

ESSEX COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS



RETURN TO IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION PLAN 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR

Updated 11-20-2020

Health and Safety Measures

The health and safety of our students and staff is of the utmost importance. Therefore, Essex County Public Schools are taking the following steps to mitigate the impacts associated with the spread of the COVID-19 virus in our schools.



TRAINING

- Staff will undergo health mitigation training prior to students returning to the building.
- Teachers will facilitate health mitigation training with students; this will occur during homeroom of the first week of in-person instruction for each group of students (purple, gold, and grey) in each school.

SCREENING

- Parents/guardians are expected to screen their students for COVID-19 symptoms each day prior to sending them to school (including temperature check). Parents must ensure they do not send a child to school if the child has COVID-19 symptoms (as listed in this document) or is lab-confirmed with COVID-19, and instead should opt to receive remote instruction until conditions by the local health department for re-entry are met.
- Staff will be required to self-screen for COVID-19 symptoms prior to reporting to work each day (including temperature check). The district may require additional screening of employees at any time based on current state and federal guidelines.
- Temperature checks will also occur prior to students and staff entering each building.
- If a student or staff member is identified with symptoms, he/she will be separated and moved to an isolation area. Parents will be called immediately to pick up their child from the school. Isolation areas have been identified at each school with distancing protocols and PPE in place.
 - COVID Symptoms could include:
 - Temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher;
 - Sore throat;
 - New uncontrolled cough that causes difficulty breathing (or, for students with a chronic allergic/asthmatic cough, a change in their cough from baseline);
 - Diarrhea, vomiting, or abdominal pain; or
 - New onset of severe headache, especially with a fever.
- Teachers will monitor students and refer to the nurse if symptoms are present.

SOCIAL DISTANCING/SOCIALIZATION

- Classrooms will be arranged to ensure social distancing. Occupancy will be limited to maintain spatial distancing requirements.
- Mitigation signage will be posted throughout the building.
- Teachers and building administrators will use floor markers and blockades to remind students and staff to distance themselves from others.
- Student socialization will be limited to within a class setting with social distancing, mask wearing, and other mitigation efforts in place.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT / FACE COVERINGS

Students and staff are expected to wear face coverings during school hours.

In order to protect our students and staff, face coverings will be required for all students and staff at school. Face coverings include non-medical grade disposable face masks that cover the nose and mouth.



- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) will be available in every classroom setting, as needed.
- Face coverings should follow [CDC guidance](#) which indicates cloth coverings should have at least 2 layers. Masks with exhalation vents are not allowed. Bandanas tied over the nose and gaiters are discouraged except for outdoor use.
- Individual needs will be addressed on a case-by-case basis with appropriate documentation. Requests for accommodations should be submitted to the school administration. Students with significant disabilities that prevent them from wearing a mask may be exempt from mask requirements.
- Each individual is responsible for providing their own face covering. The district will have face coverings available in the event one is lost or breaks.
- Mask breaks are allowed as needed. A mask break is the removal of a mask for short periods of time (for example a few minutes) while at least six feet from others; however, in transition periods masks will be required.
- When a student is encountered within six feet by an adult or another child, a mask will be worn.
- If a student refuses to wear a mask, the student will be coached by faculty and administrative staff. Continued refusal will require placement of the student back into virtual instruction. Certain exceptions may apply.

HEALTHY HYGIENE PRACTICES

All individuals should ensure optimal healthy hygiene practices, including hand washing or the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers, to prevent infections and reduce the number of viable pathogens that contaminate the hands. Hand washing is the single most effective infection control intervention (CDC). Hand sanitizing dispensers will be located throughout the schools. Students and staff will be encouraged to wash hands/use hand sanitizer often.

BATHROOMS

- Each school will develop plans based on individual school needs to limit the number of students that enter the bathroom at one time.
- Students will have access to the bathroom; however, access will be monitored.
- Custodial staff will provide ongoing sanitation of the bathroom.

WATER FOUNTAINS

- Touchless water dispensers have been installed in all school buildings to replace the water fountains.
- Students are encouraged to utilize reusable water bottles. The school will provide every student who attends in-person instruction with a reusable water bottle.

HAND WASHING AND HAND SANITIZER

- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer will be available at school entrances, in classrooms, in the cafeteria, and in common areas throughout the school.
- Staff and students will be expected to wash or sanitize their hands regularly.
- Requirements for hand washing and use of provided hand sanitizer include: upon entry to classrooms and periodic times during the day, after recess, before eating, and following restroom breaks.
- Students are encouraged to bring a personal hand sanitizer container.

CLEANING, SANITIZING, AND DISINFECTING

Sanitation of classroom and workspaces will take place throughout the school day and each evening after the dismissal of students. The cleaning steps outlined below will be instituted to disinfect workplace surfaces, chairs, tables, etc. to protect employees and reduce the risk of the spread of infection. To mitigate the spread of the virus, everyone must manage their immediate area and employ good habits including wiping of surfaces, frequent hand washing, and disinfecting an area whenever possible.

Cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting reminder signage will be prominently displayed.

- Employees will disinfect their own personal workspaces (handles, switches, counter/desk, phone, etc.) throughout the day, giving special attention to commonly touched surfaces. Staff will have access to disinfecting supplies to aid in cleaning during breaks in instruction.
- Heavily trafficked areas such as the main office and frequently touched surfaces such as door handles will be sanitized regularly by the custodial staff.
- Restrooms and other common areas will be sanitized several times a day as well.
- The school buildings will be closed on Fridays to allow for deep cleaning by the custodians.

Classrooms, Desks, Workspaces and Electronics Disinfection

During the school day, teachers, and staff will utilize alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol to disinfect in their classrooms or immediate work areas ([per CDC guidelines](#)). Alcohol based solutions are supported by the CDC for disinfection and have a shorter cleaning time than other district disinfection products. At the secondary level, student desks will be cleaned between classes. Computer labs will be cleaned after each use and on a daily basis otherwise.

STUDENT MEDICATION

- Students will be allowed to access the nurse's office for medication with prior notice from the nurse.

POSITIVE CASES

- Written correspondence will be provided by the superintendent to families and staff in the event the division is made aware of a positive case.
- If a child is exposed, a contact tracer from the Health Department will contact parents/guardians and will provide them with guidance. See mitigation plans on the school's website for further details.
- In the event that there are multiple cases and there is a fear of transmission, a school may be closed in order to provide appropriate cleaning and sanitation.
- If schools have to close due to positive cases, then all students will return to 100% virtual instruction

INSTRUCTION

ECPS is committed to ensuring that all students have an equitable and positive experience and access to high quality instruction. Throughout the 2020-2021 academic school year, students will interact with instruction in three different ways: in-person, virtual/remote learning, and hybrid. Teacher-student assignments will be flexible to ensure that all three modes of instruction are in effect. Synchronous instructional activities will be recorded, and asynchronous instructional activities will be arranged to ensure seamless instruction, regardless of mode. A district-wide three-week rotating schedule will be provided to each student. Planning and preparation will be employed by teachers to ensure all modes of instruction remain in effect.



VIRTUAL INSTRUCTION

- Virtual instruction will entail primarily synchronous instruction.
- Families may elect to have their children remain in 100% virtual instruction. More information can be found on the ECPS website or by calling the School Board Office at 804-443-4366. Students will be required to remain in the selected modality of instruction for a marking period.
- While in virtual instruction, students may receive various modalities of instruction from different teachers.

IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION (Updated 11-20-2020)

The “AA/BB” approach will entail dividing our student populations into two groups (by last name). This will be done via examination of our student enrollment across the division; thus, splitting our student populations in half. We realize that an equal distribution of students across the school division might not appear evenly divided within a classroom or a grade; we will do our best in this regard. The “AA/BB” model will allow the “AA” group to attend school on Mondays and Tuesdays of each week, while the “BB” group will attend school on Thursdays and Fridays. Below is a depiction of this arrangement.

Student Group	Weekly Schedule
Group “AA”-Students with last names A – I	Monday and Tuesday
Group “BB”-Students with last names J – Z	Thursday and Friday

Wednesdays will afford the custodial staff time to provide cleaning between the two groups. Additionally, there will be several specialty groups of students who will be allowed to attend school on a daily basis:

- ✚ Students with special needs
- ✚ English Learners
- ✚ Students with 504s
- ✚ Pre-K students
- ✚ Students who have inaccessible internet connectivity
- ✚ Students with chronic absenteeism
- ✚ Siblings of any of the above-mentioned student groups

Families who would like their student to attend school daily, under the “students who have inaccessible internet connectivity” designation, will have to contact their student’s school and make a formal request. The

request will be reviewed by the principal and submitted to Dr. Temple for final approval. Likewise, daily student attendance authorization under the “students with chronic absenteeism” designation will require a formal request by the principal, to be submitted to the attention of Dr. Temple. Finally, principals must alert Dr. Temple as to any student who should be allowed to attend school daily because he/she is the sibling of a specialty student (s).

Plans to expand in-person student enrollment in school is still contingent on COVID case counts. The COVID case incident rate for Essex County is currently two, based on the 7-day average number of new cases (source: Virginia Department of Health). We will continue to monitor case metrics and use such data points to determine the feasibility of in-person instruction.

We intend to follow the following scheduling timelines to prepare for our transition into the third marking period.

