



VIRGINIA
IS FOR
LEARNERS

COVID AND PREK-12 EDUCATION IN VIRGINIA

Presented to
The Virginia Commission on Youth

May 3, 2021

Dr. James F. Lane,
Superintendent of Public Instruction





Virginia Department of Education



Our vision is that Virginia will maximize the potential of all learners.

The mission of the Virginia Department of Education is to advance equitable and innovative learning.

“

Those who write the history of these times will tell about how **we responded to the needs of teachers, students and families.** Let's make sure we leave evidence of not only our recognition of the needs but also the determination, fervor and excellence with which we intervened.

- Dr. Rosa Atkins
Charlottesville Public Schools

”

State Action and Support for Schools

Where We've Been

March 2020 – Virginia closed schools for the year following a 2 week short-term closure

June – *Phased Guidance for K-12 Schools* provides a pathway for schools to begin reopening

July – *Recover, Redesign, Restart* – a comprehensive operational and instructional guide for divisions is published by VDOE

September – 10 divisions start the year full time, in-person. 67 division begin fully remote.

October – New VDH guidance for schools is published in alignment with CDC School Indicators

January 2021 – *Interim Guidance for Reopening Virginia Schools* replaces previous guidance, provides pathway to reopening amidst varying transmission rates

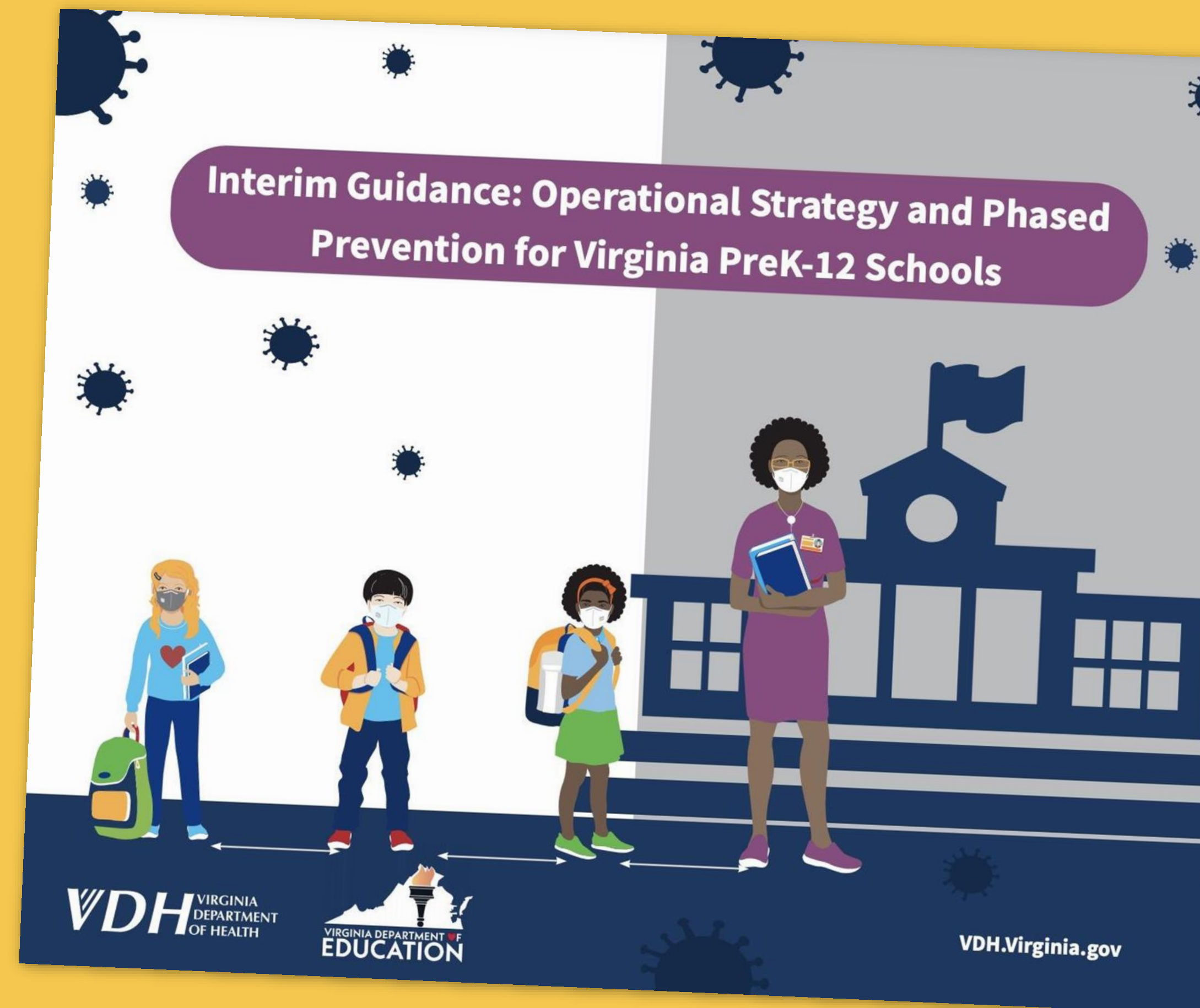
February – CDC provides new reopening school guidance; Governor Northam charges all divisions to offer some in-person instruction

