

# Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan

August 2021

Queen Anne's County  
Public Schools





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## Executive Summary

Queen Anne's County Public Schools (QACPS) are devoted to providing high-quality teaching and learning and keeping all students and staff safe amid the COVID-19 health crisis. Each school in Queen Anne's County provides an essential function and role for serving the unique needs of its community. Hence, schools serve to provide for the academic needs of all students by delivering high-quality instruction while providing the social and emotional support through interaction with children and adults; nutrition through free and reduced-cost breakfast and lunch; health services from school nurses that are specialists in public health; connection to community resources through school social workers; counseling services through school psychologists and professional school counselors; and athletic and extracurricular activities. Therefore, the impact of the Maryland school closures was felt throughout our communities in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic. The safe reopening of schools not only impacts students, but it impacts parents and caregivers and their ability to return to work as well as local and regional businesses and agencies that depend on Queen Anne's County parents as their workforce.

Based on the continued guidance from Governor Larry Hogan, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Maryland Department of Health (MDOH), and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) the superintendent and the district executive leadership team established a reopening plan with the following goals:

- Work collaboratively with the Queen Anne's County Department of Health to ensure the health, safety, and wellbeing of all students, staff, and families based upon public health data
- Deliver high-quality instruction to students, regardless of the delivery model
- Identify where students are instructionally and implement evidence based interventions to close the learning gap
- Focus on equity to make sure ALL means ALL
- Optimize the use of all organizational resources
- Engage the community in planning and development
- Gather input/feedback from stakeholders to make revisions
- Communicate clear and accurate information based upon the analysis of multiple data

The Queen Anne's County Public Schools Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan outlines the procedures and protocols for returning to school for the 2021-2022 school year in a safe manner.

## Requirement 1

**Requirement 1: Local school systems must have their recovery plans completed and posted to their websites by July 30, 2021 (Plan may need to be updated prior to the opening of school based on Stakeholder feedback). The MSDE will review all local recovery plans to ensure that the plans include all requirements for opening schools.**

To access the QACPS Recovery and Reopening Plan please visit the school district website at [www.qacps.org](http://www.qacps.org).





## Requirement 2

**Requirement 2: The local school system's equity plan must be reflected throughout the local reopening plan.**

QACPS defines equity as providing access to essential academic, social, emotional, and economic supports in order to engage each student in rigorous instruction with appropriate educational resources to achieve their highest potential.

### Plan for Access and Equity

Assessing Student and Family Needs:

- Designated staff based on their prior relationship and knowledge of the student and their family, will have ongoing contact with the student and their parent(s)/guardian(s).
- Communication with students and family to include specific and periodic assessments of the instructional environment and needs for the chosen instructional modality.
  - a. If an internet-based modality of instruction is selected, the interview will determine that they have a reliable and accessible connection and device, the location that will be used, and the time(s) of the day it will be used.
  - b. Assess that sufficient time can be allotted, and assist with the daily organization of the learning tasks that need completion.
  - c. Students and families will be assisted in identifying a quiet work area in which distractions can be limited and the specific supplies needed.
  - d. Resources for support of both learning and technology will be identified.
  - e. If the student is using a pre-loaded device without internet access for instruction these same instructional and organizational factors will need to be assessed, except for those pertaining to accessing an internet connection.
  - f. Student services staff will help the family and student organize a schedule, identify a quiet place and supplies needed, and access to resources that will contribute to the student's success.

### Students with Academic Needs

Students participating in reading interventions will receive intervention sessions implemented by reading specialists or other trained staff as determined by the intervention the student is participating in. Additionally, reading specialists will use reports from both the System 44 and Read 180 platforms to monitor progress. Specialists will be in contact with students and parents frequently. Students will participate in small group sessions for intervention and other support with qualified personnel as well as with special education teachers and staff. Further, many of the intervention students will continue in supplemental Math programs providing resources to their specific intervention plan.

Students requiring instructional and testing accommodations and/or modifications will continue to receive identified support as determined by the IEP, EL, or Section 504. Special education staff will be in contact with families at the onset of changing conditions. In the event adjustments to the IEP or Section 504 were needed an IEP or Section 504 meeting would be scheduled to review.

## **English Learners (ELs)**

QACPS will continue to provide opportunities for students to develop the English language (EL). English learner teachers will collaborate with content teachers of English Learners on an ongoing basis. This can be completed through email, Zoom Meeting, or face to face. EL teachers will examine work and give suggestions on how to make required work more accessible for their English Learners. A communication log will be kept to document connections made between teacher and student.

Translators/Interpreters will communicate with content teachers as needed to bridge the gap between home and school.

## **Gifted and Talented Students**

Students in Grades 3 and 5 will take a fall CogAt assessment for identification into the GT program. Students were identified in the 2020 - 2021 school year through diagnostic assessments in the Exact Path Program.

Students may also be identified in the GT programs through fall MCAP results, i-Ready Diagnostic, and teacher recommendations.

Teachers, at all levels, will continue to support their Gifted and Talented students by providing them with differentiated assignments or project based learning opportunities. Teachers will also provide small group learning experiences to allow students opportunities to explore topics more deeply through small discussion forums. Also, honors level students will continue to participate in assigned honors level courses where they will be provided with an appropriately challenging curriculum. Finally, Advanced Placement (AP) students in AP courses will be challenged with coursework and resources from the College Board that are appropriate for students at the AP level while these students prepare to take AP exams to earn AP credits. Students are being provided these opportunities by appropriate teacher lessons as well as AP classroom opportunities.

Students throughout all grade levels are offered a variety of club and extension opportunities to expand and enhance their learning with high interest topics. During the 2022 summer, the county will offer high interest exploration experiences through the GEERS II grant. This will provide a new opportunity for Gifted and students who have potential gifts in various areas. Finally, through the GEERS II grant a new series of Unified Arts courses will be developed and offered during the 2022-2023 school year with GT students targeted for unique research and project based learning in the classrooms.

## **Homeless Student Population**

QACPS currently provides services to students, kindergarten through grade 12, identified as homeless using the criteria established by the McKinney Vento (MV) Act and supported by QACPS Policy 513. The current economic impact felt by families during the COVID-19 closure is expected to continue, as well as the potential for a significant increase in the number of students attending or enrolling in QACPS identified as homeless. The greatest barrier to students successfully navigating this scenario is school attendance. The most effective way to eliminate many resource and instructional needs is to encourage homeless students to attend, with provisions to accommodate their learning, social, emotional, and physical needs, on a daily basis. To effectively address the needs of homeless students in QACPS, consideration should be given to the following areas: communication, access to resources, social-emotional support for students, and training for staff.

### Recommendations:

- Develop communication plans for families to educate them regarding available supports and services.
- Provide additional face-to-face and/or virtual learning opportunities for homeless students.
- Provide access to digital learning tools and other necessary tools for instruction.
- Provide access to counseling and school health.
- Enhance community partnerships so that when QACPS locations are not available, partnerships can provide access to methods and locations to support instruction.
- Provide social-emotional support for homeless students.
- Provide awareness and instructional training for staff regarding impacts of homelessness on students' attendance and performance

### **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)**

Student's social and emotional needs will be met both through social-emotional learning curricula and with counseling intervention based on individual needs. All teachers will receive "refresher" training in ACEs/trauma informed care prior to the start of school. SEL/School Climate teams will continue to meet monthly before or after school in grades K-8, with stipends provided to 10-month staff to plan for Zones of Regulation (ZoR) implementation. In addition, both Kent Island High School and Queen Anne's County High School will participate in a Learning Collaborative through the National Center for Safe Supportive Schools (NCS3). The goal of the Learning Collaborative is to improve the integration of trauma-informed schools (TIS) and Cultural Responsiveness, Anti-Racism & Equity (CARE) efforts into comprehensive school mental health systems through our partnership with NCS3.

It is understood that there will be students who will be returning to school having experienced trauma during the school closures. These students will be a priority for therapeutic intervention and supportive counseling. Addressing social-emotional needs and skills will be an important component of recovery that will be necessary for academic achievement and success.

### **Identification and Referral Process for Timely Social-Emotional Support**

During the re-entry of students into the Queen Anne's County Public Schools, it will be essential that teachers and the school administrators work closely with school counselors and other student services staff to monitor students who may be demonstrating behavior and signs of emotional and/or social difficulties, and to share and address concerns about these students. School counselors and student services staff will also need to monitor those students who have been identified through the Student Services Team (SST) meetings as being at high risk and in need of support. This would also include students who are homeless or in foster care. Identified students will be seen by the school counselor and/or student services staff, and when necessary; a mental health referral will be made. Families will also be contacted and provided with community resources including providers of mental health therapy if needed.

