



Amherst County Public Schools
Comprehensive School Improvement Plan For:

Amherst Elementary School

156 Davis Street

Amherst, VA 24521

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2023-2024

The following individuals assisted in creating this plan:

Individual	Title
Amanda Cassise	Principal
Shannon Presnell	Coordinator of CTE/Administrative Lead at AES
Jill Guill	Division Liaison
Natalia Cecil	Division Liaison
Hannah Brown	1st Grade Teacher
Amy Dawson	3rd Grade Teacher
Emily Hackenbracht	4th Grade Teacher
Jennifer Johnson	Title I Reading Specialist
Cassie Mayhew	Special Education Teacher

"You will go **FAR** when you are **FOCUSED, ACCOUNTABLE, AND RESPECTFUL.**"

School Profile/Demographic Information

Status for Most Recent School Year		Student Population Percentages			
Total Enrollment	268	Poverty	46%	Other	11%
Attendance Rate	77.7%	White	60%	Special Education	15%
Graduation Rate	N/A	Black	18.7%	English Learners	4%
Accreditation Status	Accredited	Hispanic	9%	Gifted	5%
Title I Model <small>Schoolwide Program (SWP) Targeted Assistance (TA) Not Applicable (N/A)</small>	SWP	Asian	0.77%		

Faculty & Staff						
		Years of Experience by Content / Grade Level				
Grade Level/Content	Number of Teachers	0-3 Years	4-7 Years	8-15 Years	>16 Years	New To School (for most recent SY)
Pre-K	2		1		1	
Kindergarten	3	1			2	1
First	3		1	2		1
Second	2				2	
Third	2				3	
Fourth	3				2	
Fifth	2	1			1	1
Special Education	3		1	1	1	
Reading	2				2	

Specialists						
Resource	4	1			3	1
School Counselor	1				1	
Total	27	3	3	3	18	4

Executive Summary

Division Demographic and Curriculum Overview

Amherst Elementary School is a fully accredited elementary school that is located in the town of Amherst, Virginia. The school receives support through local churches, restaurants, and stores. The town, county, and state law enforcement agencies are visibly engaged and involved with our students. The PTO is a strong organization that funds extra academic opportunities for students, such as field trips and assemblies. The PTO also provides or helps provide opportunities that encourage family engagement in the school community. Families are excited to be more involved in the school community. Back to School Night in October was well attended with 83 families and many parents have volunteered to help in classrooms and around the building providing extra support for students and staff.

Amherst Elementary continues to show an extremely low turnover rate with faculty/staff as shown through consistency within its instructional staff. We have four new teachers to our school for the 2023-2024 school year, and three teachers in the 0-3 year experience range this school year. About 89% of teaching staff have over four years of experience with 67% having taught more than 16 years. The principal is in year two at Amherst Elementary, but has previous administrative experience and teaching experience in the division for the last twenty plus years.

Amherst Elementary has been fully accredited for the last nine years. The number of students in the gifted program (TAG) grades 3-5 has remained steady for the last three years and over 10% of the students participate in the enrichment program within TAG.

Amherst Elementary continues to implement small group instruction opportunities, remediation, and additional support to students especially targeting the areas of Reading

and Math, but also including Science and Social Studies to enhance student learning opportunities and address learning gaps due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Extended Learning Opportunities - Before, During & After School (*Component 3*)

- Quality Tier 1 instruction will be provided to students in all academic areas during the school day.
- For the 2022-2023 school year, students in grades K-5 will have the opportunity to work with specialized Reading staff (PALS instructor, Reading Specialists, Instructional Staff, and/or Resource Staff) if identified as below grade level. This opportunity is also available for the year 2023-2024.
- Students have the opportunity to access online math programs, e.g. IXL and Reflex, within the school day and outside of school hours to focus on standards of learning skills and fact fluency.
- Students have the opportunity to access online reading programs outside of school hours, e.g. Lexia, Epic, and IXL reading.
- For the 2022-2023 school year, students in grades K-5 will have the opportunity to participate in additional small group/remediation activities during school and after-school hours with support staff. This opportunity is also available for the 2023-2024 school year.
- Faculty meeting agendas, PLC minutes, reading/writing summary charts, student growth assessments, PALS assessments, formative and summative assessments, and student quick checks will help to identify and monitor students progress.
- Administration will review the content and cognitive level alignment in lesson plans, lesson delivery, and assessments and provide feedback to teachers on a regular basis.
- Community and Family involvement opportunities during the 2022-2023 school year include: Back to School Night, Game Night, Love a Good Book Night, Science Fair, Field Day, Parent/Teacher Conferences, PTO Meetings, Awards Assemblies, and Student Showcase events. This opportunity is also available for the 2023-2024 school year.

