

Facebook Live Events

On March 13, 2020, Virginia Governor Ralph Northam closed schools for the remainder of the school year to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Following that unexpected action, Newport News Public Schools needed to find an avenue where division leadership could connect with our families during that time of uncertainty to answer their questions and ease their worry in what was to become our new normal for the remainder of the school year.

It was decided that we would hold Facebook Live events as needed to keep our families and staff informed with the most up to date and accurate information since our page had nearly 20,000 likes and we could interface with families and staff in a live setting during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. The events were promoted across our Facebook and twitter pages as well as on our website and through the city's social media channels and newsletter.

With the help of our city's television department, we were able to use their studio and cameras to hold a socially-distanced question and answer session via our Facebook page. The communications team monitored comments and selected questions to ask panelists on our inaugural broadcast, which included our Superintendent, a School Board Member, our Chief of Staff, and our Chief Academic Officer. Our communications team also responded to questions in the comments while the live discussion was occurring. The outcomes from our Facebook Live events allowed us to interact directly with those impacted by the school closings and keep our community informed of what plans were in place to continue student learning, and ensure families received meals and students had access technology. Our inaugural Facebook Live had over 1,500 people watching and we received over 1,500 comments. We were able to download those comments the next day and build a Frequently Asked Questions webpage so that parents, students, community members and staff could see the questions and answers. After each Facebook Live event we added to our FAQ webpage and informed parents that we did so. The video of the Facebook Live event remained on the division's Facebook page so that our community could watch it on demand. It amassed over 16,000 views.

We held two more Facebook Live events before this school year started, one in April as we adjusted to virtual learning and one again in July with the division's plans for the upcoming school year.