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USVI Schools Set to Reopen to Full In-Person Learning Monday, August 9

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The Bryan administration plans to reopen public schools to full in-person learning on Monday, August 9, almost a year and a half since the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted lives around the world. The Consortium first learned of the reopening date Sunday evening.

Mr. Bryan did not divulge much details, leaving the task to the Dept. of Education for a later date. However, he told the Consortium during a brief call following his Monday press briefing that things were looking good for the projected date.

Mr. Bryan referenced the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's March 2021 guidance for reopening public schools, which cut in half the distance students should remain from one another in classrooms. The CDC said K-12 students should remain at least 3 feet apart in classrooms

rather than the agency's previous recommendation of 6 feet. The CDC said the change was based on new scientific findings.

The CDC also recommended that schools install barriers such as partitions and sneeze guards, and encouraged schools to consider Covid-19 symptom screening for sports and extracurricular activities.

Mr. Bryan told the Consortium the 3 feet guidance would work well for the territory. "If we can stay there or a little lower we can accommodate anybody, but if it goes up higher, then we can't — but it's looking good," he said.

The governor encouraged parents to get their children, ages 12 and up vaccinated, which he said would further boost safety when schools reopen.

The Department of Education has had a taste of in-person learning, which it started [in March](#) for Pre-K to 3rd grade students. Students from 4th-12th grade continued learning virtually.

The CDC said the reduced distance applies strictly to students, not teachers and staff as Covid-19 rates are higher among adults. Additionally, the agency said if middle and high school students cannot be divided into cohorts, they should continue to remain 6 feet apart in localities where transmission of the virus is high.

And students while eating and engaging in activities such as sports or singing in large groups (also called chorus), should remain 6 feet apart. This also applies to areas where masks cannot be worn such as school auditoriums and lobbies.

"I'm hopeful that we are turning a corner on this pandemic," CDC Director Rochelle Walensky said in March. "Getting our children back to school in-person instruction as soon as possible is a critical first step in doing so."

The CDC does not have authority over schools, and the agency's guidelines are only recommendations.

Correction: May 24, 2021

Because of a date error, a previous version of this article stated that USVI schools would open to full in-person learning on the 8th of August. The correct date is the 9th of August. We've updated the story to reflect the correct information.