

BOARD BRIEF

sDate: November 19, 2021

BOARD INFORMATION: X

MEETING PREPARATION:

FROM: Tanja Mayer-Harding, Humanities Team Coordinator
Meagan Carrick, Fine Arts Instructional Specialist

THROUGH: Gerald R. Mann, Jr., Ed.D., Executive Director of Instructional Support
Terri H. Mozingo, Ed.D., Chief of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership
Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr., Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

TO: The Honorable Meagan L. Alderton, Chair, and
Members of the Alexandria City School Board

TOPIC: Performing Arts COVID 19 Guidance

ACPS 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL:

Goal 2: Instructional Excellence

SY 2021-2022 FOCUS AREA:

Focus Area 1: Social-Emotional and Academic Learning Recovery

FY 2022 BUDGET PRIORITY:

Implementation of 2025 Strategic Plan

SUMMARY:

The purpose of this brief is to communicate new COVID-19 guidance for school Performing Arts Programs. On September 22, 2021, the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) issued new interim COVID-19 guidance for music, choir, and performing arts classrooms as listed below. At this time, all schools in Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) have received most of the requested Fine Arts PPE, including bells covers and small face masks. We are awaiting the delivery of medium- and large-size face masks. According to Facilities and Operations, the vendor states that the manufacturer will be completing and shipping our order soon, and we can expect to have it no later than November 30, 2021. The masks will then be sorted and distributed to schools as soon as possible. When the medium and large face masks are delivered, schools will have the requisite Fine Arts PPE and be able to resume their usual programming.

- Masks
 - Require the use of face masks at all times.
 - Consider using covers on wind and brass instruments to reduce droplet spread while playing.

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- Physical Distance
 - Maximize physical distance as much as possible.
 - Maintain at least 6 feet of distance during activities when increased exhalation occurs, such as singing, shouting, or playing wind/brass instruments. Consider increasing distance even more (10 feet apart) during these activities if the room size allows for it.
 - Limit activities that require close contact between performers (e.g., lifting a dancer, scenes in a play that require very close contact between actors), especially when indoors.
 - For general classroom use (when not singing, shouting, etc.), follow Virginia’s Interim Guidance to space students at least 3 feet apart in classrooms.
- Cleaning and Disinfecting
 - Limit the use of shared items between persons, where feasible.
 - Avoid shared equipment where the mouth may come into contact with equipment. If equipment must be shared, follow the manufacturer’s instructions to clean thoroughly between uses. For microphones, disposable microphone covers may also be used.
 - In general, clean once a day, which is usually sufficient to remove potential virus particles from most surfaces. Disinfecting (using an Environmental Protection Agency [EPA]-approved disinfectant) kills any remaining germs on surfaces, further reducing the risk of spreading infection. If an indoor classroom or other Performing Arts space has had a sick person or someone who tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 24 hours, clean AND disinfect the space. Refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance on cleaning and disinfecting for additional recommendations.
- Cohorting
 - Practice cohorting; conduct Performing Arts classes or activities in small “pods” of students, with the same students always performing or practicing together.
- Screening Testing
 - Consider screening testing for students who regularly participate in activities involving singing, shouting, and performing in the band that could lead to increased exhalation.
- Handwashing
 - Encourage all students, teachers, and staff in Performing Arts classrooms to wash their hands frequently.
- Ventilation
 - Consider conducting the class outdoors or under an open tent while ensuring outdoor classes are safe from other hazards, such as extreme heat/cold or air pollution.
 - If the class is held indoors, ensure the ventilation system is optimized with regard to flow rate and filtration.
 - Consider limiting the duration of choir rehearsals (e.g., 30-minute limit if inside).

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Recommendations for performances include the following:

- Consider canceling or postponing concerts when community transmission is substantial or high.
- Encourage all attendees who are eligible to get fully vaccinated prior to attending any performance.
- Hold virtual or outdoor performances instead of indoor concerts. If held inside a K–12 school, all individuals should be instructed to wear a mask, as required by the order of the State Health Commissioner.
- Limit the number of students at one time in backstage or storage areas.
- Limit audience capacity to ensure attendees can remain at least 6 feet apart.
- Set up handwashing or sanitizer stations at entry/exit points.
- Instruct anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 to stay at home.
- Communicate safety expectations (including mask and distancing policies) to all performers and attendees.
- Refer to CDC guidance on hosting safer gatherings.

BACKGROUND:

Under current VDH guidelines, Performing Arts Programs will be in person with required mask use, musical instrument personal protective equipment (PPE), and social distancing measures in place.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Superintendent recommends that the School Board review the information in this brief.

IMPACT:

ACPS students will be able to continue improving their proficiency in their selected Performing Arts Programs in an environment that mitigates the spread of COVID 19.

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