



**VIRGINIA
IS FOR
LEARNERS**

GUIDANCE FOR SUCCESSFUL VIRTUAL LEARNING

PURSUANT SENATE BILL 1303 (2021)

ISSUED MAY 2021

INTRODUCTION

During the 2021 legislative session, the General Assembly passed [Senate Bill 1303](#) regarding the availability of in-person instruction for students in the 2021-2022 school year. While the bill requires each school board offer 180 teaching days or 990 teaching hours of in-person instruction to each student in the division, it also allows divisions to offer remote instruction to those students who elect that mode of participation.

Senate Bill 1303 also tasks the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) with establishing benchmarks for successful virtual learning and guidelines for providing interventions to students who fail to meet such benchmarks and for transitioning such students back to in-person instruction. In fulfillment of that mandate and to support local school divisions in their efforts to provide high-quality instruction across any modality, the Department has issued the following guidelines to promote success in remote learning environments.

For the purpose of these guidelines and consistency with the statutory definition, "in-person instruction" means any form of instructional interaction between teachers and students that occurs in person and in real time and does not include the act of proctoring remote online learning in a classroom. These guidelines are primarily designed to apply to the full-time virtual student but may be adapted to support other remote learners, including part-time virtual students.

LOCAL FULL-TIME VIRTUAL LEARNING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

To facilitate successful virtual learning in accordance with these guidelines, local school boards must establish a strong framework for student accountability, support, and intervention. Questions that local school boards may want to consider in establishing their local policies include:

- 1) What measures and/or expectations for full-time remote/virtual learning are already in place? Policies on measures and/or expectations for virtual learning should address technological access, attendance, student engagement, assignment submission, completion deadlines, among other key variables for success.
- 2) How will the division support and schools provide counseling to students and parents/family to determine which instructional environment may be the best fit for the student?
- 3) How will the division and schools support a student's ability to meet those expectations successfully and/or address potential barriers to success?
- 4) What student behaviors or characteristics related to established measures and/or expectations will trigger local action to (re)evaluate success and appropriate placement in a full-time remote/virtual setting?

- 5) What are the expectations for consistent communication and interaction between teachers and students that foster the development of relationships?
- 6) What are the expectations regarding appropriate synchronous and asynchronous instruction?
- 7) What resources will be provided to support students' social-emotional health and wellbeing?
- 8) What is the time table for implementing the action plan/expectation contracts that are established? Is there a clear time table and consequence for further adjustment if the terms of the contracts are not met by the student?
- 9) Have the above expectations and policies been clearly communicated to staff, students and parents/caregivers before students embark on virtual learning?

SUCCESSFUL VIRTUAL STUDENTS

It is the responsibility as educators and educator leaders to provide each student an instructional modality that best supports their academic success. To that end, school divisions should establish expectations for determining academic success in full-time virtual education. Prior to enrolling students in full-time virtual programs, divisions should ensure that each student is able to meet/demonstrate the characteristics of a successful full-time virtual learning student. Divisions may do this in a wide variety of ways, but careful consideration should be given to each student on an individualized basis prior to enrolling the student in full-time virtual programs. Such consideration should include, but is not limited to, the following characteristics of successful learners. Information regarding effective practices in virtual learning can be found on the [VDOE's Supporting Virtual Learning](#) page. For those students who are unable to meet all such characteristics, divisions should consider if/how individualized student support may be provided to promote success.

Successful Full-time Virtual Learning Students –

- have access to a learning environment that is conducive to learning that minimizes distractions and has access to tools necessary to support effective learning;
- have consistent access to high-speed Internet, online applications, and resources that support virtual learning;
- demonstrate attendance consistent with local policy;
- consistently engage in learning activities, as directed by the teacher;
- participate in regular communication with teachers to ask questions, receive feedback on submissions, and provide feedback on their personal strengths and challenges;
- submit assignments in a timely manner;
- consistently demonstrate mastery of learning in alignment with any individualized learning plans;
- participate in services and supports provided as part of existing individualized education programs (IEP) or other learning plans (Section 504);

- work independently and demonstrate effective organizational, time management, and self-advocacy skills; and
- demonstrate positive characteristics of digital citizenship and academic integrity.

