeting, the City of Norfolk School Board voted to return students to in-person instruction only when the health indicators set forth by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) fall in the lower or lowest risk of transmission of COVID-19. These core and secondary indicators, which can be found on the [CDC's website](#), are labeled in dark green and light green. This plan included a five phased approach as outlined below:

- Phase One –students with disabilities (K-12 students in self-contained classrooms) and English learners (K-12 students in levels 1, 2, and some 3). The students with disabilities in this phase will attend school four days per week. The possibility of English learners attending school four days per week will be reviewed by the administration,
- Phase Two – Kindergarten through grade 3 (hybrid model).
- Phase Three – Grades 4 and 5 (hybrid model); the possibility of returning prekindergarten students will be reviewed,
- Phase Four – Grades 6 through 8 (hybrid model),
- Phase Five – Grades 9 through 12 (hybrid model).

A three-week transition period between phases pending positive health metrics was included in this approved plan. All students were expected to return to in-person learning in a hybrid model either on Monday/Tuesday or Thursday/Friday except for students with disabilities in self-contained classrooms, who would return for four days a week.

During their business meeting held on December 16, 2020, the City of Norfolk School Board voted to revise its previous decision to support a return to school plan that was based on the status of the recommended three core indicators outlined within the CDC's Indicators for Dynamic Decision Making, which includes case incidence per 100,000 persons within the past 14 days, percent positivity (RT-PCR test) during the past 14 days, and the school division's readiness to implement key mitigation strategies as outlined by the CDC. When case incidence per 100,000 and percent positivity (RT-PCR test) both reach the moderate risk of disease

transmission level (yellow) for 14 consecutive days in the City of Norfolk, the school division may begin implementing its phased approach to in-person instruction as previously approved.

With the COVID-19 vaccine being made available to Norfolk Public Schools' employees as well as improving metrics and the suggested recommendation of Governor Northam and State Superintendent Lane on February 5, 2021, to make in-person learning options available by March 15, 2021, the Norfolk School Board made further amendments to the in-person learning plan. During the Norfolk School Board's February 17, 2021 meeting, the following updated phases were approved:

- March 1, 2021 – All teachers and staff return to in-person work and teach from within their classrooms,
- March 15, 2021 – All Pk – 5 student return to in-person learning on the hybrid schedule in addition to all PreK through post-graduate students with disabilities in self-contained program classrooms and all English Learner level 1, 2 and some 3 students,
- April 12, 2021 – All middle school students return to in-person learning,
- April 26, 2021 – All high school students return to in-person learning.

Local Health Criteria

Each school division was given the ability to develop their own reopening plan due to the variance of COVID-19 health data between communities. At the time of the School Board's initial vote in July of 2020, Norfolk was above a 15% positivity rate for COVID-19. Considering a multitude of factors, to include percent positivity and other health metrics, and since the percent positivity rate was well above the Governor's recommendation of 10% for moving between phase 1 and phase 2, the School Board voted on a virtual opening for the first nine weeks of school for the safety of students, staff, and the community.

Throughout the current school year, leadership from Norfolk Public Schools had met with the Norfolk Department of Public Health to stay abreast of the latest health data. Although the metrics as of the publication of this document do not meet the moderate levels previously voted on by the board, with the implementation of vaccines, a downward trend in the data and proper mitigation strategies the Board and division leadership support returning students to in-person learning in a phased manner.

Operational Infrastructure to Support Learning

Schools' Schedules

Beginning March 4, 2021, the following time changes are being implemented temporarily to ensure the ability to transport students to schools safely:

	Current Times	Temporary Changes
First Stagger	7:25 a.m. – 2:05 p.m.	7:25 a.m. – 2:05 p.m.
Second Stagger	8:15 a.m. – 2:45 p.m.	8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Third Stagger	8:55 a.m. – 3:20 p.m.	9:15 a.m. – 3:40 p.m.
Fourth Stagger	9:30 a.m. – 3:55 p.m.	9:55 a.m. – 4:20 p.m.

