



# Chesterfield County Public Schools

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## PROJECT RESTART FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION

Updated Oct. 7, 2020

As school divisions and other large businesses across the country have seen during the last six months, information about COVID-19 and guidance related to operations and health precautions during the pandemic change frequently.

Chesterfield County Public Schools and the Chesterfield County School Board realize that changing public health guidance, and alterations to academic plans made as a result, can be confusing for stakeholders, frustrating for personal schedules and disruptive to life in general. We appreciate the patience, grace and understanding that has been extended to our school division since mid-March. This international pandemic was not started by any school division in country; nor was it started by any family that we served. Yet we all must react to it and continue to do the best we can within the confines of scientific and public health guidance that are provided.

While the Project Restart plan, including the reliance on a Public Health Committee's recommendations regarding metrics for returning to in-person learning, remain largely intact, the school division has made minor tweaks along the way. These changes were made after listening intently to feedback from families and staff members. We hope these are viewed as positive, responsive changes to concerns.

This document continues our efforts to be responsive to the most frequently questions submitted to the school division after the Sept. 22 community updates about our hybrid learning model. This document will be updated and reposted as additional thematic questions are received. Families are encouraged to check this document often for updates.

### OVERVIEW

***Things are working very well with the virtual learning environment, much better than we expected. We like this learning environment and have become comfortable. Why change and bring students back into school when they are settling into a routine?***

The School Board and school division leaders have said from the outset of re-entry plan discussions that it is our intention to return students to their normal learning environment as quickly as possible. That is

what the Project Restart plan is designed to do, while also providing families who want the flexibility to continue in a virtual learning environment the opportunity to do so.

The inclusion of the hybrid model was generated in July and was an attempt to have a plan that could start to phase students back in to in-person learning opportunities. The hybrid model became an option when the Health Committee determined the community health situation allowed this step while the overall regulatory guidance still precluded a full (100 percent) enrollment return at this given time.

The purpose of the in-person setting is to provide direct instruction and support for students with the teacher onsite where differentiation can take place and the focus can be on small-group versus dual audience delivery.

We agree that from Day 2 forward the virtual learning environment has been a great success. Our students have adapted nicely to learning online from home, and our teachers and school-based staff members have knocked it out of the park.

***What changed in the latest updates/clarifications sent to parents?***

- [We have added more definition to in-person, virtual and asynchronous opportunities.](#)
- Virtual opportunities are now included on asynchronous days.
- ALL schools will return to normal operating hours once Cohort No. 2 reports. See [mychesterfieldschools.com](http://mychesterfieldschools.com) for posted school operating hours.
- Third-grade students now are included in Cohort No. 2 to align with state recommendations.
- Proposed return of CTC students delayed to Cohort No. 3 to align with state recommendations.
- Face coverings required for all students and staff. Individualized health plan necessary for those students who cannot wear a mask.

***Is the school division aware that Virginia Beach Public Schools, a comparably sized school division, has decided to return all of its students? Under their proposal, all students in a certain grade level can come back at the same time once their cohort is re-introduced.***

Chesterfield County Public Schools has worked collaboratively with other school divisions since in-person learning was stopped in mid-March. We are aware of Virginia Beach's current plans and that other nearby, smaller school divisions have opted to return all students to school as well.

Chesterfield County Public Schools acknowledged from the beginning that our staff members are educational and student support experts. We are not medical practitioners or scientists. So, school division leaders and the School Board have deferred to those individuals and the guidance put forward by state and federal regulatory agencies like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Virginia Department of Health. As a result, we are continuing forward with our plans to implement social distancing guidance provided by these regulatory agencies.

## **CHOOSING A PLAN**

***Why do I have to make a decision about in-person learning or virtual learning by Oct. 1?***

School-based leaders are working diligently to update teaching assignments as we plan for cohorts of students to return to in-person instruction (possibly as early as Oct. 12), while allowing for a family to choose to remain in virtual learning environment for the rest of the first semester if they choose.

In order to allocate the proper number of teachers to the virtual and in-person learning environments, we must know now how many students will attend in each setting prior to their actual return.

***I like my child's teacher. Will they remain in a virtual learning environment?***

It is important to remember that when deciding between the hybrid and virtual learning environments, that it is important to choose the model that best meets the needs of your student and fits with your family regardless of who the teacher is. Chesterfield County schools are filled with outstanding educators who will make sure your student is prepared for success no matter which program they are in.

