1. **Question:** Do you know if there is a possibility of using CARES money to purchase HEPA filters for classrooms? (Zargarpur)

**Answer:** Almost all the current CARES money has been expended; therefore, no funds are available to purchase individual HEPA filters for classrooms. However, we are purchasing 100 HEPA filter units for the nurses’ areas, based upon recent CDC recommendations. Here are some other factors to consider regarding purchasing units for classrooms:

- There are approximately 5,354 classrooms/spaces in our School Division.
- One HEPA unit (with a years’ worth of filters) is about $1,000 each.
- Therefore, the estimated cost is +/- $5.3M to purchase units for classrooms.
- Due to the current high demand and supply shortages, it may not be possible to purchase that many. It was difficult to source the purchase of 100 for the nurses’ areas.

Consequently, we have not recommend putting one in every room. One of the primary mitigation strategies recommended by the CDC is that school divisions provide adequate ventilation in its schools. It has been a primary focus of our Facilities staff to ensure that each HVAC unit is providing fresh air as designed and required by building code.

2. **Question:** This is the fourth time I am submitting a similar version of this question- please excuse the receptiveness but I wanted to follow up on the response given. Can we address the plan for when specific metrics vary 13 by zip code- would we move from phase-to-phase based on ROI? Can we consider starting a pilot program in a low incidence area help this area? 10/23: Answer: Please refer to the October 16 Board communication regarding health metrics. Our health and return plans are based on county-wide implementation. (Jackson)

**Answer:** We have not provided a plan for zip-code metrics because, as noted in the October 16 Board communication, our health and return plans are indeed “based on a county-wide implementation.” This is the case for several reasons: a) the plans submitted to and accepted by VDOE are countywide; and b) the operation of individual schools or groups of schools in a given area still depend on resources that extend county-wide, from staffing, to transportation and food and nutrition services. Moving from phase-to-phase based on hyper-local information would be just as difficult in these circumstances, if not more so, as making school or area-focused inclement weather closing decisions. The same arguments apply to a pilot project. Instead, PWCS will continue to follow VDOE and Health Department guidelines with respect to reopening phases. Potential school staff/student or even school quarantines will be implemented in keeping with the previously published PWCS Covid-19 Health Plans and in close consultation with Student Health Services and the Prince William Health District.

3. **Question:** I am still seeking ways to increase transparency to avoid having parents feel “like the rug was pulled out from under them” and for those who concerned what concurrent instruction looks
like. To confirm, again, I understand that the health metrics are available online, there were two county emails at the time of this question, school emails, The SCOOP, Communicator, and FAQs and thank you for pointing out the reporting by the news. We have used many resources and our FAQs are great, but some parents are very concerned about how we communicate. For example - how do parents know when the health metrics page has been updated? How do we update people on what the new instructional method (concurrent) look like? How do we keep parents abreast with changes in health metrics? Should we create a task force to improve communication so that PWCS can hear directly from parents regarding communication? What additional steps are we are taking to increase transparency, to address parental concerns, and decrease people feeling “in the dark?” (Jackson)

**Answer:** PWCS has led the way in transparency with COVID-19 reporting in the state. PWCS was among the first school divisions to launch a webpage that showed every case in the Division, and to update it daily, whereas many school divisions were not releasing any information. This dashboard has been covered by local media and is available via a quick link button on the homepage, we will continue to refine methods and tools to promote this information. PWCS is well aware of the perception that some parents believed that they “were promised” a return to in-person learning in November. Following the extensive public discussion with the School Board on the issue, the Superintendent sent a personal message to all parents and staff in the School Division explaining the rationale for the change in plan, not the least of which was the change in guidance from VDH. COVID-19 remains a dynamic and evolving situation and the Superintendent, and the School Board motion in July, have acknowledged that the latest health data should be considered when making decisions. A communication task force is not necessary as PWCS has received substantial input via email, social media, survey, and School Board meeting Citizen Comment on all aspects of COVID-19 response and planning. The community is clearly divided nearly 50/50 on the issue and the concerns raised are often those who may not support the decision regardless of the communication and justification received. PWCS will continue to maximize transparency for all parents, staff, and students. This will utilize a multi-modal, multi-lingual approach to reach everyone. Schools will continue to be encouraged to work with their staff, parents, and students to share the most relevant and specific information for their circumstances. Additionally, please note that:

- The FAQs were created because the amount and variety of information being communicated is overwhelming. Though specific issues are addressed both there and in prior communications (in “The Scoop!,” Dr. Walts’ talking points, etc.) the questions are asked repeatedly. It is important for the School Board to continually refer people to the FAQs and R2 In-Person Learning page as valuable resources, while also reminding them that new information is added as it becomes available.
- A video showcasing Concurrent Instruction is in the works and will be shared with the School Board prior to being added to the ever-growing list of available resources.

4. **Question:** Continuing on the theme of increasing transparency - if our goal is that all students are in the building by the first week in February and the reason for the roll out is systematic and methodical than best practice dictates a goal with measurable steps. For example if our goal was a SMART goal it would read something like- Given _________ (your specific health metric) all PWCS students who have selected 50/50 will return to school by February 3, 2021, we would list measurable objectives (i.e. all schools will have _____________ by a date). Can we please be transparent and clear with the public with the many tasks that PWCS lists that must be completed, outside of health metrics? Can we please provide the public with these measurable objectives and update them as they are completed in some fashion? (Jackson)
**Answer:** The list of tasks associated with the identified phases of bringing students back for in-person learning is huge. It involves extensive efforts by every principal and level associate, Transportation Services, Food and Nutrition Services, Communications and Technology Services, Risk Management, and Student Services. Each of these departments/offices and many more know their roles and ensure that critical tasks are accomplished when needed (whether for normal start of a school year or the unusual place in which we currently find ourselves). The Superintendent oversees, but does not micromanage the Senior Staff responsible for this work and it would be counterproductive for him to do so, or expect Board members or the community to play that role.

There is critical information that will be communicated to appropriate audiences by the Division, departments, and/or schools at the proper time to create understanding and awareness. The following guidance was sent via the Division’s “Admin Instant” update to aid administrators in preparing their school communities for the next phase in the Return to School Buildings plan:

**Elementary School Administrators**

**Reminder: Please be sure to continue communication on phase-in details to your parents.**

It is important to communicate regularly with your parents the specifics of how your school will be implementing the phase-in approach. The Division will continue to provide updated information that applies to all schools. However, each school should communicate regularly with parents regarding specific details. The PWCS overall FAQs can be a good source to help craft your communications. The following are a few items (but not all) you should consider communicating with your families (or as soon as available):

- In-person start dates for each grade
- Reminders of daily self-health screening and health procedures at school for sick students
- Face covering requirement
- Bell times, daily schedule including house and staggered bus groups
- Key contacts at your school for information/questions regarding bus schedules, house assignments, and tech support
- Lunch procedures
- Arrival and dismissal procedures
- Reporting an absence
- Process for using the restroom, late arrivals, visitors, etc.

When appropriate, it may be necessary to convey the fact that a particular service may not be available as expected. Otherwise, parents can and should expect that appropriate staffing, technology, food services, transportation, and other resources will be ready, just as they are at the start of each school year. While parents may have complained that they were not given adequate information about November 10 prior to the October 7 decision to alter the Return to School Buildings timetable, their concern may stem from the fact that the proper time had not arrived to effectively convey that information.

Measurable objectives are key to the appropriate evaluation of the Superintendent by the School Board and of employees by Senior Staff. For the Superintendent, the appropriate objective
is that schools and both in-person and virtual learning are staffed, equipped, and provided per the current Return to School Buildings timetable, or that appropriate and clearly justified adjustments to plans will be made in keeping with the School Board’s resolutions of July 10. Demanding a more granular list for staff would create more work, while not informing and possibly interfering with ultimate outcomes.

