



Dr. Robert Arnold, Superintendent
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Section 1: Introduction

The purpose of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) III Fund is to help safely reopen and sustain the safe operation of schools and address the impact of COVID-19 on the nation's students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. Amherst County Public Schools (ACPS) was awarded \$7,306,875.43 in ESSER III funds. Below is our plan describing how the awarded funds will be used over the three year award period. Any questions pertaining to health and safety should be directed to Dr. William Wells, Assistant Superintendent at wwells@amherst.k12.va.us and questions pertaining to in-person instruction and continuity of services please contact Dr. Dana B. Norman, Chief Academic Officer at dnorman@amherst.k12.va.us.

Guiding Principles

ACPS is dedicated to ensuring a safe learning environment that provides equitable experiences and meets the needs of Every Child, Every Day. ACPS is committed to stand by the following principles:

1. Provide a clean and safe environment for all students and staff to engage in learning.
2. Set a purposeful focus on the 5 C's profile for Virginia Graduates (Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking, and Citizenship).
3. Confirm the content aligns with the Virginia Standards of Learning.
4. Use performance assessments to connect student learning to real world experiences.
5. Establish and maintain tiered instruction to support learning loss.

ACPS Response to COVID-19

Looking back at the 2020-2021 school year, ACPS made two things top priority: 1) to ensure the physical and social emotional well-being of all students were maintained, and 2) to provide the most effective and supportive instruction possible during this time of continual change. ACPS introduced distant learning to all students in an effort to reduce learning loss in content and skills during the state-wide

school closure. We offered students three instructional options during the pandemic: a hybrid learning model, an in-person learning model and a 100% remote learning model. We successfully continued instruction to our students and supported the community and nation in reducing the spread of COVID-19.

As a division, ACPS established and promoted a multitude of safety and hygiene training using guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Virginia Department of Health (VDH). We disbursed on the first day of returning to the buildings, all the safety and hygiene training documents, videos and building signage (all of which promoted screening protocols, spread prevention, social distancing, proper use, type and style of face coverings, and other mitigation strategies) to all division employees, students, visitors and shareholders. Additionally, the school custodial staff were trained on the updated CDC guidelines on cleaning and sanitizing high traffic areas during a pandemic. Throughout the course of the year, the trainings were revisited and communicated often to ensure the fidelity of implementation and many of those materials still remain in circulation today.

Shortly before the start of the 2021-2022 school year, the Commonwealth of Virginia passed Senate Bill 1303, which legally requires school divisions in Virginia to offer five days of in-person instruction to all students effective July 1, 2021. ACPS will transition from the current model of half virtual learning and half in-person learning to all students, to a 5 days in-person learning as required by the Governor's most recent Executive Order. Returning to five days, in-person instruction presents certain challenges, but it also provides opportunities for improvement. ACPS will meet the needs of Every Child, Every Day, by continuing to offer academic, social, emotional, and mental health support to all students and employees as they return to the buildings.

All members of the school community continue to be impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic and as we move forward into the 2021-2022 school year, various supports will be needed. Along with our focus on physical safety, support for the well-being of our students and staff is of the utmost importance. As in-person instruction opens to all students five days a week, ACPS will continue to nurture the relationships that have been established with all stakeholders, while consistently providing a safe, effective, and equitable learning environment for our students, families, and employees.

Section 2: Prevention and Mitigation Strategies

ARP Act ESSER III funds may be used to implement prevention and mitigation strategies that are, to the greatest extent practicable, consistent with the most recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance on reopening schools, in order to continuously and safely open and operate schools for in-person learning. Amherst County Public Schools will use approximately \$1,461,375.09 of its ARP Act ESSER III funds to implement prevention and mitigation strategies as described below.

ACPS has taken and will continue to take actions to ensure the health and safety of students, educators, and other school and division staff during and following the return to full in-person instruction. A description of actions already taken and additional actions planned is below. The following actions were

implemented during the 2020-2021 school year and will continue into the 2021-2022 school year as we return to full in-person instruction.

