

A Strong and Healthy Start: Safety and Health Guidance for Music Education

Rev. Feb. 25, 2021

Purpose

This guidance updates the provisions of [A Strong and Healthy Start: Safety and Health Guidance for Vermont Schools](#) related to music instruction, rehearsal and performance in Vermont Schools (page 26). This document replaces that guidance, which is rescinded and superseded as of Feb. 17, 2021.

General Considerations

Group music instruction, rehearsal and performance is permitted, with the following measures in place:

- **Safety and Health Guidance:** All students and instructors must follow Vermont Agency of Education and Vermont Department of Health's [Strong and Healthy Start Guidance](#), including guidance on wear of face coverings.
- **Physical Distancing:** All singers, musicians, conductors and instructors must have a six-foot by six-foot distance separating them from others at all times. This spacing is extended to nine feet for trombone players.
- **Rehearsal / Performance Time Limit:** All rehearsals, performances, or other instructional time where students will sing or use wind instruments should not exceed thirty (30) minutes per group of students.
- **Rehearsal Space Ventilation:** Rehearsal space should have three (3) complete air exchanges per hour. If this is not possible, music programs should use [NFHS guidance](#) for alternative measures to meet this standard. Where possible, rehearse and/or perform outdoors.
- **Time Between Rehearsals / Performances:** Rehearsal and performance spaces should be left vacant for one complete air exchange between groups of students. This time will vary depending on the rate of air exchange for your facility, and will need to be independently determined for each rehearsal space.
- **Sharing of Instruments:** As much as possible, reduce sharing of instruments. No wind instruments should be shared, and common instruments such as percussion instruments should be disinfected after each use.
- **Group Size:** All group activities should be as small as possible to achieve instructional goals:
 - Group rehearsals should be limited to the ensemble or section practicing a specific piece or movement only; other sections, ensembles or classmates not actively practicing should not be present.
 - Solo rehearsal time should be conducted with one student in a room.

- Individual or small group instruction should be limited to the minimal number of students practicable.
- Assessments should be conducted virtually if practicable. If in-person assessment is necessary, it should be conducted with one student at a time only.
- **Reducing Potential Exposure:** Music programs should continue to do everything possible to reduce unnecessary exposure while conducting in-person musicmaking. Considerations include:
 - Continuing to do virtual instruction or group music rehearsal as applicable on hybrid learning days.
 - Conducting music theory or history instruction in a regular classroom setting or virtually, rather than in rehearsal / performance spaces.
 - Holding class outside when singing or using wind instruments.

UPDATED Considerations for Masks, Face Coverings and Bell Covers

All students and staff must wear a face covering at all times, per the [Strong and Healthy Start Guidance](#). Because the potential for aerosol transmission is higher, it is important that students singing or performing with wind instruments wear a highly protective mask. A cloth face covering is not sufficient. Students should wear one of the following:

- A procedure mask, defined as a disposable, 3-layer rectangular-shaped face mask typically of nonwoven material (such as polypropylene) that covers the mouth and nose, and usually has elastic ear loops for securing the mask to the face.
- A KN95 mask.

A KN95 mask provides a higher degree of protection than a procedure mask. When purchasing procedure masks, schools may wish to purchase masks with a GB/T32610 standard, which indicates a certification of a high degree of protection. When purchasing masks, schools should be alert to the existence of masks that are mislabeled or counterfeit, particularly when purchased online. One possible strategy is to purchase PPE products [authorized by the FDA](#).

Procedure masks should be disposed of after each use. While they are not washable, with proper care KN95 masks should be reusable for an extended period of time. Students and staff may continue to use their KN95 mask unless obviously damaged, soiled or difficult to breathe through. Damaged or soiled KN95 masks can be discarded in the normal trash. To keep KN95 masks clean between uses, store the mask in a labeled paper bag for 48 hours before wearing again.

For rehearsals, solo practice and performance, students and staff must follow the following, discipline-specific masking guidelines:

- **Singers** should wear a well-fitting procedure mask or KN95 at all times.
- **Woodwind and Brass instruments** should use a multi-layer bell cover, with a middle layer that consists of MERV-13 filter material.

- **Woodwind and Brass instrumentalists** should wear well-fitting procedure mask or KN95, with a small slit for the mouthpiece to enter. When not actively playing, instrumentalists should cover the slitted mask with another face covering.

Requirements for Performances

Ensembles, bands and individual students may resume in-person performances effective immediately. Performances must comply with all [Strong and Healthy Start](#) guidance on use of communal spaces, as well as public access to and use of schools. In addition, the following considerations apply:

- No audience is permitted at these performances; instead, the event should be streamed virtually to allow family and friends to watch from home, and/or other students to watch from their classrooms, as applicable.
- Avoid mixing or combining ensembles in performances.
- If performances will involve multiple ensembles, students not actively playing should not be in the same room with the group performing.
- Performance run of shows should allow for transition breaks to facilitate the requirement for at least one complete air exchange between groups of students.
- If facility and logistical considerations permit, groups could be staged in separate rooms, with the live stream switching between each venue – this option reduces potential transmission between group ensembles.

With the approach of Spring, music performances are encouraged to move outdoors as weather conditions allow. These performances may occur with in-person audiences, with proper health and safety distancing measures in place:

- Use of all safety considerations for performers outlined above, including masking and physical distancing.
- Physical distancing of audience members, either by individual or by family group, as applicable, and in accordance with [current Agency of Commerce and Community Development guidance on group size and public events](#).

Resources

[NFHS Fall 2020 Guidance for Music Education](#)