### **Trauma Informed Discipline**

Addressing student discipline during recovery may be very different due to the impact that an extended time out-of-school may have for students. In many cases, various traumatic experiences may have occurred. The opportunity to address abuse and/or neglect is difficult because of the lack of time spent with the students. Virtual instruction, even in the home setting, does not provide many of the indicators of abuse and/or neglect often recognized by instructional staff. Also, the student does not have easy



access to their teachers during the school day, or to the school counselor, or nurse, whom they can confide and reveal situations of abuse and/or neglect. COVID and other medical situations and conditions may have impacted families due to illnesses and deaths. Concerns such as unemployment, lack of money and food and essential items may have occurred and caused emotional turmoil and stress.

Separation from family and friends and lack of socialization with others has also occurred. Students with these difficulties may have increased acting-out, anxiety, and depression which then fuels negative actions and interactions with peers and adults. There will also be those students with internalized conflicts, whose behavior does not create disciplinary problems, but who may exhibit self-harm or suicidal behavior. Using approaches such as tiered intervention, counseling and restorative practices, will be important to address the students' perspective and emotional status. Interventions with these students will require additional time for the planning and implementation of proactive interventions. As students return and interact with others, school staff may expect to experience students with emotional instability for a period of time. These students may have an increased need for support and intervention.

### **Modified Behavioral Threat Assessment Process**

Behavioral threats are taken very seriously by school staff and administration, whether a student makes a threat in the school building or outside of the school building and brought to the staff's attention. Procedures were updated in 2019 to address the threats through team threat assessment. Team threat assessment uses information and evidence to identify and assess risks to student and school safety in a deliberate and thorough manner.

Based on that information and evidence, the threat assessment team can determine response strategies to mitigate risk and to provide assistance. For cases in which initial reports, information, and evidence suggest low to moderate threat, school personnel will work with students and families to notify whoever allegedly made the threat, notify those to whom the threat was made, and implement safety measures as appropriate. The School Resource Officers (SRO) are a valuable resource for students who are not in school, but are alleged to have made a serious threat of imminent harm toward the school, school staff or students. The SRO investigates the situation by locating the student and their family, responding with any necessary steps to insure safety, and reporting the information to the school administration and their team. The school administration can implement the necessary response for school security, including a safety plan and discipline if needed.

### **Student Services Ongoing Monitoring and Collaboration**

- Students may have gaps in learning which will need to be assessed and identified so that students are able to learn new skills and instruction. This will be accomplished with ongoing communication between the student service staff, the student's teachers, and families.
- Weekly student service updates
- Continue regular SST meetings at each school with a new focus on continuation of learning and barriers.
  - Mental Health
  - Trauma
  - Homeless
  - Food insecurities
  - Resources

## Requirement 3

**Requirement 3: Local school systems must consult with a wide variety of stakeholders when developing the plan.**

**The local school systems must ensure that the plans are in an understandable and uniform format; to the extent practicable, written in a language that parents can understand or, if not practicable, orally translated; and upon request by a parent who is an individual with a disability, provided in an alternative format accessible to that parent; and to be made publicly available on the local school system website.**

**Please note that local school systems need to update the Reopening Plan at least every six months through September 30, 2024, and must seek public input on the plan and any revisions, and must take such input into account.**

Various groups made up of key stakeholders, including educators from all levels, school-based and central office administrators, parents, community members, and a Board member, met to revise and edit the previous reopening plan. The eleven requirements established by the MSDE provided guidance for teams to make adjustments for the new reopening plan.

Below are the groups/teams that provided the necessary feedback to revise the QACPS reopening plan as well as the time line for completion.

Curriculum and Instruction Team  
 Executive Team  
 Blueprint Implementation Advisory Group  
 School Administrative Teams

### **Timeline for Completion:**

- July 15, 2021 - Curriculum and Instruction Team met to discuss revisions to the plan based on new requirements
- July 26, 2021 - Executive Team provided feedback/revisions
- July 28, 2021 - Blueprint Implementation Advisory Workgroup provided feedback/revisions
- August 4, 2021 - Revised plan shared with the Board Members for feedback
- August 9-11, 2021 - School Administrators and Leadership Teams and Central Office Leadership Teams met to finalize the document
- August 13, 2021 - Revised and Finalized Plan submitted to the MSDE and posted to QACPS's website

Given the changing nature of the pandemic, this document remains fluid as the plan is based upon guidance at the time of the publication and may be amended or updated based upon new information. This plan will be revisited every six months until the year 2024.

## Requirement 4

**Requirement 4: Early in the school year, schools must determine where their students are instructionally, identify the gaps in learning, and prepare a path for instructional success and recovery.**

To address concerns about gaps due to the COVID-19 crisis, QACPS will institute the Exact Path platform for all kindergarten - second grade students in the area of reading in order to meet the requirements for the Ready to Read Act. Mathematics teachers will have Exact Path available as well to screen students in K –12<sup>th</sup> grade to identify levels of performance and learning loss. Exact Path is a personalized learning program that promotes academic growth for K–12 students in reading, language arts, and mathematics. The program utilizes assessment data and/or teacher recommendations to automatically provide students with an individualized playlist of the competency-based curriculum at the discrete skill level. Each learner, ranging from struggling to accelerated students, is then able to access a unique learning path made up of instruction, practice, and short quizzes precisely targeted to their achievement level. Over time, students can advance within the learning path to encounter more challenging material, all of which are designed to promote student achievement and academic growth. Also, students can complete a diagnostic test in Exact Path that adapts in real-time to adjust the difficulty level of the questions that students receive. This allows each student to receive an efficient assessment that pinpoints both what a student knows and where they are ready to learn. The Exact Path diagnostic has high reliability and strong predictive validity evidence. Following the completion of the diagnostic, Exact Path automatically generates individualized learning paths for every student based on the assessment results. School leadership teams and collaborative teacher teams will use the diagnostic score reports to pinpoint learning gaps and design targeted plans to support the individual needs of students. In accordance with ESSA’s definition of “evidence-based” activities, strategies or interventions, Exact Path is considered a Level 3/Promising Evidence which means research shows the specific activity *is associated with* the outcome.

The data available for those students that participated in summer school (2021) will be utilized by schools to assist in establishing a support plan.

Students in grades 3 – 12 will participate in the QACPS’s local assessments in English Language Arts and Mathematics, beginning as early as the first week in September, to assist administrators and teachers with identifying students needing additional supports due to learning loss.

Data from English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies from the Fall administration of MCAP can assist in determining gaps and planning instructional recovery as well.

Schools will triangulate using Exact Path screening tools, local assessments, and MCAP, disaggregating each set of data by race, service group and gender, allowing schools to establish a plan to address student learning needs. Students that score below grade level will receive supplemental instruction and interventions which will be delivered before, during, and/or after school to address any identified learning loss. QACPS will continue to focus on teaching the approved state standards for specific content areas that are spiraled through curricular activities at each grade level. Mastery of these standards will be measured through the administration of local assessments, spring MCAP, and Exact Path screening tools. This data will be disaggregated by race, service group and gender allowing schools to identify student knowledge, skill levels and establish if students met the projected growth – of one grade level.

## Requirement 5

**Requirement 5: All local school systems must ensure that Maryland College and Career Ready Standards PreK-12 are taught in all content areas and the state frameworks are followed for each content.**

**The local school system must ensure continuity of services including but not limited to services to address the students' academic needs, and students' and staff social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services.**

### **Instructional Delivery Resources**

The Maryland College and Career Ready Standards (MCCRS) are spiraled throughout curricular activities at each grade level. Learning modules will include structured project-based learning processes that ensure students are ready to meet the demands of college or career standards in all content areas. Further, curriculum supervisors remain a critical asset in supporting classroom teachers with implementing the Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards while providing coaching and feedback through ongoing classroom monitoring regardless of the delivery method.

Exact Path through Edmentum, used in QACPS as a screening tool and intervention, is aligned to the MCCRS ([edmentum.com/products/exact-path](http://edmentum.com/products/exact-path)). QACPS uses Schoology, a K-12 learning management system that can be integrated with more than two hundred instructional tools to deliver instruction for in-person or distance learning. The platform integrates with other QACPS systems including PowerSchool's student information system (SIS) and Performance Matters, and education platforms including Google and many curriculum publishers. Key features include communication tools (i.e. teacher to parent, teacher to student), integration with PowerTeacher Pro grade book, assessment tools, and conferencing tools including the ability to establish student and teacher groups for enhanced learning opportunities. District curriculum supervisors have organized courses for teachers to create virtual materials with essential curricula, instructional materials and resources, instructional strategies, assessment tools, and professional development modules.