April – All divisions on track to offer some in-person instruction



Health and Safety Guidance

- June 2020 – *Phase Guidance for Virginia's Schools*, which provided a phased approach for bringing students back to school for in person instruction.
- October 2020 – *Interim Guidance for Virginia Schools*, which incorporated CDC Indicators for Decision making (released in September).
- January 2021– *Interim Guidance for Reopening PreK-12 Schools* was issued to consolidate and replace the previously issued guidance and support school reopenings.
- March 2021 – the *Virginia Interim Guidance* was updated to reflect revised guidance by the CDC.



Other Applicable State Policies

Executive Orders

Some components of EOs apply to schools (masks, recreational sports, graduations, and fine arts performances)

Department of Labor and Industry Emergency Standards

Schools are subject to health and safety measures and COVID reporting requirements as employers

Order of the State Health Commissioner

Required submission of health plans by school divisions before reopening after the March 2020 closures.

Vaccine Distribution Policy

School staff were included in the definition of essential workers in Phase 1B.



Policy Waivers

EO51 (March 2020) allows for regulatory waivers

State Superintendent waivers pursuant to language in the Appropriation Act (both during the 2020–2021 School Year and renewed for the 2021–2022 School Year).

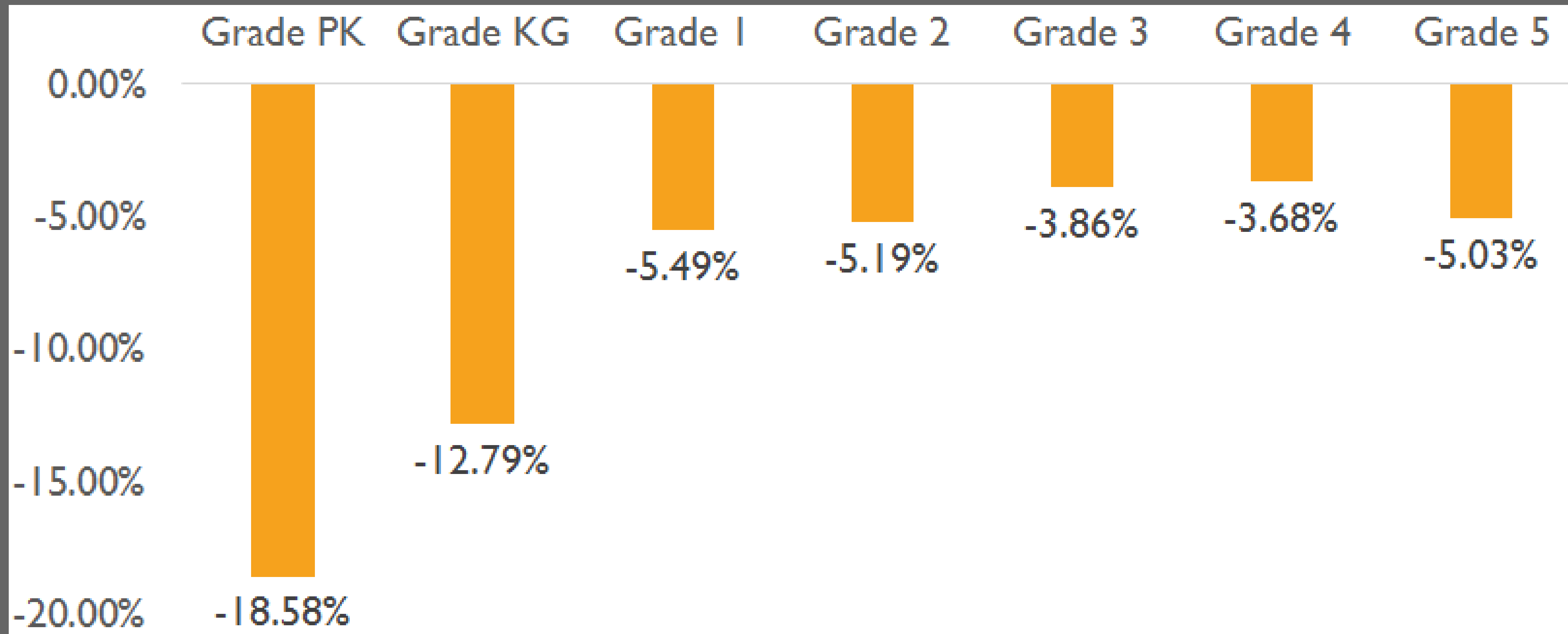
All waivers and relief measures issued to date are posted on the [VDOE website](#), including:

