



SALEM
CITY SCHOOLS

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**Salem City Schools
Plan for Safe Return to In-Person
Instruction and Continuity of Services**

December 12, 2023

Section 1: Introduction

This plan describes how Salem City Public Schools will maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other school and division staff during and following the return to full in-person instruction.

We believe that most students learn best under the direction of a caring and committed educator. We are also committed to providing a healthy and safe environment in accordance with state and federal guidelines for in-person instruction, but we understand that it is not possible to provide a “no risk” environment. Salem City Schools plans to operate at full capacity five days a week on our normal bell schedule.

Section 2: Maintaining Health and Safety

Salem City Public Schools has taken and will continue to take actions to ensure the health and safety of students, educators, and other school and division staff during and following the return to full in-person instruction.

Salem City Public Schools has adopted policies on each of the following safety recommendations established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

- Salem City Public Schools has developed a [scalable mitigation implementation plan](#) based on recommendations from the VDH, the CDC, and the AAP. COVID-19 prevention and mitigation strategies will be implemented in accordance with this plan.
- If required by local, state, or federal guidelines SCS will modify facilities to allow for physical distancing of students and staff. At this time, Salem City Public Schools has no plans to require physical distancing of staff or students.
- Salem City Public Schools will continue to communicate and encourage proper handwashing and respiratory etiquette.
- Salem City Schools will continue cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities.
- Salem City Schools will implement isolation for individuals who are experiencing symptoms consistent with illness as recommended by the VDH in collaboration with the local health department.
- Salem City Schools will continue to promote and support vaccination in collaboration with the Roanoke Alleghany Health District and the local health department.
- Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies will continue to be provided.
- Salem City Schools will continue to coordinate with state and local health officials.

Section 3: Continuity of Services

Salem City Public Schools has taken and will continue to take actions to ensure continuity of services, including but not limited to services to address students’ academic, social, emotional, behavioral, mental health, and other needs.

Salem City Public Schools used ESSER Grant funds to hire additional instructional staff to provide instructional support to address unfinished learning.

Additional funds were budgeted for school counseling services and a social worker to address social emotional and mental health needs for students and staff.

For the provision of mental health services:

- School counselors will be available in each building.
- Salem City Schools has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Counseling Group (NCG) for the provision of Therapeutic day treatment and Intercept Health for the provision of Substance Abuse Evaluations and Counseling.
- Salem City Schools has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with Principled Behavior Consulting and LEO Consulting, LLC to assist with student maladaptive behaviors.
- Salem City Schools has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with Mainstream Inc. for Individual Outpatient Counseling.
- Salem City Schools has added a licensed clinical social worker at Salem High School to work with Tier II and Tier III services for wellness and mental health.
- Salem City Schools has added an elementary school counselor to support Tier II and Tier III services for students in the area for wellness and mental health.

Section 4: Opportunity for Public Comment

In developing the ARP ESSER Plan, Salem City Public Schools sought public input and took such input into account as described below.

Stakeholder committees were solicited for feedback on the plan. Including the CTE Advisory Committee, Health and Wellness Committee, the Comprehensive Planning Committee, and the Local Special Education Advisory Committee. The opportunity for general public comment was advertised and offered in August 2021 January 2022, March 2022, August 2022, and January 2023. Input was taken into consideration during updates to the plan.

Section 5: Periodic Review and Revision of Plan

During the period of the ARP ESSER award (until September 2024), Salem City Public Schools will periodically review and, as needed, revise its plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services. The plan will be reviewed at least every six months, and Salem City Public Schools will seek and take into account public input during the review process. Plan revisions will address updated CDC guidance on safely reopening schools, if any are issued.

Section 6: Making the Plan Available to the Public

Salem City Public Schools has taken the following steps to make this plan available to the public:

- The plan is posted at <https://www.salem.k12.va.us/covid19>
- The plan is available in multiple languages [English and Spanish];
- The plan may be orally translated for parents. Contact Dr. Randy Jennings at 540-389-0130 to request translation; and
- Upon request, a parent who is an individual with a disability as defined by the ADA may be provided with the plan in an alternative format accessible by contacting Randy Jennings at 540-398-0130 or email at rjennings@salem.k12.va.us

Return to Learn COVID-19 Mitigation Plan

Goals

1. **Maximize in-person instruction.** We believe students learn best in a safe and disciplined environment provided by caring and respectful adults. Therefore, our primary goals are to minimize exposure to keep students in school and keep schools operating at full capacity.
2. **Continue to be a community health partner.** As one of the largest employers and the largest childcare provider in our community, we are committed to working with community healthcare agencies to ensure the health and safety of our staff, students, and the community.
3. **A scalable plan.** We desire to create a scalable plan that allows us to meet the health and safety needs of our staff, students, and community as local conditions and guidance change.

