

Comparison of Instructional Time Guidance Among Washington Area Board of Education (WABE) Districts

Research Methodology

EAB Researchers Reviewed Publicly Available Information on Distance Learning Plans from WABE Districts

EAB researchers identified publicly available information on distance learning plans from districts in the Washington Area Board of Education (WABE): **Fairfax County Public Schools, Alexandria City Public Schools, Arlington County Public Schools, Falls Church City Public Schools, Loudoun County Public Schools, Manassas City Public Schools, Manassas Park City Schools, Montgomery County Public Schools, Prince George’s County Public Schools, and Prince William County Public Schools**. Specifically, EAB researchers reported on instructional time guidance published as of April 7, 2020.

Instructional Time

Eight of Ten Profiled Districts Establish Some Instructional Time Guidance for Students During Distance Learning

Administrators at eight of the ten profiled districts set specific instructional time recommendations in distance learning plans:

- **Fairfax County Public Schools’ [Distance Learning Plan](#)** and **FCPS Distance Learning Instructional Model** draft document;
- **Alexandria City Public Schools’ [Learning Activity Packets](#)**;
- **Loudoun County Public Schools’ [Continuity of Education Plan](#)**;
- **Manassas City Public Schools’ [Update on Distance Learning](#)**;
- **Manassas Park City Schools’ [COVID-19 Continuous Learning Plan](#)** ;
- **Montgomery County Public Schools’ [Elementary Information](#)** and **[Middle and High School Information](#)** web pages. On the web page **[Continuity of Learning](#)**, district administrators indicate that individual secondary schools will distribute their own schedules. To that end, EAB researchers sourced instructional time guidance from **[Benjamin Banneker Middle School](#)** and **[Damascus High School](#)** in the district;
- **Prince George’s County Public Schools’ [Continuity of Learning](#)** web page;

- **Prince William County Public Schools’ [Home Learning](#)** web page (see “Optional Daily Schedules”).

In this report, EAB researchers defined “instructional time” as time spent on core content areas (i.e., English language arts (ELA)/reading, math, science, social studies) and—if the information was available—time spent on specials (e.g., physical education (PE), art, music, etc.). See the table on **pages three to five** of this report for daily instructional time recommendations at each of the above districts.

EAB researchers acknowledge that profiled districts are still adjusting their distance learning plans and thus have not comprehensively outlined instructional time requirements.

Profiled Districts Recommend a Daily Minimum of One Instructional Hour for Pre-K Students

Administrators at three profiled districts—**Fairfax County Public Schools**, **Manassas Park City Schools**, and **Prince William County Public Schools**—recommend a minimum of one instructional hour for pre-K students. Administrators at the seven other profiled districts do not recommend a minimum amount of instructional time for pre-K students.

***Fairfax County Public Schools* Recommends More Instructional Time for Elementary Students, Compared to Other Profiled Districts**

At **Loudoun County Public Schools**, **Manassas Park City Schools**, **Montgomery County Public Schools**, and **Prince William County Public Schools**, administrators recommend between 1 and 3 hours each day for elementary students. In contrast, administrators at **Fairfax County Public Schools**—in the **FCPS Distance Learning Instructional Model** draft document—recommend 4-5 hours each day, five days a week, for elementary students.

Of the above districts, administrators at only **Prince William County Public Schools** allocate instructional time by subject area for elementary students. Administrators recommend 2.5 hours of instructional time, including 1 hour combined for math and science/social studies and 1.5 hours for language arts and science/social studies.

Profiled Districts Recommend 30 to 45 Minutes Per Subject Area Each Day for Secondary Students

Across the five profiled districts that provide overall daily instructional time recommendations for secondary students—**Fairfax County Public Schools**, **Loudoun County Public Schools**, **Manassas Park City Schools**, **Montgomery County Public Schools**, and **Prince William County Public Schools**—administrators recommend between 30 and 45 minutes per subject area.

- At **Fairfax County Public Schools**, administrators recommend—in the **FCPS Distance Learning Instructional Model** draft document—that all middle school students complete 3 hours of instruction. The 3 hours includes 45 minutes for each of four subject areas (i.e., language arts, math, science, social studies). Similarly, high school students spend 45 minutes on each subject area.

- At **Loudoun County Public Schools**, administrators recommend that secondary students spend up to 30 minutes per course.
- At **Manassas Park City Schools**, administrators recommend that students in grades 6-8 complete 3 hours of instruction, which includes 2.5 hours combined for language arts, math, science, and social studies (averages 37.5 minutes per subject area) and 30 minutes for specials. Administrators recommend that students in grades 9-12 complete 3 hours of instruction but do not break down this recommendation by subject area.
- At **Montgomery County Public Schools**, administrators recommend that all secondary students complete at least 135-180 daily minutes of instruction, including 45 minutes per subject area for three to four subject areas.
- At **Prince William County Public Schools**, administrators recommend that all secondary students complete 2.5 hours of instruction, including 1 hour combined for social studies and science and 1.5 hour combined for English and math.