Building teacher capacity remains a critical component of improving teaching and learning. To further support our instructional initiatives, school-based academic deans, teacher specialists, reading specialists, and math specialists remain essential for coaching classroom teachers and providing job-embedded professional development to enhance the teaching and learning process at the site-level. The intent is that the deans and specialists will collaborate with principals, teacher teams, departments, and other staff to share professional development; facilitate processes to analyze and make public student progress data; and support the planning and delivery of effective small group instruction and intervention to students PreK-12.

### **Career & Technical Education**

Career & Technical Education starts in middle school with Project Lead the Way/Gateway to Technology and is available to all students in grades 6 – 8. Opportunities continue in high school with courses representing all ten state approved career clusters. Through these courses, students are afforded the opportunity to participate in work-based learning, youth apprenticeships, and receive industry recognized credentials.

## **Students & Staff Social, Emotional and Mental Health**

Resources and practices to support students' social, emotional, and mental health can be found under Requirement 2, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) .

Human Resources will remind staff of our free Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and how to access these services.

## **Student Health Services (SHS)**

QACPS SHS will leverage the public health expertise and experience of their school nurses in disease prevention, surveillance, and mitigation to implement action steps and interventions aimed at keeping students and school staff healthy and safe. The guidance released on July 9th, 2021 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) emphasizes the need to monitor community transmission, vaccination coverage, screening, testing, and occurrence of outbreaks to guide decisions on the level of layered prevention strategies in K-12 schools during the coming academic year. QACPS nurses are eager to partner with administrators, teachers and other support personnel to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and protect everyone's health using evidence-informed guidance and operating procedures, bridging both health and education to ensure that students are healthy and safe.

## **Strategies for Reopening Process**

- Maintain COVID-19 health education to staff regarding transmission, symptoms, and effects on local communities
- Use data on attendance, student engagement, student health records, and public health to identify student support opportunities
- Continue to implement COVID-19 prevention strategies recommended by the CDC, MSDE, and MODH to decrease disease transmission
- Review student health records to identify students who may be at increased risk of severe illness from the virus that causes COVID-19
- Continue to educate families about when to send children to school, safety protocols, and who to contact with questions or concerns
- Communicate what's required for students to return to school, like well child visits, immunizations, screenings and testing if exposed or exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19
- Collaborate with local public health agencies and ensure up to date COVID-19 information is shared between agencies
- Work with local public health agencies, health care providers, and community-based organizations to provide students and families with resources and support
- Use local data to identify communities and students who are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and provide resources and support
- Continue to connect and collaborate with MSDE, State School Nurse Consultant/MDOH Medical Director of SHS and with local public health agencies to discuss COVID-19 vaccinations and school-based vaccines and to develop updated communication materials for students and families

Given the frequently changing guidance regarding COVID-19 mitigation strategies, quarantine, and isolation, QACPS SHS will keep current on evidence and best practice, reviewing NASN's COVID-19



resource, CDC guidance, collaborating with the MSDE School Nurse Consultant/MDOH Medical Director Consultant, along with the state's School Nurse Association, and school nursing colleagues to develop tools and resources for use in our school district.

### **Food Services**

Sodexo will continue to deliver healthy school meals based on the USDA's nutrition guidelines so that students are engaged and ready to learn in school. All meals include a variety of fresh fruit and vegetable choices, and a variety of chilled non-fat or low-fat milk.

### **Grading**

QACPS will revert to our standard policies and procedures for grading.

### **Access to Technology and the Internet**

QACPS remains a 1:1 district and is equipped to deliver virtual instruction for students if needed, for example if a student needs to quarantine, instructional materials will be available on the QACPS LMS, or if schools close, virtual instruction will commence. Hotspots are available for students as needed.

### **Professional Development**

Building the capacity of leaders and teachers is essential to the implementation of the Safe Return Plan. Therefore, a host of professional development opportunities will be provided and implemented during the 2021- 2022 school year. Virtual webinars may be used when participants cannot attend onsite or when there is a need by a school or the district as a whole. Below is a summary of some of the essential professional development learning opportunities offered.

- School health and safety protocols for reopening schools
- Continued Schoology learning management system essential components for teachers and leaders
- Edmentum Courseware content resources
- Social-emotional learning
- Equity
- Ongoing, job-embedded training for classroom teachers, instructional specialists, EL teachers, and special educators on the delivery of digital learning
- Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) by grade and content teams meet to monitor, plan, and edit student intervention plans and to track the rate of progress and/or to focus on a specific Action Step as a grade group.
- Ongoing, job-embedded professional development supported by data-driven dialogue

### **Hybrid Learning Delivery Models**

QACPS is planning for face-face instruction throughout the 2021-2022 school year; however, should COVID-19 or any variant force a return to hybrid learning, we will utilize an alternative schedule.

## **Staff Video Conferencing Guidelines**

QACPS is planning for face-face instruction throughout the 2021-2022 school year; however, should COVID-19 or any variant force a return to hybrid or virtual learning, we will release the staff video conferencing guidelines.

## **Parent and Student Video Conferencing Guidelines**

QACPS is planning for face-face parent and student meetings throughout the 2021-2022 school year; however, should COVID-19 or any variant force a return to hybrid or virtual learning, we will release parent and student video conferencing guidelines.

## **Policy Guidance:**

### **QACPS Policies and Administrative Regulations <https://www.qacps.org/domain/2393>**

[QACPS Policies and Administrative Regulationshttps://www.qacps.org/domain/2393](https://www.qacps.org/domain/2393)

205. Acceptable Use of Technology and Electronics [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kCidO8Wonp7P4qlw4Nz\\_saarrPay9wBZ/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kCidO8Wonp7P4qlw4Nz_saarrPay9wBZ/view)

205.1. Acceptable Use of Technology and Electronics Regulation [tps://drive.google.com/file/d/1hZLWCFOS-fVL1o2UPTxwP0lYnzeZpw0X/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hZLWCFOS-fVL1o2UPTxwP0lYnzeZpw0X/view)

## **Synchronous Learning**

QACPS is planning for face-face instruction throughout the 2021-2022 school year; however, should COVID-19 or any variant force a return to Synchronous learning, we will utilize an alternative schedule.

## Requirement 6

**Requirement 6: Local school systems must follow the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504), and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).**

QACPS is committed to providing free and appropriate educational opportunities for students with disabilities through the development of Individual Education Programs (IEPs), to the fullest extent possible in alignment with public health guidelines. Our goal is to maintain the integrity of the Individualized Education Program, Least Restrictive Environment, and the legal requirements of IDEA, FERPA, and HIPAA regulations.

Collaboration with families has always been an integral part of the special education process and continues to be essential during this time. Circumstances related to COVID-19 which resulted in continuous updates/ changes through local/state/federal government and the Centers for Disease Control required ongoing monitoring and updates of IEPs. With the passing of HB 714 QACPS along with other districts in the state of Maryland will develop IEPs as meetings are held with learning continuity plans in an effort to provide seamless specially designed instruction for our more vulnerable populations.

QACPS will return to the 2021-2022 school year with a face-to-face model. IEPs are developed to be implemented in the most appropriate and least restrictive environment. While the preferred method is through a brick and mortar, face-to-face modality, that includes a hybrid or virtual response. An IEP can continue to be implemented during periods of distance learning as written and in some cases with amendments to how services will be delivered.

When services cannot be implemented and/or in light of other extenuating circumstances, the team (inclusive of the parent/family) may review and amend an IEP. Any decision regarding the implementation of an IEP will be documented clearly within the Maryland Online IEP system, including prior written notice to families. The IEP amendment will then be implemented accordingly.

Assessments will be conducted in-person where possible in consideration of all Maryland and Queen Anne's County Department of Health guidelines, to ensure the safety of students, staff, and our larger community. In the event a face-to-face option is not available, evaluators will determine the ability to conduct virtual assessments using a virtual assessment decision protocol which aids in determining the ability to assess while rendering valid results.

Specially designed instruction and interventions will continue to be delivered in the least restrictive environment as determined by the IEP. Updated progress for each student with a disability shall be monitored and reported quarterly. This will continue to be a multi-disciplinary process and should not be completed by one person alone.

### **Guiding Principles**

Queen Anne's County Public Schools is committed to following these guiding principles for the 2021-2022 school year:

- Health and Safety – The health and safety of staff and students is the single highest priority.
- Procedures and Protocols – Specific safety protocols will be carefully planned, implemented, monitored, and updated regularly in collaboration with federal, state, and local health organizations.
- Academic Success – Classroom-based learning provides an effective learning environment for students to meet learning objectives and access instructional support from caring adults.
- Social-Emotional Support – Relationships and in-person connectivity are a critical component of social development for students and will be addressed through Zones of Regulation (elementary and middle) and Learning Collaborative (high school).
- Responsiveness – QACPS staff is available to interface with sites and Public Health to answer any questions or concerns that arise.