- State Accreditation
- Class Size Caps in certain circumstances
- Alternative Assessment Options for History/Social Science SOL Tests
- Locally Awarded Verified Credits
- VPI Funding and Enrollment
- Teacher Licensure
- Student Vision and Hearing Screening

Operational Overview of the 2020-2021 School Year

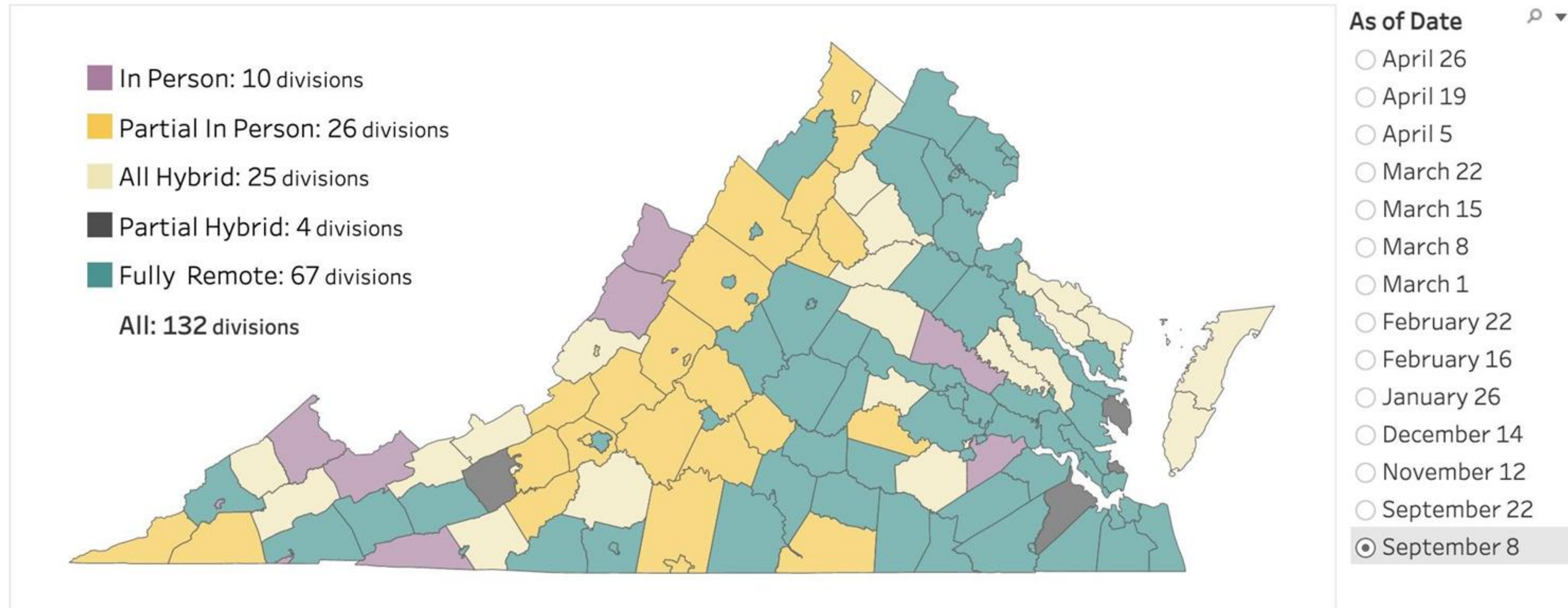
Enrollment Declines