Additionally, the following hybrid schedule will be in place for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
In-Person Learning	A Group Students	A Group Students	Asynchronous/Independent	B Group Students	B Group Students
Live Virtual Learning via Zoom	B Group Students	B Group Students	Asynchronous/Independent	A Group Students	A Group Students
Live Virtual Learning via Zoom	VSA Students	VSA Students	Asynchronous/Independent	VSA Students	VSA Students
In-Person Learning	Self-Contained Students	Self-Contained Students	Asynchronous/Independent	Self-Contained Students	Self-Contained Students

Teachers will be teaching classes concurrently to students online as well as in-person. To accommodate for this change in teaching style, all rooms have been outfitted with web cameras and Bluetooth headsets to allow the teacher freedom of movement throughout the classroom.

Technology Needs for a Virtual Opening

Starting in the spring of 2020, Norfolk Public Schools purchased laptops, Chromebooks, and MiFi devices (hotspots) to meet the needs of all staff and students. Devices were distributed to all students who did not have access prior to school opening in the fall. If students were still in need of a device, they made requests through their principals and devices were distributed to them at that time.

Technology Safety and Support

The Information Technology (IT) department has redeveloped a new virtual technical online support system for NPS students, parents/guardians, teachers, staff, and administrators. The system consists of a Virtual Learning Support (VLS) website and a hosted Online Call Center. The VLS link is located on the homepage of the school division's website and each school's website.

The support website covers a great variety of information related to the districts' technology regarding mobile devices, internet access and support, technical guides and videos for Zoom, and many others. The online Call Center and support areas have expanded from engineering support to instructional technology support for students and teachers. The VLS website and call center has an online chat and remote assistance feature to better assist users. For an added level of support, learning modules for parents/guardians and students on Zoom, Canvas, and other instructional tools are being developed. We have also created a Return to Face-to-Face Instruction webpage. This web page has videos of model lessons from our teachers, an introduction video, and will be a repository of resources for our teachers as we begin concurrent instruction in the school division.

All NPS mobile devices are centrally managed and maintained by Network Services (NS). For Internet safety and security concerns, all NPS computer devices are filtered through a web content filtering solution called Securly. Multi-factor authentication has been implemented in all NPS critical systems and Virtual Private Network (VPN). Advanced Threat Protection Level 2 (ATP-2) has been integrated into the district's Office 365. The solution increased the level of awareness and protection against various phishing attacks within NPS district emails. Cisco Amp will be installed on all Windows and Mac devices in the district.

Information Technology is in the beginning stages of the process of transitioning Synergy, ADFS, and Munis to a hosted solution. The solution will increase the district's security and operations in the event of a future network outage. Provided that NPS students and staff have access to the Internet, they can conduct school or business operations.

Essentially, NPS has moved in a more effective and sustainable technology support structure. The IT department's goal is to sustain and maintain technology operations for all students, parents/guardians, teachers, staff, and administrators.

New Instruction for all Students

The original NPS Instructional Plan was developed to ensure all students had the opportunity for new learning. Based on lessons learned during first semester, the need for in-person instruction has proven to be vital. Therefore, the revised plan includes a hybrid approach with continued virtual learning paired with in-person learning.

Virtual Learning and Attendance

The focal point for the instructional plan is ensuring the curriculum is being used to provide new learning for all students. Enhanced pacing guides will continue to be developed by the Department of Curriculum and Instruction in collaboration with teachers. These guides take into consideration where teachers are in the curriculum and the standards that must be covered this 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. While live instruction will take place both in-person and virtually via Zoom, students will access materials, assignments, and feedback via Canvas. The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) has created a variety of strategies for tracking students' attendance through evidence of meaningful contact over a 24-hour period. Whether students are participating in live instruction, submitting completed assignments to demonstrate learning, accessing recorded instructional sessions, participating in telephone conferences or email exchanges concerning instruction or assignments, students' attendance can and will be monitored. Therefore, the attendance of students will be required to increase accountability for learning.

Assessments and Student Data

A major component of the instructional plan includes assessment data. Norfolk Public Schools has closely monitored STAR reading and math data, PALS data, local division benchmark assessments at the division-level, 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.

Grading Procedures

With daily interactions and lessons scheduled, grading procedures and percentages outlined in the NPS Grading Procedures Handbook will not change. Guidance was provided to teachers during their pre-service week on how to categorize specific types of online activities and for what expectations should be on the number of assignments required. While in a virtual setting, feedback on student work will be critical. Since a great deal of student learning will take place independently, teachers will be required to provide feedback for student growth on assignments during individual Zoom meetings or via feedback tools on Canvas.