We are still working on which teachers will teach in person and which will teach virtually. We will not know how many other virtual teachers are needed until the Oct. 1 deadline for families to decide how their students will continue to learn.

Teachers who need accommodations for a disability have priority for virtual instruction. Other teachers who are assigned to serve students choosing a virtual option may teach virtually or in classrooms, depending upon the needs of the school division.

***Will any changes be made to the calendar to make sure instructional time is balanced?***

The School Board will receive a proposal to modify the 2020-21 school calendar at its Sept. 29 meeting. This proposal would eliminate the three-hour early release currently scheduled for Oct. 16.

This change is proposed so that there is not an early release scheduled during the first week that students in Cohort No. 2 return to in-person instruction. It also is not needed because teachers will now have Wednesdays to accomplish student/parent check-ins, small-group instruction, planning and/or professional development.

There are no other calendar changes proposed at this point. While students in the Monday/Tuesday grouping will miss time for parent-teacher conference day and Election Day, students in the Thursday/Friday cohort lose the equivalent amount of time for the Thanksgiving holiday.

We will continue to monitor if inclement weather impacts the schedule.

***My family has an elementary school-aged student in Cohort No. 2 and Cohort No. 3? Can my younger child wait and return with my older child when Cohort No. 3 starts?***

Yes. Please let your child's school know of your intention.

***By only attending school in person two days a week, my child will receive less instruction in person than they would virtually.***

This is not necessarily true. Students learning in person will receive approximately 12 hours of direct instruction during the two days they are onsite at school. Because of asynchronous learning opportunities built into the virtual schedule so that students are not in front of a screen all day, students learning in a virtual learning environment will receive approximately 12 hours of direct instruction as well.

***High school students will only see their teacher in person once a week. This is a big change that means less time with their teachers.***

There is not as big a change as one might think. High school students have operated on an even-odd schedule for years, meaning that they only see their teachers twice a week for half of the school year. In addition, with the new change, students will be able to join the beginning of each class every day that they are working from home.

To clarify, students will not be teaching themselves new curriculum. During the days that they learn from home, students will be working on teacher-provided assignments that allow for practice and for demonstration of skill acquisition and proficiency.

## **INSTRUCTION**

***Why can't the school division stream all classes fully to students working from home?***

The purpose of the in-person setting is to provide direct instruction and support for students with the teacher on site where differentiation can take place and the focus can be on small group versus dual audience delivery

Camera-based instruction with school computers tends to be stationary versus mobile, as the goal is not to film students for others outside the classroom to see but rather remain focused on the instructor. In a normal classroom, the teacher is moving throughout the class to support student's individual needs. This cannot happen if confined to an area due to a camera.

If there are technical issues, the teacher must pause the in-person instruction to support getting students virtually back online.

***The information that came out regarding the hybrid and virtual schedules was helpful. I still need more clarification on what "daily" teacher interaction means for 100 percent virtual. Will my elementary school student have teacher-led instruction for the majority of his virtual school day, similar to the current environment, or will it be virtual check-ins off and on throughout the day?***

Students at the elementary school level who choose to remain in a virtual classroom once in-person instruction resumes should see very little change from the current virtual learning setup. Students will continue to follow similar schedules for five days a week; though, the starting time may change, depending on the normal operating schedule of your child's school.

***My middle/high school child is not ready to return yet, but CCPSONline is not the right option for them either. What services will my child receive?***

At the secondary level, a student choosing to remain in a virtual learning environment will continue to have the ability to check in at the beginning of each class with their teacher and in-person colleagues.

***Why did the school division decide to include third grade in Cohort No. 2?***

Cohort Nos. 2 and 3 originally were created to split the six elementary school grades in half, to better balance school attendance and bus ridership.

However, the Governor and multiple state agencies, including the Virginia Department of Education, encourage school divisions to bring back special education and K-3 students first. The school division's move aligns with these state recommendations.

Moving third grade to Cohort No. 2 also avoids a potential split of Cohort No. 3. ((Virginia Department of Health suggests that only special education and K-3 students attend school when a locality or region is deemed to be in moderate or substantial community transmission. Chesterfield County has had this label for several weeks.)