### **Timeline**

There are no waivers to IDEA related timelines and as such all mandated timelines will be followed regardless of the necessary instructional delivery model. In the event face-to-face options are not available or present a health risk to students, staff, or families, a virtual option will be provided as appropriate.

### **Specially Designed Instruction**

It is the intention of QACPS to maximize in-person learning by utilizing all opportunities for safe student to teacher interaction. QACPS will continue to monitor ongoing changes in local health metrics and work collaboratively with the local health department to make appropriate and safe decisions about changes to in-person learning. In the event of an exposure and mandatory period of quarantine, students receiving specially designed instruction will continue to do so through alternate service delivery models. A variety of tools, resources, and procedural options will be provided to students across instructional settings to encourage continuity of learning as outlined by the student's IEP and to ensure access, equity, and progress.

To address the achievement gap for students with disabilities the depth and breadth of instruction must be addressed with an increased intensity. To achieve this, special educators, in collaboration with general education co-teachers must implement effective instruction using integrated tiered systems of support and high leverage practices guided by evidence-based practices. Teachers must engage in targeted needs-based and explicit instruction with high frequency for practice turns and feedback and targeted small group instruction. Special educators and their general education counterparts will be exposed to specific training on high leverage practices and their implementation within the co-taught setting. Educators have ongoing access to professional learning through the QACPS Special Education Weebly Resource page.

Throughout the pandemic school closures, QACPS has continued to respond to changes in delivery models to ensure compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the provision of a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for students with disabilities. Team development of the Individualized Continuity of Learning Plan (ICLP) in the Spring of 2020 which provided virtual options, transitioned to an Individualized Distance Learning Plan (IDLDP) in the Fall of 2020 which allowed for face-to-face, hybrid, and/or virtual learning, then to IEP amendments in Winter of 2020, to now a fully embedded Learning Continuity plan (LCP) within the IEP. The LCP addresses the alternate delivery models appropriate for each student in the event of an emergency inability to access face-to-face instruction greater than 10 days. Alternate delivery models could include paper packets, recorded lessons, access to the Learning Management System, Schoology, progress monitoring check-ins, diagnostically prescribed lessons via Edmentum Exact Path, etc. Participation will be determined by the

IEP team based on individual student need. Development of LCPs will take place at annual review meetings, beginning September 1, 2021. The IEP team will consider if the IEP can be implemented as written if face-to-face instruction were unavailable under these circumstances. If the IEP can be implemented as written, educators will be provided support in doing so and no changes to the IEP would be necessary. If the IEP can not be implemented as written, the IEP team will review the IEP and any previous amendments related to continuity of learning to each area of the IEP can be addressed. All decisions regarding the implementation of the IEP and/or the LCP will be documented in the IEP and communicated to parents with prior written notice. In the event the LCP is activated due to emergency conditions, parents/guardians will be notified. Guidance to support teams in these decisions has been communicated with staff directly and via the QACPS Special Education Weebly Resource page.

In the fall of the 2021-2022 school year, students will be screened using various screening tools to determine present levels of performance. Students will be screened using DIBELS for Reading and Edmentum Exact Path for Math. Regression and/or lack of progress will be considered and addressed on an individual basis. Should regression or lack of progress be noted related to a denial of FAPE, additional opportunities for recovery compensatory services will be discussed amongst the IEP team to determine a plan of action.

QACPS will continue to utilize the Learning Management System (LMS) which further allows for co-development, co-implementation, and co-evaluation by all members of the instructional team. Teachers and related service providers will have joint access to students through the LMS which will allow for collaboration, design, implementation, and evaluation in the least restrictive environment. Teachers and paraeducators will have access to students in a whole group and small group settings in all learning environments. This approach allows for the delivery of specially designed instruction to those students participating in a face-to-face and virtual model throughout the continuum.

Lessons will continue to provide academic instruction aligned with Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards (MCCRS) and IEP goals and objectives. For those students following the Alternate Education Framework, instruction will also include functional targets and align with MCCRS, Essential Elements and IEP goals and objectives.

Content and intervention staff will continue intervention groups required for a free appropriate public education (FAPE), during face-to-face and in periods of virtual learning. An example of intervention is small group or individual instruction focused on a goal area or a skill deficit, such as basic reading skills. Interventions are available for both students with disabilities and general education students.

Progress of all students will be monitored weekly through informal and curriculum based assessments. This data will be used to determine the need for varying access points, different services and/or accommodations. Data collection will be a collaborative process conducted by general education and special education teachers and/or paraeducators.

Post-secondary transition goals will continue to be addressed through the Individual Education Plan (IEP), as developed collaboratively with the school and families of each student.

#### Alternate Service Delivery Models

In the event a student with disabilities were required to quarantine as a result of being a close contact or suspected positive case of COVID-19, QACPS will continue to provide access to FAPE. QACPS will continue to implement layer prevention strategies in schools as a preventative measure however we recognize the possibility for the need to quarantine. In the event a student with disabilities were required to quarantine, QACPS would review the student's IEP to determine if the IEP can be implemented as



written without in-person instruction. QACPS will use alternate service delivery models, including but not limited to paper packets, recorded lessons, assignments posted on the learning management system, progress monitoring check-ins, etc. as determined by individual student needs and IEP teams. QACPS staff will coordinate with families to determine the most appropriate times for service delivery. Service may include direct service, consultation among team members and with families, co-taught instruction, and/or disability need-specific instruction and support that is collaboratively developed and provided through learning experiences.

Instructional materials will be made accessible for the individual student. Materials will be created following accessibility principles, and accommodations and supports for individual students will be provided in accordance with their IEP. In the event QACPS is unable to provide FAPE to a student during the quarantine period, then it will consider compensatory education services to address the loss of FAPE.

QACPS will continue to provide technology necessary to ensure equitable student access and to enhance learning outcomes. Staff and families are provided access to the QACPS assistive technology specialist and technology department to troubleshoot connectivity, devices, and software. QACPS continues to ensure that appropriate technology and supports are identified, available, and used appropriately by students who require its use.

### **Section 504 Staff Responsibilities**

- Collaborate and facilitate Section 504 meetings, including the annual review and completing/updating any necessary Section 504 plan amendments.
- Each school will review student Section 504 plans to adjust and plan for student accommodations, in collaboration with families, to best meet the student's access to his/her education based on his/her disability and learning environment.
- Any new requests for 504 plans will be provided an opportunity for an eligibility meeting held virtually, or face-to-face by request, to determine if the student would meet the qualifications.

### **Special Education and Related Services Staff Responsibilities**

- Collaborate and facilitate IEP/IFSP meetings, including the annual review, update of the IEP/IFSP and completing/updating any necessary IEP/IFSP amendments.
- Collaborate with families to provide related services, as outlined on the student's IEP/IFSP, through approved educational environments. In a virtual environment parent(s)/guardian(s) may assist as necessary for modeling and to ensure student safety (e.g. during physical therapy for a student with an unsteady gait).
- If assessments are required, follow procedures and recommendations related to assessment in collaboration with other providers and parents/guardians to ensure timelines are met. When permitted, in-person assessments should be completed according to the Assessment Protocol. Work with teachers to ensure that all specialized instructional needs are met while maintaining a multi-tiered system of support.
- Ensure assigned general education teachers have updated accommodations and support on implementation in a face-to-face and virtual environment online to ensure that targeted instruction and support are provided.
- In the event virtual learning is needed, communicate with all families of students on the caseload regarding the online learning plan and to plan for the provision of service and support through an IEP/IFSP. This should include a discussion of how co-planning with general educators will ensure access to the content of the distance learning lessons.
- Continue to document and communicate IEP goal/IFSP outcome progress.

- Support social-emotional, behavioral goals in collaboration with families, counselors, and social workers based upon reported behaviors.
- Continue monthly medical assistance case management/billing.

### **Paraeducator Staff Responsibilities**

- Support general and special education teachers with co-teaching lesson planning as needed to implement accommodations and modifications.
- Provide additional support/interventions for students in small groups to address instructional and testing accommodations, meeting IEP goals and objectives, and supplementary aids and services.

### **Special Education and Section 504 Paperwork**

There are no waivers to IDEA related timelines and as such all mandated timelines will be followed regardless of the necessary instructional delivery model. Special education teachers and related service providers will continue to work on IEP/504 and evaluation paperwork within the required timelines.

