

Date: April 9, 2021

Vision and Hearing Screenings during 2020-2021 School Year

Dear Parent or Guardian:

In Virginia, vision and hearing screenings are required for students in grades K, 3, 7, and 10 (See *Code of Virginia*, § 22.1-273) unless: (a) such student was tested as part of the School Entrance Health Form; (b) the parents or guardians of such student object on religious grounds and the students show no obvious evidence of any defect or disease of the ears; or (c) any such student has an Individualized Education Program or a Section 504 Plan that documents a defect of hearing or a disease of the ears and the principal determines that such a test would not identify any previously unknown defect of hearing or a disease of the ears.

Virginia's Superintendent of Public Instruction has granted a waiver of the statutory requirement for vision and hearing screenings that allows parents to "opt out" of screenings under the following conditions:

- **Virtual Attendance Only.** The student attends school on an entirely virtual basis during the 2020-2021 school year;
- **Parental Opt-Out.** A parent declines vision and hearing screening services in writing and submits such writing to the student's school; and
- **Notice of Screening Benefits.** Prior to declining, the parent has been informed of the benefits of vision and hearing screens for a student's health and wellbeing.

The benefits of vision and hearing screens are summarized as follows. Vision screening is essential for detecting visual impairment. Conditions that lead to visual abnormalities may lead to inadequate school performance and prevent students from obtaining maximum benefits from their educational experience. Undetected impairments of the visual process can lead to permanent loss of vision in the affected eye, loss of depth perception, decreased integration of visual and motor skills, potential decrease in learning ability, and problems in school adjustment.

The purpose of a school hearing screening program is to identify students with a hearing loss that may impact their intellectual, emotional, social, speech, and/or language development. The subtlety of a hearing loss may lead to a child's hearing loss being overlooked. The school's hearing screening program can play an important role in ensuring no student has a hearing loss that goes undetected and unmanaged, resulting in further developmental or academic delays. Even mild hearing losses may be educationally and medically significant. An undetected hearing loss may result in:

- A delay in speech and language skills.
- Language deficits, which may lead to learning problems and limited academic achievement.
- Difficulties in communication, which may lead to social isolation and poor self-concept, resulting in emotional or behavioral problems.
- A negative impact on the child's vocational and educational choices.
- Behavioral problems.

If your student will attend school on a full-time, virtual basis during the current school year, you may decline screening services by signing and returning this form as set forth below.

IF YOU DO NOT WANT a vision and hearing screening for your student, please fill out this [online form](#) with your child's opt-out information by Friday, April 23rd.

Sincerely,
Jen Heiges