***At the elementary school level, how will pacing work for students who are in-person and students who are virtual? What if there is a need for a virtual student to return to in-person instruction. Will they be behind?***

Our teachers, both those working with students in person and those working with students in the virtual learning environment, are expected to continue to partner on lesson planning and pacing. As noted elsewhere, both sets of students will have about the same number of direct teacher-led instruction hours.

***Will students who wish to continue virtually once the school division reopens for in-person/hybrid instruction be able to remain enrolled in their dual enrollment course(s)? I have been told that my high school-aged daughter cannot take her dual enrollment course virtually. Why are students not able to continue virtually in a class they are already taking virtually? Is that a John Tyler Community College policy? We have high-risk family members, and she should not have to be removed from her class just because she choose to remain virtual.***

As outlined in Project Restart, students who elect the virtual option will learn via CCPSOnline or will elect to follow their regular schedule, following the asynchronous format described in the hybrid option five days a week.

Students enrolled in dual enrollment courses are required by John Tyler Community College/Virginia Community College System to meet a minimum amount of contact hours with their teacher in order to receive dual enrollment credit. When students return to the building, while students selecting all-virtual instruction will have the opportunity to virtually log on at the beginning of each class period, this will not provide students the ability to meet the required number of hours of direct instruction. (Please note, this required contact time does not include the amount of time that students spend on homework, studying, etc.)

Our goal is certainly not to reduce opportunities for students or to add unnecessary changes during this already dynamic time. Unfortunately, as our courses are designed under our current plan, students selecting a virtual-only learning environment would not be able to fulfill the requirement of the needed hours of direct instruction in order to receive dual enrollment credit.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

***Will face coverings be required?***

Yes. All students and staff members will be required to wear a face covering/mask indoors unless they qualify for an exemption as outlined in the Governor's Executive Order.

If a student is unable to wear a mask due to health reasons, their family must notify the principal in writing so that an accommodation can be made and protective measures taken to support the rest of the class. **A family must complete and have a doctor sign an individualized health-care plan.**

As a condition of employment, an employee is required to notify their supervisor if they are unable to wear a mask. A face shield will be used instead, or the staff member can seek ADA accommodations.

***What happens when a student displays symptoms at school?***

Students experiencing COVID-19 related symptoms will be separated immediately from the school population using a Symptom Management Room. Families will be asked to pick up their student in a timely fashion and will be advised to seek the assessment of a licensed health-care provider.

***What happens if a student or staff members tests positive for COVID-19?***

Per Chesterfield County Employee Health guidance, a student or staff member diagnosed with symptomatic COVID-19 will be required to stay home until:

- At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared, and
- At least 48 hours have passed since a fever was present (without the use of fever reducing medication), and
- Respiratory symptoms have improved, or
- A written note from a licensed health-care provider is received indicating a safe return date

For employees only: In addition to the above requirements, employees must receive approval from Chesterfield County Employee Medical Center prior to returning to work

A student or staff member diagnosed with asymptomatic COVID-19 will be required to stay home for 10 days from the date of the positive COVID-19 test.

Testing guidance for isolated students and staff are provided by CDC at this link [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/end-homeisolation.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fprevent-getting-sick%2Fwhen-its-safe.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/end-homeisolation.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fprevent-getting-sick%2Fwhen-its-safe.html). Contact your licensed health-care provider for additional guidance regarding testing.

A more detailed look at the school division's Health, Safety and Communications plan can be found [here](#).

***Who will work with the Department of Health and contact tracers when there is a potential exposure or confirmed case?***

Our Student Health Services team will work with school-based administration and the Virginia Department of Health to share information about close contacts. The Virginia Department of Health is responsible for contact tracing.

***How will we know if there is a positive case at my child's school?***

Given we were largely closed to the public during the summer, the school division followed VDH and CDC guidance regarding individual notifications: Notifying staff in a facility who came into close contact with the infected employee. (VDH: Close contact defined as within 6 feet for 15 minutes or longer.)

In the interest of transparency and a continued trusting relationship between school-home, we plan to go above and beyond the VDH and CDC guidance:

- **Once staff returns for virtual learning:** Will notify all staff members in a building if there is a positive case within the facility; name of individual infected will not be shared; work directly regarding need for quarantine
- **(DURING COHORT NO. 1) Once students return for in-person instruction:** Will notify all staff/families if there is a positive case in facility/on bus; name of individual infected will not be shared; work directly regarding need for quarantine. (The general school population will not be notified at this time because of the small number of students in attendance that would make such notification self-identifiable and violate student privacy rights.)
- **(ONCE COHORT NO. 2 RETURNS TO SCHOOL) Once students return for in-person instruction:** Will notify all staff/families if there is a positive case in facility/on bus; name of individual infected will not be shared; work directly regarding need for quarantine

#### ***Do we have a nurse assigned to every school?***

The school division has made significant progress toward its goal of having a nurse assigned to each school. There are currently five full-time vacancies; however, each school currently has an assigned nurse. We continue to advertise and interview.

