

## Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction, Continuity of Services and Use of Grant Funds



**Amherst County  
Public Schools**

Dr. Williams Wells, Superintendent  
Dr. Dana Norman, Assistant Superintendent  
Ms. Kim Lukanich, Chief Financial Officer  
Mr. Jim Gallagher, Chief Human Resource Officer  
Mr. Josh Neighbors, Chief Student Services Officer  
Mr. Tim Hoden, Chief Operations Officer  
Dr. Marie Petrone, Director of Student/Family Wellness and Attendance  
Mr. Gary Roakes, Supervisor of Maintenance and Operations  
Vacant, Grant Writer

### **Section 1: Introduction**

The purpose of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) III Fund, along with ESSER II - Part I and Part II, and GEERS show a combination of financial support to help safely reopen and sustain the safe operation of schools and address the impacts of COVID-19 on the nation's students by addressing students' **academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs**. This plan describes how Amherst County Public Schools (ACPS) will maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other school and division staff during and following the return to full in-person instruction. Any questions pertaining to health and safety should be directed to Dr. Tim Hoden, Chief Operations Officer at [thoden@amherst.k12.va.us](mailto:thoden@amherst.k12.va.us) and questions pertaining to in-person instruction and continuity of services please contact Dr. Dana B. Norman, Assistant Superintendent at [dnorman@amherst.k12.va.us](mailto: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**

As we moved past the initial COVID impact ACPS made two things top priority: 1) to ensure the physical and emotional wellness 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 we moved out of the pandemic we returned to full in-person learning which allowed us the opportunity to focus on meeting the needs of our students and the learning gaps they had experienced.

The Assistant Superintendent provided SOL testing data to the School Board at its September meeting. The division team has worked with schools in creating their Comprehensive School Improvement Plans based on that data. ACPS Leadership has completed training in data analysis and provided support to schools regarding the newest data collection of PALS, VKRP, and Student Growth Assessments. This information will be used to help administrators work with teachers in their PLC's to provide interventions and support to struggling students.

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). Shortly before the start of the 2021-2022 school year, the Commonwealth of Virginia passed Senate Bill 1303, which legally required school divisions in Virginia to offer five days of in-person instruction to all students effective July 1, 2021. ACPS transitioned from the model of half virtual learning and half in-person learning for all students, to a 5 days in-person learning as required by the Governor's Executive Order. Returning to five days, in-person instruction presented certain challenges, but it also provided opportunities for improvement. ACPS met 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 returned to the buildings.

As we moved forward into the 2022-2023 school year all members of the school community continued to be impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Along with our focus on physical safety, the support for and the well-being of our students and staff is of the utmost importance. As in-person instruction opened to all students five days a week, ACPS continued to nurture the relationships that had been established with all stakeholders, while we consistently provided a safe, effective, and equitable learning environment for our students, families, and employees.

ACPS has continued to abide by the requirements under the Code of Virginia and any legislation taken by the General Assembly to determine the implementation of K-12 educational programs in the state of Virginia.

## **Section 2: Maintaining Health and Safety**

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 are below. The following actions were implemented at the onset of the school closure in March 2020 and continue as we are now back to full time in-person instruction.

**Absenteeism: As been updated to reflect current practice**

ACPS monitored student absenteeism using already established attendance procedures. When the rate of absenteeism increased in our schools, the Superintendent was made aware of this by the attendance clerk and consulted with the Central Virginia Health District regarding possible causes and next steps. Additionally, ACPS led contact tracing efforts to keep schools safe and will continue to notify students and staff who have been exposed to an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19.

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.

ACPS encourages all employees to stay home if experiencing symptoms.

- 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](#) was developed based on the most recent guidance from the CDC, VDH, AAP, VDOE, and Governor's Executive Orders. This document served as the foundation for all communication regarding health mitigation strategies for employees, students, and parents. The plan was updated for the 2022-2023 school year and will continue to be implemented for the 2023-2024 school year.

**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.
- 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.

### **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: Classrooms will be set up so that students needing to borrow writing utensils, arts supplies, calculators, etc. will be provided clean disinfected materials. When students return those items to the teacher they will again be sanitized before redistributing.
- 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 students after they have been disinfected. When possible 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.

### **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 Instructional Assistants in selected professional development activities as necessary.

