



Friday, April 19, 2024

Dear Virginia Educator:

In June 2026, Norfolk, Hampton Roads, and Virginia's Chesapeake Bay region will welcome an international fleet of tall ships, military vessels, and character ships to commemorate America's 250th anniversary. This milestone event, **Sail250® Virginia**, will include more than 60 ships from 20 countries, bringing 7,000 visiting sailors, officers, and dignitaries to Virginia's shores.

Sail250® Virginia events are planned to promote goodwill among nations, inspire patriotism and foster interest in American maritime history and heritage. In the tradition of the past five iconic OpSail® maritime festivals held in Virginia since 1976, the international Sail250® Virginia fleet will once again bring extraordinary experiences and opportunities to every corner of our communities, including our Virginia schools.

There is already an incredible amount of information being developed for educators about the country's 250th anniversary. We want to take this opportunity to inform you of our plans for a Sail250® Virginia education program that will be available to all Virginia educators beginning in September 2024.

This Sail250® Virginia educational program will include three elements – our very successful Adopt-A-Ship program, a collection of online maritime resources, and suggested maritime themed classroom projects. This program will build on the successes of programs from our past events - OpSail2000® Virginia and OpSail2012® Virginia.

The Sail250® Virginia Adopt-A-Ship program will allow students to serve as “ambassadors” to the international fleet. Each Adopt-A-Ship school will be paired with one of the visiting ships to learn about the ship's history, the culture of its home country, and eventually, to correspond with its crew as they sail to Virginia in 2026! Transportation grants will be available to participating schools, helping to offset the cost for those schools to visit Norfolk for the June 2026 events.

A Sail250® Virginia online resource collection will focus on our country's maritime heritage and include histories, personal narratives, and links to lesson plans developed by museums from across the country. Educators will be able to integrate this information into their history, language studies, geography, art, and music curriculum using the Sail250® Virginia suggested classroom projects.

If you are interested in involving your school or wish to receive more information about the Sail250® Virginia commemoration events and activities, please complete the attached **Virginia Educator Interest Form** and return via email or mail to: Paula Cook; Sail250®Virginia Education Manager; CookP@festevents.org; Norfolk Festevents; Attn: Paula Cook; 120 W. Main Street; Norfolk, VA 23510.

We will continue to update resources and provide the latest information about the June 2026 events through our webpage www.Sail250Virginia.com.

Thank you for your important work in educating Virginia's youth!

With warm regards,

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