

Virgin Islands Department of Education's Guide to Safely Reopen Public Schools

A New Beginning. New Ways to Learn.
A New Norm for the USVI.

School Year 2021-2022

Racquel Berry-Benjamin
Commissioner



THE VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

A Message from Commissioner Racquel Berry-Benjamin

August 27, 2021

Greetings, VIDE Family, Students, Parents and Virgin Islands Community:

It is my honor to welcome you to another school year—one that is filled with great promise and bright hope. This marks the second year the Virgin Islands will open its public schools during the global pandemic, and I credit our preparedness to do so safely to the tireless efforts of the Territory-wide Reopening of Schools Taskforce, which formed in 2020, that created a platform for health experts, government officials, educators, educational leaders, parents, and other community partners to offer their insights and expertise into the safe reopening of USVI public schools. I wish to thank the Office of the Governor and our partners at the V.I. Department of Health (DOH), V.I. Board of Education, the Collective Bargaining Units, and the V.I. Department of Education's (VIDE) leadership team and staff who have contributed to this document.

As we return students to our public-school campuses, this document should be used as the primary guide for safely and effectively doing so. However, this document remains a fluid work, as changes are anticipated based on the impact of the coronavirus on our local community. In the following pages you will find what is expected of and available to students, teachers and parents as campuses reopen, answers to frequently asked questions, and other important information critical to navigating campus life while responding to the pandemic.

The guidance provided by the DOH and the contents of this plan are only as effective as our implementation. I want to commend our educators for their resilience and quick response to the COVID-19 pandemic. I am inspired by your commitment to face this great challenge head-on and incredibly proud of how you have pulled together to help keep Virgin Islands' students safe and afford them the ability to continue learning.

Lastly, I wish to encourage everyone to get vaccinated—it is our best chance of safeguarding ourselves and our loved ones from the deadly coronavirus. Furthermore, please be reminded to continue following the general health guidelines of wearing a mask or facial covering, washing hands frequently with soap and water or using hand sanitizer when water is not available, and practice social distancing.

Stay safe and remain healthy. Together, we will transform public education in the Virgin Islands.



In Your Service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Racquel Berry-Benjamin".

Racquel Berry-Benjamin
Commissioner



Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the entire Virgin Islands community and the world. This health crisis has brought with it many challenges and never-before-experienced occurrences. Not to mention, it has changed the landscape of traditional, in-person teaching and learning to one that is online/mobile and future-facing.

This document should be considered a living document. We expect the information would be further developed to capture the changes in our local community should the coronavirus impact increase or decrease. This plan was developed with the most current information about the coronavirus available at the time of drafting and will be updated as new data becomes available.

In accordance with the DOH's current Reopening of Schools Guidelines, USVI public schools will be prepared to shift between three (3) phases, based on the escalation or de-escalation of the COVID-19 virus—100% in-person (PHASE GREEN), hybrid (PHASE YELLOW), and 100% virtual instruction (PHASE RED).

REOPENING OF SCHOOLS PHASES	
PHASE GREEN	100% In-Person Classroom Instruction
PHASE YELLOW	Combination (Hybrid) of Virtual and In-Person Instruction
PHASE RED	100% Virtual Instruction



Timeline

2020

March

- 13th – Governor Bryan declared a State of Emergency in response to COVID-19 and directed all public schools closed, effective March 18, 2020 through April 14, 2020.
- 30th – Governor Bryan renewed the State of Emergency, extended the Stay-At-Home Order, which prolonged school closures to April 30, 2020.

April

- 11th – VI. Board of Education released Resolution 001/2020 – A Resolution Regarding the Promotion and Retention Policy Compliance during the COVID-19 Emergency.
- 22nd – Commissioner Betty Benjamin announced the last day of school for the 2019-2020 school year would be June 4, 2020.
- 29th – Governor Bryan renewed the State of Emergency, establishing the Safer At Home Order, and declared all school buildings would remain closed for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year.