5. **Question:** How are tracking student success and potential loss? (Jackson)

**Answer:** Across all levels, we are emphasizing the importance of giving students multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery as outlined in Regulation 661-2. Further, in keeping with PWCS policies and regulations, all teachers have been directed to update their grades regularly to ensure students and parents are receiving an accurate screen shot of their performance in a class or subject area. Real-time grades allow teachers to track student success and progress and to provide updates/feedback to students and parents as needed during this unusual period. Parents/guardians are reminded via email to log-in to ParentVUE to check grades and to contact teachers about any concerns. The Division recently purchased MasteryConnect as a method to track students’ progress according to grade level standards and schools are currently being trained on this tool. Additionally, schools are doing ongoing assessments overseen by principals and level associates. At the elementary level these include PALS, DRA, CSA benchmark, and MAP assessment which in combination offer a picture of where students stand in reading, phonics, and math. They have also begun to use the first unit assessments in math. Administrators at the high school level are monitoring student academic progress and will make adjustments as necessary throughout the year. Summative assessments, which are detailed in ParentVUE, also assist in monitoring student progress throughout the year.

As detailed in the Board communication of October 23, the Office of Accountability will be analyzing student performance in terms of grades and how it relates to attendance at the quarter level. On-Track reports currently available and updated quarterly help schools to identify students who are at risk based on factors such as failing grades, excessive absences, discipline, etc. The Office of Accountability will use that information and other factors to provide a Division-level report for the School Board after the end of the first quarter.

6. **Question:** Regarding student mental health and accessibility - what changes were made since the meeting to address mental health concerns? (Jackson)

**Answer:** A nearly identical question on mental health was answered in the October 21 Q&A. This question, posed on 10/23 adds the reference “since the meeting,” (the meeting took place on 10/21). Consequently, the 10/21 response still applies; it outlines both the ongoing measures that guide provision of mental health assistance to our students, and the training designed to equip staff to better detect and assist students in need.

7. **Question:** Last time I asked is there a limit on the homework for high school students? The answer was homework assignments remain governed by Regulation 663-1. For high school that is 1-2.5 hours a night. While I understand that this does not include classwork that students may complete many students are expressing that they are overwhelmed with homework. Given that we have asked students to turn on the computer to increase attentiveness can we please address their concerns regarding workload? I am receiving concerns that students are working until the late hours completing work routinely. (Jackson)
Answer: The High School Principals’ group continues to address the issue of workload, particularly in terms of homework or classwork assigned and not completed. We understand we will continue to reinforce with our teachers the need to focus on those "critical standards." We have already addressed some of the outstanding issues in this area but will continue to promote “reasonableness” in terms of homework. We will employ and reinforce with teachers the “important standards” that we have used in the past.

8. Question: To date, how many students from our SPED, EL and other vulnerable populations are receiving services in our buildings? The VDOE directs us to prioritize these learners for in-person instruction. What is our plan to increase the number of students in these categories for four-day in-person learning? What timelines are we working towards, and what is our strategy? (Wall)

Answer: Though we are not tracking numbers Division-wide on a daily basis, current in-person attendance likely remains in the 1,200 range in which we started the school year. Emphasis is on meeting the needs of SPED students for in-person learning, as identified. For that purpose, IEP efforts are ongoing, with special outreach to parents/guardians. Additionally, parents/guardians of students with special needs have been advised to contact schools or the Office of Special Education if they believe that SPED students who are not currently receiving in-person services should be reconsidered for that purpose.

9. Question: What is the district guidance to schools for the starting up of clubs and after-school activities? If we have not given guidance to schools, when do we plan to do so? Will separate guidance be given at the elementary, middle, and high school levels? (Wall)

Answer: The vast majority of clubs and after-school activities remain virtual while schools remain virtual (allowing indoor extra-curricular activities will be considered as levels are phased in for in-person instruction, or possibly when special exceptions are announced). Currently, clubs may start in-person under the same guidance applied to out-of-season practices, as described in answer 29 of the October 21 Return to School Buildings and Return to Work Questions. Meanwhile, highly specific guidance on mitigation measures for a wide array of courses and activities has been provided to administrators. This includes information on Encore, Elective, Specialized Academic Courses, Physical Education and Recess; it contains measures relevant to such activities as sports practices, singing, and use of musical instruments which will apply to extra-curricular clubs and activities as well as to class-related safety. This information will be shared with staff, parents, students and other audiences as appropriate and will essentially be uniform for all levels. Given recent guidance from the Governor, Virginia Department of Health, and the Virginia High School League, additional guidance will be provided soon to high schools regarding athletics. It is important to keep in mind that additional direction/precautions will be implemented by levels as needed.