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.

Students of Equity and Opportunity

Early Learners (PreK – 3)

Students from prekindergarten to grade 3 are considered to be a critical-needs group for virtual learning due to the difficulty of learning to read and phonics instruction in a virtual setting. Due to this, students within this category will be in the first phase of in-person learning.

Students with Disabilities

Instructional Needs

Since August 2020, pertinent professional development has been an area of instructional focus in meeting the needs of students with disabilities. The professional development offerings have been and will continue to be provided to teachers who have a student with any disability in their class. These sessions were mandatory for teachers during their pre-service week. Teachers were provided guidance and professional development around the roles and effective use of various special education staff in a virtual learning environment. Teachers also received

professional development to provide specially designed instruction that adapts, as appropriate, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to meet the needs of students with disabilities and to ensure access to the general curriculum. Norfolk Public Schools also provided professional development opportunities related to the co-teaching model in the virtual environment.

The NPS Department of Learning Support-Special Education Services provided professional development and workshops to parents/guardians in the fall semester. Some examples of topics included: implementing students' IEP accommodations in the virtual environment, strategies to support a virtual learning environment, strategies to support social/emotional skills during a virtual learning environment, and understanding telepractice and supporting students' related services during a virtual learning environment.

Finally, in addition to those supports, online software was purchased to provide academic and social-emotional learning opportunities to students beyond teacher directed virtual instruction. The implementation of this resource was tracked during the fall semester and additional guidance and professional development continue to be offered to fully implement this tool.

The NPS Department of Learning Support-Special Education services will continue to provide professional development to teachers, related service providers, and school staff in preparation for the transition to in-person learning on March 15, 2021 and throughout the remainder of the school year. In collaboration with other NPS departments such as Curriculum and Instruction and Student Wellness, professional development will focus on pacing of instruction and addressing learning loss, social-emotional learning and skills, concurrent teaching and management, and additional topics based on individual student and school needs.

Additionally, the Department of Learning Support-Special Education services staff will provide in-person assistance to schools and teachers to include coaching and assistance with materials or resources. Throughout the return to in-person learning, the department will also provide opportunity for expanded access to and use of additional learning software such as Acellus, an interactive learning platform designed to assist students with mastering content.

Additional Supports

During the virtual learning experience, students with disabilities continued to receive special education services to address Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals as determined by the IEP team. Students received access to instructional materials and assistive technology tools, as required by their IEP, for use at home. Additionally, students eligible under Section 504 were given appropriate accommodations based upon the documented need. Implementation of students' IEP and section 504 Accommodation Plans will continue during the return to in-person learning with instructional materials, assistive technology tools, and necessary resources remaining available to assist students during asynchronous instructional days and their hybrid learning schedule.

English Learners

English learner students are also recognized nationally as a highly vulnerable group. Throughout the fall semester, ESL teachers have worked closely with their students and families to provide needed communications and support. Due to this group being vulnerable, students within this category will be in the first phase of in-person learning.

Identifying All Students of Equity and Opportunity

Beyond the nationally recognized groups mentioned above (early learners, students with disabilities, and English learners), Norfolk Public Schools is committed to reaching all students of equity and opportunity. Students who have shown learning gaps as compared to their peers based upon assessments have been offered additional supports.

Funds to support additional needs of all students of equity and opportunity were reserved to provide additional time for one-on-one and small group instruction beyond the school day to assist with students who are falling behind. Teachers, administrators, and central office personnel used data from assessments, to catch our students of equity and opportunity early and provide the needed assistance prior to any type of a summative assessment. However, mid-year data show increases in learning gaps for many of the NPS equity and opportunity students. For this reason, the importance of returning to in-person learning has become vital.

Virtual Scholars Academy

To accommodate the needs of families who wish to keep their children home for virtual learning, NPS has created a fully online school-within-a-school referred to as the Virtual Scholars Academy (VSA). This remote learning option requires parents/guardians to select virtual learning for the second semester.