July

- 1st – Governor Bryan extended the State of Emergency through September 9, 2020.
- 13th – Governor Bryan announced the start of the 2020-2021 School Year, originally planned for August 10, would be delayed until after Labor Day 2020.
- 16th – the VI. Department of Education revised its Reopening of Schools Plan for School Year 2020-2021.

August

- 6th – VI. Department of Education announced Virtual Learning for the 1st Semester of the 2020-2021 school year.
- 11th – Governor Bryan suspended bus transportation as a safety measure to enforce social distancing during the pandemic.
- 13th – Governor Bryan announced, through Executive Order, that effective August 17, 2020 at 6:00pm all public, private and parochial school campuses will be closed for students. Virtual learning programs or classes would be allowed.
- 28th – Governor Bryan extended the 1st Supplemental Executive Order issued on August 13th to order all public, private and parochial school campuses to be closed for students to be closed until 6:00pm September 8, 2020.

September

- 28th – Governor Bryan, through the 1st Supplemental Order, ordered all public schools closed for students. Virtual learning programs or classes are allowed as scheduled by the VI. Department of Education.

2021

January

- 27th – Governor Bryan, through the 2nd Supplemental Executive Order, ordered all public schools closed for students. Virtual learning programs or classes were allowed as scheduled by the VI. Department of Education.

February

- 27th – VI. Department of Education announces the March 2 start of In-Person Learning for PreK-3rd Grade, Special Education Self-Contained, and Career & Technical Education students in the St. Croix District.

March

- 2nd – PreK-3rd Grade, Special Education Self-Contained, and Career & Technical Education students in the St. Croix District returned to school campuses for in-person learning.
- 12th – VI. Department of Education announces the March 16 start of In-Person Learning for PreK-3rd Grade, Special Education Self-Contained, and Career & Technical Education students in the St. Thomas-St. John District.
- 16th – PreK-3rd Grade, Special Education Self-Contained, and Career & Technical Education students in the St. Thomas-St. John District returned to school campuses for in-person learning.

July

- 29th – Governor Bryan ordered schools to open virtually on August 3, out of an abundance of caution due to a surge in COVID-19 cases.

August

- 9th – All public schools open 100% virtually.
- 27th – VI. Department of Education announces the start of In-Person Learning on September 7 for PreK-3rd Grade, Special Education Self-Contained, and Career & Technical Education students territory-wide.



THE PLAN: Learning Options

2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR

The school year began on Monday, August 9, 2021, with all students attending classes virtually—PHASE RED. On Tuesday, September 7, 2021, in-person learning for students in grades PreK-3rd, CTE students in specific career pathways, and self-contained special education students began; students in grades 4-12 continued learning virtually—PHASE YELLOW. On Monday, January 10, 2022, all students will return to in-person learning—PHASE GREEN (with the exception of students enrolled in VIVA-Virgin Islands Virtual Academy). Should the impact of COVID-19 increase or decrease, the VIDE reserves the right to adjust its plans. All are asked to remain flexible.

SCHOOL DAY

School days will begin and end as normal:

- Six (6) hours for elementary students
- Six and one half (6½, 6.5) for secondary students

The goal of the VIDE is to maximize instructional hours within the boundaries of the health guidance, such as incorporating social distancing, taking breaks from wearing masks, COVID-19 testing, transitional times between classes, and sanitizing surfaces throughout the school day.

LEARNING OPTIONS

Definitions

- **Learn from School:** Student receives in-person instruction in a classroom/school building
- **VIVA - Virgin Islands Virtual Academy:** Students enrolled in this program will learn exclusively online

Option 1: Learn from School (In-Person Learning)

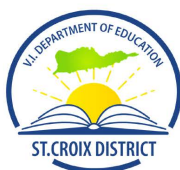
- In-person learning for grades PreK-3rd, self-contained special education students, and CTE students in specific career pathways began on Tuesday, September 7, 2021
- In-person learning for students in grades 4-12 will begin on Monday, January 10, 2022 and 6.5 hours on the secondary level



ST. CROIX DISTRICT

Beginning Monday, January 10, 2022:

- All students enrolled at Lew Muckle, Ricardo Richards, Alfredo Andrews, Pearl B. Larsen, Eulalie Rivera, Claude O. Markoe, and Juanita Gardine schools will attend classes in-person, five days a week.
- 7th and 8th grade students at the John H. Woodson Jr. High School will attend school in-person two days per week and three days virtually.
- 9th grade students attending both the St. Croix Educational Complex High School and the St. Croix Central High School will have four days of in-person classes and one day of virtual classes each week.
- 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students at both high schools have two days of in-person learning and three days of virtual learning each week
- Students at the Positive Connections—Alternative Education, site will attend school three days in-person and two days virtually.
- Schedules for students currently attending the St. Croix Career & Technical Education Center will remain the same – these students will learn in-person five days a week



In-Person Student Rotation

Grade Span	Week	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
7 th	A	In-Person		Virtual	Virtual	
	B	Virtual			In-Person	
8 th	A	Virtual		Virtual	In-Person	
	B	In-Person			Virtual	
9 th	A	In-Person		Virtual	In-Person	
	B					
10 th	A	In-Person		Virtual	Virtual	
	B	Virtual			In-Person	
11 th	A	Virtual		Virtual	In-Person	
	B	In-Person			Virtual	
12 th	A	Virtual		Virtual	In-Person	
	B	In-Person			Virtual	

Last Updated: November 8, 2021



ST. THOMAS-ST. JOHN DISTRICT

Beginning Monday, January 10, 2022, the following groups are expected to return to school for in-person instruction:

- All students in PreK-8th grade will return to their school campuses full time, five days per week
- 9th graders at both Charlotte Amalie and Ivanna Eudora Kean high schools will report to campus four days per week, including Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays; and they will learn virtually on Wednesdays.
- 10th, 11th and 12th graders will report to school campuses two days a week and learn from home three days a week
- Wednesdays will be used to deeply clean between grade-level cohorts



In-Person Student Rotation: CAHS

Grade Span	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9 th	IN-PERSON	IN-PERSON	VIRTUAL/Deep Cleaning	IN-PERSON	IN-PERSON
10 th	IN-PERSON	IN-PERSON	VIRTUAL/Deep Cleaning	VIRTUAL	VIRTUAL
11 th	VIRTUAL	VIRTUAL	VIRTUAL/Deep Cleaning	IN-PERSON	IN-PERSON
12 th	VIRTUAL	VIRTUAL	VIRTUAL/Deep Cleaning	IN-PERSON	IN-PERSON
SPED Self-contained	IN-PERSON	IN-PERSON	VIRTUAL/Deep Cleaning	IN-PERSON	IN-PERSON
CTE	VIRTUAL (AM)		VIRTUAL/Deep Cleaning	IN-PERSON	IN-PERSON
	IN-PERSON (PM)				

Last Updated: November 8, 2021



In-Person Student Rotation: IEKHS

Grade	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9 th	IN-PERSON	IN-PERSON	VIRTUAL/Deep Cleaning	IN-PERSON	IN-PERSON
10 th	IN-PERSON	IN-PERSON	VIRTUAL/Deep Cleaning	VIRTUAL	VIRTUAL
11 th	VIRTUAL	VIRTUAL	VIRTUAL/Deep Cleaning	IN-PERSON	IN-PERSON
12 th	VIRTUAL	VIRTUAL	VIRTUAL/Deep Cleaning	IN-PERSON	IN-PERSON
CTE Morning All Students	Follow grade Level Schedule Above		VIRTUAL/Deep Cleaning	IN-PERSON	IN-PERSON
CTE Afternoon OJT	IN-PERSON		VIRTUAL/Deep Cleaning	IN-PERSON	IN-PERSON
SPED Self-contained/ Intensive Support	IN-PERSON		VIRTUAL/Deep Cleaning	IN-PERSON	IN-PERSON



Option 2: VIVA - Virgin Islands Virtual Academy

- The Virgin Islands Virtual Academy (VIVA) is a pilot program of the V.I. Department of Education, as we seek to establish a permanent online school as part of our educational product
- Students in grades 6-12 who applied to and were accepted into VIVA have been informed and will receive additional information concerning their participation in the Academy prior to the close of this semester in December. A new component of the Academy now allows for limited numbers of parents to elect to have their children enrolled in VIVA.