Additionally, given their unique learning needs divisions should carefully consider appropriateness of full-time virtual learning for the following:

- younger learners;
- students with individualized education programs (IEP) or other learning plans (Section 504);
- disadvantaged students;
- English learners;
- students that have failed a Standards of Learning assessment; and
- students with inconsistent or inadequate access to technology.

INTERVENTION CONSIDERATIONS

School divisions should work in conjunction with teachers to consistently monitor the effectiveness/ appropriateness of virtual learning for each student on a consistent and regular basis. VDOE recommends (re)evaluations at regular intervals to ensure interventions are timely and responsive to any issues or concerns. At a minimum, such (re)evaluations should happen at the end of each quarter or semester (for students eligible under IDEA, this review is recommended to occur every four weeks and/or as often as progress is reviewed and provided for non-disabled peers). For those student populations that may need additional review (see above), the division may want to establish a more regular (re)evaluation schedule.

The questions below establish benchmarks for evaluating whether the student has demonstrated the ability to meet and maintain each of the characteristics of a successful virtual student. This list of questions is not exhaustive and divisions may elect to add other questions that help indicate whether additional supports are necessary. Some questions may be used to evaluate more than one characteristic.

Successful Full-time Virtual Learning Students	Determining the Need for Intervention
Have access to a learning environment that is conducive to learning that minimizes distractions and has access to tools necessary to support effective learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the student staying engaged in virtual learning environments? • Are they responsive when called on during synchronous lessons? • Are they responsive to correspondence, including chats or emails?
Have consistent access to high-speed Internet, online applications, and resources that support virtual learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the student not have regular access to necessary devices? • Does the student have a dedicated device for instructional purposes?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there connectivity issues that prevent the student from staying logged on or engaged?
Demonstrate attendance consistent with local policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many absences has the student accumulated? • How many are excused or unexcused? • How many are the result of connectivity issues, not having access to devices, or other technology concerns?
Consistently engage in learning activities, as directed by the teacher.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the student responsive when called upon? • Are they completing their work? • Are they engaging with the peers when required?
Participate in regular communication with teachers to ask questions, receive feedback on submissions, and provide feedback on their personal strengths and challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are students communicating with teachers to receive feedback? • Are students communicating with teachers about their challenges?
Submit assignments in a timely manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What percentage of assignments have been submitted late?
Consistently demonstrate mastery of learning in alignment with any individualized learning plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are students demonstrating appropriate levels of mastery?
Participate in services and supports provided as part of existing learning plans (Section 504 and Individualized Education Programs).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are students participating in necessary services and supports?
Work independently and demonstrate effective organizational, time management, and self-advocacy skills.	
Demonstrate positive characteristics of digital citizenship and academic integrity.	

DEVELOPING ACTION PLANS

If students have demonstrated that they have not been successful in remote settings, school divisions may choose to start an intervention program by establishing an action plan or expectation contract with the student and parent. Action plans or expectation contracts should be clear, specific, and outline measures of student success and benchmarks for determining improvement within a predetermined timeline, similar to attendance plans for improvement.

Core components of student action plans or expectation contract should include:

- specificity around those characteristics/benchmarks which students are not meeting consistently or are at-risk of not being able to meet consistently;

- corresponding supports needed for student success;
- a plan for engaging parents/guardians or other individuals, including school staff, to provide said supports and promote student success;
- concrete and measurable steps metrics that will indicate improvement;
- clear expectations for student and teacher responsibility in improvement plans; and
- a timeline for reconsideration.

TRANSITIONING STUDENTS BACK TO IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION

Divisions have a responsibility to provide an instructional modality that best meets student learning needs and supports student success. When an action plan has been unsuccessful in supporting a student in their virtual learning environment or there is an immediate and demonstrated need, a division may require a student to transition from a remote setting to an in-person setting if they are not successful in virtual learning or cannot meet the requirements of a contract for academic improvement in a virtual setting. Transition plans must consider any health or medical reasons that would prevent a student from returning to an in-person setting.