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VIRGINIA LEARNS ANYWHERE

A report and recommendations
from Virginia's educators on the
Continuity for Learning (C4L)
Task Force



C4L 
CONTINUITY
— FOR —
LEARNING

C4L TASK FORCE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In an effort to support Virginia educators, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) created a Continuity for Learning (C4L) Task Force to address the immediate needs of administrators and teachers in supporting students. The C4L Task Force consisted of teachers, leaders, and collaborating educational partners across Virginia. Over the course of three days, this C4L Task Force virtually convened over 120 members to create the recommendations in this document.

On March 30, Superintendent of Public Instruction James Lane convened the C4L Task Force and provided the educators and VDOE staff with the following charge:

“We face the unprecedented closure of all Virginia Public Schools in the immediate future. This Commonwealth has some of the best educators in the nation. Let’s use the Profile of a Virginia Graduate to create a response that serves generations.”

While the Task Force recognizes that this is a difficult time for families, teachers, and students, it is also a time to come together as a community to ensure all of our students’ needs are met. The recommendations in this document address strategies to prevent further expanding of currently existing learning gaps among our students. At the same time, this document discusses the importance of supporting the social and emotional needs of students first. Below you will find the common themes that arose from the work of the Task Force.

COMMON THEMES EMERGED FROM THIS WORK, INCLUDING THE NEED FOR GUIDANCE TO:

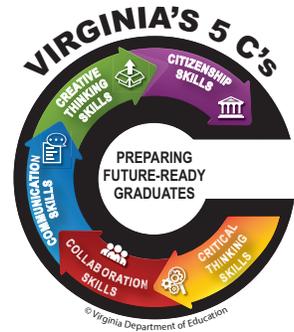
- Focus first on all students and their social and emotional needs. This is a devastating time for all Virginians and we must put the needs of our students before all else.
- Target essential knowledge and skills for grade levels and content areas. Educators must identify what is essential for learning to continue while also ensuring we don’t expand upon already existing learning gaps.
- Create quality learning opportunities that integrate essential knowledge and Virginia’s 5 C skills (critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, collaboration, and citizenship). Educators can deepen learning by focusing on the essential knowledge that students can engage in while at home.
- Provide equitable support for all students and families recognizing that some of our families do not have access to the same resources and supports.
- Focus on administrator-to-teacher, administrator-to-families, teacher-to-student and teacher-to-family communication in order to maintain clear and concise lines of communication and guidelines for learning. Communication should be weekly and address the expectations of student learning for the week.
- Use instructional models that contain innovative approaches to teaching and learning including learner-centered, teacher-centered, and hybrid models. Delivery of instruction should align with students needs and resources. Internet access may not be available for all students or teachers and lessons should be differentiated.
- Utilize materials, resources, learning management systems, and communication platforms that are consistent across grade levels and content areas within a school. A recommendation of the Task Force for schools is to utilize existing resources that are familiar to students, teachers, and families.
- Support assessment of and for student learning consisting of feedback to support continuity for learning. The VDOE does not recommend grading of student work during this time. The Task Force recognizes the importance of providing continuous feedback as a way to build relationships and provide meaningful feedback during a time when students are feeling isolated from their school community.
- Provide individualized professional learning to staff knowing this a busy and uncertain time for educators. Task Force encourages teachers to reach out to administrators and peers to support just-in-time learning.
- Provide a continuity of support to families. As social and emotional needs of students are critical during this time, the same can be said for our families. The Task Force recognizes our families are tackling many difficult issues and learning may not be the highest priority.
- Support local decision-making to honor local needs. This document provides recommendations for teaching and learning, divisions should analyze and address local needs while creating their continuity for learning plans.

When schools across the Commonwealth closed their doors, all Virginia public schools quickly transitioned from the comfort and familiarity of learning in schools to an unprecedented, technology-enabled, and remote learning model. Communities and school divisions continue to work tirelessly to manage this transition in ways that preserve a commitment to equity of access and

C4L TASK FORCE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

purposeful, sustainable engagement. This difficult and at times overwhelming work is unfolding in the same days that families face uncertainty around continued employment, access to resources, and exposure to the COVID-19 virus.

However, the school year is anything but over. During this historic and uncertain window of time, Virginia teachers and administrators are actively mobilizing to provide a model for how essential knowledge and skills can yield deeper learning outcomes for students. Teachers are learning how to communicate and cultivate relationships with learners of all ages in innovative ways. Division and school administrators are working to discover new ways to spark much-needed dialogue between school and community. Educators are innovating around the creation and delivery of essential professional learning supports that simply did not exist at this level of scale a month ago.