The Plan: HEALTH & SAFETY

The health and safety of students and staff have been the top priorities when making the decision to physically reopen school campuses. The Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE) worked in collaboration with local health officials, federal health agencies, key community partners, and the Office of the Governor in planning to reopen safely.

School administrators should use the Virgin Islands Department of Health's (DOH) Reopening of Schools Guidelines and this plan to develop clear protocols for their respective school campuses to ensure the safety of students and staff.

Pursuant to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations, and consequently, the DOH orders, all faculty, staff and students must wear face mask or face shield with a mask beneath while at school and on the school bus, as well as maintain at least two feet while seated in class and six feet of physical distance during outdoor school activities. Additionally, students and VIDE employees must wash hands regularly and utilize hand sanitizer as needed.

MASK PROTOCOL

- Cloth face coverings that cover the nose and mouth are recommended as a simple barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from traveling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the cloth face covering coughs, sneezes, talks, or raises their voice. This is called source control. This recommendation is based on what we know about the role respiratory droplets play in the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. (CDC.gov)
- Masks are now a part of the school uniform in the U.S. Virgin Islands Public School System. Students are required to wear a mask to school daily. Masks can be homemade from breathable cloth material or store-bought. Medical-grade masks, such as surgical facemasks or N95 respirators, may be worn, but are not required.
- All masks must be appropriate in size, shape, and fit to properly cover the nose and mouth, as well as in written/printed words and/or applied décor. School administrators will determine if masks disrupt the learning environment and address pupils accordingly.

✓ While boarding, riding, and disembarking the school bus	✓ While in classrooms and during rotations/transitional periods
✓ While waiting to enter school campus	✓ While leaving school
✓ While on school campus (except when eating or drinking, or during a scheduled mask break)	

- Breaks from wearing masks shall be taken every 30 minutes, under the supervision of a teacher, or as needed, while students are in their own safe place. Parents with a child/children who has/have health concerns should immediately notify the school administrator in writing.





TEMPERATURE CHECKS

- Temperature checks will be conducted daily when students, faculty, and staff arrive at school.
- The temperatures of students arriving by private vehicle will be checked before students can leave the vehicle.
- Students with a temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher will remain in the vehicle with parents and not be allowed onto the campus until they can provide written clearance from the DOH. The same is true for all school-based employees driving personal vehicles.
- Students with elevated temperatures who walk to school or who arrive by school bus will be placed in an isolation room. If the parent has given written consent for COVID-19 testing, the student will be administered a rapid antigen test (BinaxNOW) by the school nurse. Regardless of the result, parents will be called to pick the child up. Parents should follow steps in the DOH's Guidelines for Schools when a child is sick. Similarly, school-based employees who walk to work and show elevated temperatures are required to immediately leave the campus and follow the steps in the DOH's guidelines.
- As a precautionary measure, parents are asked to check students' temperatures before they leave home and do not send students to school if they are sick.

HAND WASHING & HAND SANITIZATION PROTOCOL

(From DOH Reopening of Schools Guidelines)

Proper hand hygiene is an important infection-control measure. Each person is required to wash his/her hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol should be utilized.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Hand soap rather than hand sanitizer should be used for younger children
- Clean/disinfect frequently touched surfaces and shared objects after each use
- Hand washing and sanitization are encouraged throughout the day
- Key times to clean hands in general include:



- Before, during, and after preparing food
- Before and after eating food
- After using the bathroom
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing

- Provide paper towels and no-touch trash cans in all bathrooms, classrooms, and frequently trafficked areas
- Schools will take steps to ensure all water systems are safe at all times
- Allow students and staff to bring hand sanitizer from home
- Use gloves, if required, to touch surfaces contaminated by body fluids