The school division also will rely on nurse supervisors, 1:1 LPNs whose students do not return to in-person instruction, clinic assistants and clinic backups.

#### ***Why are we not testing each student before they enter school each day?***

We have asked parents and guardians to play a key role in the successful reopening of our schools. Each family will be provided with a checklist and series of questions to review with each child before sending them to school each day. This includes a temperature check at home.

For a student or staff member who is asymptomatic, a temperature check could be a false sense of security if a temperature reading comes back normal. In addition, while school divisions have been given specific temperature ranges for concern, each person's normal body temperature is different. While we have been asked to exclude students with a fever of 100.4 degrees or higher, that is based on a student with a normal reading of 98.6. If a person's normal temperature is 97.2 degrees, they could be ill and contagious well before they reach 100.4.

A temperature check conducted at school each day also could mean that students have already been exposed by riding a school bus. At this time, there is not time built into the schedule to conduct 26 temperature checks as students board the bus and still complete the morning runs on time.

#### ***Will visitors be allowed in school buildings?***

During the pandemic, visitors to school buildings will not be allowed past the front office area unless there is a predesignated meeting. This will include classroom visits and lunchroom visits once in-person instruction begins.

## **OPERATIONS**

### ***Has staff been provided with the necessary personal protective equipment and do we have the cleaning supplies necessary to open schools?***

There are masks and face shields in place for all staff members. (We have extra masks in stock for students who forget to bring their own, too.) Gloves, hand sanitizer, hand soap, paper towels, wipes and disinfectant spray all have been ordered and delivered to sites as well. Staff members who work in environments where gowns, etc., are needed have been provided those materials, too.

### ***Who is responsible for cleaning what in schools?***

A cleaning expectations chart has been developed and is being shared with staff associated with Cohort No. 1. The expectations delineate responsibilities between day porters, the contracted night crew and school-based staff. Cleaning expectations for teachers should not be different than they would normally look like, other than they are being asked to clean items that are transferred between students.

As we evaluate progress in Cohort No. 1, we will make tweaks as needed.

### ***What cleaners will the school division use to combat COVID 19?***

- Re-Juv-Nal (disinfectant for touch surfaces) [Product Information Link](#)
- Sanitizer (disinfectant for food contact surfaces) [Product Information Link](#)
- Suprox (Glass cleaner and Floors) [Product Information Link](#)

Custodial carts should be fully stocked to include mop bucket and pulse mop for each cart. This will ensure staff can quickly address any issues that may arise

All chemicals listed above are stocked in schools, available in the main school division custodial closet and approved by Environmental Protection Agency to be effective with COVID-19 pandemic strain. Staff should follow guidelines as identified in the provided product information link.

### ***Is bus transportation being offered?***

Yes. Students may ride the bus to school this year.

Bus routes are built based on a student's home address. If there is an alternate address that a student will need to be picked up from or dropped off at, it is important that you update your family's information in ParentVUE so that routes can be adjusted as needed.

In addition, we encourage families who are able to assist us with transportation during this time. If a family is able to transport their child to and from school, it would be appreciated and would help support reducing bus ridership numbers and social distancing guidelines.

Students will only be allowed to ride on assigned buses to designated stops. They will not be allowed on buses on which they are not assigned.

***How will buses be monitored for overcrowding?***

Each bus driver is provided a list of students who are scheduled to be on their bus for a particular run. In addition to monitoring seating as students board the bus – loading back to front (with the exception of our youngest students) and sitting one per seat (unless siblings sit together) – bus drivers will do head counts of students onboard and report numbers to their area office.

Routes will be tweaked as necessary and changes will be made as quickly as possible.

***How will this addition of third graders affect bus ridership numbers?***

As we will with every cohort that is introduced back into the in-person learning environment, our Transportation team will be monitoring daily ridership numbers and will be making tweaks to routes as needed and as quickly as possible.