Changes in enrollment between 2019–2020 and 2020–2021 school years



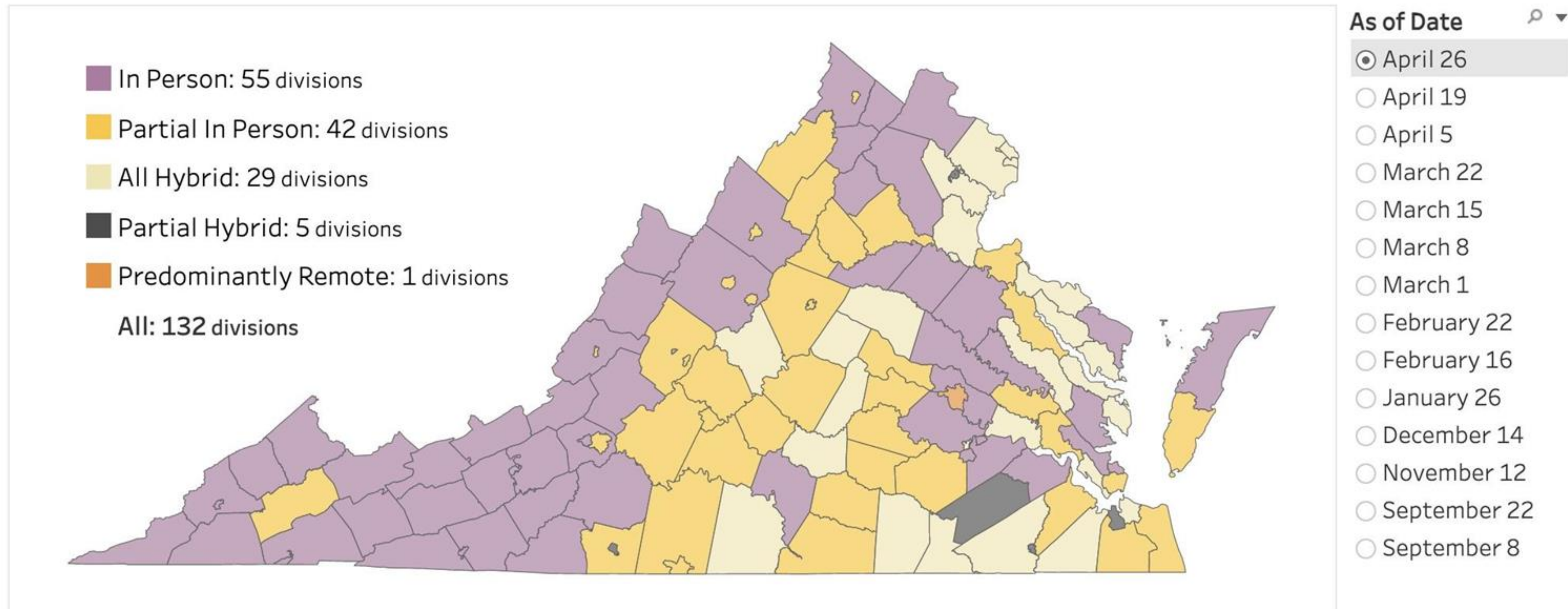
September 8, 2020

Virginia's Return to School Instructional Schedules School Year 2020-2021



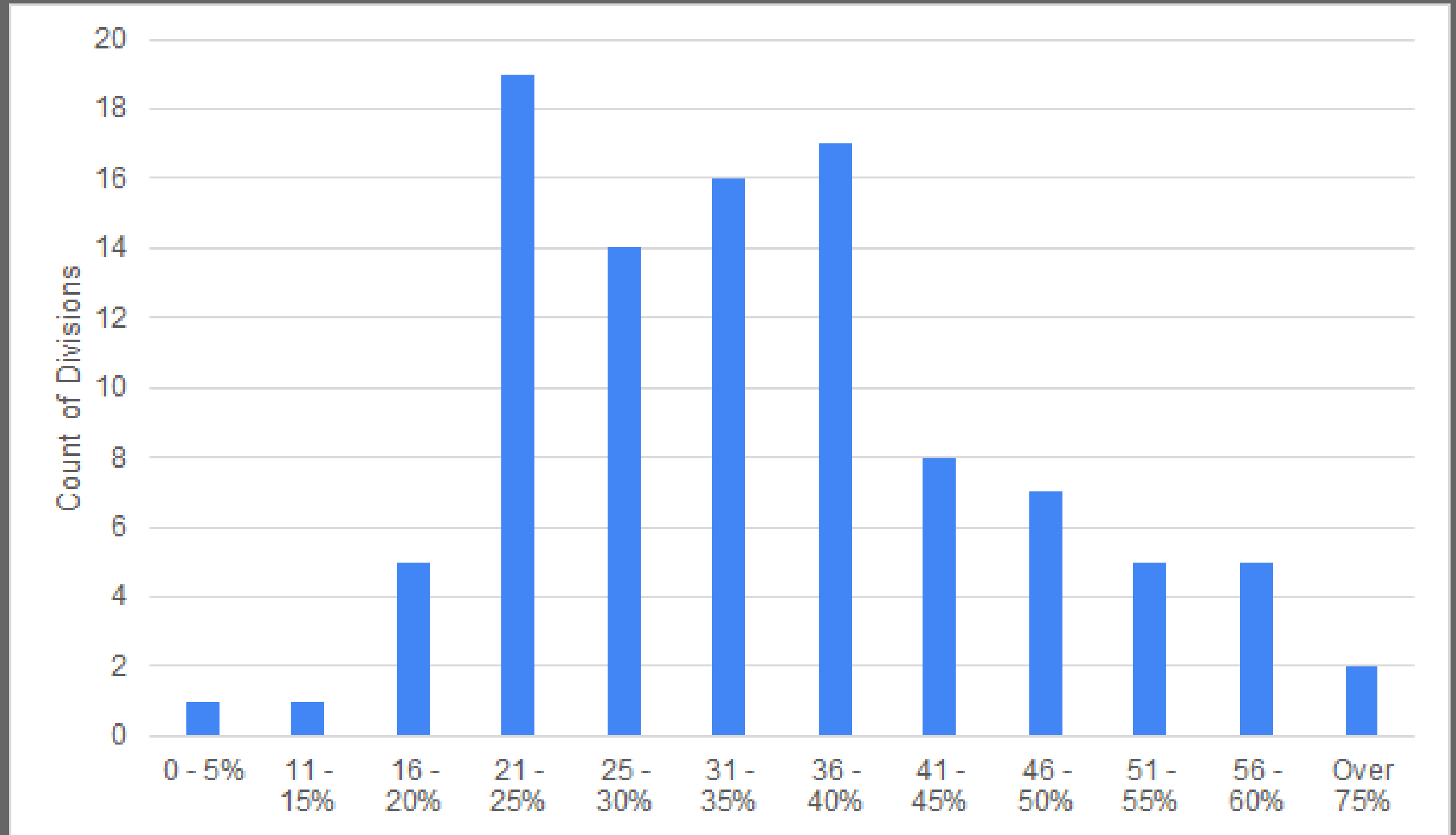
April 26, 2021

Virginia's Return to School Instructional Schedules School Year 2020-2021



Parent Choice

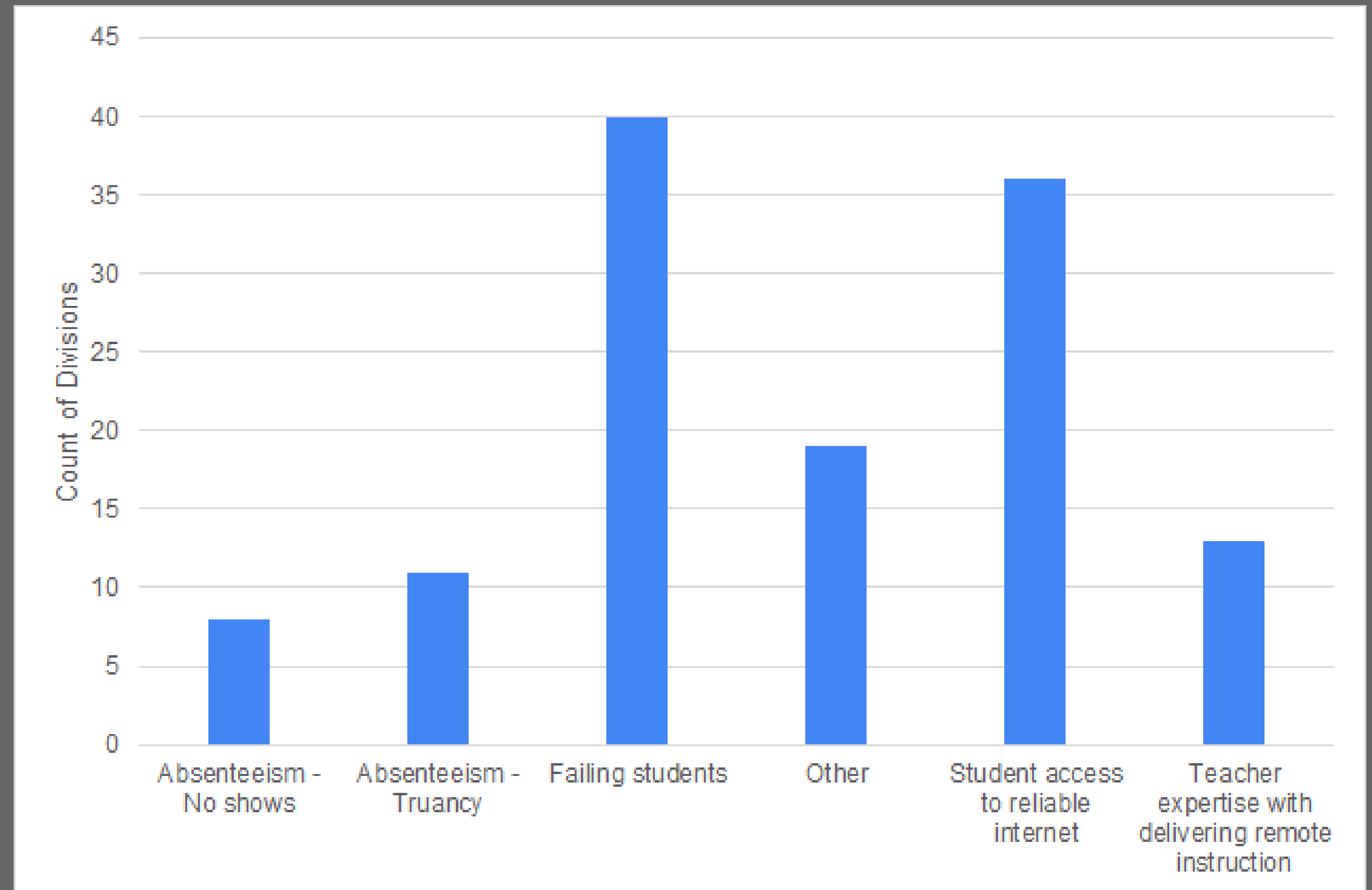
Percentage of parents opting for fully remote instruction in divisions offering in-person or hybrid options only



N=100, source: VDOE
November, 2020

Remote Learning Challenges

Greatest single challenge, as reported by school divisions



Student Health and Academic Impacts

Health and Mental Health Impacts on Children (As reported by Pediatricians to the Virginia AAP)

Significant Increases in:

- child and adolescent anxiety
- increases in depression
- changes in suicidal ideation
- child behavior problems
- parental stress

Smaller Increases in:

- adolescent drug, alcohol, or marijuana use
- eating disorders
- child abuse

Decreases in:

- child and adolescent physical activity
- quality sleep
- social and behavioral progress in children and adolescents with autism