Needs Assessment Process (*Component 1*)

A comprehensive needs assessment (CNA) was used to determine the strengths and weaknesses at Amherst Elementary School. The CNA afforded the leadership team the opportunity to look at data from multiple sources, overtime, and within subgroups. The CNA guided the team to areas of strength which will continue to be monitored, replicated, and

improved upon and to areas that need improvement which will require more in-depth data analysis and collaboration through Professional Learning Communities (PLC), greater monitoring and professional development.

Needs Assessment Findings - Areas of Strength (Component 1 & 4)

Through the last three reporting years (2018-2023), Amherst Elementary has performed well on reading SOLs. During the 2020-2021 school year, in the height of the COVID 19 pandemic, the pass rate dropped 9%, but rebounded well in the 2021-2022 school year with an 89% pass rate. PALS data over the last three reporting years (2018-2023) shows a similar trend with a spike of students being identified in the spring of 2021, but rebounding to pre-COVID identification rates in the spring of 2022. By the Spring of 2023 Amherst Elementary cut its identified PALS students to 14% for its lowest rate in recent years. Amherst Elementary continues to out-perform the other elementary schools in the division. Amherst Elementary began training in the science of reading and utilizing the Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Curriculum with fidelity in the 2021-2022 school year to provide evidence based instruction to students on encoding and decoding which was continued during the 2022-2023 school year.

Based on the results from the 2022-2023 SOL tests, Amherst Elementary continues to perform consistently overall in reading with an 89% pass rate. Our black subgroup made tremendous progress from the previous year, by increasing the pass rate from 73% to 90%. Amherst Elementary continues to implement the Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Curriculum in the 2023-2024 school year, with the addition of the University of Florida Literacy Institute curriculum for grades K-2 that supports the science of reading with explicit phonics instruction and resources. Additionally, all students will use Lexia daily with fidelity to provide individualized instruction to facilitate accurate decoding and encoding skills.

SOL Reading Pass Rates			
Pass Rate 18-19	Pass Rate 21-22	Pass Rate 22-23	Pass Rate Cumulative 3 Year Average
88%	89%	89%	88.5%

PALS Identification Rates

Spring 2019	Spring 2021	Spring 2022	Spring 2023
20%	30%	21%	14%

For the year 2021–2022, math continues to be a strength at Amherst Elementary School (see table below.) All sub groups continue to make the 70% pass rate. Math teachers will continue providing quality tier 1 instruction, differentiating and grouping students according to their specific needs, and providing remediation and intervention as needed.

For the year 2022–2023, the math pass rate dropped by 11%. Although an 81% pass rate is still above the 70% required pass rate, there is a need for additional support in math.

SOL Math Pass Rates			
Pass Rate 18-19	Pass Rate 21-22	Spring 22-23	Pass Rate Cumulative 3 Year Average
95%	92%	81%	88%

Needs Assessment Findings – Areas of Improvement (Component 1, 2, and 4)

Although Amherst Elementary has performed well in reading overall, in the spring of 2022 our black subgroup missed the 75% pass rate and other subgroups have just made the 75% pass rate in reading in 2021–2022 school year (see table below.) Amherst Elementary has a small population within most sub groups and one individual can make a great difference in whether the pass rate of 75% is met or not. Amherst Elementary will continue to monitor the progress of all students and dig into data analysis for sub groups to ensure all students are making adequate progress.

As noted in the 2022–2023 assessment results, students with disabilities did not meet the required 75% pass rate. Amherst Elementary will continue strategies from the 2022–2023 school year. Additionally, students in grades 3–5 considered “at risk” or “low proficient” in reading will participate in high intensity tutoring to focus on learning gaps for 45 minutes two days a week. Amherst Elementary is committed to quality tier 1 instruction, data analysis, and small group instruction to best meet the needs of all student groups.