IF STAFF/STUDENTS DEVELOP SYMPTOMS SUGGESTIVE OF COVID-19

(From DOH Reopening of Schools Guidelines)

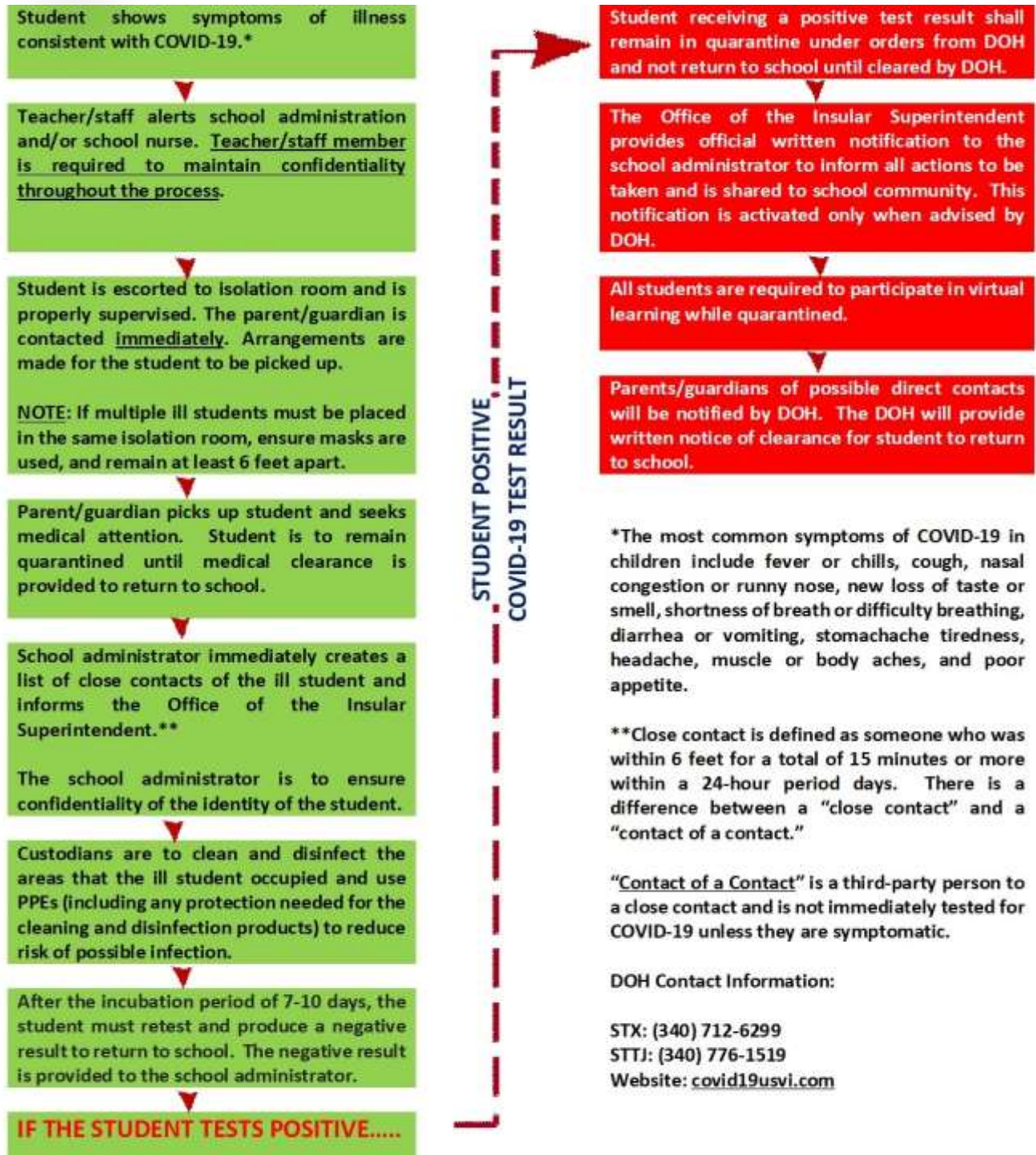
- School personnel and students who are sick must stay home
- Staff and students who present with COVID-19 symptoms (such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath) at school will be isolated from others immediately
- School administrators will immediately notify the insular superintendent or designee of any case of COVID-19
- The Division of Human Resources will inform (in writing) those employees who have had close contact to a person suspected of COVID-19 to stay home and follow DOH guidance if symptoms develop. If a person does not have symptoms, he/she is also required to follow appropriate guidance from DOH for home quarantine until cleared. ***Close contact is defined as individuals who were within six (6) feet of a positive case for 15 minutes without a mask covering their nose and mouth, whether vaccinated or not.***
- Advise sick staff members, parents and children not to return to the school facility/building until they have met the criteria to discontinue home isolation (quarantine).
- Those who become sick at school will have their temperature taken:

- In the isolation room or before entering another room
- Students/staff will be isolated and sent home if reading is 100.4°F (38°C) or above. School nurses can conduct a rapid antigen test on students if written parental consent has been granted
- Confidentiality of student/staff is to be maintained
- If the child or employee is in any kind of distress, 911 will be notified immediately

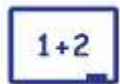
- A student will not be able to return to school without clearance from the DOH or a negative COVID-19 test result
- Nurses caring for children suspected of COVID-19 exposure should immediately report their suspicion to the school administrator
- Schools will participate in contact tracing and specimen collection efforts as directed by local health officials



WHAT TO DO IF A STUDENT BECOMES SICK OR REPORTS A NEW COVID-19 DIAGNOSIS AT SCHOOL



VISIT THE V.I. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S WEBSITE TO VIEW MORE DETAILS ON THE SAFE AND HEALTHY GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOLS: www.vide.vi



THE PLAN: Special Student Groups



SPECIAL EDUCATION & ENGLISH LEARNERS

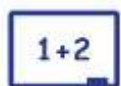
With the uncertainty of the pandemic and the flexibility provided by the U.S. Department of Education-Office of Special Education, schools have a unique opportunity to utilize in-person and remote learning options to ensure students with disabilities and other special populations, such as English Learners, are fully integrated into every aspect of preparation and participation, and to ensure the needs of all students are addressed.

For students receiving special education services, schools will create schedules to meet the requirements of each student's Individual Education Program Plans (IEP) and provide services to students by utilizing one of the Department's two Learning Options (see Learning Options above). Similarly, for English Learners, schools will use one of the two options to educate English Learners. The WorldClass Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) test will resume as an in-person assessment.

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

CTE classes engage in learning activities that require critical thinking and hands-on application.

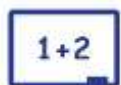
- Schools will develop schedules to allow labs and other hands-on activities to occur while students in specific career pathways are physically present in the classroom
- Theory will be taught in virtual/online settings
- Schools should ensure CTE programs engage students and staff in a safe manner according to the health and safety guidelines
- Schools will develop a process that ensures all tools are cleaned after each use so they are ready for the next student or class. This may vary from school-to-school.
- Guidance counselors and CTE teachers will provide students the necessary guidance they need on their respective career pathways



THE PLAN: Curriculum, Instruction, Assessments & Technology

CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, ASSESSMENTS & TECHNOLOGY

- The standards and teaching material that currently make up curriculum at the VIDE, Virgin Islands Standards of Achievement (VISA), remain the same. An online repository for VISA, #GoOpenUSVI, an open educational resources microsite, is completed and operational.
- Teachers will design and execute lessons using existing standards and instructional resources
- Teachers will schedule assessments in-person for students who choose the “Learn from School” option and schedule assessments on the online platforms for students who choose the “Learn from Home” option
- Standardized assessments will resume as normal for the 2021-2022 school year. The Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) assessment will be piloted for the 2021-2022 school year. Updates to the VIDE’s assessment plans will be informed by guidance from the U.S. Department of Education.
- Each student needing a Chromebook has received one upon parental request
- Students needing internet access at home receives a MiFi device upon parental request
- VIDE will continue use of Schoology as the online platform hub that houses all digital platforms supported by both districts, including iReady, Edmentum, and Acellus. Schoology also serves as a communication tool that allows teachers to interact with parents and students. Additionally, Schoology manages students’ academic and co-curricular calendar. Finally, it is an extension of the Department’s already-existing student information database—PowerSchool. This makes it easy for teachers to enter grades, and students and parents to view grades.