Daily Instructional Time Guidance at Profiled Districts

District	Elementary (K-5)	Secondary (6-12)
Fairfax County Public Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the FCPS Distance Learning Instructional Model draft document, administrators recommend 4-5 hours each day • Asynchronous and synchronous: Elementary students will spend 2 hours on virtual, teacher-directed instruction and individualized student support and 2-3 hours on independent work—four days a week. As part of synchronous learning, students will also engage with learning content presented through television on Channel 21 (i.e., 10:00-11:00 am for Pre-K-2 students, 2:00-3:00 pm for students in grades 3-6). Students complete independent or collaborative work once a week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle School: 3 hours (i.e., 45 minutes for each of four subject areas), of synchronous learning • Asynchronous and synchronous: Students meet with teachers from the four core content areas and from world language for synchronous instruction. Students also complete independent or collaborative work • High School: 3 hours (i.e., 45 minutes for each of four subject areas) of synchronous learning • Asynchronous and synchronous: Students meet with all teachers for synchronous instruction. Students also complete independent or collaborative work
Alexandria City Public Schools*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30-60 minutes of reading • <i>Administrators do not provide instructional time guidance for other subject areas</i> • Asynchronous only: Learning packets by grade offer asynchronous activities/tasks. Administrators do not explicitly state that the district will provide synchronous learning opportunities for students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle School and High School: At least 1 hour of reading • <i>Administrators do not provide instructional time guidance for other subject areas</i> • Asynchronous only: Learning packet offers asynchronous activities/tasks. Administrators do not explicitly state that the district will provide synchronous learning opportunities for students
Loudoun County Public Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K-2: Up to 60 minutes total • 3-5: Up to 90 minutes total 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 30 minutes per class (up to 3-4 total cumulative hours)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Administrators do not break down instructional time guidance by subject area</i> • Asynchronous and synchronous: Teachers of students in grades 3-5 will provide synchronous and asynchronous instruction starting April 15, 2020. Teachers of K-2 students may provide optional synchronous learning opportunities. Administrators do not break down instructional time guidance by asynchronous versus synchronous learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asynchronous and synchronous: Teachers of secondary students will provide asynchronous and synchronous instruction starting April 15, 2020. Administrators do not break down instructional time guidance by asynchronous versus synchronous learning
<p>Manassas City Public Schools*</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5: (per week) more than 90 minutes per class (i.e., one, 30-minute video lesson per class; one, 30-minute assignment per class; one, 30-minute “live” class interaction) • Asynchronous and synchronous: “Live” class interactions represent synchronous learning. Administrators do not specify whether the 30-minute video lesson is synchronous or asynchronous. Administrators do not specify the number of classes that students take during this time—thus, administrators do not provide overall daily instructional time guidance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle School and High School: (per week) more than 90 minutes per class (i.e., one, 30-minute video lesson per class; one, 30-minute assignment per class; one, 30-minute “live” class interaction) • Asynchronous and synchronous: “Live” class interactions represent synchronous learning. Administrators do not specify whether the 30-minute video lesson is synchronous or asynchronous. Administrators do not specify the number of classes that students take during this time—thus, administrators do not provide overall daily instructional time guidance
<p>Manassas Park City Schools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 1 hour total • <i>Administrators do not break down instructional time guidance by subject area</i> • Asynchronous only: Administrators do not explicitly state that the district will provide synchronous learning opportunities for students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle School: 3 hours (i.e., 2.5 hours combined for language arts, math, science, and social studies; 30 minutes for specials) • Asynchronous and synchronous: Students meet virtually with class at scheduled times and complete asynchronous work outside of “live” meetings. Administrators do not break down instructional time guidance by asynchronous versus synchronous learning • High School: 3 hours (<i>administrators do not break down instructional time guidance by subject area</i>) • Asynchronous and synchronous: Students meet virtually with class at scheduled times and complete asynchronous work outside of “live” meetings. Administrators do not break down instructional time guidance by asynchronous versus synchronous learning