Reading Subgroup	Pass Rate 18-19	Pass Rate 21-22	Pass Rate 22-23	Pass Rate Cumulative 3 Year Average
Black	77%	73%	90%	80%
Hispanic	<	90%	70%	85%
Multiple Races	86%	<	87%	84%
White	91%	93%	91%	91%
Students with Disabilities	74%	75%	68%	72%
Economically Disadvantaged	80%	88%	84%	83%
English Language Learners	<	<	<	83%

Although Amherst Elementary has performed well in math overall; however, some subgroups have just made the 70% pass rate in reading for the 2021-2022 school year (see table below.) Amherst Elementary has a small population within most sub groups and one individual can make a great difference in whether the pass rate of 70% is met or not. Amherst Elementary will continue to monitor the progress of all students and dig into data analysis for sub groups to ensure all students are making adequate progress.

Based on results from the 2022-2023 SOL math assessment black students and students with disabilities did not meet the 70% pass rate. Amherst Elementary will continue strategies from the 2022-2023 school year. Students in grades 3-5 considered “at risk” or “low proficient” in math will participate in high intensity tutoring to focus on learning gaps for 45 minutes two days a week. Amherst Elementary is committed to quality tier 1 instruction, data analysis, and small group instruction to best meet the needs of all student groups.

Math Subgroup	Pass Rate 18-19	Pass Rate 21-22	Pass Rate 22-23	Pass Rate Cumulative 3 Year Average
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Black	86%	86%	58%	77%
Hispanic	<	90%	80%	90%
Multiple Races	100%	<	71%	89%
White	96%	93%	89%	93%
Students with Disabilities	79%	75%	53%	68%
Economically Disadvantaged	91%	90%	74%	85%
English Language Learners	<	<	<	100%

Although Amherst Elementary earned a level 1 in science for its 3 year average, it earned a level 2 status in science in the spring of 2022 by not reaching a 70% pass rate (see table below.) One challenging factor contributing to this performance was due to students not being taught science by a teacher in fourth grade. The students who took the science test were in a hybrid location for science in fourth grade and received their instruction through computer based lessons on Canvas. Students were unable to conduct hands-on investigations or apply what they may have learned on the computer. This year’s fifth grade students were taught fourth grade science standards by a teacher last year. During this school year (2022-2023) students are able to work collaboratively in groups, learn through hands-on investigations, and apply knowledge more easily to real world experiences.

Amherst Elementary met the 70% benchmark pass rate in science with a 72% in the spring of 2023. Students will continue to be exposed to hands-on scientific learning. With science topics incorporated into reading, writing, and resource classes. Students will continue to spiral their science learning to review previously taught materials. Amherst Elementary is committed to quality tier 1 instruction, data analysis, and small group instruction to best meet the needs of all student groups.

	Pass Rate 18-19	Pass Rate 21-22	Pass Rate 22-23	Pass Rate Cumulative 3 Year Average
Science	74%	66%	72%	71%

Since 2019 Amherst Elementary’s Chronic Absenteeism rate has more than doubled (see table below.) The chronic absenteeism rate needs to decrease by 12% by the end of the 2022-2023 school year. Coming out of the pandemic parents are still in the mindset of keeping their students at home for minor illnesses. Amherst Elementary’s team will re-educate parents on the importance of good attendance due to the impact excessive absences have on student progress.

AES dropped the chronic absentee rate to 12.5% during the 2022-2023 school year. For the 2023-2024 school year, AES will continue to closely monitor attendance and will aim to drop the chronic absentee rate to 10%.

	School Year 18-19	School Year 21-22	School Year 22-23	Cumulative 3 Year Average
Chronic Absenteeism Rate	8.19%	22%	12.5%	12%

Schoolwide Reform Strategies (Component 2, 3, and 4)

To facilitate improving student achievement in reading, the following approaches are being implemented:

- A new division-wide literacy plan has been implemented and will be followed during the 2022-2023 school year. This will continue to be used for the 2023-2024 school year.
- A division Phonics Scope and Sequence will be implemented to provide explicit, systematic phonics instruction.
- The Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Curriculum will be used with fidelity daily to increase students’ awareness of speech sounds needed to facilitate accurate decoding and encoding skills. Additionally, grades K-2 will use the UFLI curriculum with fidelity to aid students in explicit, systematic phonics instruction.