10. Question: What is being done to address the many concerns that students are expressing regarding workload, especially at the high school level? (Wall)

Answer: See response to question #7.

11. Question: What ideas do we have for how to structure virtual education for next year? For instance, can we create a school within our district, similar to Virtual PW, where both students and teachers are virtual?

We need to explore ways to assist students who are struggling to master curriculum in the virtual environment. Have we considered providing night classes or structured tutoring for our youngest
students? Can we offer academic tutoring/personalized assistance at our high schools for students to come for in-person assistance with subjects they need extra assistance with? (Wall)

**Answer:** We continue to learn from the current implementation of virtual learning across the Division and we are continuing to look for creative ways to offer a variety of options to our students going forward. In the coming weeks our Return to School Buildings Instructional Logistics Task Force will look closely at this option and others. It is important to keep in mind that this type of model is very dependent on our ability to fully staff and fund completely separate virtual schools at all levels where staff would be given virtual only assignments to teach virtual only students. While this model is being utilized in some smaller districts, the logistics in a Division our size is much more complex.

The Division and schools are diligently working to support students who may be struggling in the virtual environment. Schools are utilizing a number of creative ways to provide personalized instruction and support to students. Some examples of support include teacher office hours, small group instruction, individual instruction, peer tutoring, co-planning and co-teaching of students, as well as, written or hands on materials and virtual resources. Ongoing high-quality professional development is a key factor in the Division working systematically to address the needs of students during this time that we are redesigning instruction during this pandemic. Additionally, Student and Professional Learning in collaboration with other offices is providing monthly parent support sessions to assist parents, especially the parents of our most vulnerable students. October’s session was focused on literacy support and was offered in multiple languages.

Please see the answer to question number 12 regarding other efforts at the high school level.

12. **Question:** What plans do we have for remediation, once the first quarter assessments and grades come in? What about creating individualized academic support plans (with options for remediation) for high school students who have experienced a sharp decline in their GPA over the course of virtual instruction? (Wall)

**Answer:** Remediation at the high school level is handled several ways. If the student demonstrates knowledge on a learning target in the course, the teacher can give the student credit for this new knowledge. High schools have also opened additional sections at semester for students to gain credit. The High School Principals' group are continually discussing other options.

13. **Question:** For sports, what “phase” are we in, and why? Neighboring counties are in Phase III for sports and are allowing greater engagement and training, but it appears we consider ourselves in Phase II. Do we intend to follow VHSL and their guidance for sports? (Wall)

**Answer:** The phase guidance is tied to the transmission risk assessment of a locality’s health district. The current status for PWCS is “moderate to high risk” and is posted on the PWCS Health Trends page at [https://www.pwcs.edu/cms/One.aspx?portalId=340225&pageId=44011535](https://www.pwcs.edu/cms/One.aspx?portalId=340225&pageId=44011535). The Division’s current determination that it remains in Phase II is thus based on the risk assessment of the Prince William Health District and is unchanged since the presentation by Health District Director Dr. Ansher at the October 21 School Board meeting.

Recently, the Governor, VDH, and VHSL collaboratively released updated Phase III guidance for athletics. On a statewide Zoom call with the State Superintendent, VDH, and VHSL, it was reiterated that localities would need to monitor local metrics and different localities may be in
different phases for the reopening of competitive athletics due to differing health metrics. The following are the links to these Phase III guidance documents.


The Division continues to work toward the planned reopening of athletics as early as December 7. We are hopeful that we will be able to implement the Phase III guidance at that time. However, it is important to keep in mind, as was stated on that statewide Zoom call, adjustments may need to be made to specific sports and/or all athletics based on our local metrics.