Absenteeism: (Will continue as stated)

ACPS monitored student absenteeism using already established attendance procedures. Should the rate of absenteeism increase in any school or across the division, then the Superintendent will be made aware of this by the attendance clerk and will consult with the Central Virginia Health District regarding possible causes and next steps. Additionally, ACPS will work with the Health Department and local medical providers to ensure that contact tracing and notifications are accurate and completed in a timely manner.

ACPS initiated the following protocols to monitor employee health and absenteeism:

- Required employees to complete a health screening protocol before reporting to work each day. The results of the individual health screening will be reviewed and documented by the employee's immediate supervisor.
- Tracked employee absenteeism at the school and district levels using a time management software that required staff to enter their absences.

Communication: (Will continue as stated)

As part of the completion of the COVID-19 Mitigation Health Plan for the 2021-2022 school year, a Health Procedures Summary Document will be developed based on the most recent guidance from the CDC, VDH, AAP, VDOE, and Governor's Executive Orders. This document will serve as the foundation for all communication regarding health mitigation strategies for employees, students, and parents. The documents will be distributed to students and parents prior to the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year through several communication platforms including School System/School Websites, Social Media Platforms, local media, and USPS mailings.

Mitigation Strategies: (Will continue as stated)**Proper Hygiene and Cleaning**

Frequently touched surfaces will be cleaned and sprayed with an approved EPA List N disinfectant. Food service areas will be sanitized utilizing solutions that are approved for use in those areas.

- Door handles, water fountains, sinks, toilet handles, etc. will be cleaned with a sanitizing solution on a regular basis.
- Surfaces that are frequently touched by students and non-cafeteria staff in food service areas will be sanitized between each rotation of students. Food will be pulled from the line and the area will be cleaned in accordance with VDH and USDA guidance.

- Transportation: The transportation department will sanitize student areas daily between each run and at the conclusion of the last run. Driver areas will be sanitized daily at the conclusion of the last run.
- Principals will develop cleaning schedules for routine cleaning, as appropriate for their buildings. The routine cleaning schedule will be fluid and adjustable to meet the needs as circumstances change. Routine cleaning will include disinfecting frequently touched surfaces and high volume areas nightly.
- Building level custodians will notify their building administrators of the need for any necessary cleaning and sanitizing supplies. The school administrator will requisition supplies from the Supervisor of Maintenance and Operations.
- The Supervisor of Maintenance and Operations will ensure building level administrators, custodians, and transportation specialists are trained in the proper usage and storage of cleaning and sanitizing supplies.
- Hand Sanitizing stations will be located at entrances to the buildings, outside of restrooms, and food service locations. Each classroom, office, and clinic will have hand sanitizer available and located in a visible and accessible location.

Minimize Sharing of Resources

- Computers and Electronics: All students in grades Pre-K through 12 will be assigned a Chromebook that they can take with them to all classes and for use at home. Teachers will ensure that students do not share electronics or computers. Any device that may be shared will be cleaned between uses. Calculators will be assigned to individual students and cleaned at the end of the class period in which they were used.
- Supplies: All classrooms will be set up so that students have adequate supplies (writing utensils, art supplies, calculators, etc) assigned to them eliminating the need for community supplies. Teachers will ensure that students do not share supplies.
- Early-childhood: Toys, games, and soft items that cannot be cleaned will be removed from classrooms. Any manipulatives or toys that can be easily cleaned will be used by only one student at a time and cleaned between use. When possible, additional 4 manipulatives and other instructional items will be purchased so that each student will have their own assigned to them and stored with their supplies.
- CTE: Students in CTE classes using tools will be required to wear gloves. Ten (10) minutes will be scheduled at the end of each class period to sanitize all tools. Protective eye wear will be individually assigned and sanitized using UV boxes.