- Virtual and face-to-face IEP/IFSP/Section 504 meetings will be offered as options as determined by parent choice. QACPS has noted an increase in parent participation when virtual options are presented. Face-to-face meetings will be accommodated when requested as long as health and safety measures allow.
- As annual reviews occur IEP and 504 teams need to consider and develop continuity of learning contingency plans as part of the IEP document that will address virtual learning and potential school closure.
- IEP and 504 plans will be written as if students will be attending school during face-to-face instruction. As of July 15, 2021, the Maryland Online IEP System requires consideration for emergency closures which will outline what a student's program will look like through virtual learning and in the event of a school closure.

### **QACPS Infant and Toddler Program**

The QACPS Infant and Toddler Program will continue to offer all services to children and families in a face-to-face model as health and safety guidelines allow. In the event of a situation where school buildings are closed due to health and safety regulations, service delivery will continue using a virtual model. This includes Child Find activities, evaluations for eligibility determination, family assessments, Child Outcome Summaries, IFSP/IEP development and direct services to children, and reflective coaching with caregivers. The Infant and Toddler Program staff will work with private service providers and community agencies to coordinate how services will be provided to children within those community settings.

### **Child Find and Evaluation**

QACPS Special Education Department will continue to identify, locate, and evaluate students suspected of having a disability and needing special education and related services. Evaluations may be conducted remotely or in-person while adhering to public health guidelines where appropriate. Face-to-face administration will be the primary assessment modality with virtual exceptions made on a case-by-case basis when school buildings are accessible.

### **IEP Meetings**

QACPS Special Education Department is committed to providing families the opportunity for meaningful participation in the special education process. IEP teams will partner with families to determine the most practical format to conduct meetings. Virtual and face-to-face IEP/IFSP/Section 504 meetings will be offered as options as determined by parent choice. QACPS has noted an increase in parent participation when virtual options are presented. Face-to-face meetings will be accommodated when requested as long as health and safety measures allow. IEP meetings will be held as needed to determine different or additional needs of students related to changes in instructional modalities or as part of the IEP process.

### **COVID Recovery Compensatory Services**

During the 2020-2021 school year, school teams regularly reviewed student data and progress for evidence indicating a lack of progress or regression. Information was also distributed to parents requesting they contact case managers if they had concerns which would trigger an IEP meeting. QACPS will continue to monitor for regression and/or lack of progress which will be addressed on an individual basis. Should criteria defined as a denial of FAPE be found present, recovery compensatory services will be discussed and considered amongst the IEP team to determine a plan of action. Discussions and decisions will be documented through prior written notice. Parents may decline the review.

### **Itinerant Personnel**

Personnel who travel between schools will be required to transfer into each building upon entry to maintain a log of buildings visited. Logs can be used for contact tracing in the event of an exposure. Staff will continue to have access to appropriate PPE at each site.

### **Non-Public Special Education Schools**

In all learning modalities QACPS will continue to work with each individual non-public school in order to ensure that students receive their specialized instruction, related services, and support to close achievement gaps across multiple student groups.

### **Individual Education Program or 504 Plan Accommodations**

All students will be provided their specified accommodations per their IEP or 504 Plan. The IEP team will work collaboratively to determine appropriate accommodations that may vary due to virtual instruction.

### **Related Services**

Related services will take place face-to-face when health and safety standards allow. In the event a student is prevented from attending face-to-face, all related services will be offered virtually when possible. In the event virtual services are not available or appropriate, sessions will be made-up when the student is available for face-to-face delivery.

### **Social/Emotional/Behavioral**

QACPS recognizes the need for social/emotional support and continues to broaden the scope of services offered through Integrated Tiered Systems of Support (ITSS). Student support resources were broadened to include an additional on-staff Social Worker and School Psychologist for the 21-22 school year. A

countywide initiative to incorporate Zones of Regulation at elementary and middle school levels was implemented to aid students in their ability to identify emotional needs, self-regulate, and advocate for support. The Program for Emotional and Academic Learning Support (PEALS) continues to be available for students that require therapeutic support in a smaller, more structured setting. Families are encouraged to access the [QACPS Special Education Backpack](#) where resources for a supported return to school and tips can be found on supporting social/emotional wellness at home. Staff have participated in additional training on establishing relationships and explicit teaching on classroom learning behaviors in a proactive measure to receive early learners that have had minimal exposure to learning environments. Staff are provided access to ongoing professional development on trauma, classroom management, and behavior management through [Safe Schools](#) and the [QACPS Special Education Weebly Resource page](#).

### **Medically Vulnerable Populations**

School health staff will develop or review health care plans in consultation with the family and child's doctor for medically vulnerable students. **Consideration for alternate service delivery models will be considered on an individual basis. Families of children that are unable to attend in-person instruction due to medical conditions will be invited to participate in an IEP meeting to discuss alternate instructional models that will allow access while ensuring safety.**

## Requirement 7

**Requirement 7: The local school system must indicate the extent to which the school system has adopted policies and a description of any such policies on each of the following health and safety strategies: universal and correct wearing of face coverings (masks); physical distancing (e.g., use of cohorts/podding; handwashing and respiratory etiquette; cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation; contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments; diagnostic and screening testing; efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible; and appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies.**

### Health Services

There are several ways in which QACPS can help protect students and staff and slow the spread of COVID-19 in the community as the school system reopens schools. Emphasizing the implementation of layered and consistent prevention strategies to keep students and staff safe. The school system in collaboration with local health officials may determine how to implement some of these decision points while meeting the needs of schools and their surrounding communities. QACPS has enrolled in the ELC “Reopening Schools COVID-19 Screening Testing Opportunity for Public and Non-Public Schools” to facilitate diagnostic and screening testing for COVID-19 in its schools for educators, staff, and students. Participation in the program allows for a flexible and fluid COVID-19 mitigation plan for our school district with an end to end approach on prevention, identification, and minimization of the COVID-19 infections in schools. QACPS is collaborating and exploring onsite access to the COVID-19 vaccines with the local health department to facilitate access to the COVID-19 vaccines for eligible students as well as acting as vaccine access liaison for its educators and staff thereby linking them with local and state resources in a timely manner. The school's nursing staff is prepared to meet the challenge of student needs while implementing additional measures in response to COVID-19 which includes the following recommendations:

- Post signs in highly visible locations (e.g., school entrances, restrooms) that promote everyday protective measures and describe how to stop the spread of germs (such as by properly washing hands and properly wearing a cloth face covering).
- Provide basic information about COVID-19, including age-appropriate information for students/staff. Topics for good hygiene practices include handwashing, covering coughs and sneezes, proper use of masks, staying home when ill, and temperature monitoring.
- Identify protocols for health room staff assessing symptoms with the minimum patient transition, to prevent exposure to the building.
- Implement protocols requiring that sick students and staff stay home and provide requirements for a return to school/work.
- Health room and quarantine protocols will be established for students who are ill versus routine health services while maintaining discretion and confidentiality.
- Provide an isolated rest room/space, to the extent possible, for patients accessing the health room for COVID-19 related illness.
- Identify special populations (students and staff) who require specialized Personal Protective Equipment (face shields, face coverings with clear panels, gloves, etc.) due to the need for closer proximity. Special population students include, but are not limited to: those who display high-risk



behaviors that may spit or bite, students who are deaf and hard of hearing, students accessing reading interventions, and students with sensory impairments.

- Training on the proper use of PPE will be provided to staff and students.
- Establish a protocol for scheduling health room visits and times for medication administration.
- Develop a flowchart regarding how to support individuals presenting COVID-19 symptoms. This should include procedures on isolation and exclusion from school buildings, as well as appropriate processes for return.
- Establish protocols regarding contact tracing and train school nurses/administrators on these protocols.
- Notify appropriate health officials if student/staff are COVID-19 positive and follow appropriate notification or closure guidance.
- Teach and promote self-quarantine and social isolation from others if suspected exposure to COVID-19 or receipt of positive testing results for COVID-19.
- Require health services staff to wear appropriate PPE (can include face covering/face shield, gloves, gown, etc.) when working with all students or staff in the health room. If a student/child or staff member develops symptoms of COVID-19 while they are at school and it is safe to do so, health services staff will place a face covering/face covering on the person if they are 2 years of age or above and not wearing one.

### **Health Screening and Protocols**

Employees are encouraged/expected to stay home when they are sick, or not feeling well, or have any COVID-19 symptoms. Parents are also encouraged to follow these same protocols for their students. When there is a doubt about an illness, staff and students are encouraged to stay home and contact their health care provider for testing and care. In addition, students/children, teachers, and staff should stay at home if they have been in close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 or suspected of having COVID-19 and have not completed quarantine, if they are waiting for a COVID-19 test result, or if they have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and not completed isolation. For certain situations where individuals would not need to quarantine, such as when fully vaccinated, please see [CDC guidance](#).

