

INTRODUCTION

The health and safety of our students and our student-athletes is of the highest priority. We understand many of our students are ready to return to their activities, but this must be done with the highest regard to their health and safety. Making decisions about returning to conditioning, practice and activities is no easy task. Our district took the recommendations of four authoritative bodies (VDOE, VA Health Dept., VHSL, and the NFHS) in order to make the best decisions possible for our students, coaches, and community. Under the direction of the VHSL, our district created a Return to Sports Task Force (Director of Secondary Leadership and the Director of Student Activities from - KFHS, LHS, and NRHS). The Task Force was crucial in developing a comprehensive list of concerns the district would need to address in order to safely return to athletics. Those concerns include:

- ❖ Handling of confirmed COVID-19 cases within a school or team;
- ❖ Sanitizing and disinfecting;
- ❖ Social distancing;
- ❖ Use of facial coverings during practice & activities;
- ❖ Limiting crowds;
- ❖ Use of locker rooms and equipment;
- ❖ Pre/post game handshakes;
- ❖ Equity of sports

Additionally our district received guidance from city-wide Athletic Directors from our region as well as Bon Secour who advise the SPS Athletics Department on health related issues. Bon Secour also recommends procedures and protocols, reviews athletic processes for safety purposes, and develops safety guidelines for the Athletics Department. By gathering the recommendations, advice and guidelines from these six groups, our district developed the 2020 Return to Athletics Plan for a safe and successful return to activities.

Respectfully,

Ron M. Leigh, Director of Secondary Leadership

PRE-SEASON PARTICIPATION PLAN

In order to return to activity as cautiously as possible, our district created a Pre-Season Participation Plan that allowed students to return to activity in phases:

PHASE I	VIRTUAL WORK-OUTS	August 2020
PHASE II	RETURN TO ACTIVITY	October 5, 2020
PHASE III	RETURN TO ACTIVITY	December 14, 2020

This phased implementation approach included athletics, band, JROTC, and color guard. With the start of the final phase of the Summer Participation Plan, all established safety precautions were in place. The safety precautions, implemented by Phase, are outlined below:

PHASE I - STRENGTH, CONDITIONING AND FITNESS

With guidance from the Virginia High School League (VHSL) our district began Phase I of the Pre-Season Participation Plan in **August 2020**. The focus of this phase was to allow our student-athletes to begin conditioning and strength training. Student-athletes used no equipment and were virtual the duration of activity. All Student Activity Directors, Coaches, and Principals were trained on the use of the temperature readers, workout and practice procedures, and safety protocols.

[COVID-19 STUDENT MONITORING FORM](#)

PHASE II - RETURN TO ACTIVITY

With guidance from the VHSL our district began Phase II of the Pre-Season Participation Plan on **October 5, 2020**. Different from Phase I, sport-specific equipment was permitted. Also, more student athletes could participate in a group and the weight rooms were open for use. The following safety protocols were strictly enforced during Phase II:

- ❖ Signage was posted prominently indicating no one should attend or participate in practice if they had symptoms or had been in contact with anyone with a confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis within the past 14 days;
- ❖ Coaches were responsible for tracking attendance for the purpose of noting potential COVID-19 cases;
- ❖ No one with a cough, cold, or fever was allowed to participate;
- ❖ Social distancing with 6 feet of spacing was mandated;
- ❖ Small groups of 10 people maximum, including students and coaches, with social distancing;
- ❖ Athletic facilities only were able to be utilized by student-athletes (stadiums, practice field, track, baseball/softball field, tennis court, weight room, gymnasium);
- ❖ Groups consisted of the same individuals for each session to limit exposure;
- ❖ Locker rooms not available or open;
- ❖ One restroom available.
- ❖ Disinfecting was done before, during and after activities
- ❖ No back spotters for weightlifting were allowed (side-spotting only),
- ❖ No spectators;
- ❖ All student-athletes brought their own water bottle – no water fountains or water cows in use;
- ❖ One identified restroom was available with one individual allowed inside at a time.