14. **Question:** What progress have we made in determining the status and accommodations for our Tier 1 teachers? What timeline have we identified to determine and resolve the status of teachers requesting accommodations? Have we actively begun to determine and resolve the status of our high school teachers? If not, why not? (Wall)

**Answer:** We have a significant number of employees who have underlying health conditions that could place them at higher risk of serious illness should they contract COVID-19. We have designated these staff members as Tier 1 staff. The American with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires the employer and the employee to engage in the interactive process to discuss “reasonable accommodations” for our Tier 1 staff. Most of our Tier 1 teaching staff requested a virtual teaching assignment. During the first quarter with the Virtual Instructional Model, PWCS was able to offer virtual teaching assignments as “reasonable accommodations” to all Tier 1 teachers.

However, as previously explained, once we implement the Return to School Buildings 50/50 Instructional Model, the number of virtual only teaching assignments that can be made available without negatively impacting our ability to maintain school operations and instructional services to students returning to our buildings will depend upon the number of students that choose the virtual only option in particular subjects or grade levels. Therefore, virtual teaching assignments will not continue to be a “reasonable accommodation” to offer all Tier 1 teachers as our service delivery model changes. We are engaging with those Tier 1 teachers who cannot be reasonably accommodated with a virtual teaching assignment through the interactive process. The interactive process involves a discussion between the employee, the school administrator, and our Benefits Office to discuss what other reasonable accommodations can be implemented to allow a Tier 1 teacher to return safely to onsite teaching. “Reasonable Accommodations” could include (but are not limited to) additional PPE, physical barriers, additional sanitizing measures in their classrooms, other mitigation measures, or a leave of absence.

These interactive meetings usually last from 20-30 minutes. We are currently conducting interactive process meetings with those Tier 1 teachers who cannot be accommodated with a virtual assignment at the elementary level and for high school CTE teachers. At this time, we are only meeting with teachers scheduled to return during the second quarter. We are also meeting with Transportation and Food Services Tier 1 employees scheduled to return in person second quarter. These meetings have been well received and many employees are extremely surprised by the limited number of students that will be physically present, thus reducing the challenges of maintaining a safe physical distance. In addition, PWCS has been very responsive with providing mitigation measures requested by Tier 1
teachers to allow for the safest return possible. Each employee’s health requirements are different, so these meetings are individualized to try and meet each employee’s request and the unique needs of each employee’s health situation.

While we agree that offering Tier 1 teachers virtual assignments whenever possible is the safest option, it simply will not be possible, or constitute a reasonable accommodation in every situation. The other alternatives referenced above are also considered reasonable accommodations under the ADA, meet CDC recommendations for PPE, and will be tailored to provide the employee the highest level of protection to respond to general as well as any unusual risks presented by their job duties. They are also consistent with the approach adopted by our neighboring jurisdictions.

We will be publishing a schedule soon for interactive meetings with those secondary employees scheduled for return to in-person learning in the second semester that cannot be accommodated with a virtual teaching assignment.

15. **Question:** When the cameras and headsets that the district has on order come in, will we prioritize their distribution to elementary schools first, so that they can be prepared for in-person concurrent instruction? (Wall)

   **Answer:** Yes, distribution is being prioritized to fit the phase-in timetable.

16. **Question:** It was brought to my attention that Daycare centers are not allowing students who are returning to school 50/50 to attend their facilities after school. I wanted to bring this to your attention, but realize you may know this.

   I am concerned about this because:

   - parents are having to choose between daycare and f-2-f instruction
   - it might change our numbers of students who plan to attend school virtually
   - it may impact some schools/demographics differently and to a greater extent

   Is there anything we can do to support families as they may have just learned about this policy? Can we please consider addressing this before the next meeting given the time limitations? (Jackson)

   **Answer:** Regrettably, there is little PWCS can do to change the policies of private childcare providers, regardless of potential impact of those policies on specific populations or schools. As currently established, our rules allow parents to change student selections from in-person to virtual as needed, which may assist them in dealing with the dilemma you describe.