### **Staff Screening**

Employees are to self-screen before coming to their work location. Bullets below illustrate symptoms of COVID-19. By swiping into ADP daily, employees do so acknowledging that they do not have any of the COVID-19 symptoms listed below; and can answer no to all of the questions listed below.

#### ***Symptoms of COVID-19***

- Fever of 100.4 or above
- New onset of severe headache (especially with fever)
- New or Unusual Cough
- New loss of taste or smell
- Diarrhea or Vomiting
- Sore throat

1. Have you or anyone in your household had any of the following symptoms?
2. Are any of the people you live with on home quarantine due to contact with someone with possible or confirmed COVID-19, or waiting for a COVID-19 test result?
3. Do any of the people you live with have COVID-19 and not yet completed isolation?

If an employee can answer **Yes** to any of the above questions or is experiencing the above mentioned symptoms of COVID-19 he/she is to stay home, self- isolate, and seek medical attention by contacting his/her healthcare provider. Additionally, employees should contact their principal or supervisor.

If an employee becomes sick during the workday, he/she is to immediately report his/her condition to their supervisor/principal. The school nurse can be consulted if needed. The employee may be asked to leave work, contact his/her healthcare provider for follow-up, and/or obtain a COVID-19 test. Parents/guardians will conduct self-screening of their student(s) utilizing the same criteria. If a staff member is experiencing any of these circumstances, they are not allowed to enter the building. QACPS utilizes the MDOH/MSDE guidance entitled "[Response to Confirmed Case of COVID-19](#) and Persons with COVID-19 Symptoms in Schools and Childcare" or exclusion, isolation, and quarantine recommendations as well as communication and notification processes, which include the "Decision Aid: Exclusion and Return for Persons with COVID-19 Symptoms and Close Contacts in Child Care, Schools, and Youth Camps".

### **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is to be worn as needed to mitigate the risk to staff while performing duties. Masks or ear loop face coverings are the standards for teachers and most staff when are required. Some jobs or tasks require a different level of PPE such as those performed by custodians and school nurses. Instruction in the use of required PPE will be provided by the supervisors of the staff members as required. PPE for specialized teams, programs, and classes will be provided and instruction given on their use. [Guidance for Healthcare Personnel on the Use of Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) in Schools During COVID-19](#)

### **Student Screening**

Parents will be provided the same information about COVID-19 symptoms and affirm that by sending their students to school, they are acknowledging that their student does not have any of the symptoms. QACPS will establish and disseminate clear "return to school" procedures, including that sick staff members or students should not return until they have met CDC's criteria to discontinue home isolation.

### **Face Coverings as described in CoMar 13A.01.07**

Face coverings must be worn by staff and students. Any logos or embellishments must meet the standards for what is appropriate for school. Face coverings should be held on the face by loops around the ears. QACPS will provide face coverings if students or staff wish to have them provided. Students will be frequently reminded not to touch the face covering and to wash their hands frequently. Please see transportation (Requirement 8) for face covering use on buses.

### **Response to COVID-19 Infections**

Return to school procedures will be distributed in coordination with the QACDOH when a COVID-19 infection occurs. School nurses and other health services staff will wear appropriate personal protective equipment when working with sick students. After an illness, staff members or students should not return until they have met CDC's criteria to discontinue home isolation and/or direction from a healthcare provider. Enhanced cleaning is triggered when an employee or student is identified as positive for COVID-19 based on testing. Enhanced cleaning will be performed as soon as positive test results are

confirmed. Enhanced cleaning will focus on the areas of the school where the staff or student(s) frequent the most. If there are multiple infections, decisions to close a school will be made in coordination with the QACDOH under the guidance of the Health Officer.

## Groups Disproportionately Affected by COVID-19

For groups disproportionately affected by COVID-19, QACPS will be providing PPE for educators, students, and staff along with continuing to implement mitigation strategies within its buildings and properties. In addition, QACPS will identify and reach out to this population to link them with local and state COVID-19 prevention, testing, treatment and educational resources. Onsite vaccination clinics are being explored to remove the transportation barriers often times present in rural areas. This population will also be offered additional onsite after school mental health support along with access to transportation.

## Employee Face Coverings

The purpose of the Employee Face Covering Protocol is to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 among Queen Anne's County Public School employees. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend face covering to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

The COVID-19 Enhanced Infection Control Protocols of the QACPS states that employees wear face covering throughout the workday. Face covering must be worn at all schools and facilities, during home visits, and off-site community settings. Face covering must cover the employee's nose and mouth.

QACPS employees must wear face covering throughout the workday. This includes while employees are interacting with staff, students, and parents; when employees are interacting with other employees; when employees are off-site and participating in work-related activities; and when employees are in common areas such as hallways, cafeterias, meeting rooms, and restrooms.

A face covering may be removed when an employee is alone in private enclosed offices and work areas with only one person present. An enclosed work area has walls on at least three sides and has at least six feet of space between the two individuals. When eating, employees must create social distancing of at least six feet.

Some employees will need to wear different types of face covering depending on their job duties (cloth face covering, surgical face covering, N95 face covering). They are to ask their supervisor which type of face covering is required for their job duties.

## Hand Washing

All individuals in the school building should wash their hands with soap and water whenever possible rather than using hand sanitizer. Hand sanitizer use should be limited to times when soap and water are not available. Recommended strategies to optimize handwashing include:

- Provide students and staff with instruction on proper handwashing procedures including timing for handwashing during the school day
- Increase handwashing stations within the school, where possible. Identify handwashing opportunities within class schedules
- Establish an expectation of compliance with hand hygiene guidance
- Ensure that students and staff wash their hands before going to shared spaces like the cafeteria
- Supervise the use of hand sanitizer by students, particularly younger students

- Direct students on dose amount (dime-sized amount of hand sanitizer)
- Direct students to rub their hands together (as if washing), spread the product on all sides and between fingers, and allow to dry
- Ensure that students use soap and water if they have skin reactions or contraindications to hand sanitizer

### **Building Cleaning and Disinfecting**

The safety of students and staff is our first priority. Schools have been completely cleaned and disinfected and all necessary sanitation precautions will continue to be followed. School buildings will be cleaned and disinfected each evening with special emphasis placed on those surfaces which are frequently-touched throughout the day.

### **Custodial Cleaning**

The work shifts for custodians may be adjusted to maximize the number of custodial staff during peak cleaning times. This team will perform increased, routine cleaning, and disinfection. CDC's "Considerations for Schools" recommends increased cleaning and disinfecting for frequently-touched surfaces. To facilitate effective disinfecting, each school currently has one (1) electrostatic backpack sprayer, and each secondary school has one (1) misting (or "fogger") machine to facilitate disinfecting in large areas, including physical education and athletic spaces.

QACPS has provided each school's custodial team with written direction on increased, routine cleaning and disinfection. Instructions will focus on high-touch areas, such as door handles, desks, and drinking water fountains. Custodial staff will ensure adequate provision and distribution of cleaning supplies, EPA approved and Green-Seal certified disinfectants and microfiber cloths.

### **Staff Cleaning Supplies**

Each classroom is provided alcohol based hand sanitizer, alcohol sanitizing wipes, and disinfectant spray for additional sanitizing needs. CDC's Considerations for Schools recommends cleaning of frequently-touched surfaces, such as door handles. The custodial team will increase the cleaning of frequently-touched surfaces, by providing cleaning provisions for instructional staff which allows them to access approved cleaning products quickly if needed.

### **CTE and Shared Equipment**

Any equipment or supplies that CTE students share will be cleaned in-between uses. CTE students are also provided disposable gloves and aprons for added precaution, if safe.

### **Facility Enhancements and Modifications**

The focus on facility enhancements is centered around operational changes in each building to support the instructional needs and facilitate a safe and healthy learning environment.

## **Ventilation**

Maintenance staff will continue to modify the ventilation schedules such that the occupied mode will begin two hours before staff arrival and continue through the end of the school day. Staff shall ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase the circulation of outdoor air as much as possible. The HVAC systems are programmed to use the maximum amount of outside air possible to maintain the proper operation of the systems. Doors and windows should not be opened if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g. risk of falling, triggering asthma symptoms, violating safety rules and regulations) to staff and students in the facility. The filters in all HVAC systems are upgraded to the maximum MERV rating that will allow for proper operation of the system as recommended by the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air Conditioning Engineers in response to COVID-19. Any filter media that has a MERV-11 rating or lower will be changed every 6 weeks instead of the normal 12-week schedule.

