

WESTMORELAND COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

COVID -19 Frequently Asked Questions

Updated 08/25/2021

What is the school division doing to try to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

The division is following guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Virginia Department of Health (VDH), and the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE).

The division and schools are implementing 9 key prevention strategies:

1. Promoting vaccination
2. Consistent and correct use of masks
3. Physical distancing
4. Screening testing* (coming soon)
5. Ventilation
6. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette
7. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities
8. Staying home when sick and getting tested
9. Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine

Additional details can be found in [Virginia's Interim Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in Virginia PreK-12 Schools](#) (updated August 12, 2021).

Are vaccinations required?

No. The division strongly encourages all staff and eligible students to get vaccinated, as this is an effective mitigation strategy to prevent the transmission of COVID-19.

Are masks required?

Yes. The State Health Commissioner issued a [Public Health Order](#) requiring all students, teachers, staff, and visitors (ages 2 and older) to wear a mask indoors in public PreK-12 school settings, regardless of vaccination status. The division had already required masks because masks provide an effective layer of prevention, and this is consistent with the latest CDC guidelines.

What if I forget my mask?

Masks are available at all of the schools, school division buildings, and on all buses and cars used for pupil transportation.

How much physical distancing is required?

All students should be at least 3 feet apart whenever possible. Although physical distancing should be maximized to the greatest extent possible, school divisions have been advised not to reduce in-person learning in order to meet a minimum distance requirement. Physical distancing should be combined with other mitigation strategies, including correct and consistent mask wearing indoors.

Are COVID-19 screening tests being offered at the schools?

Not yet. Since screening testing can help promptly identify and isolate cases, the school division will be participating in the Virginia School Screening Testing for Assurance (ViSSTA) program. ViSSTA is a joint effort between the VDOE and VDH to offer COVID testing at no cost to public schools. The start date is not known at this time; please check this FAQ for updates.

Are COVID-19 vaccinations being offered at the schools?

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) has offered several free vaccination clinics for staff and students of Westmoreland County Public Schools. Additional clinics are being planned. Once scheduled, these clinics will be announced through Instant Alert, the division website, and social media.

Are parents supposed to check their students' temperatures every morning before they come to school?

Yes. Parents are asked to conduct a health screening with their children every morning before school. This includes checking temperatures. It also includes checking to see whether their children feel sick or are experiencing any of these symptoms:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

If students are experiencing any of these symptoms, they should stay home.

Are teachers and other staff members required to conduct a health screening for themselves every morning?

Yes. All staff members are expected to self-monitor for any of the symptoms noted above. If staff members are experiencing any of these symptoms, they should stay home.

What if you don't know whether the symptoms are from COVID-19 or something else, like a cold?

If students or staff members are experiencing any symptoms, they should stay home. Please do not take chances with spreading COVID-19. Consult your physician to see whether COVID testing should be conducted, with a negative result, before returning to school.

How does the school know whether or not someone has COVID-19?

The quickest, most effective way the school can learn of a positive case among students is if the parent contacts the school administration to report it. Parents are asked to contact the school principal immediately upon learning your child has tested positive for COVID-19. This enables the school principal to begin contact tracing, and it enables the school to properly code your child's absences.

Staff members who test positive are expected to immediately report to their immediate supervisor. Again, this enables contact tracing to begin.

The school division's Deputy Superintendent is also alerted to positive cases within the schools by the Virginia Department of Health (VDH).

What happens if someone tests positive? How long must they stay home?

Individuals who test positive for COVID-19, and who **have** symptoms, should stay home for:

- At least 10 days after symptoms first appeared, **and**
- At least 24 hours with no fever without fever-reducing medication, **and**
- Other symptoms have improved.

Individuals who test positive for COVID-19, and who **never have any** symptoms, should stay home for:

- At least 10 days after the date of the first positive test result, **and**
- No symptoms have started since being tested.

I don't want everyone to know my child tested positive. If I report it to the school, will the school share my child's name and positive test result with other students/parents, their bus drivers, and their teachers?

No. The school reports all positive cases, by name, to the Deputy Superintendent who then reports them to the Virginia Department of Health. The school and division will alert others that a positive case

has been reported at the school, in your child's classroom, or on your child's bus, but will not share your child's name.

What happens if a student or staff member is exposed to COVID-19 in school or on the bus?

When the school principals learn of a positive case, they immediately alert the Deputy Superintendent, who then alerts the VDH (unless the report came from the VDH). School administrators then immediately begin working to identify any close contacts in the school setting (including transportation). When close contacts are identified these are shared with the Deputy Superintendent, who passes the information to the VDH to assist with their contact tracing. The VDH may identify additional close contacts in the school setting and/or outside the school setting. The VDH and schools work closely together to identify close contacts so that they may be advised to quarantine and monitor for symptoms.

Who is considered a close contact at school or on the bus?

Individuals are considered close contacts if they have been within six feet of the person who has COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more during a 24-hour period, or if they were exposed to respiratory droplets (e.g., coughed or sneezed on) by the person who has COVID-19.