Process for Disinfecting Weightroom and Equipment

- ❖ Performed daily at the conclusion of training day;
- ❖ The disinfecting process must be performed daily at the conclusion of the last workout session;
- ❖ Before disinfecting, all equipment and touch-point surfaces must be cleaned using the normal cleaning process (no bleach);
- ❖ After cleaning, use a sprayer to spray the entire room with the provided disinfectant solution. Spray enough to leave a visible sheen on surfaces and equipment so that disinfectant solution remains wet on the surfaces and equipment for 10 minutes to air dry;
- ❖ This is a No Wipe process;
- ❖ If any weight room equipment has been relocated outside for training areas, the relocated equipment must be returned to the weight room for the daily disinfecting process.

Process for Sanitizing Weight Room and Equipment

- ❖ Performed Continuously and Simultaneously During Training Sessions;
- ❖ During usage of the weight room and outside training area, utilize the disinfectant solution as a sanitizer to clean weights, weight equipment, training equipment, and all touch-point surfaces;
- ❖ Utilize disinfectant solution spray bottles and disposable paper towels to sanitize weights, weight equipment, training equipment, and all touch-point surfaces between sets/reps;
- ❖ The use of reusable rags is prohibited;
- ❖ Disinfectant spray bottles and disposable paper towels must be located throughout the weight room and outside training area for easy access to execute the process.

PHASE III - WORKOUTS FOR CONDITIONING & SPORT SPECIFIC SKILL DEVELOPMENT

With guidance from the VHSL our district will begin Phase III of the Return to Athletics Plan on **December 14, 2020**. At this time, our student-athletes will be allowed to use sport-specific equipment and schools locker rooms made available. The following safety protocols will be strictly enforced during Phase III:

- ❖ All athletic facilities, including locker rooms and the trainer's office are open;
- ❖ All equipment can be used (including balls, nets, etc. including helmets and shoulder pads);
- ❖ Whole group participation is allowed;
- ❖ The use of water coolers and water cows are allowed (student-athletes still encouraged to bring their own water bottles and towels);
- ❖ Restrooms in the locker rooms available.

Locker Procedures for Student Athlete Utilization

- ❖ No more than 10 people in the locker room at a time;
- ❖ No one other than coaches, staff and student-athletes permitted in the locker room. No parents, college coaches, vendors, etc. are permitted;
- ❖ Only one athletic team can utilize the locker room at a time;
- ❖ Multiple sport locker rooms must be divided into sections for each sport;
- ❖ Student-athletes must utilize the locker room strictly for changing and equipping themselves for practice. Change and exit. No standing around, socializing or lying down;
- ❖ Facial coverings must be properly worn while in a locker room;
- ❖ Student-athletes and coaches should maintain a 6 foot distance while in the locker room. Sharing lockers is not permitted;
- ❖ Student-athletes must take all personal and school issued practice equipment home daily for cleaning, sanitizing and/or disinfecting;
- ❖ At the conclusion of each practice, the locker room must be disinfected with the disinfectant provided by the School Facilities Department.

2020 WINTER PRACTICES BEGIN

According to the Virginia High School League (VHSL) the first allowable date to begin fall sports (practice) is **December 7, 2020**. On this date, the following sports will begin practice:

PROPOSED VHSL SPORTS 2020-2021 CALENDAR CHAMPIONSHIPS + 1

SAFETY PROTOCOLS FOR WINTER 2020 ATHLETIC PRACTICES

All cleansing and sanitation practices used during the Pre-Season Participation Plan will continue to be utilized when Season 1 practices begin. This includes procedures for the weight rooms and locker rooms. Coaches will continue to ask athletes questions from the Monitoring Form and turn the form in to the Director of Student Activities. That Monitoring Form will help assist in contact tracing should a positive COVID-19 case occur. The following safety protocols will be in place for athletic practices:

- ❖ Athletes will social distance when feasible;
- ❖ Daily cleaning procedures for athletic equipment and locker rooms remain in effect;
- ❖ Coaches are responsible for tracking attendance for the purpose of noting potential COVID-19 cases;
- ❖ All athletic facilities including locker rooms and the athletic trainer's office will be open;
- ❖ The use of water coolers and water cows are allowed;
- ❖ Restrooms in the locker rooms can be used with no more than ten people in the space at a time;
- ❖ Handshakes and high fives are not permitted.