Guiding Principles

- **Students benefit from in-person learning.** Safely maintaining in-person instruction during the 2023-24 school year is a priority.
- **Focus on prevention.** Educate students/staff to monitor health daily, stay at home if they have symptoms, and follow public health recommendations following any illness.
- **Consider community needs.** Consider disease and vaccination trends and understand the socioeconomic factors, literacy barriers, and other educational needs in your community when developing plans.
- **Be flexible and innovative.** Scientific knowledge evolves rapidly, and local context is incredibly important. Community transmission and the level of impact to a given school can change and the combination of prevention strategies may evolve with time.

Legal Requirement

SB 739 – Requires each school board to offer in-person instruction and allows the parent of any child enrolled in a public elementary or secondary school, or in any school-based early childhood care and education program, to elect for such child to not wear a mask while on school property. The bill requires each local school division to comply with the foregoing provisions relating to masks no later than March 1, 2022.

Current Recommendations

Centers for Disease Control

On Friday, February 25, 2022, the CDC unveiled a [tool](#) to help communities determine appropriate COVID mitigation strategies. Using a variety of metrics, the tool assigns a level for every county and major city in the country (low, medium, high). Citizens can determine the level for their community by using the interactive map on the [website](#).

VDH

There is presently a lack of consensus among health experts regarding the costs and benefits of mask-wearing for children in school. Parents should consult with their medical providers if they have questions about whether or not their child should mask and for how long; this is especially true if a child is at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19, or lives with individuals at higher risk for severe illness.

In situations where a child is returning from isolation due to COVID or was subject to a close contact exposure, the benefit of temporary masking is likely to outweigh the risks.

The "**Interim Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention for Students, Teachers and Staff in Child Care, K-12 Schools and Day Camp Settings**" was retired effective May 31, 2023. For more information on COVID-19 prevention in K-12 school settings, please visit the CDC [Operational Guidance for K-12 Schools and Early Care Programs to Support Safe In-Person Learning](#).

Isolation and Precautions for People with COVID-19

- **Symptomatic persons** (regardless of vaccination status) should begin isolation at home and undergo testing as recommended by their healthcare providers. The day symptoms began should be counted as day 0.
- **Persons who test positive** (regardless of vaccination status) should isolate themselves at home for at least 5 days. If they are asymptomatic or symptoms are resolving and they have been fever-free for 24 hours, they may return to programming after Day 5.
 - If the individual is able to mask, they should do so through Day 10 OR
 - If the individual is unable or unwilling to mask during this time, these persons should either isolate for 10 full days (including children under age 2), or follow the [CDC "test based strategy"](#), which now includes two negative antigen tests after 5 days of isolation, in addition to being fever-free for 24 hours and with other symptoms improving. The first test should be on day 6 or after, and the second test should be 48 hours after the first test.
 - Students or staff who come to school or child care with symptoms or develop symptoms while at school or ECE program should be asked to wear a well-fitting mask while in the building and be sent home and pursue medical evaluation and/or testing as appropriate. Some schools may have testing resources available at school. Symptomatic people should be separated from others as much as possible; children should be supervised by a designated caregiver who is wearing a well-fitting mask or respirator until they leave school grounds.

For persons who have had recent confirmed or suspected exposure to an infected person (regardless of vaccination status), quarantine is no longer recommended for K12 Schools and Early Care and Education settings. These individuals may continue to attend programming as long as they remain asymptomatic.

Masks: Students/staff that attend programming during the 10 days after exposure may choose to wear a mask around others indoors. The date of last exposure to the person with COVID-19 is considered Day 0.

Testing: Persons who have had recent exposure may consider testing for COVID-19 ≥ 5 days after exposure (or sooner, if they are symptomatic), irrespective of their vaccination status. Schools may use available VDH testing resources to support this testing. Test to Stay is no longer routinely recommended. Schools that choose to implement Test to Stay programs can contact VDH for more information on available testing resources and/or guidance.

If the school or facility is experiencing an outbreak of COVID-19 that has been difficult to control or is unusual in size or scope, regional and local epidemiologists may apply professional judgment and recommend traditional quarantine and isolation standards be applied until the situation is stabilized.