- Sensory classrooms: Sensory rooms will be limited to students who require this accommodation as part of their IEP. Sensory equipment that cannot be wiped clean will be removed from the classroom. All equipment will be sanitized in between uses. Should a student require an item that cannot be wiped clean, such as a swing, then that item will be limited to that student's use.
- Books: Books will continue to be made available to students in classrooms and libraries. Students will not be permitted to touch or browse books prior to selection or assignment. Reading will be done individually or, if done in a group, each student will have their own copy of the book. Once students are finished with a book, it will need to sit for 24 hours prior to being touched by another student or staff member.

Operations Training: (Will continue as stated)

ACPS is broadly recruiting substitute employees to increase the availability of staff to ensure continuity of operations across departments. All current and newly hired substitutes will be provided with targeted professional development to ensure that they are prepared to seamlessly transition into their role as a substitute employee. Additionally, ACPS is including all Instructional Assistants in professional development activities planned for teachers so that they may transition into those roles in a substitute capacity, as necessary.

Each school building will have at least two lay responders who are trained in all duties and expectations of School Nurses to ensure there is a point person for COVID-19 related questions and tasks. These lay responders will be able to contact division personnel and health department resources, as needed, to ensure compliance to all guidelines.

Addressing Positive Cases: (Will continue as stated)

Employees who have tested positive and have had COVID-19 may return to work when they meet ALL of the following criteria and have coordinated their return to work with their immediate supervisor:

- Have had no fever for 72 hours (without the use of medicine that reduces fevers), and
- Other symptoms have improved for 72 hours without the use of medication (e.g., cough, shortness of breath), and
- It has been at least 10 days since symptoms first appeared.

Students who have tested positive and have had COVID-19 may return to school activities when they meet ALL of the following criteria:

- Have had no fever for 72 hours (without the use of medicine that reduces fevers), and

- Other symptoms have improved for 72 hours without the use of medication (e.g., cough, shortness of breath), and
- It has been at least 10 days since symptoms first appeared. Any individual placed on self-isolation or quarantine by a health official will be allowed to return at the end of their quarantine period, in consultation with the COVID Response Team.

Any individual who remained at home due to symptoms of COVID-19, but did not get tested will be allowed to return when they are symptom free for 72 hours.

In addition, ACPS implemented protocols that aligned with Board policy on each of the following safety recommendations established by the CDC.

- Universal and correct wearing of masks. Based on current state guidance, ACPS students and staff will be required to wear face masks that cover their noses and mouths while inside school buildings or on buses. Masks may be removed when outdoors and able to maintain safe physical distancing.
- Modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing (e.g., use of cohorts/podding) All student desks will be spaced 3 feet apart. Elementary students will be in cohorts. Secondary students will utilize block scheduling to minimize the number of class changes per day.
- Handwashing and respiratory etiquette [Handwashing Video](#)
- Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation. School division maintenance staff and school based custodians will conduct daily cleaning and disinfecting surfaces in all facilities. Hand sanitizing stations have been established in all facilities. All classrooms and common areas are equipped with hand sanitizer. Water fountains have been disabled and water bottle filling stations have been installed in every school. Students and staff are encouraged to bring their own water bottles to school. Buses are sanitized between runs and at the end of the day.
 - o HVAC
 - ACPS renovated the HVAC system in all school facilities over the past five years and all systems are ASHRAE compliant for the mixing of outdoor air.
 - All renovated systems use bipolar ionization to treat the air.
 - ACPS has a service contract with an HVAC contractor to provide required maintenance and cleaning of HVAC equipment.
- **Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments** Parents shall contact the student's school when a student or immediate family member tests positive for Covid-19. School based personnel will notify the ACPS COVID Response Team (CRT) when a positive case is reported. The CRT will work in conjunction with the VDH and conduct contact tracing and follow CDC and VDH guidance when determining which (if any) students or staff need to be quarantined. In the event students or staff are considered contacts and need to be quarantined, ACPS will notify the exposed staff and the immediate family of students prior to releasing a

public statement. ACPS will notify the students' families via letter and school messenger when a positive case of COVID-19 is confirmed in their students' school. ACPS will notify local media through a press release when a school division student or staff member is diagnosed with a confirmed case of COVID-19.

