



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**PGCPS Safely Resumes In-Person Instruction at All
County Schools As 2020-2021 School Year Begins**

Physical Distancing, Frequent Cleaning Among Measures to Protect Those at School Campuses

PRINCE GEORGE, Va. (Sept. 8, 2020) - Prince George County Public Schools safely opened the 2020-2021 school year Tuesday as students returned to class both virtually and in-person at the district's nine schools with measures in place aimed at protecting the health of students and staff.

Tuesday was the first day since mid-March 2020 that most county students attended classes in-person following the closure of school campuses for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year as part of Executive Order 53 issued by Governor Ralph Northam as the Commonwealth sought to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Since the closure and into the summer, PGCPS closely monitored guidance from state health officials as the district began to plan its offerings for the 2020-2021 school year.

In accordance with Governor Northam's *Forward Virginia* Phase III guidance, school divisions were granted the ability to offer in-person instruction to all students with physical distancing measures in place, along with remote learning options, and other mitigation strategies to protect our school communities. This, along with recommendations from the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), helped shape the [Prince George County Public Schools Health Mitigation Plan for K-12: Phase III](#), a document that extensively details PGCPS' efforts to keep students and staff at our schools safe when welcoming them back to class.

In preparation for the 2020-2021 school year, the school district reached out to families to glean their comfort level with having their children return to campus for class, culminating in the *Return to Learn Family Instructional Choice Survey*. During the late-July 2020 survey, over 5,200 responses we received out of 6,049 students enrolled, representing a response rate of 87 percent. Of those responses, over 2,600 families, or 43 percent, selected in-person instruction for the first semester, while the remaining 57 percent chose 100 percent virtual/remote instruction.

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On August 6, 2020, the Prince George School Board voted unanimously to move forward with the school district’s instructional plan, which offers two options for the 2020-2021 school year:

- **In-Person Instruction**: On-campus learning in line with a learning continuum that allows for traditional classroom learning for as many days as resources and safety allow, blended instruction through a combination of in-person and virtual/remote instruction, and temporarily online, dependent on local COVID-19 health data.
- **100% Virtual/Remote Instruction**: At-home online instruction focused on keeping students engaged through the best academic experience possible while staying connected via meaningful virtual lessons designed to enhance student learning and growth.

Following the school board’s approval, [PGCPS’ instructional plan](#) was submitted to the VDOE in early August.

Currently, students who selected in-person instruction will attend classes four days a week (Monday-Thursday), with Fridays serving as a day of virtual/remote learning from home. The on-campus offerings will be dependent on the health and safety conditions present in our community. Along the in-person learning continuum, with lower rates of COVID-19, traditional learning, where students are on campus for five days with physical distancing measures in place, can be utilized. If the need exists to move along the continuum, PGCPS can seamlessly move to blended learning, which includes in-person instruction on-campus and virtual learning, or temporarily online until conditions allow for a return to on-campus teaching.

For virtual instruction, both during the one day of online instruction for our in-person students and our families who have selected 100% virtual/remote learning, students will follow a schedule throughout the day with instruction for students with opportunities to receive support and enrichment while learning from home. Students will have access to both synchronous (live interactions via Zoom, Google Classroom) and asynchronous (recorded lessons and prepared assignments) through their teachers, along with additional enrichment and remediation activities to support students on Fridays.

Prince George County Public Schools has ordered over 2,500 Chromebooks since June to support the expected distance learning needs of our elementary families. While the school district has been made aware some of the ordered units’ arrivals have been delayed beyond the start of the school year, PGCPS expects approximately 800 of those units to arrive by the end of this month. Once those devices arrive, the school system will distribute them, with priority being given to virtual/remote learners who have indicated they need a device.

As students arrived on campus Tuesday, they found a new normal that highlighted the importance of reducing the spread of COVID-19 and other communicable diseases. Prior to exiting their parent’s vehicle or school bus, students had their temperatures checked and face coverings were highly recommended and strongly encouraged when six feet of physical distance couldn’t be maintained. Once inside, desks inside classrooms were positioned to allow for adequate physical distancing and PGCPS Department of Custodial Services teams led sanitization efforts, regularly cleaning surfaces throughout the day.

As buses completed their student runs, the units were sanitized either at each school or the district’s garage before departing to continue student pick-ups, one of several safety measures implemented to protect students and drivers as they travel to and from school.

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Prince George County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Lisa Pennycuff and other members of the school division's leadership team joined Prince George School Board members in fanning out across the county to welcome students, families, and staff back to class Tuesday.

"Seeing the faces of the students returning to class today brings us great hope for brighter days for our community," **Prince George County School Board Chairman Chris Johnson said.** "I am proud of the tremendous effort put forth by our faculty, staff, and administrators in doing what is best for the children. I think our community is fortunate to have the leadership and resolve that we have in our staff here in Prince George County."

"Today was a special day in Prince George County as we welcomed students back to class for in-person instruction and virtual/remote learning," **Prince George County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Lisa Pennycuff said.** "While today was filled with smiles and laughter, we also understand this is an extraordinary time and things look a little different than they did the last time our students were here in March. What remains unchanged is the commitment of our faculty and staff to providing high-quality instruction to our students in-person and virtually. We appreciate the support of our community and the grace and kindness of our families as we work together to overcome any challenges we face during this school year."

For more information about PGCPSS' instructional plans for the 2020-2021 school year and the district's efforts to protect the health of students, faculty, and staff, visit our "Return to Learn" website at <http://pgs.k12.va.us/ReturnToLearn>.