Each school building will continue to identify 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: Updated Guidelines**

#### Employees:

- Staff who are sick with COVID-19 symptoms should remain at home.
- Staff should immediately notify their administrator that they are being tested and then of the results of the test. Administrator will notify and update the division COVID Response Team.
- Staff who test positive must isolate for 5 days from symptom onset and cannot return until symptom free for 24 hours (excluding long-term symptoms).

#### Students:

- Students who are sick with COVID-19 symptoms should stay home.
- Families should immediately notify the school if a student is being tested or tests positive. Rapid tests are available at the school.
- 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 placed back into use and where possible water bottle filling stations have remained in schools. 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.
  - 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 training and notification** ACPS health staff will no longer contact trace positive cases that the school has been notified about.

All screening services for students (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.

- **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 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 students 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.

- **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.

ACPS employees have served on multiple health and safety related committees with the community organizations listed above. The Central Virginia Health Department partnered with ACPS during two different outbreak events during the 2021-22 school year, holding a testing clinic for all secondary students and staff. Amherst County Emergency Management Services has partnered with ACPS in providing free vaccinations and boosters to staff and students.

ACPS has recognized the toll of the pandemic on student mental health. In response, ACPS has partnered with The Madeline Center for outpatient therapy and other mental health services in our schools. Life Push has provided mentoring and supportive-level counseling services to students who have received office discipline referrals. ACPS has also partnered with Lynchburg Continuum of Care and Amherst County Trauma-Informed Community Network to conduct needs assessments and plan future interventions for at-risk students.

### **Section 3: Continuity of Services**

Amherst County Public Schools has taken and will continue to take actions to ensure continuity of services, including but not limited to services to address students' academic needs and students' and staff social, emotional, mental health and other needs.

**Description of steps taken to address each area of academic, social, emotional, mental health, student health, and food services by ACPS.**

#### **Academic Services**

ACPS advances an instructional model that prioritizes student engagement and a focus on the 5 C's of Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking, and Citizenship. We will continue our commitment of providing instructional opportunities that prepare students for

their future. A *Life Ready Student* will be given frequent opportunities to investigate college or career paths, experience real world challenges, and participate in meaningful learning that leads to authentic assessments. By prioritizing this instructional model, ACPS affords students avenues for recouping learning loss and strengthening the relationships .

The efforts that have been made regarding the provision of creating quality instruction for all students will remain at the forefront of our mission. Providing opportunities for all students to engage in real-life experiences as they move throughout their academic career is essential to re-engaging students in school.

- **Communication Efforts**

- ACPS is committed to providing transparent communication on a regular basis to all school and community members (families, employees, business partners, etc.) in an effort to support students and their academic success.
- The Superintendent, Dr. William Wells as the point person for the division, will disseminate information to the appropriate group(s), in a timely manner, utilizing the following methods:
  - Superintendent's Video Messages
  - School Messenger calls, texts, letters, and emails
  - ACPS Leadership Meetings
  - ACPS Board Meetings
  - ACPS and School(s) Website, Facebook Page, Twitter Account, Instagram Account, and YouTube Channel
  - ACPS Employee Email System
  - ACPS Superintendent's Newsletter
  - Surveys for two-way communication will continue to be utilized
- In an effort to keep families informed on all aspects of the school learning environment, School Administrators and teachers will regularly communicate regarding events and student progress.
- Parent Portal will continue to be utilized as an access point for all parents to check on student progress.
- As always parents, community partners, and citizens may contact any school, or the School Administrative Offices, by phone to provide input or seek clarification on topics associated with the school division. If a specific person has been identified, an email can also be used for corresponding.

- **Daily Schedules**

- All secondary schools (ACHS/AEC, AMS, & MMS) attend in-person all five days on a traditional seven period schedule that was utilized prior to COVID-19
- All elementary schools (AES, AMEL, CES, ELON, MHES, & TES) attend in-person all five days with no hybrid placement.
- Student schedules will be released on Parent Portal each summer before the start of the coming school year.
- ACPS has implemented the VDOE required All In VA Program for High Intensity Tutoring. The Bridges to Success program for Amherst has designed one 45 minute block of time each day for tutoring of students in the area of reading and math. This time also includes science extend lessons to support science hands-on instruction.