- **Diagnostic and screening testing** All students and staff must complete a daily screening form before being allowed to participate in athletics or events. The screening will consist of the following:

Answer Yes or No since my last day in the building, Have I had any of the following:

- A new fever (100.4 or higher) or a sense of having a fever?
- A new cough that cannot be attributed to another health condition?
- New shortness of breath that cannot be attributed to another health condition?
- New chills that cannot be attributed to another health condition? · A new sore throat that cannot be attributed to another health condition?
- New muscle aches (myalgia) that cannot be attributed to another health condition or specific activity (such as physical exercise)?

If an individual answers YES to any of the screening questions before arriving, they should stay home and not enter the building. If an individual reports having COVID-19 symptoms upon arrival, the school will activate COVID-19 protocols. All screening services (vision, hearing, dental) will continue to be offered. Organizations that volunteer their assistance, such as the Lion's Club and James River Dental Clinic, will be subject to the ACPS Employee Health Screening prior to entering the schools. Outside organizations will follow the most recent guidance from the CDC, VDH, AAP, VDOE, and Governor's Executive Orders and will be screened in accordance with the ACPS Employee Health Screening protocols. Parents will be informed of these practices and will have the option to decline the screening services.

- **Efforts to provide vaccinations to school communities** ACPS employees were offered the opportunity to be vaccinated and more than 75% of employees did so. Students aged 16 and over were also offered the opportunity to be vaccinated. The Amherst community has multiple vendors offering free vaccinations to students and community members.

- **Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies** All students with Individualized Health Plans, 504 Plans, Individualized Education Plans accommodations, or doctor's orders for medical services will receive the services as normal. All individual healthcare plans will address COVID-19 risks for students with health needs. VA Association of School Nurses recommendations will be adopted for these medical services.

- **Coordination with state and local health officials** ACPS will coordinate with local agencies and organizations to include Central Virginia Health Department, Department of Social Services, VA Department of Health, Amherst County Emergency Management Services, Amherst County Sheriff's Office, The Town of Amherst Police Department, Amherst County Administrator, Town of Amherst Administrator, local civic organizations, local medical providers, and local churches in the community response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Section 3: Addressing Unfinished Learning**Plan for Use of Funds**

Of the \$7,306,875.43 awarded funds, \$1,461,375.09 (20%) will be set aside to address the academic impact of lost instructional time or learning loss through the implementation of evidence-based interventions. These may include, but are not limited to, summer learning or summer enrichment programs, extended school day, comprehensive after school programs, extended school year programs, facilities repair and upgrades, and provide necessary resources to meet identified student needs.

Amherst County Public Schools will use CARES funds to continue the following:

- A. Utilize Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment in the areas of reading and math to determine student academic growth. In addition, this assessment provides identification of specific instructional needs in areas where students may need research based strategies to close the learning gaps. (Guiding Principle # 5)
- B. Provide instructional support staff at the elementary levels to assist with small group learning opportunities, as well as, provide targeted skill instruction. This instructional support will provide additional opportunities for students to strengthen academic skill deficits. (Guiding Principle # 5)
- C. Provide hot-spots for students who do not have at home internet connection in order to access instructional materials and resources outside of the school building. (Guiding Principle #5)
- D. Provide custodial support at all schools to address cleaning and disinfecting the buildings. (Guiding Principle #1)

In addition, Amherst County Public Schools would like to provide supplemental supports to students, staff and principals in the following ways:

- E. Provide two Instructional Specialists to address individual and small group instructional needs for students in the area of reading, as well as, support teachers in providing strategies to support academic success and close achievement gaps. (Guiding Principles #3 and #5)
- F. Provide two Attendance Officers to help facilitate and ensure student attendance and compliance for students in Grades Pre-K through twelve. (Guiding Principle #5)
- G. Provide one Math Specialist and one Reading Specialist at the secondary level (Grades 6-12) to address individual and small group instructional needs for students, as well as, support teachers in providing strategies to support academic success and close achievement gaps. (Guiding Principles #3 and #5)
- H. Provide one School Counselor at secondary and one School Counselor for Elementary/Virtual Learning, who will work with students in the division to

provide mental, emotional, and physical health supports and assist with issues as they arise. (Guiding Principle #1)