<p>Montgomery County Public Schools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K-2: 1.5-2 hours • 3-5: 2.5-3 hours • <i>Administrators do not break down instructional time guidance by subject area</i> • Asynchronous and synchronous: Administrators divide instructional time into three areas: students view central lessons (administrators do not specify whether these lessons are asynchronous or synchronous), join “live” time with the teacher, and complete independent work. Administrators do not break down instructional time guidance by asynchronous versus synchronous learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle School: At least 135-180 minutes (i.e., 45 minutes per subject area for three to four subject areas each day) • Asynchronous and synchronous: Students access on-demand content and attend “live” check-ins with teachers. Administrators do not break down instructional time guidance by asynchronous versus synchronous learning • High School: At least 135-180 minutes (i.e., 45 minutes per subject area for three to four subject areas each day) • Asynchronous and synchronous: Teachers post pre-recorded instruction and may choose to also present synchronous content. Administrators do not break down instructional time guidance by asynchronous versus synchronous learning
<p>Prince George’s County Public Schools*</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 60 minutes (i.e., two 30- to 45-minute virtual lessons, either <i>math and science</i> or <i>reading and social studies</i>) • Asynchronous and potentially synchronous: Students experience the two virtual lessons between the hours of 9 am and 1 pm. Administrators do not specify whether these virtual lessons are asynchronous or synchronous. Administrators do not break down instructional time guidance by asynchronous versus synchronous learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle School and High School: At least 30 minutes (one 30- to 45-minute lesson, on English, math, science, or social studies) • Asynchronous and potentially synchronous: Students experience the virtual lesson between the hours of 9 am and 1 pm. Administrators do not specify whether these virtual lessons are asynchronous or synchronous. Administrators do not break down instructional time guidance by asynchronous versus synchronous learning
<p>Prince William County Public Schools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.5 hours (i.e., 1 hour combined for math and science/social studies; 1.5 hour for language arts and science/social studies) • Asynchronous only: In sample daily schedules, administrators do not discuss synchronous learning opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle School and High School: 2.5 hours (i.e., 1 hour combined for social studies and science; 1.5 hour combined for English and math) • Asynchronous only: In sample daily schedules, administrators do not discuss synchronous learning opportunities

*Administrators at these districts do not provide overall daily instructional time guidance for students. Instead, administrators at these districts only provide time recommendations for one or two subject areas (e.g., reading, math). Thus, the listed time recommendation in the above table likely underestimates the amount of total time administrators expect students to dedicate to academic learning.

Administrators at **Arlington Public Schools** and **Falls Church City Public Schools** have not yet provided instructional time recommendations for students during distance learning. EAB researchers note that administrators at these districts will likely publish these plans later in April.

- In response to EAB researchers' email outreach, contacts at **Arlington Public School District** report that administrators plan to publish distance learning plans for elementary and secondary students on April 9, 2020.
- Administrators at **Falls Church City Public Schools**—in their [March 27, 2020](#) update—state that teachers will participate in a professional development day on April 13, 2020 to finalize their instructional plans for distance learning.

Profiled Districts Do Not Cite Research-Based Best Practice on Instructional Time in Distance Learning

No profiled district has cited research-based best practices on instructional time allocation in a distance learning context. Notably, administrators at **Falls Church City Public Schools**—in their [March 27, 2020](#) and [March 24, 2020](#) updates—do emphasize that expecting students to be synchronously engaged on the computer for 6.5 hours via distance learning “is not sound instructional practice or learning practice.” Rather, administrators aim to prioritize student engagement—thus, administrators design instructional time to comprise a blend of synchronous and asynchronous instructional sessions, supplemented with self-directed work on assignments.

Profiled Districts that Offer Both Synchronous and Asynchronous Instruction Do Not Differentiate Instructional Time Allocation for Each Type

Administrators at [Fairfax County Public Schools](#) (pages 15, 17, 19), [Loudoun County Public Schools](#) (page four), [Manassas City Public Schools](#), [Manassas Park City Schools](#) (pages eight, nine), [Montgomery County Public Schools](#), and [Prince George's County Public Schools](#) state that students will receive some form of synchronous instruction (e.g., learning that occurs in real-time).

Administrators at these profiled districts define synchronous instruction as: (1) students meet virtually with their class at a scheduled time, (2) students receive “live” instruction from teachers, and/or (3) students attend “live” office hours.

- At **Fairfax County Public Schools**, administrators expect Pre-K-12 students to meet virtually with their class at scheduled times. Students may also attend office hours.
- At **Loudoun County Public Schools**, teachers of grades 3-12 will offer both synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities through Google Classroom. Teachers of K-2 may choose to offer optional synchronous learning opportunities. Students may also attend office hours.
- At **Manassas City Public Schools**, teachers will provide one, 30-minute “live, touch-base opportunity time” for the entire class each week.
- At **Manassas Park City Schools**, administrators expect students in grades 6-12 to meet virtually with their class at scheduled times. Students may also attend office hours.
- At **Montgomery County Public Schools**, administrators expect students to attend “live time” with the teacher.
- At **Prince George's County Public Schools**, students may attend office hours.

Of the above districts, administrators at only **Fairfax County Public Schools** provide a breakdown of time for asynchronous and synchronous learning each day (for elementary school students). Administrators at the other profiled districts do not yet specify the breakdown of instructional time for synchronous versus asynchronous learning. As districts further hone their distance learning plans in the coming weeks,

districts may publish more detailed guidance regarding time spent on each form of learning.

A Guide to WABE Districts Profiled in this Report

District	State	Approximate Enrollment
Alexandria City Public Schools	VA	15,966
Arlington County Public Schools	VA	27,434
Fairfax County Public Schools	VA	187,797
Falls Church City Public Schools	VA	2,620
Loudoun County Public Schools	VA	81,906
Manassas City Public Schools	VA	7,723
Manassas Park City Schools	VA	3,724
Montgomery County Public Schools	MD	162,680
Prince George's County Public Schools	MD	132,657
Prince William County Public Schools	VA	90,843