- **School Calendar**

- **Open House for Schools was held on Wednesday, August 9, 2023 1-7:00 PM**
- First day of school for all students was August **16, 2023**
- New teachers to the division reported on July **27, 2023**
- Teachers/Instructional Assistance returned on August **7, 2023**

**AMHERST COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
2023-2024 School Calendar  
ACPS annual calendar begins on 7/2, 2023 and will close on 6/16, 2024

Month	Days	Instructional Days	Instructional Hours
July 2023	July 2-31	1	60
August 2023	August 1-31	20	1200
September 2023	September 1-30	20	1200
October 2023	October 1-31	20	1200
November 2023	November 1-30	19	1140
December 2023	December 1-31	17	1020
January 2024	January 1-31	20	1200
February 2024	February 1-29	18	1080
March 2024	March 1-31	20	1200
April 2024	April 1-30	20	1200
May 2024	May 1-31	20	1200
June 2024	June 1-16	10	600

**Special Events**

Date	Event
July 27	Teacher Workday
August 9	Open House
August 16	First Day of School
September 5	Teacher Workday
September 11	Back to School
September 18	Teacher Workday
October 9	Teacher Workday
October 16	Teacher Workday
November 1	Teacher Workday
November 8	Teacher Workday
November 15	Teacher Workday
November 22	Teacher Workday
December 1	Teacher Workday
December 8	Teacher Workday
December 15	Teacher Workday
December 22	Teacher Workday
December 29	Teacher Workday
January 5	Teacher Workday
January 12	Teacher Workday
January 19	Teacher Workday
January 26	Teacher Workday
February 2	Teacher Workday
February 9	Teacher Workday
February 16	Teacher Workday
February 23	Teacher Workday
February 29	Teacher Workday
March 6	Teacher Workday
March 13	Teacher Workday
March 20	Teacher Workday
March 27	Teacher Workday
April 3	Teacher Workday
April 10	Teacher Workday
April 17	Teacher Workday
April 24	Teacher Workday
May 1	Teacher Workday
May 8	Teacher Workday
May 15	Teacher Workday
May 22	Teacher Workday
May 29	Teacher Workday
June 5	Teacher Workday
June 12	Teacher Workday
June 19	Teacher Workday
June 26	Teacher Workday

- **Transportation**

- Providing safe transport to and from school will continue to be a priority for ACPS. Throughout the school year we have encouraged families to provide transportation and continued to make that request for the 2023-2024 school year. The specifics are as follows:
- Car Riders
  - ACPS encourages parents to provide transportation to their students if they wish.
  - ACPS will follow normal school routines for student drop off and pick up.
- Buses/Vans
  - Students will sit two per seat.
  - Students will be assigned seats and will not be able to move between seats.
  - Weather permitting, windows will be open to allow for increased ventilation.

- **Technology**

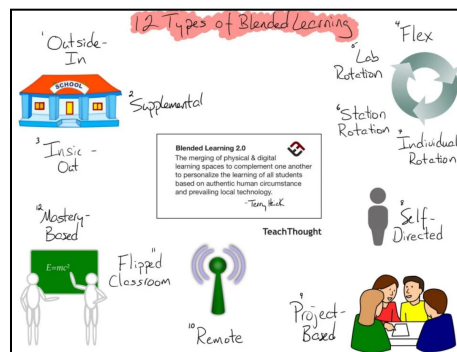
- During the Fall of 2020, ACPS issued all students Pre-K through 12th Grade/Early College a Chromebook in order for students to access instructional materials and resources, as well as attend synchronous classes for direct instruction.
- During the Winter of 2021, ACPS issued to any student who did not have Internet access a hotspot, paid for by ACPS in order for students to access instructional materials and resources, as well as attend synchronous classes for direct instruction. This ends on June 2, 2023 due to the grant ending.



- During the Spring of 2021, ACPS issued to any teacher who did not have Internet access at home a hotspot, paid for by ACPS, in order for them to provide instructional materials and resources to students, as well as provide synchronous instruction to their students, if the school was to close due to COVID-19 conditions. This ends on June 6, 2023 due to the grant ending.
  - If funding, in the operational budget permits, there will be a small number of available hotspots to be issued to students/employees due to medical and/or extenuating circumstances. Based on funding these will be approved by the Assistant Superintendent and issued to each individual by the Supervisor of Technology.
- ACPS will continue to provide all students with a Chromebook. ACPS will also continue to provide to faculty and staff a laptop for remote work.
- Parents, students, and employees will sign the Acceptable Use Policy in order to utilize services.
- Wi-Fi Internet access continues to be made available to the community at the front of each school building, as guest access, for the 2023-2024 school year.