Exception for students only (not staff): If both students (the exposed student and the student with COVID-19) are consistently and correctly masked, the exposed student is not considered a close contact. This exception does not apply on the bus.

What happens if a student or staff member is identified as a close contact at school or on the bus?

Students or staff members who are identified as close contacts will be advised to quarantine (stay home) for 14 days after the date of the last close contact with the person who has COVID-19. So, if the last close contact was on a Monday, the 14 days of quarantine starts on Tuesday.

If the student or staff member is at school at the time they are determined to be a close contact, they will be isolated from others at the school until they can leave or be picked up. If they are already at home, they will be contacted by school administration.

While the student or staff member quarantines for 14 days, they should closely monitor for symptoms.

What if the student or staff member has been fully vaccinated? Do they still have to quarantine?

No. Fully vaccinated students and staff members do not have to quarantine, as long as they have no symptoms. They should still get tested 3-5 days after exposure and wear a mask in all indoor public settings (not just school) for 14 days or until they get a negative test result.

If a student or staff member is fully vaccinated, do they have to quarantine until they get tested? Or while they wait for a negative test result?

No.

As a parent, student, or staff member, how will I know if there is a positive case in my school?

Beginning Monday, August 30, the school/school division will send out an Instant Alert to all students, parents, and staff connected with an individual school to alert them that a positive case has been reported to that school. No names will be shared.

As a parent, student, or staff member, how will I know if the person who has COVID-19 was in the same classroom or on the same bus as me or my child?

When the school administration learns of a positive case, the school/division distributes letters to all staff and students who shared classroom and/or bus space with the person who has tested positive for COVID-19. No names will be shared.

As a parent, student, or staff member, how will I know if my child or I have been identified as a close contact to the person who tested positive for COVID-19?

School administrators will reach out directly via phone call to the parent(s) of any student who has been identified as a close contact and advise them the student needs to quarantine (unless fully vaccinated).

School administrators will reach out directly to any staff member who has been identified as a close contact and advise them to quarantine (unless fully vaccinated).

In most cases, those identified as close contacts will also be contacted directly by someone from the VDH, as the VDH continues their contact tracing.

If one child in my household is identified as a close contact for someone who tests positive for COVID-19 at school or on the bus, do all of the children in my household need to quarantine?

No. It is only necessary for the person who was directly exposed to the person who has COVID-19 to quarantine. If the other children in the household were not directly exposed to the person who has COVID-19, they do not need to quarantine.

It is not necessary to quarantine if you are exposed to a close contact. It is only necessary to quarantine if you are exposed to a person who has COVID-19 and determined to be a close contact.

As a parent, will I be notified if a student in my child’s class or on my child’s bus has to quarantine?

No. You will be alerted if your child shares classroom or bus space with an individual who tests positive for COVID-19. This is because of potential exposure to a positive case. You will not be notified if your child shares space with someone who must quarantine but who has not tested positive.

Why is the quarantine for 14 days? I heard it could be just 10 or shorter if you test negative.

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) has advised us to maintain the “gold standard” 14-day quarantine until further notice due to the high level of community transmission and the surge in cases at this time.

VDH does permit two shorter quarantine timeframes for individuals with no symptoms:

- After 10 days without testing; or
- After 7 days with a negative PCR or antigen test performed on or after Day 5.

Again, at the advice of VDH, the division is NOT using either of these two shorter quarantines at this time. The division is currently using only the 14-day quarantine for all close contacts.

What if my child has to quarantine for 14 days? Will they be marked absent every day? Will they receive any instruction?

Students who must quarantine – either because they have tested positive for COVID-19 or because they have been identified as a close contact for someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 – will continue to receive instruction from their teacher(s) through Canvas.

Within two days of the student being quarantined, the classroom teacher(s) will contact the parents to explain the attendance process and continued learning plan. Within two days, the teacher(s) will also begin to post daily instructional materials and assignments in Canvas. The teacher will attempt to meet with the student via phone or Google Meet at least one time per week to check in with the student for questions and support. When appropriate, the teacher(s) may arrange for the student to “join” live instruction via Google Meet.

Daily attendance for students who are quarantined will be coded “QUA” in PowerSchool. A “QUA” is considered PRESENT. Therefore, quarantined students will be considered PRESENT, so long as they are connecting with the teacher or Canvas daily **AND** completing and submitting daily assignments through Canvas.

- Elementary Example: When in quarantine, a student is counted ABSENT if the child does not submit work on a daily basis in Canvas.
- Secondary Example: When in quarantine, a student is counted ABSENT for a class period if the child does not submit work on a daily basis in Canvas for that classroom period.

If my child must quarantine, will they still get breakfast and lunch from the school?

Yes. Within two days of being quarantined, the school counselor will call the student and student's parent to check in. The school counselor will ask if you would like to order breakfast/lunch. Parents who order breakfast/lunch will be able to pick up, or have delivered, 10 days' of breakfasts/lunches from the school on Wednesdays at a pre-arranged time.