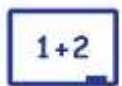
THE PLAN: Assessing and Addressing the Impact of the Loss of Instructional Time

ASSESSING & ADDRESSING THE IMPACT OF THE LOSS OF INSTRUCTIONAL TIME

- In an effort to determine learning loss or gains with our student population, assessments will be administered. After assessments are completed, to address any area with evidence of learning loss and/or to maintain and increase any area with evidence of gains, afterschool programs in English Language Arts and Mathematics, homework assistance, tutorials, and Saturday academies will be offered. Students and teachers interested in participating in any of the above mentioned, should contact their school administrator.
- Students will benefit from in-person and online supports unique to each individual school

EPISODIC DISTANCE LEARNING

- Should the pandemic strengthen in the community, after-school services should be offered from a distance using the available technology, and school personnel should maintain connections with parents and others from their school community.



THE PLAN: School Operations



IN-PERSON REOPENING

- Schools will practice the logistics of social distancing, temperature checks, COVID-19 antigen and PCR testing for students, meal distribution, and other aspects of campus life to ensure compliance and efficiency
- Teacher and student desks, and school main offices have been retrofitted with Plexiglas barriers as an added measure of safety the VIDE has implemented (this is not a requirement of the CDC)
- A variety of safety signage has been designed and posted throughout campuses to inform students and staff of the safety protocols
- Informational messages will air online, and on local radio and TV to inform of the new on-campus procedures
- Visitors, including parents, are not allowed on campus without an appointment

BUS TRANSPORTATION

- In keeping with CDC social distancing guidelines, school buses will carry less than half of their capacity on each pick-up and drop-off. Two (2) students per seat, with face masks/coverings, are allowed on school buses. Parents who are able to transport their children to and from school are strongly encouraged to do so.
- Students are required to wear a mask that covers the nose and mouth at the bus stop, and while being transported to and from school on the school bus. School bus operators must also wear masks.
- VIDE and DOH will periodically monitor students for mask wearing at school bus stops

MEALS

- Breakfast and lunch will be served daily
- Under the guidance of the Department of Health, cafeterias will reopen and students will follow a staggered feeding schedule for breakfast and lunch, allowing for appropriate social distancing
- Students are required to bring bottled water to school, whenever possible

TRAINING

- In an effort to ensure a full understanding of operating safely during the coronavirus pandemic and how to navigate the “new normal” of our school environments, a series of trainings have been arranged for teachers, students, parents, custodial workers, school monitors, school administrators, and all other school-based personnel. Training for school nurses, School Food Authority employees, and school bus drivers have been completed.



- Training dates and times will be announced; sessions will be conducted virtually or in-person, while adhering to social distancing guidelines

SUPPORT SERVICES/COUNSELING/MENTAL HEALTH

The COVID-19 pandemic has created high levels of stress for many of our staff, students, and families. This experience emphasizes the importance of social-emotional wellbeing for all. As such, the emotional wellbeing of students, staff, and families has been at the forefront of the Department's planning and decision-making. Wellness services will be in place to service our populations. Services will be utilized through the DOH and other contracted professionals. School personnel, such as guidance counselors, will continue to be trained to address the overall wellness of students. All VIDE employees are encouraged to maximize the Employee Assistance Program for their personal wellness.

As a preventative measure, schools will:

- Promote the wellness of students and staff on a daily basis
- Partner with the appropriate professionals to ensure the wellness of students and staff
- Make the necessary referrals for extreme cases beyond the scope of the school
- Develop a system to connect with students and families to promote attendance