The C4L Task Force Guide is intended for immediate use and in ways deemed most useful by each of the 132 public school divisions across Virginia during the extended school closure.

EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS

Although school buildings are temporarily closed, “school” remains a means to engage students with experiences that continue the planned learning program and help them to stay connected with teachers and classmates. These learning experiences offer authentic opportunities to focus on essential knowledge and 21st Century skills. They emphasize communication, collaboration, creativity and involve a balance of on-screen and off-screen tasks that help connect to previous learning and the current curriculum. The C4L Task Force identified three different models for teachers to use to support learning and delivery of instruction by grade levels (elementary) or content areas (secondary).

KEY STEPS TO ENSURING EDUCATIONAL EQUITY DURING COVID-19 SCHOOL CLOSURES:

- Strive to meet students’ immediate needs first.
- Ensure equitable access to learning resources and provide the adequate supports necessary for students to achieve success.
- Provide clear, centralized, and regular communication to all families.
- Begin developing a return to learning equity plan.

“AS SCHOOL DIVISIONS REVIEW OUR GUIDANCE AND PLOT A COURSE FORWARD THAT BEST FITS THEIR UNIQUE CIRCUMSTANCES, THEY SHOULD MAKE SURE THAT EVERY DECISION IS EQUITABLE AND MEETS THE NEEDS OF ALL LEARNERS, INCLUDING EARLY LEARNERS, ENGLISH LEARNERS, STUDENTS EXPERIENCING POVERTY AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES”

- Dr. James F. Lane

RESOURCES FROM THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (VDOE) FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The VDOE has compiled a list of [COVID-19 FAQ](#) and [COVID-19 Resources](#) for division and school-level administrators related to include school closures, Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) guidance, school budget and finance, assessment and accountability, instruction, early childhood, special education and student services, school nutrition, data collection and technology, teacher education and licensure, and public meetings.

The VDOE has developed further documents to provide further guidance and support to school divisions. Documents are linked below.

[Guidance from the Department of Special Education and Student Services](#) - The goal of this document is to provide school divisions and stakeholders with information and solutions around the provision of services for special education and student services.

[COVID-19: A Parent Guide for School-Age Children](#) - The VDOE has created this guide to serve as a resource for parents, families and caregivers on a variety of topics related to COVID-19 and their students. Click on the link or visit doe.virginia.gov/covid-19.

[Guidance on Graduation Requirements, Awarding of Credits, and Continuity of Learning](#) - The goal of this document is to provide school divisions with information and solutions around graduation requirements, promotion, new instruction, and ease of process.

[Emergency Child Care during Statewide School Closure](#) - The Department of Social Services (VDSS) and the VDOE are working closely together in this effort to support critical members of the workforce and provide safe child care alternatives for their families. This document outlines a variety of options and waivers which different public and private entities and communities should consider in order to provide safe child care alternatives for essential personnel while maintaining stringent health protocols to minimize the risk of additional COVID-19 spread.

LEARNER-CENTERED MODEL

The learner centered model prioritizes open-ended discovery and authentic learning experiences. Teachers and students use a wide range of resources to understand and consistently apply content knowledge toward the creation of work products that they may safely share with their local and extended communities. Educators who choose the learner centered model:

- wish to seize the opportunity for expanded student autonomy during an extended school closure;
- possess an intermediate to advanced level of comfort with designing and facilitating virtual and student-led learning experiences using Virginia's 5 C's; and
- provide intentional check-ins on progress towards learning goals and task expectations.

TEACHER-CENTERED MODEL

The teacher centered model prioritizes consistency and structure for contexts when students need more direct and explicit instruction and guidance. Instruction continues along content specific lines, with accommodations made for remote learning conditions. Students create work products that are shared largely between themselves and their respective teachers. Educators who choose the teacher centered model:

- adapt a variety of high-yield instructional strategies to best serve the learning needs of students in the midst of profound change; and understand Virginia's 5 C's; and
- provide ongoing feedback to students.

HYBRID MODEL

The hybrid model meshes the familiarity of established teacher directed instructional models with openness for additional student independence with context specific projects that apply content to the outside world. Students interact with carefully curated assignments to refine content mastery. They then work with their teachers and each other to periodically showcase learning in non-traditional and innovative ways. Educators who choose the hybrid model:

- leverage their experience and skill as teachers to create innovative ways to explore prior and possibly uncovered content using multiple formats and/or platforms;
- maximize learning gains via a combination of established essential knowledge and innovative challenges aligned to Virginia's 5 C's; and
- provide ongoing feedback to students.