## **Protective Barriers**

Each school front office and health room are provided with three clear, desktop shields that provide a barrier between the school secretaries and office visitors. QACPS restricts the number of front-office visitors but recognizes that there are situations in which front office staff will need to interact with staff, students, and visitors.

## **Playgrounds**

Elementary school playgrounds are open for use during the school day by students. During recess, students are able to utilize the permanent hand sanitizer stations installed near each elementary school playground. After recess, students are able to wash their hands before returning to the classroom. This guidance could change throughout the school year and will be done in coordination with the Queen Anne's County Department of Health.

## **Lockers**

Lockers will not be used because students cannot access lockers while observing social distancing. Elementary school cubbies will also not be used for the same reason. Students will place items by their assigned workstations during the school day and will not leave any items/articles behind when their workspace will subsequently be occupied by another student.

## **Classroom Modifications**

Furniture and supplies will be returned to the proper classroom after summer cleaning is complete. Each school administrator will work with the Office of Supporting Services to determine the proper social distancing layout in each building. The CDC recommends that students be seated at least 3 feet apart while in the classroom and face the same direction.

Staff members should use the following guidelines for classroom setup to allow for proper cleaning and sanitizing of each space:

- Classroom tools that are not currently in use should be stored inside of cabinets or closets
- Wall decorations and visual aids should be laminated and used sparingly
- Carpets, rugs, soft furnishings, and other soft textiles should be removed or placed in storage
- The number of personal items brought to the school building should be minimized

## **Hand Sanitizer**

QACPS has hands-free sanitizing dispensers to extend the current alcohol-based hand sanitizer provided in every classroom. The CDC's Consideration for Schools recommends that if soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol can be used for staff and children who can safely use it. Hand washing is still the preferred method of cleaning hands, but hand sanitizer is available for when hand washing is not possible.

## **Building Access and Pedestrian Flow**

Pedestrian traffic-flow will not be adjusted at this time, however if conditions change or recommendations are made, modifications will occur to support social distancing.

## **Student Movement**

At the start of each school year, learning expectations and rules are explained to students in which social distancing will be emphasized as part of this new norm. Staff and students have been practicing social distancing for several months and site-specific adjustments will be made based on the needs of each school community. Student movement will be limited to the greatest extent possible within buildings during the day. When the movement of students occurs, staff will require social distancing and the use of face coverings.

## **Student Arrival and Dismissal**

The use of multiple entrances and exits will continue in schools to support social distancing efforts. Large gatherings of students will be limited at the beginning and end of the day. Students will move to classrooms, or other designated areas, for arrival and dismissal to maintain smaller groups of students.

## **Signage**

Signage compliant with CDC standards will be placed throughout each school to educate and reinforce handwashing, social distancing, the wearing of face coverings, and self-screening of COVID-19 symptoms. The CDC's Considerations for Schools recommends posting highly-visible signs to promote everyday protective measures and to describe how to stop the spread of germs. Food Service staff will post signs in cafeterias to support social distancing and limit the number of students gathered in one area. [Downloadable Signage from the CDC](#)

## **Health Room Protocols**

Modified health room protocols are being coordinated with the Queen Anne's County Department of Health (QACDOH). The school nurses will take direction from the QACDOH health officer designee for response protocols for COVID-19. School health staff is being provided appropriate personal protective equipment designed to mitigate the risk of infection while responding to routine and emergency care for ill and injured students and staff. Protocols for isolation areas in health rooms, when separate isolation rooms are not available, are being established that require well students needing routine care and the treatment of injuries to be attended to away from the health rooms.



Protocols include minor injuries being dealt with in the classroom when possible, communication to the nurse before sending students to the health room, and interaction with parents/guardians when students are isolated. Every effort will be made to ensure that students are provided privacy and confidentiality when being seen by the nurse.

### **Health Suite Air Purification**

Each health room has been provided a standalone air purification unit that employs an ultraviolet germicidal lamp and two levels of air filtration. QACPS has upgraded the air filter media in other areas of the building, where feasible, and will be scheduling the ventilation cycle to begin a full two-hours before daily occupancy. For COVID-19, the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) recommends such air purification devices for high-risk spaces.

### **Health Suite Isolation Space**

Schools have identified space in proximity to the current health room or inside of the health room for the isolation of individuals exhibiting symptoms of illness. Maryland's Recovery Plan for Education requires that schools immediately separate staff and children with COVID-19 symptoms at school. In some cases, the health room recovery area may be used for isolation, and another space used for conventional, or "well care," health services. Each health room is equipped with a locked rolling medication cart. This contains first aid supplies and medication. Students can be attended to by the nurse or Certified Medication Technician (CMT) outside of the health room away from ill students.

School nurses will supply classrooms with Band-Aids for minor injuries. The nurse will be notified by the teacher before sending any student to the health room so that they can be triaged for possible isolation.

### **Health Suite Protocol**

The QACPS School Health Services Manager is working closely with the Queen Anne's County Department of Health to compile the latest directives and advisements, to establish changes to current practices in response to COVID-19.

### **Parent/Guardian Protocols for Picking Up Ill Students**

Parents/Guardians who are picking up their ill child from isolation will not be permitted in the building. The school health staff will escort the child to the parent/guardian's car and have them complete the sign-out process at that time.

### **Home Visits and Traveling Staff**

Staff who routinely make home visits will be provided with a tote containing PPE and will follow the protocol established for scheduling visits, assessing risk, and protocol for possible exposure. A contact log will be maintained for each visit. For more information, please reference the Home Visit Protocol [here](#).

Traveling staff such as speech therapists and professional school counselors who travel between schools will also be given a tote containing appropriate PPE and should keep a log of the locations they visited and individuals they interacted with while providing services at these locations.

**Food Services**

Both the cafeteria and outdoor areas will be utilized for students to consume meals while maximizing social distance. Locations for meal service will be coordinated directly between FNS and school staff. This ensures appropriate meal service and cleaning protocol can be accommodated based on specific school staffing.

**Before and After School Care**

Custodial Staff will provide cleaning and disinfectant products and cleaning cloths to each before and aftercare provider (AlphaBest) in a QACPS facility. AlphaBest will use QACPS disinfectants and microfiber cleaning cloths after each session with students. Disinfectants must be provided in containers properly marked (per OSHA) and AlphaBest will be responsible for storing the sanitizing chemicals securely away from children.

**Community User Groups**

The use of QACPS facilities remains suspended until further notice.

## Requirement 8

**Requirement 8: Local school systems must follow protocols for the safe transportation of students to and from schools.**

### **Transportation of Students**

QACPS will encourage families to drive or walk their children to school, if possible, to reduce the number of students on buses.

Bus drivers will be trained prior to the start of school. Additional training will occur as required. Buses will be inspected prior to the start of school and throughout the school year.

Ventilation will be increased by utilizing the roof hatches and windows. When possible, loading and unloading students in a manner that encourages social distancing (load back to front and unload front to back) will be utilized.

### **Face Coverings During Transportation**

Students will be required to wear a mask on the bus. QACPS will make masks available for students who need them. Drivers are required to wear masks during loading and unloading of students, and during any interactions where social distancing cannot be maintained. Drivers may remove their face covering while driving if they feel it causes a safety concern, but it is recommended that masks be worn as much as possible while students are on the bus.

### **Students Who Are Ill on the Bus**

Bus drivers will respond to health emergencies of students on the bus using the guidance provided in the student's individualized plan for students with chronic health conditions or guidance from [Guide For Emergency Care in Maryland Schools](#). If a student becomes ill and it is not an emergency, the driver will do his/her best to make sure all body fluids are contained and the child is isolated to the extent possible. The driver will notify the school of the situation. The ill child will be taken off the bus before other students exit so that any cleaning or disinfecting of body fluids can take place. The ill student will be placed in the isolation room for the school nurse to assess and provide follow-up.

### **Sick Student Transportation**

The Maryland Recovery Plan for Education requires the establishment of procedures for safely transporting anyone who is sick to his/her home or a healthcare facility. As it is understandably discouraged for school staff to transport symptomatic students in the staff member's private vehicle, another means of transportation must be identified. Depending on availability, a county bus may be provided to transport a sick child home.

**Bus Cleaning**

Bus drivers will increase the cleaning and disinfection of buses. Each driver will be provided a spray bottle filled with EPA approved cleaning products, cloths and wipes. Bus drivers will inspect and sanitize their buses after morning and afternoon routes using the provided cleaning products. Special cleaning emphasis is placed on seats, handles/railing, and window controls. Handheld electrostatic sprayers will also be utilized.