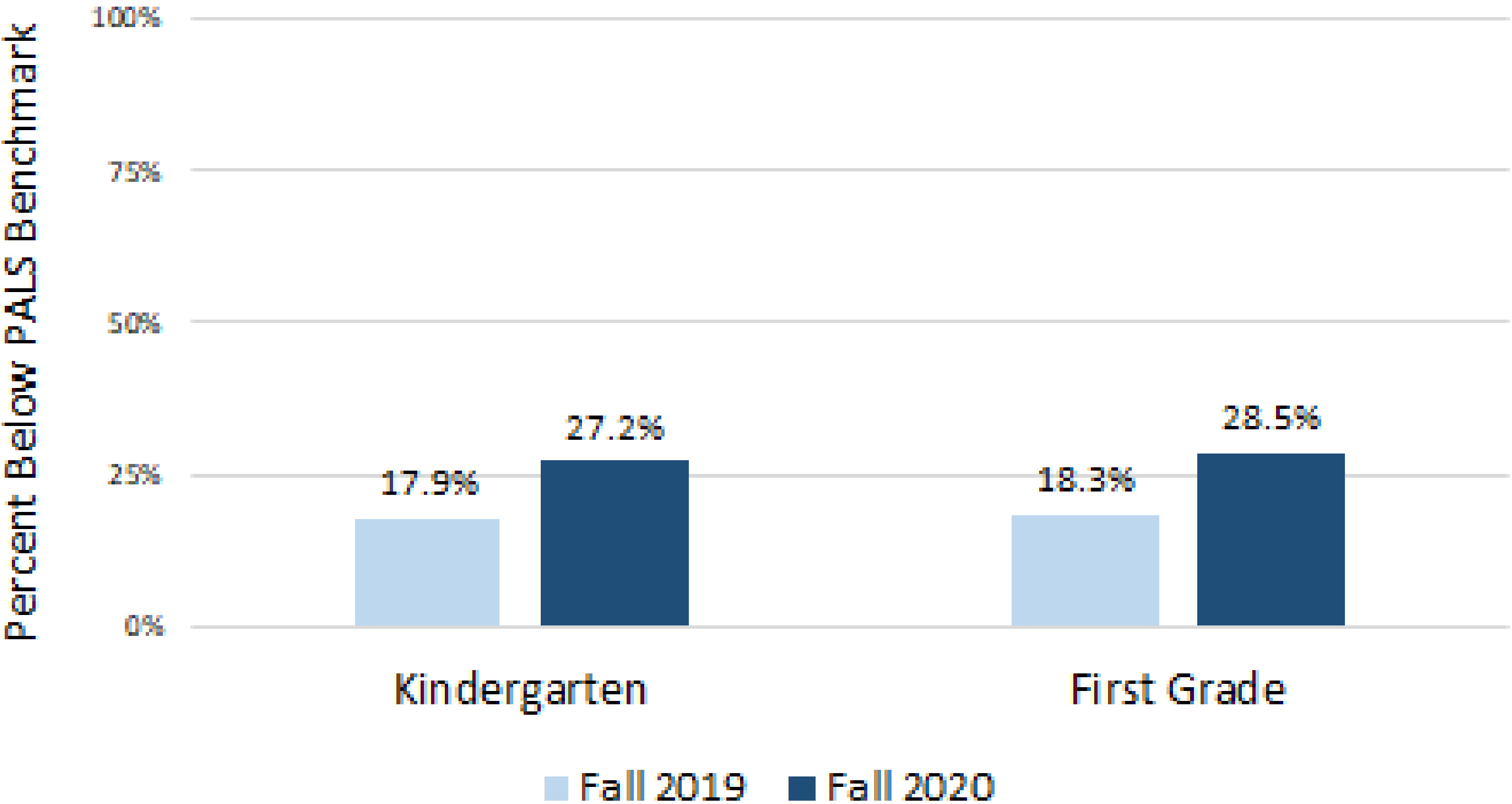
Phonological Awareness Literacy (PALS) Screening Data



- The PALS K-3 screening tools identify students at-risk in early reading and this guides the allocation of EIRI funding to support early intervention.
- Students falling below the PALS benchmark are identified as being at high-risk for third-grade reading failure, in the absence of intervention.
- PALS data show significantly more kindergarten and first grade students starting the school year at high risk for reading failure compared to last year.
- The increase in kindergarten and first grade students starting the school year at high risk for reading failure was largest among students who are Black, Hispanic, economically disadvantaged and English learners (EL)

PALS Data

Students At High Risk for Reading Failure:
Fall 2019 versus Fall 2020



Young Learners

Fall 2020 data show a significant impact of COVID 19 on Virginia's youngest learners. Here are estimates of children entering kindergarten not ready:

When only using literacy (PALS)

- 26%



Using VKRP— literacy, math, self-regulation and social skills

- 45%



For students from low-income backgrounds

- 56%



Fall Growth Measures

Proportion Proficient Reading

grade	term	
	FL '19	FL'20
	Proj Prof	Proj Prof
3rd	0.55	0.61
4th	0.66	0.67
5th	0.68	0.67
6th	0.69	0.69
7th	0.69	0.68
8th	0.64	0.65

Proportion Proficient Math

grade	term	
	FL '19	FL'20
	Proj Prof	Proj Prof
3rd	0.75	0.74
4th	0.85	0.79
5th	0.79	0.73
6th	0.82	0.80
7th	0.73	0.71
8th	0.63	0.65

"...initial findings reveal students stayed relatively the same in reading, whereas math indicated substantially more unfinished learning."

VDOE Mid-year Report - Key Findings

- As compared to the first periodic report (November 2020), divisions report more elementary students at or above expected achievement levels.
- However, in both middle and high school, most divisions continue to report more students are failing 2 or more classes as compared to this time last year.
- Externally-provided data indicates that while we are seeing student growth in reading and mathematics over time, the growth is lower than in previous years.

SOL Testing

- Federal testing waivers issued in spring 2020
- No outright federal assessment waivers in 2020–2021, some flexibility offered

State Policy Waivers and Flexibilities:

- SOL tests will not be used for school accreditation
- Option for local assessment in Virginia–mandated history/social studies and writing (SOL option)
- New remote testing option for virtual students, will be reported separate from SOL test scores

Why?

- Consistent and reliable perspective on learning loss and unfinished learning
- Critical to informing recovery strategies at state and local levels
- Testing and reporting on student performance is still required by USED

Addressing Unfinished Learning

Summer 2021

- Spring assessment data will capture what students have mastered and what remains unfinished
- Prioritize opportunities for students who need the most support with recovery of unfinished learning
- Options include expanded summer offerings, year-round opportunities and adding days to the next school year
- Simultaneously address social and emotional supports for students and staff
- Build confidence around in-person learning for those communities that have been the most hesitant to return



Virginia LEARNS

Developed by statewide educational leaders in spring 2021

Resources and best practices for divisions related to:

- equity,
- curricula — especially in literacy and mathematics,
- remediation and intervention strategies,
- assessments,
- data analysis,
- student and staff wellness, and
- technology to support instruction and learning.



Looking Ahead to 2021-22

Through-Course Assessments

- Fall 2021 begins phased implementation of HB2027 /SB1357
- Grades 3– 8 math and reading
- Fall 2021 assessment will be shortened version of previous year's content
- Off grade level and mid-year assessments will be offered in 2022–2023

In-Person Instruction

- SB1303 requires divisions to offer in-person instruction to all enrolled students
- Full and part time virtual options may be offered by the division
- Allows for short term fully-remote experience if health conditions necessitate

Federal Relief Funding

Federal Relief Packages

Coronavirus Aid, Recovery, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (March 2020)

- \$44M from Governor's Discretionary Fund for PreK-12 (GEER)
- \$238.6M formula driven to divisions (ESSER I)
- \$23.9M for state set-aside

CARES Act - Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) (October 2020)

- \$220.8M to public school divisions on a per pupil basis

Federal Relief Packages Cont'd

Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act (December 2020)

- \$46.6M for non-public schools (EANS)
- \$30M Governor's Discretionary Fund (GEER II)
- \$845M formula-driven to divisions (ESSER II)
- \$101M state-set aside

American Recovery Plan Act (March 2021)

- \$1.9B formula-driven to divisions (ESSER III)
- \$211M state set-aside

Statewide Pandemic Response

Spring and Summer 2020

- Devices and MiFis for students
- Expansion of Virtual Virginia content
- Early childhood care and learning supports
- School nutrition
- Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) supports and screener
- Partnerships with PBS and Radio Poder

2020-2021 School Year and Beyond

- High quality instructional supports to address unfinished learning
- Expanded learning time for students
- Mental health and social emotional supports
- Through-Course Assessments
- Continued support for Virtual Virginia
- LASER - statewide early intervention system

Questions and Discussion