WINTER SPORTS CONTESTS BEGIN

Winter sports competitions will begin **December 21, 2020** for Varsity and Junior Varsity athletics. However, athletic competitions will look much different this year because of the extra safety protocols in place. Athletes participating in competitions are not required to wear face coverings, however they are always voluntary for any athlete. Athletes on the sidelines or bench must wear a face covering and socially distance when feasible. Only home cheerleaders and bands will be in attendance to perform but must maintain social distancing. There will be no pre-game or postgame handshakes permitted.

In 2020, despite the challenges that we face with COVID-19, Suffolk Public Schools is offering a full athletic program. Our Winter, Fall, and Spring sports are as follows:

SEASON 1 (Winter)	SEASON 2 (Fall)	SEASON 3 (Spring)
BASKETBALL (14)	COMPETITION CHEER (3)	BASEBALL (12)
INDOOR TRACK (6)	CROSS COUNTRY (6)	SOCCER (10)
SWIM & DIVE (6)	FIELD HOCKEY (10)	SOFTBALL (12)
WRESTLING (8)	FOOTBALL (6)	TENNIS (10)
SIDELINE CHEER (14)	BOY'S/GIRL'S GOLF (8)	OUTDOOR TRACK (9)
	VOLLEYBALL (12)	

The media must stay in an area off one end zone opposite of the band for the duration of the contest. In previous years, the media was allowed to roam the sidelines but because of COVID-19 precautions, that will not be the case this year.

SPECTATOR PROCEDURES FOR 2020-2021 CONTESTS

2020 has caused many changes to what the world knows as normal. One specific change will be with the spectator experience. In an effort to help control interactions and limit the spread of COVID-19, SPS will alter spectator procedures to allow for spectators as long as safety precautions are followed. SPS values the hard work of the student-athletes and wants to provide an opportunity for the skill sets of all student-athletes to be put on display. However, due

to the current concerns related to the pandemic, limitations must be in place to maintain a safe environment for student-athletes as well as spectators.

- ❖ Masks are required when on SPS property;
- ❖ Each participant will have the opportunity to identify two spectators to attend home games. These spectators must still purchase their ticket;
- ❖ The participant must submit the names of two spectators before the deadline:
 - For football, the deadline is the Wednesday before the game
 - For volleyball, the deadline is the day before the game
- ❖ Participant's spectator pods will be required to sit together;
- ❖ All home facilities (bleachers, stands, gyms) will be clearly marked to adhere to social distancing;
- ❖ Tickets will be sold online via the school's web page. Tickets are required at the gate in a digital form. Authenticity of the ticket will take place at the gate and admission will be granted. Only names provided by the participant will be allowed to purchase tickets;
- ❖ All spectators will go through security measures at all events;
- ❖ Administrative passes will be accepted.

VIRTUAL VIEWING OF CONTESTS (Tentative)

To ensure that our community has access to events, we are researching a partnership with NFHS Network to stream each of our contests live. Cameras could be installed at each school stadium and inside each gym so friends and family members who can't make the game will not miss a single play.

ANNUAL PASS

\$69.00

MONTHLY PASS

\$9.99/MONTH

MARCHING BAND AND GUARD PROCEDURES

Full Marching Band will be permitted to begin practicing on October 5th, along with all of our student-athletes. The Marching Band will only attend home games during the fall sports season. Every Marching Band member will have the opportunity to receive two spectator tickets per contest or competition. The recipients of those two spectator tickets will have the opportunity to purchase tickets to the event via the school's website.

The Marching Band and Color Guard must also adhere to the following guidelines and procedures:

- ❖ Marching Band must socially distance at least 6 feet. Some instruments, for example trombones, will need 9 feet;
- ❖ High School Marching Bands/Pep Bands should have a presence at all home football games. High School Bands will not be attending any away games during the fall season;
- ❖ Halftime Marching Band field shows are optional and not required. If on the field, instruments should be pointed to the sidelines/press box and never in the direction of another student;
- ❖ Marching Band uniforms may be worn on Homecoming only. Uniforms must be cleaned after each wearing and collected by dry cleaners the next Monday after the game. Any game where uniforms are not worn, the band's attire should be in an "official Marching Band shirt" with coordinating matching long pants;
- ❖ Masks are required during the time participants are not performing on the field or in the stands. This includes 3rd Quarter break;
- ❖ National Anthem singers need to perform on the track and not inside the press box;
- ❖ Students should not share instruments including mallets/sticks unless they are sanitized between use;
- ❖ Avoid sharing music folios in the stands;
- ❖ Refer to the following link for cleaning of instruments after use -
<https://www.nfhs.org/articles/covid-19-instrument-cleaning-guidelines>.