- I. Provide one division CTE Specialists who will facilitate opportunities for students to investigate college or career paths and participate in meaningful learning experiences in order to develop into a Future Ready Student. (Guiding Principle #2)
- J. Provide one CTE position for Health Sciences at the Secondary level who will work collaboratively with the CNA instructor and the Coordinator of Internships to partner with local senior care and medical facilities. (Guiding Principle #2)
- K. Contract additional Day Treatment slots to support student social, emotional and behavior needs. (Guiding Principle #1)
- L. During the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years, ACPS is offering students whose families continue to choose remote instruction an opportunity to participate in the Virtual Virginia Program. Funding from this grant will be used to pay the tuition for these students. (Guiding Principle #2 and #5)

Section 4: Other Uses of Funds

The plan also includes the renovations to Amherst County High School. The information below describes how the remaining funds will provide new areas that can assist with additional space for learning opportunities for students. If approved, these projects can be completed within the timeline provided with the new funding. (Guiding Principles #1 and #2)

- A. Auditorium - new auditorium with 1400 seats that seats approx. 470 students (social distancing) to accommodate for standardized testing, assemblies, and presentations. This could be utilized by students and staff for large group events. The current auditorium could seat less than 100 students at one time.
- B. Commons / Dining / Toilet Rooms - new dining commons with seating for 400 would seat 180 students when social distancing. The current dining room will accommodate approx. 90 students with social distancing. The current gymnasium lobby would hold less than 20 occupants. The New commons would hold approx. 400 as a commons area for the gymnasium and auditorium. New toilet room facilities would permit 4 times the occupants and better social distancing than with the current facilities.
- C. Food Court - new food court will replace the standard serving lines providing more area for student area in the servery and more area for students to stand in point of sale lines and social distance.
- D. Collaborative Learning Lab - A large portion of the existing dining room would be converted into a Collaborative Learning Lab. This space will accommodate a large group of approx. 74 students

with social distancing. This is a new space that would permit 4-5 classes without restrictions and 3 classes in one space with restrictions.

- E. Black Box Theatre - The existing auditorium would be converted into a Black Box Theatre, additional classroom and additional testing site. This Black Box Theatre could hold approx. 100 students with social distancing.

In order to utilize the ARP ESSER III Funds, the division must develop and make publicly available on its website the plan for the use of the funds. The school division must engage in meaningful consultation with stakeholders and give the public an opportunity to provide input in the development of its plan.

The Plan for Use of ESSER III Funds 2021-2024, will be reviewed and adjusted if needed every six months. This is the first review. Revisions to the application may be made as needed.

Timeline

Initial Plan Presented	August, 2021
First Review	December 2021
Second Review	June 2022
Third Review	December 2022
Fourth Review	June 2023
Fifth Review	December 2023
Final Review	June 2024

Section 5: Addressing Students' Academic, Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Needs

With such an abrupt school closure that began March 13, 2020, which moved into limited summer offerings and a modified school year for 2020-2021, the school community experienced unexpected challenges. ACPS began the 2020-2021 school year with ensuring that all students and employees were provided with support during their return to school.

- Employee Social/Emotional Supports

- The division partnered with Harvest Outreach to offer synchronous sessions, both individual and small groups, that allowed employees to discuss the hardships and/or opportunities they were experiencing during the pandemic. This same service will be offered again.
- All Points Employee Assistance Program was also offered to each employee if they requested assistance and wanted to remain anonymous.
- Seminars and training documents were provided explaining the support granted to each employee that experienced COVID-19 symptoms, or who was diagnosed with COVID- 11 19 and needed to be out of work. (ACPS granted sick time to all employees impacted by COVID-19, this will end and VDOE/VDH guidance will be adhered to during the 2021-2022 school year.)

