



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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Superintendent of Public Instruction

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June 24, 2020

Mr. Dan Zacharias
Executive Director
Old Dominion Association of Church Schools
3131 Valor Court
Broadway, VA 22815

Dear Mr. Zacharias:

Thank you for sharing your inquiry regarding Virginia's reopening plan and the Phase Guidance for Virginia Schools. While your inquiry is not directed to the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), we thought some additional information from our office would be helpful given the nature of the inquiries. In particular, as VDOE is the state agency responsible for receiving the plans required under the June 9, 2020 [Order of the State Health Commissioner](#), we wanted to provide some context and clarity on the purpose and nature of the plan collection process.

First, we want to thank you and the Old Dominion Association of Church Schools (ODACS) for its diligent response to the public health crisis. The team at VDOE recognizes the challenges that Virginia's schools faced in balancing the well-being of its communities with its commitment to offering quality instruction.

As we move towards the new academic year, one of VDOE's central goals is to provide resources that schools and divisions need to frame critical internal discussions. Similarly, the State Health Commissioner's order seeks to ensure that schools and school divisions have meaningfully engaged in these important conversations and have a thoughtful approach to reopening safely. With this in mind, we have provided additional information below related to your inquiries.

The State Health Commissioner's order only requires that schools and school divisions submit their Phase Health Plan to the VDOE. As such, private schools have fulfilled their obligation to submit a plan by virtue of submission alone. The State Health Commissioner's order does not give VDOE the authority to approve plans nor does it require plans to be approved prior to reopening. Therefore, VDOE is not and will not approve or deny Phase Health Plans for any schools, public or private. This process does not constitute an inspection and is only for the purpose of providing additional resources or technical support, if required. VDOE will not be conducting in-person inspections of any kind related to this matter.

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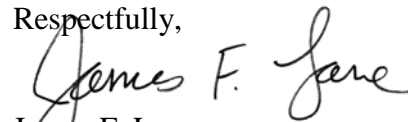
Additionally, the Phase Health Plan requirement does not assume or allow VDOE authority over the operation of private schools. Private schools may resume in-person operations in alignment with their reopening plan without approval or authorization from VDOE.

Other than the requirement to submit health plans, the Governor's Phase Guidance serves as a recommendation for Virginia's private schools to mitigate risks associated with COVID-19. Schools should make decisions on implementing such guidance, and assuming additional risk, in consultation with local health departments and school attorneys.

The reopening guidance gives schools and school divisions discretion on whether to make plans publicly available online. Recognizing the concerns of parents, students, and staff during this time, the intent was to encourage communication and transparency within Virginia's school communities.

We hope you find this information helpful and it provides your schools some relief with respect to the intent and nature of the Phase Health Plans. Please let us know if there is any additional information we can provide.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James F. Lane". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "J".

James F. Lane

Superintendent of Public Instruction