Once the hybrid model of in-person learning is in effect, VSA students will continue to be online with the same teacher and use the same curriculum as they have for this school year. Since the VSA is a school-within-a-school program, students are still tied to their home school/specialty programs, and no student loses their enrollment in a specialty program. Instruction in the VSA will involve Zoom (live) and Canvas learning modules (independent). Teachers will be teaching concurrently to their in-person students and their virtual students; therefore, all students will be kept up to pace with learning needs.

If a closing should reoccur following the reopening of schools, NPS would reactivate the fully virtual program that has been established for the first nine weeks of school.

Family Engagement and Support

Child Care

To ensure all parents/guardians have access to affordable childcare, Norfolk Public Schools continues to collaborate with child-care providers throughout the City of Norfolk. In collaboration with providers such as Champions, YMCA, YWCA, Norfolk Parks and Recreation, Boys and Girls Club of Southeast Virginia, and faith-based organizations, NPS will allow providers to utilize school building spaces where possible to continue low-cost opportunities for parents/guardians. Plans are also being developed to offer needed childcare in the hybrid setting for NPS students while ensuring that key health mitigation strategies are followed.

School Nutrition Services

With the addition of the Community Eligibility Provision (CPE) grant, NPS will continue to feed all students breakfast, lunch, and a snack every day. During days students are not in schools, meal pickup locations will continue to operate to ensure no child goes hungry.

Professional Development

Opportunities for All Staff

In preparation for in-person learning based on the Norfolk School Board's vote in October 2020, the schedule was shifted to allow for asynchronous Wednesdays. These days were established to allow for additional planning time and professional development opportunities for teachers. Between October and January, over 8000 attendees participated in the offerings. During the first semester, the focus of the sessions was on the tools used to facilitate virtual learning. The focus for the second semester has been developed around student feedback, data driven instruction and supporting student needs to be academically and socially successful.

Opportunities for Administrators

Throughout the 2020-2021 school year, principals have been attending monthly division-wide equity and excellence professional development sessions with members of their leadership teams. These learning sessions have been focused on best practices for virtual learning along with how to observe and give feedback to teachers for growth. School leaders were also focused on supporting students with disabilities and struggling learners using current data.

Employee Guidelines Related to COVID-19

Norfolk Public Schools is committed to ensuring a safe and healthy workplace for all employees. In doing so, NPS asks that employees take responsibility for monitoring their own health, including possible exposure to others who may be displaying symptoms of COVID-19. The following protocols have been put in place as requirements for all employees to follow.

Prevention Protocols

Beyond classroom teaching, employees are encouraged to continue having meetings via online platforms such as Zoom whenever possible to limit potential exposure of the COVID-19 virus. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to the virus. The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person when individuals are in close contact with one another (within six feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks.

To maintain a safe environment in schools and offices, NPS requires 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.

Response Protocols

Employees must self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms daily by using one of the following resources:

- [Virginia Department of Health Self-Check Tool](#), which includes a list of possible symptoms, testing locations, and frequently asked questions.
- [Centers for Disease Prevention and Control Self-Check Tool](#), which provides resources on how to protect yourself as well as advice on what to do if you feel sick.

If an employee feels sick, has a positive COVID-19 test, or has been significantly exposed to another person that is positive for COVID-19, they **should not** report to their building. Instead, they should call, email, or text their supervisor to make them aware of their concerns. The supervisor will contact the appropriate staff to see what measures need to be taken such as cleaning the building, contact tracing, and potentially quarantining those that require it. Specific

guidelines and instructions will be provided for managing responses to suspected or confirmed COVID-19 exposure and/or infection.

Internal NPS contact tracing, which typically includes communication by phone, will be used to determine the level of risk that an individual has with regard to COVID-19 virus exposure and possible infection. Those positive with COVID-19, those significantly exposed to someone with COVID-19, and those with symptoms that might suggest a potential COVID-19 infection will be contact traced and provided guidance that is in alignment with the most current VDOE and CDC protocols.

Response efforts will be coordinated with local health officials as circumstances dictate.