- **Student Social/Emotional Supports**

- Students participated in Social/Emotional Learning Lessons the first two weeks of school during 2020-2021 that aligned with meeting the needs of all students such as re-socialization, fear of the unexpected, etc.
- As we enter the 2021-2022 school year, ACPS will prioritize support for students and provide a safe learning environment within a positive social school climate.
- Continuing to build positive relationships with all students and establishing awareness of our differences will be at the forefront of the School Counseling Program.
- Research based strategies in teaching and promoting resilience will also be a focus during the 2021-2022 school year.
- Student Health Services (to include mental and nutritional health).

ACPS has been on the forefront of ensuring that students and their families have access to all available health services. Self-care is an important activity that must be taught and acted upon in a deliberate manner. In order to be a Future Ready Student taking care of the mental, emotional, and physical health is a priority. Learning how to eat right, reduce stress, exercise regularly, and take a time-out when needed is the way to stay healthy, happy, and resilient.

- **Student Health Supports**

- During the 2020-2021 school year School Counselors trained staff to assist in the screening of each student regarding mental and nutritional health concerns. Teachers reported to counselors any signs of disengagement or outburst that would warrant concern. Counselors met with and provided direct support to students and their families, contacting the Supervisor of Accountability and Wellness for additional support with outside agencies if needed.

- Schools Counselors will continue to work with all staff to assist in identifying and addressing issues as they arise in the 2021-2022 school year.
- A licensed clinical counselor will work with at-risk students, as needed and with parent permission.
- Therapeutic Day Treatment services are available to students who qualify due to mental health or behavioral needs.
- All students have access to nursing services provided by EMT, LPN or RN medical professionals.
- Nutritional Health Supports
 - Meals were consistently provided to all school-aged children in Amherst County whether they were enrolled in ACPS or not from March 13, 2020 until schools reopened. Meals were provided free of charge to all.
 - During the 2020-2021 school year all ACPS students were eligible to receive meals free of charge based on the guidelines provided by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).
 - Meals were provided to all students for days that they were both in the building and learning remotely.
 - Meals were also provided to all students that chose to remain 100% remote throughout the 2020-2021 school year.
 - Per the USDA, all ACPS students will be eligible to receive meals free of charge for the 2021-2022 school year.
 - Students will eat their meals in designated areas to meet the recommended distancing guidelines.

Section 6: Consultation with Stakeholders and Opportunity for Public Comment

In developing the ARP ESSER Plan, Amherst County Public Schools sought public input and took such input into account as described below. During the May 13, 2021 Regular School Board Meeting, public comment was allowed at the beginning of the meeting in order to provide all citizens an opportunity to have input into the 2021-2022 school year. Superintendent Dr. Arnold presented his plan outlining aspects of the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services portions of the plan. The meeting was conducted in-person and also live-streamed, so that those could attend virtually in order to hear the plan. At the close of the meeting, ACPS posted on its website a survey for any citizen to

comment and provide feedback on the Superintendents recommendations. The survey will close on June 3, 2021 and the Amherst County School Board will be apprised of that data and comments from citizens.

Periodic Review and Revision of Plan

During the period of the ARP ESSER award (until September 2023), Amherst County Public Schools will periodically review and, as needed, revise its plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services. The plan will be reviewed at least every six months, and Amherst County Public Schools will seek and take into account public input during the review process. Plan revisions will address updated CDC guidance on safely reopening schools, if any are issued.

Section 7: Making the Plan Available to the Public

Amherst County Public Schools took the following steps to make this plan available to the public:

- The plan was posted on the Amherst County Public Schools Webpage identified as, 2021-2022 Instructional Plan & Continuity of Services.
- The plan is available in multiple languages, if needed. Contact the Amherst County Instructional Office at 434-946-9340 and request to speak with Ms. Robin Wheeler, Supervisor of Literacy and Federal Programs for a copy in Spanish.
- The plan is available in oral translation, if needed. Contact Amherst County Instructional Office at 434-946-9340 to request translation of this plan.
- Alternative formats are available for parents with disabilities as defined by ADA. Contact Amherst County Instructional Office at 434-946-9340 and request to speak with Mr. Josh Neighbors, Director of Student Services.