



Guidance for Band, Choir and Orchestra Programs at Educational Institutions During COVID-19

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COVID-19 Transmission Risk

COVID-19 transmission risks are dependent on numerous factors. These can include the level of COVID-19 activity at the school or community and whether students are appropriately screened for illness. Risk is minimized when there have been no sick persons at the school and all students are appropriately screened for illness prior to entry.

The risk of exposure may be increased in any setting where people are in an enclosed space, especially if they are singing or playing wind or brass instruments. However, there are some strategies which can decrease the risks of exposure. These strategies include social distancing, frequent hand washing or sanitizing with at least 60% alcohol hand rub and staying home when sick.

Measures to Promote Health and Safety in Band, Choir and Orchestra Programs

- Students in music classes should wear cloth face coverings and socially distance at all times.
- Students should be placed facing the same direction with a distance of at least 6 feet between each child in all directions. Practices may need to be held remotely or broken into sections to achieve proper social distancing.
- All music stands, chairs, and other frequently touched surfaces should be disinfected between classes.
- Classes should be held outdoors whenever possible. If classes must be held indoors then occupancy should be decreased, and spacing should be increased as much as possible (12 feet of spacing is better than 6 feet for example).

Guidance for Wind and Brass Instrument Practices and Performances

- Wind and brass instruments should not be shared between students. String instruments and percussive instruments (no mouth contact) may be shared if they are disinfected between students.
- Slit masks are permitted only while students are playing wind or brass instruments. When instruments are not being played, students should wear appropriate cloth face coverings.
- When possible, instruments should be fitted with bell covers consisting of a minimum of two layers of dense fabric. Bell covers should be made of a non-stretchy material with a MERV-13 rating (Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value).

Disinfection and Protection Measures for Instruments

All instruments should be thoroughly disinfected before and after use. A list of EPA approved disinfectants can be found here: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-coronavirus-covid-19>. Check with the manufacturer to determine which disinfectants won't tarnish or corrode the instrument.

- For wind and brass instruments, bell covers should be used to prevent infectious air from escaping. They should be cleaned in accordance with the requirements for cloth face coverings. Even with bell covers, instrumental performances should be conducted outdoors whenever possible, with distancing of at least 6 feet. The covers should be made of instrument multilayer MERV 13 type material.
- Spit valves should be emptied away from others into an absorbent, disposable material that can be discarded. Hand hygiene is very important after disposing of this material.

Improving Ventilation for Indoor Practices

If indoor practice is unavoidable, ventilation should be improved in the following ways:

- Doors and windows should be open unless this poses safety or health risks (e.g. risk of falling or triggering asthma).
- Fans can be used to increase circulation by placing them in or near windows and doors if they do not induce potentially contaminated airflow over students or staff. Strategic fan placement in exhaust mode can help draw fresh air into the room via open windows and doors without generating strong room air currents.
- Ensure ventilation systems are functioning and maintain air quality for the room's occupancy level. Inspect air filters to ensure they are operating within their service life and are properly fitted.
- Consider running the HVAC system at maximum outside airflow for two hours before and after the school is occupied. Portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) fan/filtration systems may be used to enhance air cleaning.

Precautions for Choirs and Other Vocal Performance Settings

- Vocal performances should be conducted with cloth face coverings on and the maximum possible distancing.
- Aerosol rates increase while singing and masks cannot contain 100% of aerosols projected from the mouth and nose. Six feet of distance is the minimum recommendation, and 12 feet is preferred when possible.
- Vocal performances are much safer outside, but if they must be conducted indoors, see some of the strategies above to maximize ventilation.

Health Measures for Students

- Students should frequently wash or sanitize their hands and use good respiratory etiquette (cough into a tissue or elbow of sleeve).
- Students should partake in daily disinfection of their instrument and surroundings (i.e., music stand, chair).
- It is critical that face coverings are used the entire time during class. A face covering must fit securely around the mouth and nose.
- Face shields, including plastic shields and hybrid products that have fabric around the edges of the shield, are not a replacement for cloth face coverings. For people who are medically unable to tolerate a face covering, a face shield may be worn alone instead.
- Immediately notify the school that your child(ren) has developed symptoms. Do not send the child(ren) back to school until your local health department or healthcare provider is consulted.