**Special Education Transportation**

Masks are required for staff and students based on recommendations from CDC. However, the health needs of students may prevent some students from wearing them. Transportation staff must strictly adhere to cleaning and sanitizing protocols. Buses should be disinfected between routes. Drivers and assistants will be trained in the proper use of PPE and requirements. Face shields may be required for some bus staff (assistants) when supporting the transportation of students with highly vulnerable medical or behavioral needs. Training may be required for some students riding the bus to educate them on social distancing and safe health practices.

## Requirement 9

### **Requirement 9: Local school systems must maintain a system for tracking attendance when students are engaged in distance learning**

#### **Student Attendance**

Students shall be considered in attendance when participating in school-sponsored activities during the school day for face-to-face and/or distance/virtual learning. QACPS will use the Schoology platform and/or PowerSchool to document students' attendance in class. If school buildings are closed and students participate in distance learning, students who are present during the school day will be coded as DL (distance learning). If a student is present in the building for small group instruction, the present code of SGI (small group instruction) will be used. The updated Student Attendance Regulation can be found [here](#).

If secondary school buildings are closed, students must login to each class within the Schoology platform on a daily basis in order to be counted as present. Students who are unable to login due to connectivity issues or other restrictive barriers must communicate with the teacher or the school's front office in order to be counted as present.

If elementary buildings are closed, students/parents/guardians must login to Schoology on a daily basis in order to be counted as present. Elementary students/parents/guardians who are unable to login due to connectivity issues or other restrictive barriers must communicate with the teacher or the school's front office in order to be counted as present.

#### **Marking Students Absent**

As students are expected to login to their classes daily in the Schoology platform, teachers are expected to take attendance daily. Students who have not logged into a class, and/or have not communicated with the teacher or front office will be marked absent for that class. Teachers will have until the next day at 9:00 AM to complete daily attendance in PowerSchool for the previous day.

Schoology shows student activity in two different ways: course activity and the last time the student logged into the platform. Teachers are responsible for marking students absent.

#### **Marking Students Present**

Front office staff will be responsible for ensuring the proper present code is provided for each student. Students that are brought in the building for small group instruction will be marked present with the SGI code for Small Group Instruction. Teachers of these students are responsible for providing the front office with a hard copy of the students present in their class daily. Front office staff will then enter the present code accordingly.

## **Monitoring Student Attendance**

The use of pupil personnel workers and mental health coordinators will support monitoring students' attendance in face-to-face and distance/virtual learning environments. Key staff, including administrators, counselors, pupil personnel workers, mental health coordinators, instructional assistants and other special service providers will monitor students' participation in the instructional program. Personal phone calls to families and home visits will be utilized to reengage students.



## Requirement 10

**Requirement 10: Each local school system must implement/enhance its own plan for communication.**

### **QACPS Communication Plan**

The QACPS strategic reopening communication plan is critical to ensure the school system is reaching the targeted audiences promptly to include employees, families, students, and key stakeholders. The communication plan is focused on five key components to include:

- (a) audience identification,
- (b) communication goals and objectives,
- (c) key messages,
- (d) communication tools, and
- (e) monitoring feedback.

As such, all communication regarding the school operations of Queen Anne's County Public Schools is directed by the Superintendent of Schools. The superintendent communicates daily with the department of health and meets regularly with her executive leadership team to monitor the progress of the Safe Return to School Plan, providing frequent updates to the community. A variety of different communication tools are utilized (i.e., website, press releases, email, Facebook, Twitter, the district communication app, school messenger) are utilized to collect and distribute information promptly in multiple languages to meet the needs of families. Further, the superintendent works directly with the Office of Public Information and the QACPS Communications Specialist for further dissemination of information while also communicating frequently with the QACPS Board of Education members.

# Requirement 11

## **Requirement 11: The local school system must implement the MPSSAA Athletic Program.**

With regards to interscholastic athletics, QACPS will operate high school athletics utilizing COVID-19 mitigation strategies as necessary. A local return to play committee will continue to meet when needed to address COVID-19 related issues and make recommendations to the Superintendent and/or designee.

### **Return to Play Committee Members**

Chief Operating Officer

Principals

Assistant Principals/Athletic Directors

Facilities and Planning

QAC Department of Health Representative

Current Fall, Winter, and Spring QACPS Coach(es)

### **Past Meeting Agenda(s)**

[QACPS Return to Play Agenda Meeting 02 11 2021](#)

[QACPS Return to Play Agenda Meeting 12 03 2020](#)

[QACPS Return to Play Agenda Meeting 08 03 2020](#)

[QACPS Return to Play Agenda Meeting 6 24 2020](#)

## Requirement 12

**Requirement 12: Local school systems must establish a plan for the continuity of learning and services for any students who may need to quarantine due to COVID-19.**

### Procedures

When the school nurse receives a report from a parent that a student has tested positive for COVID-19, contact tracing is conducted by the nurse with support from school administrators to determine close contacts.

Close Contact means: A student that is wearing a mask that is within 3 feet or less of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period, with or without symptoms.

If a student has been deemed a close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, and is not fully vaccinated, the student would be required to quarantine.

If a student has been deemed a close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, and is fully vaccinated, the student will not have to quarantine provided they are symptom free and remain symptom free.

Based on the guidance from the CDC, MSDE, and MDH, the following 3 quarantine options are available for students:

- Quarantine for 7 days from the date of exposure. On or after the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the exposure, the student may get a COVID-19 test. If the test is negative and the student is symptom free, they may return after the 7<sup>th</sup> day.
- Quarantine for 10 days from the date of exposure. If the student remains symptom free, they may return after the 10<sup>th</sup> day.
- Quarantine for 14 days from the date of exposure. If the student remains symptom free, they may return after the 14<sup>th</sup> day.

*\*The date of exposure is considered Day 0. Day 1 of quarantine is the day after the exposure.*

Each close contact will be evaluated on an individualized basis by the school nurse and/or administrator and information shared with families via phone or email – options are explained and a return to school plan is discussed.

While on quarantine, students will be coded MED for attendance purposes. Students will be provided equitable access to learning materials through the LMS platform, learning packets, and/or district email by using their school issued laptops. Classroom teachers will provide feedback to students on individual assignments as well as post grades in Power School. Hotspots will be available for students as needed. A variety of tools, resources, and procedural options will be provided to students receiving specially designed instruction to encourage continuity of learning as outlined by the student's IEP.

Four full-time substitutes will be available to engage students and provide support during the quarantine. The substitutes will be assigned a grade band. The grade bands are as follows: K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12. These grade band assignments will be adjusted based on student needs.

# Conclusion

Queen Anne's County Public Schools recognizes the changing dynamics of the COVID-19 health crisis and is prepared to adapt the *Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan* based upon updated information from the Queen Anne's County Department of Health. With this in mind, we value the ongoing feedback from the community as we face a new reality in creating a plan that is flexible while implementing procedures, strategies, and tools to keep everyone healthy and safe while providing the most robust education possible.

QACPS will continue to work with state and local leaders and monitor the current state of COVID-19 in our area and adjust our *Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan* accordingly.



# Resources

[Maryland Strong Roadmap to Recovery](#)

[Maryland Recovery Education Plan](#)

[QACPS Continuity of Learning Plan \(Updated 5.15.20\)](#)

[Top Performers' Plans To Reopen Schools: Key Trends](#)

[Return to School Roadmap](#)

[A PLAN TO SAFELY REOPEN AMERICA'S SCHOOLS  
AND COMMUNITIES](#)

[Framework for Reopening Schools A Blueprint for Back to  
School](#)

[A New Reality: Getting Remote Learning Right](#)

[Roadmap to Recovery: A Public Health Guide for Governors](#)

[Schools Are Opening Worldwide, Providing a Model for the  
U.S.](#)

[Reopening Schools Safely: Insights, Successes, and Lessons  
Learned](#)

[Reopening Schools: What It Might Look Like](#)

[Educational Continuity Resources \(Multiple Resources\)](#)

[Arts Together: Planning Guidance for Art Educators, as a  
COVID-19 Response and Paths forward](#)

[State Superintendent Issues Guidance for Safely  
Reopening Virginia's Schools](#)

[School Reopening Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Recover, Redesign, Restart 2020 Section Introductions](#)

[Here is how schools in Virginia will be allowed to reopen WATCH](#)

[NOW: Here is how schools in Virginia will be allowed to reopen](#)

[Virginia schools will reopen with flexible phases: Northam  
coronavirus update](#)

[Virginia governor allows reopening of K-12 schools as soon as  
this summer](#)

[State Rolls Out K-12 School Reopening Guidance](#)

[How Northam plans to reopen Virginia schools in the fall](#)

[Northam outlines what school will look like in fall](#)

[Schools allowed to reopen soon](#)