- Applications for virtual learning will be available on November 24.
- Any family who would like their student to remain in virtual instruction would need to complete and return said application by December 9.
- Notifications regarding student schedules in school will be issued to families by postal mail beginning on December 15.
- The “AA/BB” model of in-person school attendance will start on **January 19, 2021.**
- While in school, class changes will be limited, with teachers traveling instead of students whenever possible.
- Switching of classes will be limited as much as possible.
- There will be no congregating in the hallways during class changes.
- Elementary students will keep to one side of the hallway and use social distancing when moving through the building.
- Secondary students will follow directional signage as a means of traveling through the hallway.

HYBRID INSTRUCTION

- The hybrid schedule will include the use of asynchronous instruction, project-based learning, and flash drives.
- For those who need flash drives, they will be transported via school bus on a weekly basis.
- Additionally, paper packets can be mailed. However, we encourage the use of flash drives.
- Parents or students may also call the school and make arrangements to pick up or return flash drives to the schools.

SPECIALS/ELECTIVES

- Electives and specials will be offered with social distancing in effect. Electives will continue both virtually and in-person. Students will travel to specials/electives with their respective classes.
- Recess will be permitted with social distancing in effect. Teachers, staff, or administration will be present to ensure a safe environment for all.
- Students will be permitted to participate in physical education. On days when students participate in physical education, athletic footwear should be worn. Locker room access will be prohibited.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

- IEPs were amended to include the words “Virtual Learning” in parentheses, indicating that the accommodations/modifications would occur in both classroom and virtual learning settings.
- A case manager is assigned to each special education student. The case manager will continue to monitor the IEPs, track data, and ensure the IEPs are being implemented with fidelity.

CHROMEBOOKS

- All students have been assigned a Chromebook by ECPS.
- Students (Grades 8-12) who attend the in-person sessions will be required to bring their Chromebooks from home.
- The Chromebooks should be charged at home prior to attending school.

EHS FALL SOL TESTING

- Students will be required to attend school in-person for SOL testing. This is a mandate from the Virginia Department of Education.

ATTENDANCE AND GRADING

- See school-specific attendance and grading practices.

SCHOOL SCHEDULES

- See school-specific attendance and grading practices.

STUDENT SERVICES



CHILD NUTRITION

- The district recognizes that schools are sometimes the only reliable sources of nutritious food for some students.
- Meals will continue on a weekly basis. Food delivery will be made on Fridays with a **3 hour delay** from the student's normal bus pick up time. Students who attend in-person will get meals at home on the weeks they are not in school.
- For students who attend school for in-person instruction, breakfast and lunch will be served in the students' classrooms.
- Meals will be delivered weekly regardless of the in-person schedules.

TRANSPORTATION

- The regular bus routes will be in effect. Bus loads will be reduced to roughly 33% of their typical load.
- Children within the same family will be allowed to travel via bus together; also, students within the same family will be allowed to follow the same, three-week rotation schedule.
 - Families are encouraged to contact their child's school to ensure siblings with different last names are scheduled together.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

- ECPS is committed to helping students understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.
- ECPS will accomplish this by building relationships and explicitly teaching skills needed for the 21st century. The division's goal is to provide all families with support and resources for Social Emotional Learning.
- Returning to school during this time may cause anxiety for some students. Here are some steps you can take to help ease some of the anxiety for your child:

- Have a talk with your child and allow her/him to share thoughts and feelings about returning to school.
- Be honest. For example, you could go through some of the changes they may expect at school, such as needing to wear forms of protective clothing like masks and having to follow social distancing guidelines.
- Remind your child that safety is of utmost importance. The buildings will be sanitized more often. Teachers will be taking necessary precautions by wearing masks/face shields, and practicing social distancing.
- Counselors, the social worker, and the school psychologist will be available to assist students who present anxiety and emotions about returning to school.
- COVID mitigation training will be provided to students.
- Once students have clear directions about how to be safe, this will help to lessen stress and anxiety.

SCHOOL AND DIVISION ACTIVITIES

- In-person activities for families will remain suspended until such time as the Health Department provides COVID mitigation guidance, allowing such activities to resume.
- High school athletics will be phased in once greater confidence is attained by school personnel with regard to the operation of in-person instruction. Announcements at the district and school level will be made in a timely manner to communicate effectively such changes in the status of activities with families. ECPS is working closely with the Virginia High School League (VHSL) to determine sport seasons, and how to conduct the seasons as safely as possible.
- At this time, parents should contact the school via phone to communicate with school personnel and schedule appointments whenever possible. Access to the school building by parents will be limited to the front office and will be subject to additional screening procedures. Anyone entering a building will be required to wear a face covering which covers the nose and the mouth.
- Students who select 100% virtual instruction will be allowed to participate in clubs, sports and sports-related athletic activities.

Disclaimer: The Essex County Public School Division reserves the right to revise this information as necessary, to provide the best support for our students and their families, in alignment with directives from Governor Ralph Northam and guidance from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) and State Superintendent Dr. James Lane.