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**Prince George County Public Schools Prepares to
Safely Resume Athletics During Winter Season**

Regular screenings, physical distancing among series of protocols in place for coming season

PRINCE GEORGE, Va. - Prince George County Public Schools continues its preparations for the resumption of athletic competition as Athletic Director Bruce Carroll and his team of coaches work together to develop safe environments for student-athletes and support staff during the upcoming winter sports season.

In September, PGCPs published its Return to Play - Phase 3 Guidelines for safely reopening athletics within the school division. Carroll and the school division's coaching and athletic support staff constructed the document's guidelines around recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), and state guidance to protect student-athletes and staff and reduce the spread of COVID-19 while engaged in athletic competition.

According to Carroll, the school division's winter sports teams have been conditioning since the start of the 2020-2021 School Year under the district's Return to Play - Phase 3 Guidelines. Those regulations include screenings of student-athletes and coaches for symptoms of COVID-19 and temperature checks before partaking in any workouts. Additionally, conditioning equipment is sanitized between uses, and all forms of skill development have been shifted to individualized activities to eliminate the possibility of physical contact with other student-athletes.

In early December, tryouts took place for both basketball and cheer, with practices already underway for the two sports. On December 14, wrestling and indoor track held their first practice session. These sports are expected to begin their seasons in January 2021. Schedule information can be found at Prince George High School Athletics' website, <https://prince-george-high-school.echalksites.com/athletics> or at <https://www.centraldistrictva.org>.

As the winter sports season approaches and eventually gets underway, those protocols will remain in place, along with physical distancing, face covering use requirements, assigned seating at the benches, and individual water bottles for each player.

"All athletes, officials, staff working athletic competitions will undergo wellness and temperature checks upon entry," Athletic Director Carroll said. "Participants will be spaced six feet apart anytime they are not on the court or involved in live athletic action. All participants who are not actively playing and staff will be required to wear a mask or face covering."

Further, the VHSL has dropped the typical game-starting jump ball for the upcoming basketball season. The League has also eliminated pre-and-post-game handshakes across all sports to reduce unnecessary contact between student-athletes and staff.

Any unnecessary congregation will be discouraged as home teams will only meet in locker rooms to receive uniforms. In line with VHSL guidelines, visiting teams will arrive at competitions ready to play and will not use the locker rooms. All student-athletes will leave the facility once any games are over.

"All of these measures are part of our efforts to ensure the safety of our players and personnel, as well as improve the likelihood of the success of our participation," Athletic Director Carroll said.

As part of the district's preparations for the winter sports season, Prince George County Public Schools worked collaboratively with its fellow VHSL Central District school divisions to ensure all schools provide the most consistent game operations procedures according to the League's guidelines and regulations set by the state.

In December, Governor Ralph Northam adopted Executive Order 72, which saw the number of spectators allowed at recreational sporting events reduced to 25, among other public health measures. As such, the VHSL's Central District, including Prince George County Public Schools, will not allow spectators to attend athletic competitions during the winter sports season.

While the Central District will not allow spectators at games during the upcoming winter season, the school division, in partnership with the Prince George Alliance for Education Foundation, will be providing an online livestreaming alternative for our parents and fans free of charge. Additional livestream information will be available on Prince George High School Athletics' website in January 2021.

With the upcoming winter sports season quickly approaching, Carroll and his team of coaches and support staff are focused on providing a safe athletic experience for Prince George County Public Schools' talented student-athletes.

"Our student-athletes and coaches are incredibly fortunate to have a school division that both understands and values the importance of athletics and provides the support necessary to allow our students to participate in athletic competition," Athletic Director Carroll said. "Our youth have been living in unprecedented times since March 13th. With a tremendous level of excitement, we look forward to the opportunity to allow our teams to compete. This process takes a village, and we are grateful for the opportunity to provide our student-athletes this opportunity."