



DATE: August 14, 2021

FROM: Allen Hall, Executive Director, VMEA

SUBJECT: Revised Music Guidance for the 21-22 School Year

A great deal was learned this year from the groundbreaking research of The International Coalition of Performing Arts Aerosol Study, of which both VMEA and the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) were sponsors. We learned about how vapor particles are emitted when singing and playing wind instruments. Strategies were developed to effectively mitigate the distribution of such vapor and possible viral hitchhikers.

While COVID-related school restrictions in Virginia have not been rescinded, VMEA recognizes that the transmission rate is extremely low in music classrooms and agrees the priority is to return to learning. During the past school year, many students have not been able to adequately access the music curriculum due to health restrictions. Music students can safely participate in all music instruction, performances, and events. There should be no exclusions to music classroom activities (i.e. singing and recorder playing).

Virginia Music Educators Association is releasing the following recommended guidance for music classrooms and activities:

Outdoors

- There should be no mask, distancing, or time limitations for any outdoor performing arts activity. Outdoors remain the safest space. Proper hygiene strategies should remain in place.

Indoors

- **Masks** with appropriate material remain the best way of reducing potential spread and should continue to be utilized when singing or speaking. In order to minimize physical distancing, masks should be used when wind players are less than six feet apart. Wind players who are six feet apart are not required to wear a mask while playing the instrument, but should keep a mask around the neck to be utilized when not playing.
- **Bell covers** made with appropriate material remain the best way of reducing potential spread from circulating in an indoor space.
- **Physical distancing** of three feet is suggested when feasible but should not preclude an activity from taking place.
- **Proper hygiene** and **ventilation** strategies should remain in place at all times.

- Layer multiple prevention strategies as necessary.

Divisions should ensure that all students have access to music courses if they wish to participate. At no time should local schools or divisions “cap” the number of students enrolled in music classes due to physical distancing measures.

Performances are a critical part of music instruction and schools should offer opportunities for students to engage authentically and safely. School divisions should consider lifting non-mandated restrictions for student performances if local health metrics are favorable.

Recommendations are based on:

- [International Coalition of Performing Arts Aerosol Study](#) (July 21, 2021): Dr. Shelly Miller, University of Colorado Boulder and Dr. Jelena Srebric, University of Maryland
- [Current CDC Guidelines](#)
- [Virginia Department of Health K-12 Guidance](#)
- [Virginia Governor Public Health Order](#)
- [Association for Heating, Ventilating and Air-Conditioning Engineers \(ASHRAE\)](#): Guidance on ventilation during COVID-19
- [Assessing the Risk of Music Activities During the COVID-19 Pandemic Leads to a Chance of 1 In 1.9 Million of Contracting COVID-19 In a Music Class](#): A recently published paper which summarizes research findings to date. This paper gives an indication that the risk of spread in a music setting is very small.