- Students who ID in PALS will receive 2.5 additional hours of reading instruction weekly via Title I, PALS instructor, or Special Education Teachers, or Lexia Core 5.
- Continued professional development on the science of reading strategies and content and cognitive level alignment.
- Backwards planning will be utilized to ensure alignment of content and rigor from lesson through delivery.
- Teachers differentiate by readiness for small group instruction.
- Students in grades three through five are engaged in StoryWorks which is a Scholastic literary magazine that includes fiction and nonfiction paired readings, poetry, etc.
- Instructional technology is used to enhance student learning. All students have access to IXL reading, eSpark, Reading A-Z, epic, and Lalilo. Special education students have access to the Really Great Reading program and select students in grade 5 have access to LexiaCore 5. For the 2023-2024 school year, these programs will be continued with the LexiaCore 5 implementation daily in grades K-5.
- For the 2023-2024, students in grades 3-5 considered “at risk” or “low proficient” in reading will participate in high intensity tutoring to focus on learning gaps for 45 minutes two days a week.
- Grade level teams meet collaboratively each week during professional learning communities (PLC). During these meetings, teachers review and analyze data from formative and/or summative assessments to plan for intervention and enrichment. Teachers share instructional strategies they have found effective.
- Ensure lesson plans reflect SOL alignment in both content and cognitive level.
- Create and meet with a Parental Advisory Committee composed of parents, reading specialists, principals, and teachers to plan, implement, and evaluate the Title I Program.
- A parent resource center is available for any parent to check out materials to use at home to reinforce various reading concepts.
- Literacy events and workshops will be held throughout the year to encourage parental involvement and provide parents with information and materials on how to help their children at home.

To facilitate improving student achievement in math, the following approaches are being implemented during the 2023-2024 school year:

- Analysis of VDOE Growth Assessment Data to identify skill areas in need of improvement to provide targeted remediation/intervention with an emphasis on subgroups.
- Utilize with fidelity and monitor evidence based supplemental programs, such as IXL math and Reflex math for 2nd-5th grade students.

- Engage students in a “problem of the week” with authentic/culturally responsive word problems.
- Grades 3-5 high intensity math tutoring with a focus on learning gaps.
- Provide professional development on small group guided math instruction.
- Provide professional development on word problems with an emphasis on authentic/culturally responsive problems.

To facilitate improving student achievement in science, the following approaches are being implemented:

- Incorporation of spiral reviews of Grade 4 content.
- Incorporation of science topics into reading and resource classes (PE, Art, Music, and Library.)
- Hands-on scientific investigations.
- Ensure lesson plans reflect SOL alignment in both content and cognitive level.
- Unpack standards and develop aligned assessments.
- Data analysis of SDBQ data to identify strands and standards that are an area of need.
- Tracking science data through PLC to determine effectiveness of instruction. Review data for topics that need further remediation.
- Grades K-5 will focus on science academic vocabulary to ensure vertical alignment between grade levels.
- Participate in VDOE Science Teacher Webinars conducted by the VDOE Science Team to receive PD on various science topics that will improve student outcomes and share ACPS & VDOE Science Updates to support teacher practice with tools, PD, and resources.

To improve attendance, Amherst Elementary School will:

- Designate a school attendance team
- Utilize October catch: Phone calls home at 4 absences total during the month of October
- Parent/guardian calls after 3 absences.
- Conduct attendance meetings for individual students with family and school representatives to determine next steps and interventions for students who are at jeopardy of being chronically absent.
- Monitor data and conduct follow-ups of individual student’s attendance meetings to determine if the attendance plan is meeting its objectives.
- Record and monitors student attendance daily using Raptor and PowerSchool
- Continuing to inform parents and students of attendance procedures and strategies

to help with attendance.

- Updating and implementing an Attendance Incentive/Acknowledgment Program which includes recognizing students for improved attendance; providing interclass competition by recognizing classes with most improved attendance; and recognizing students with good attendance.
- Plan and implement random Show-Up days to encourage students to come to school because you never know when one will happen and what fun it will be.
- Provide engagement opportunities for families to develop strong relationships.
- Attendance blurbs on school newsletters, social media posts.

Budget Implications (Title I Parental Involvement)

- Literacy events and workshops will be held throughout the year to encourage parental involvement and provide parents with information and materials on how to help their children at home. Parental involvement funds are utilized to give students and their families resources, such as books and also to provide guest speakers/performers who reinforce the importance of literacy and literacy skills.
- The Title I budget also provides highly-qualified reading specialists and access to a math support specialist in the building to help struggling students.

Goals and Action Steps

Please contact the building administrator if you would like more information about the Comprehensive School Improvement Process.