

## Interim COVID-19 Guidance for K-12 School Performing Arts Programs

Activities that increase respiration can generate an increased amount of respiratory droplets and aerosols that may contain the COVID-19 virus if a person is infected. Some performing arts classes may need to alter curriculum and classroom experiences in order to reduce COVID-19 transmission.

School Performances must follow the requirements outlined under “School Performances” in [Executive Order 72](#) and the [Guidelines for Reopening](#).

For music, choir, and performing arts classrooms, Virginia Department of Health (VDH) recommends:

- **Physical Distance:**
  - Maximize physical distance to the greatest extent possible. Maintain at least 6 feet of distance during activities when increased exhalation occurs such as when singing, shouting, or playing certain instruments. Maintain at least 10 ft apart in situations where wearing a mask would inhibit the playing of the instrument (e.g. wind or brass instrument).
  - Limit activities that require close contact between performers (e.g., lifting a dancer, scenes in a play that require very close contact between actors).
  - Limit movement throughout classrooms by assigning students a specific spot to practice or perform.
  - Ensure classrooms are set up to allow appropriate physical distance between seats.
  - Ensure students maintain appropriate [physical distance](#) during all group activities.
  - Do not use plastic barriers as a replacement for [physical distancing](#).
  - For general classroom use (when not singing, shouting, etc), Virginia’s [Interim Guidance for K12 School Reopening](#) recommends that in elementary schools, students should be at least 3 feet apart. In middle and high schools, students should be at least 3 feet apart in areas of low, moderate, or substantial community transmission. During high transmission, VDH recommends schools consider a minimum of 6 feet distance standard for middle and high school students when cohorting is not possible.
  - For more information about how to protect K12 Teachers, Staff and Students in music, choir and performing arts settings in school, please visit the CDC’s [Strategies for Protecting K-12 School Staff from COVID-19](#).
- **Masks:**
  - Require the use of masks at all times following the mask requirements in the Governor’s [Executive Order](#), except for when playing a musical instrument (wind or brass instrument) where the mask would inhibit the playing of such instrument.
  - Do not use face shields as a replacement for [masks](#).
- **Cleaning and Disinfecting:**
  - Discontinue sharing items between persons, unless items are cleaned and disinfected between each person. Avoid using shared items that are difficult to clean (e.g., sheet music).
  - Clean and disinfect (with an [EPA-approved disinfectant](#)) musical instruments, equipment (e.g., mallets), and frequently touched surfaces as directed, throughout the day, if required. Use appropriate cleaning and disinfection methods to prevent damage to musical instruments and equipment. If part of an

instrument contacts the mouth, use a disinfectant that is approved for food contact surfaces, and follow any directions regarding rinsing. Due to the complexities of musical instruments' construction and materials, it may not be possible to disinfect all musical instruments to a level that makes sharing them feasible. More information on [instrument cleaning and disinfection](#) can be found at the National Federation of State High School Associations web page.

- Communicate proper hygiene techniques (e.g., practicing proper [hand hygiene](#) and [respiratory etiquette](#), educating persons to avoid touching their face) for the fine arts classroom.
- Follow guidelines for [group and community events and performances](#), as directed by the CDC.

Additionally, CDC's [Strategies for Protecting K-12 School Staff from COVID-19](#) recommend that administrators “make decisions about restarting extracurricular performing arts activities, in collaboration with local health officials, based on a number of factors. These factors include the level of community transmission, whether cases are identified among students, teachers, or staff, what other indicators local public health officials are using to follow COVID-19, and whether student, teacher, and staff cohorts are being implemented within the school.”

In these strategies, CDC offers some **general considerations for music and performing arts** which are excerpted below (please visit the CDC website to ensure the most current information):

- Reinforce use of [masks](#) by all students and staff when not playing an instrument that requires the use of their mouth.
- Consider conducting the class in an outdoor/open environment or under an open tent.
  - Ensure outdoor classes are safe from other hazards, such as heat, cold, and air pollution.
  - If the class is held indoors, ensure the ventilation system is optimized with regard to flow rate and filtration. Refer to guidance on [ventilation](#) for more information.
- Consider having teachers use a portable amplifier to keep voices at a low, conversational volume.
- Limit the number of students at one time in storage and backstage areas.
- Install transparent shields or other physical barriers, where possible, to separate the students and staff.
- Maintain [social distancing](#) to protect students and staff.

### Music instruction

- Develop plans to communicate with students regarding safety expectations during music classes.
- Practice [cohorting](#); rehearsals should be conducted in “pods” of students with the same 5-10 students always rehearsing together.
- Limit exchange (or sharing) of any instruments, parts, music sheets, or any other items.
- Modify or adjust seating arrangements during music classes to allow for a minimum of 6 feet between students and music teachers. This may reduce the number of students that can fit in a performing arts classroom.
- Establish, where possible, physical barriers between staff and between staff and students.
  - Install cleanable, transparent shields or other barriers to physically separate music staff and students.
  - Use strip curtains, plastic barriers, or similar materials to create impermeable dividers or partitions.
  - Dividers are intended to block large respiratory droplets, and should not impede airflow through the room.

- Use disposable absorbent pads or other receptacles, where possible, to catch the contents of spit valves; discard and clean properly after use.
- Consider using “bell covers” for the openings of brass instruments and specially designed bags with hand openings for woodwind instruments to minimize the generation of droplets and aerosols.

### **Theater and dance**

- Limit, where possible, sharing of props, costumes, and wigs.
- [Clean and disinfect](#) dressing rooms, green rooms, and production areas using an [EPA-registered household disinfectant](#).
- Consider holding virtual or outdoor performances instead of indoor performances.
- Reinforce social distancing and [mask use](#) requirements in the Governor’s [Executive Order](#) for staff and students when students are not singing or playing an instrument that requires the use of their mouth (unless class is outdoors and distance can be maintained).

### **Additional Considerations:**

While physical distancing guidelines are in place, the instructor may need to alter in-class curriculum, and can focus on creative processes, critical thinking and communication, historical and cultural influences, and innovations in the arts. Students can be encouraged to practice singing at home, to maintain practice logs or journals, and to create recordings at home for feedback from the teacher. Monitor students' mental health related to feelings of anxiety, fear, and loss. Sometimes arts-related experiences can trigger an emotional response or cause feelings of trauma to surface. Refer students to counselors as needed, and exercise trauma-informed teaching practices.

### **Resources:**

CDC guidance for community-based organizations:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/community-based.html>

CDC’s Guidance for K-12 Administrators:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/cloth-face-cover.html>

CDC’s Strategies for Protecting K-12 School Staff from COVID-19:

[https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-staff.html?deliveryName=USCDC\\_2082-DM36812#music-choir-arts](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-staff.html?deliveryName=USCDC_2082-DM36812#music-choir-arts)

The National Association for Music Education: <https://nafme.org/>