Emergency Paid Sick Leave (EPSL)

Norfolk Public Schools' employees affected by COVID-19 related circumstances may request Emergency Paid Sick Leave (EPSL). These circumstances include quarantine, significant exposure, personal illness, family illness, or childcare needs. EPSL was originally part of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) that expired December 31, 2020. However, Norfolk Public Schools has decided to extend the leave options associated with FFCRA through March 31, 2021. Any employee who requires additional leave because of extended personal illness or the need to care for an immediate family member should ask his or her Human Resources Generalist about the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). For all types of leave, the employee must provide as much advance notice as is reasonably practicable.

For details, please contact the following appropriate Human Resources staff members:

- Johnay Brown, HR Generalist, Classified Staffing (jbrown5@nps.k12.va.us)
- Andrew Davenport, HR Generalist, Classified: School Nutrition, Transportation (adavenport@nps.k12.va.us)
- Sonja Hale, HR Generalist, Elementary Staffing (shale@nps.k12.va.us)
- Chris Meissel, HR Generalist, Special Education & Resource Staff (cmeissel@nps.k12.va.us)
- Amanda Shilling, HR Generalist, Administrators (ashilling@nps.k12.va.us)
- Michael Sheets, HR Generalist, Secondary Staffing (msheets@nps.k12.va.us)

Operational Support

Facilities Management/Custodial Services

A protocol was put in place for cleaning a facility in the event an employee, who was physically present in that facility and reported symptoms of COVID-19 or in contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19:

- The area supervisor will assemble a team of NPS custodial building supervisors;
- The facility will be sanitized using Mister Fogger sprayer machines, the Foam It Electric Mist Unit, Victory Electrostatic Sanitizers/Disinfectant Machine+, and the Clorox Total 360 System; and
- Additional products will be used to fog, sanitize, and disinfect areas to include: BruTab Disinfectant and Sanitizing Tablets; 256 Disinfectant Cleaner; Clorox 360 Disinfectant Cleaner; and Clorox Surface Sanitizing Spray.

Established procedures for the return to a face-to-face learning environment will be implemented to adapt to schools' schedules, program needs, and movement and/or location of occupants throughout the facilities. Schools' custodial staff will conduct a complete sanitizing and disinfecting process of each building at the end of every workday.

Transportation Considerations

With a focus on mitigation strategies, buses will be running at a limited capacity. Students will load from the back seats to the front seats, and they will exit from the front to the back and be limited to 40 students per bus. Students will be required to wear masks and to sit with students in the same household as themselves. Additionally, windows on the buses will be open and buses will be sanitized between routes.

Communications with Stakeholders

Norfolk Public Schools hopes that all families stay safe during these uncertain times. It is vital to stay connected with Norfolk Public Schools to ensure that the most up-to-date information is received as decisions are made regarding the ongoing developments of educating students.

Beyond topics discussed and shared at Norfolk School Board meetings, communication plans are in place that include e-mails, telephone calls, and social media outreach to share information and engage NPS stakeholders. An updated [NPS Return to In-Person plan](#) has been created that includes a variety of helpful resources to assist with answering frequently asked questions. We look forward to staying in touch!

Website:

www.npsk12.com

Social Media Platforms:

Facebook – Norfolk Public Schools

Twitter – @NPSchools

YouTube – NPSK12VA

Contact us directly by emailing: tellus@nps.k12.va.us

Appendix

The *2020-2021 Norfolk Public Schools' Updated Reopening Plan* was grounded in research and expert guidance from the following resources. We invite our stakeholders to explore each of these resources in greater detail.

- Norfolk Public Schools' [Health Mitigation Plan, Phase 3](#), is designed to guide NPS school administrators in the reopening of schools.
- [Recover, Redesign, Restart 2020](#), published by the Virginia Department of Education in July 2020, is a guiding document for Virginia school divisions developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and in preparation for schools reopening.
- [VDOE's Interim Guidance to K-12 School Reopening](#), published in January 2021.
- Center for Disease Control's [Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools through Phased Mitigation](#), published in February 2021.
- [The Phase Guidance for Virginia Schools](#), published by the Commonwealth of Virginia in July 2021, reflects the latest science, and the best public health guidance and recommendations available intended to reduce, but not eliminate, the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in school settings.
- [Emergency Temporary Standard Infectious Disease Prevention: SARS-CoV-2 Virus That Causes COVID-19](#), published by the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI) in July 2020, that establishes requirements for employers to control, prevent, and mitigate the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) to and among employees and employers.