

**This guidance is available for historical purposes and reference. VDH is no longer updating this document and it may not reflect current COVID-19 guidance for K-12 settings. For the latest information, see [www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/get-the-latest-guidance/k-12-education/](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/get-the-latest-guidance/k-12-education/)**



## **Interim COVID-19 Guidance for School Performing Arts Programs**

Updated September 22, 2021

This guidance is intended to supplement the [Interim Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in Virginia PreK-12 Schools](#). 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. When community transmission of COVID-19 is [substantial or high](#), schools may wish to cancel or postpone any non-essential assemblies (including performing arts rehearsals and shows) until transmission levels have declined.

### **For music, choir, and performing arts classrooms, VDH recommends:**

#### **Masks**

- Require the use of masks at all times following the mask requirements in the State Health Commissioner's [Public Health Order](#), except when wearing a mask would inhibit the playing of the instrument (e.g., wind or brass instrument).

#### **Physical Distance**

- Maximize physical distance as much as possible.
- Maintain at least 6 feet of distance during activities when increased exhalation occurs such as when singing, shouting, or playing wind/brass instruments. Consider increasing distance even more (10 feet apart) during these activities if the room size allows for it. Covers may also be used on wind and brass instruments to reduce droplet spread while playing.
- Limit activities that require close contact between performers (e.g., lifting a dancer, scenes in a play that require very close contact between actors), especially when indoors.
- For general classroom use (when not singing, shouting, etc), follow Virginia's [Interim Guidance](#) to space students at least 3 feet apart in classrooms.

#### **Cleaning and Disinfecting**

- Limit the use of shared items between persons where feasible.
- Avoid shared equipment where the mouth may come into contact with equipment. If equipment must be shared, follow the manufacturer's instructions to clean thoroughly between uses. For microphones, disposable microphone covers may also be used. More information on instrument cleaning and disinfection can be found [here](#).
- In general, cleaning once a day is usually enough to sufficiently remove potential virus particles from most surfaces. Disinfecting (using a [EPA-approved disinfectant](#)) kills any remaining germs on surfaces, which further reduces risk of spreading infection. If an indoor classroom or other performing arts space has had a sick person

or someone who tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 24 hours, clean AND disinfect the space. Refer to CDC [guidance](#) on cleaning and disinfecting for additional recommendations.

### **Cohorting**

- Practice [cohorting](#); students in performing art classes or activities should be conducted in small “pods” of students with the same students always performing or practicing together.

### **Screening Testing**

- Consider screening testing for students who regularly participate in activities that involve singing, shouting, and band that could lead to increased exhalation.

### **Handwashing**

- Encourage all students, teachers, and staff in performing arts classrooms to frequently wash their hands.

### **Ventilation**

- Consider conducting the class in an outdoor environment or under an open tent while ensuring outdoor classes are safe from other hazards, such as extreme heat/cold or air pollution.
- If the class is held indoors, ensure the ventilation system is optimized with regard to flow rate and filtration. Refer to CDC guidance on [ventilation](#) for more information.
- Consider limiting the duration of choir rehearsals (e.g., 30 minute limit if inside).

### **Recommendations for Performances:**

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

### **References:**

CDC Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>

Minnesota Department of Health Recommendations for Music Activities and Performances:

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/musicguide.pdf>

National Association for Music Education Return to Music Phase III Guidance:

<https://nafme.org/my-classroom/nafme-and-nfhs-return-to-music-guidance-phase-iii-august-2021/>