MIDDLE SCHOOL SPORTS

Our middle school athletic practices and competitions will begin in the 2nd Semester during the 2020-2021 school year. There will be no practices or competitions taking place in the 1st Semester to allow time for middle school students to acclimate to the everyday routine of school. However, a schedule has been created to make certain all middle school sports have the opportunity to compete. The following chart identifies when each middle school sport will begin its season for the 2020-2021 school year.

MIDDLE SCHOOL SEASON ONE				
ACTIVITY/NUMBER OF CONTESTS	FIRST PRACTICE	FIRST CONTEST	LAST CONTEST	
BASKETBALL (8)	February 1st	February 15th	March 22nd	
SOCCER (8)	February 15th	March 1st	March 29th	
MIDDLE SCHOOL SEASON TWO				
ACTIVITY/NUMBER OF CONTESTS	FIRST PRACTICE	FIRST CONTEST	LAST CONTEST	
FIELD HOCKEY (8)	March 15th	March 29th	April 29th	
MIDDLE SCHOOL SEASON THREE				
ACTIVITY/NUMBER OF CONTESTS	FIRST PRACTICE	FIRST CONTEST	LAST CONTEST	POST SEASON
FOOTBALL (4)	April 12th	May 5th	May 26th	Peanut Bowl- Top Two Teams June 4th ????
VOLLEYBALL (8)	April 12th	April 26th	May 24th	

Game procedures will mirror high school contests to ensure consistency. As we launch, our district will continue to follow the guidelines from the Virginia Department of Health, and the VHSL and will remain fluid while we monitor COVID-19 cases close to the 2nd Semester of school. We understand the physical and mental benefits of the athletic programs at our middle schools, but believe it is important to allow our younger athletes to return to school before joining in athletics.

POSITIVE COVID-19 CASE IN STUDENT-ATHLETE

Any student or coach who is sick, or exhibiting symptoms, should not participate in any activities. If an athlete tests positive, all team members and staff who were exposed to the athlete in close contact should be quarantined for 14 days. Our district's contact tracing team, along with guidance from the Virginia Department of Health, will help identify the individuals that need to be quarantined.

The student-athlete who tested positive must:

- ❖ Quarantine a minimum of 14 days from positive test date;
- ❖ Must have completed quarantine and experienced 24 hours fever-free without the use of fever-reducing medications and demonstrate improvement in symptoms to begin graduated return to play;
- ❖ Must have physician clearance to begin graduated return to play

CONTACT TRACING & POTENTIAL EXPOSURE

- ❖ Quarantine a minimum of 14 days from positive test date;
- ❖ Must have completed quarantine and experienced 24 hours fever-free without the use of fever-reducing medications and demonstrate improvement in symptoms to begin graduated return to play;
- ❖ Must have physician clearance to begin graduated return to play

RETURN TO PLAY GUIDELINES

Athletes who received a positive test result may begin a graduated return to play no sooner than ten days following a positive test result, having been 24 hours without a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications, and have been cleared by a physician as outlined in the VHSL, recommendations. Our district has created Return to Play guidelines, broken into stages. Each stage should take a minimum of 24 hours. Student-athletes who begin to experience symptoms during a stage should immediately rest until symptoms resolve and may reattempt the stage the

following day. The graduated return to play should be completed under the supervision of a medical provider, such as the school's Certified Athletic Trainer.

RETURN TO PLAY GUIDELINES

	STAGE 1	STAGE 2A	STAGE 2B	STAGE 3	STAGE 4	STAGE 5
Activity Description	Light Activity	Frequency Increases	Duration Increases	Increase Intensity	Resume Normal Training Progression	Return to Full Competition
Exercise Allowed	Walking, light jogging, stationary bicycle. No resistance training	Simple movements and activities such as drills	Progression to more complex training activities	Normal non-contact training activities	Normal training progressions, no competition	Return to full competition
Duration	<15 minutes	<30 minutes	<45 minutes	<60 minutes	Normal Progression	Return to Competition