Virginia’s Reopening of Schools Plan Summary Information
“Schools will open for all students next year, but instruction will look very different.”

On June 9, Governor Northam announced a phased reopening plan for Virginia schools, detailed in the Virginia Department of Education document *Recover, Redesign, Restart 2020*

Under this plan, Virginia schools will be required to deliver new instruction to all students for the 2020-2021 academic year. Initially, instruction is likely to be a blend of in-person and remote learning. The announced school reopening phases are aligned with the broader Forward Virginia Blueprint and phases governing business reopening, public gatherings, etc. and will be governed by public health status data.

Phasing is intended to allow a gradual scale up of operations. Community mitigation strategies (e.g. physical distancing, enhanced cleaning, etc.) will be necessary across all phases to decrease the spread of COVID-19. Each phase specifies allowable in-person instructional options as follows:

- **Phase I** - special education programs and childcare for working families
- **Phase II** - Phase I options plus preschool - third grade students; English learners; and summer camps in school buildings
- **Phase III** - all students may receive in-person instruction as can be accommodated with strict social distancing measures in place
- **Beyond Phase III** - divisions will resume “new-normal” operations under future guidance

School divisions will become eligible to enter different Phases aligned with the Forward Virginia Blueprint but will have the flexibility to be more limited in their in-person instructional offerings than each phase allows based on determinations of local public health data. Before entering Phase II and III, every school in Virginia will be required to submit to the VDOE, and make publicly available, a plan outlining their strategies for mitigating public health risk of COVID-19 and complying with CDC and VDH recommendations, including face covering policies and procedures.

Public school divisions will also be required to submit a plan for providing new instruction to all students in the 2020-2021 academic year, regardless of phase or the operational status of the school at the time. This plan must also include strategies to address learning lost due to spring 2020 school closures as well as contingencies for fully remote instruction should public health conditions require it. Finally, school divisions are also encouraged to undertake a Return to School Planning Equity Audit as part of its reopening planning.

**Key Components of Phase I (Fairfax is currently in Phase I, scheduled to enter Phase II on June 12)**
- Instruction will be predominately remote.
- In-person instruction may be offered for special education programs with social distancing measures; students will only attend such programs if all parties agree it is appropriate.
- Childcare for working families can continue to be offered in schools.
- No athletics or extracurricular activities may be offered.
- Schools may continue to ensure provision of student services such as school meal programs.
• Social distancing measures should be implemented on buses and in buildings, including but not limited to:
  o A maximum of 10 people per bus or classroom
  o 6-foot separation whenever possible
  o Restrict mixing groups of students
  o Close communal spaces
  o No large gatherings per Executive Order

Key Components of Phase II
• Instruction will still be predominately remote.
• Phase I options continue. Additionally, in-person instruction may be offered for special education programs, preschool - third grade students, and/or English learners.
• Summer camps in school settings may be offered to students of any age.
• Limited extracurricular activities (clubs) with mitigation strategies.
• Athletics limited to individual or team-based practices with mitigation strategies
• Social distancing measures should be implemented on buses and buildings, including but not limited to:
  o 6-foot separation whenever possible;
  o Physical distance should be created between children on school buses limiting capacity as needed to optimize distance between passengers.
  o Restrict mixing groups of students;
  o 50-person limit on large gatherings, assemblies, graduations, etc.;
  o Close communal spaces if possible; otherwise stagger use and disinfect in between use; and

Key Components of Phase III
• Instruction will shift to include more in-person instruction for all students. Remote instruction will supplement in person instruction for students.
• In order to accomplish social distancing, school plans may need to include staggered in-person schedules for students.
• Remote learning exceptions and teleworking should be options for students and staff who are at a higher risk of severe illness
• Childcare and/or before and after care in schools may be offered.
• Athletics and extracurricular activities may be expanded with mitigation measures, guidance from VDOE and VHSL forthcoming.
• Social distancing and other measures will remain important prevention strategies. Additional operational requirements will include measures such as physical distancing, gathering limits and other mitigation strategies (e.g. face coverings, class size limitations, etc). Schools should follow all guidance from the CDC.
  o Physical distance should be created between children on school buses limiting capacity as needed to optimize distance between passengers
  o 6-foot separation whenever possible
  o Large gathering limit, subject to updated Executive Order at the time
  o Consider restricting mixing groups of students, adjusting schedules, transitions, recess options, and instruction to accomplish this.
Beyond Phase III
School divisions will eventually return to a “new-normal” for instructional and extracurricular operations in consultation with public health officials. Even at this point, some restrictions may still be in place - additional guidance will be forthcoming as public health data, safety precautions, and guidance evolve.

Precautions to Apply to All Phases
All schools should follow the CDC Guidance for Schools, including enhanced social and physical distancing, health and hygiene procedures, cleaning and disinfecting measures, and other mitigation strategies. These precautions should include, but are not limited to:
  o Daily health screenings of students and staff for symptoms and history of exposure
  o Providing remote learning exceptions and teleworking for students and staff who are at a higher risk of severe illness.
  o The use of cloth face coverings by staff when at least 6 feet physical distancing cannot be maintained.
  o Encouraging the use of face coverings in students, as developmentally appropriate, in settings where physical distancing cannot be maintained.
  o Encouraging staff and students who feel sick to stay home, and establish clear policies about when they can return; what happens is a school member gets sick; etc.

Additional Policy Considerations for 2021-2022 School Year
• School divisions will need set policies on student attendance to allow for all potential learning environments while ensuring compliance with compulsory attendance requirements which permit participation in educational programs and courses at a site remote from the school with the permission of the school.
• Due to the impact of school closures, school accreditation for the 2020-2021 academic year (based on 2019-2020 student data) has been waived. The recommendations of the Virginia Accreditation Task Force for the 2021-2022 school year are now under consideration. At this point in time, VDOE anticipates that strong consideration will be given to waiving accreditation for the 2021-2022 academic year. Information about a final decision will be forthcoming.
• School divisions can seek waivers from 180 day/990 hours and 140 clock hour requirements, but not from Standards of Quality or Standards of Accreditation requirements.
• Divisions will be required to grade student work.
• Barring a federal waiver, Standards of Learning assessments will be administered in the spring of 2021. This will establish a baseline for growth measures in the 2022-2023 school year accreditation.
• Additional VDOE guidance on attendance and related topics such as average daily membership, calculating instructional time, etc. is forthcoming. According to the Recover, Redesign, Restart document, it is anticipated that the Superintendent of Public Instruction will still provide flexibility on average daily membership counts even as schools return to something resembling “normal operations” as not all parents and students will be comfortable returning to the classroom at the same pace as reopening phases.