● **Student Learning**

- There will be a purposeful focus on incorporating the Profile of a Virginia Graduate~5 C's into each content area and classroom, in order to engage students in their learning.
- A limited amount of performance tasks were utilized during the 2020-2021 school year and teachers and students saw success in students' level of performance. To capitalize on that structure, the division has incorporated Performance Based Learning (PBL) Modules and Performance Based Assessments into the *curriculum pacing guides* for teachers to utilize throughout the school year. PBL Modules will continue to be added as resources for teachers to utilize during their instruction.
- To assist in filling in the instructional gaps, the division and schools will also provide additional training and support to teachers in the area of differentiation, tiering of services, and student engagement for students based on our current data.
- The direct instruction model will be a combination of whole group, small group, and center based instruction. During the 2021-2022 school year teachers used aspects of blended learning such as; flipped classrooms, asynchronous and synchronous learning, as well as mastery or project based learning. (see diagram below)



- Teachers continue to have these instructional models as options for students during the 2023-2024 school year.
  - Teachers use diagnostic formative assessments in math and reading to pre-assess students prior to instruction in order to determine the individual needs and gaps in learning that each student has. (Performance Matters Assessment Program)
  - Teachers will use the 2022-2023 SOL Assessment and VDOE Student Growth Assessment data in order to begin the 2023-2024 school year. Once identification of specific instructional needs have been determined, the teacher will provide research based strategies to help close the learning gaps.
  - Additional assessments to provide teachers with direction for instructional support will include VA Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP), Phonological Awareness & Literacy Screening (PALS), running records, Algebra Readiness & Diagnostic Testing (ARDT), VDOE Through Course Assessments, and teacher created formative assessments.
  - ACPS will focus on Core Tier I instruction and utilize remediation as needed. This ensures that every student is being provided quality instruction that meets their specific needs.
- **Equitable Services for Identified Populations** (Students with Disabilities, English Learners, Economically Disadvantaged Students, and Gifted Students)
    - Students with Disabilities will continue to have their individual learning needs addressed as prescribed in their Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Instruction will be differentiated during small groups or in a collaborative setting and tasks assigned in order to meet students' needs. The incorporation of modifications and accommodations that best benefit students as they participate in the in-person learning environment will be determined by the IEP Team.
    - All English Learners (EL) will continue to be offered services based on their educational needs, as determined by their WIDA 2023 assessment score. Data from assessment results will be used to guide all tiers of instruction for EL students who are designated at proficiency level 1 or 2.
    - ACPS continues to focus on assessing learning gaps, providing targeted instruction, and additional time for our economically disadvantaged students. Reading specialists in all Title I schools will focus overall on Phonological and Phonemic Awareness and Word Recognition, based on data from PALS and Phonemic Awareness inventories. Reading Specialists will also gear individual and small group instruction to meet that group/student specific needs.
    - All students participating in the Talented and Gifted program in ACPS will continue to receive small group and individual instruction from the (2) Gifted Instructional Specialists at each level. Elementary students will continue to receive pull-out services, while secondary students will be provided an opportunity with a specified time during their regular schedule in order to meet and receive support. All services provided will be aligned to each students' Gifted Education Plan (GEP).
  - **Bridging the Gap (Now Revised for Divisions ~ LASER Analytics)**  
Amherst County Public Schools participated in the VDOE Pilot Program for Bridging the Gap. It contained the following support from VDOE and requirements from ACPS;

- The pilot program ~~is~~ focused on the best methods and processes for scaling up the tools, training, and parental engagement required to enhance the transparency with every student's learning journey. Divisions within the pilot program did this by operationalizing the best student data to be understood by parents and by teachers. This pilot is focused on learning what school divisions are already doing in the space of parental engagement, data driven instructional practices, and how underperforming students can be served with educational best practices.
- Participating divisions had first access to the state's new analytics platform called VVASS. VVASS serves two purposes:
  1. To provide a consistent report for every student in the Commonwealth related to their educational progress using a variety of measures, and
  2. To provide school-based leaders with a value-added, statistical analysis of growth projections for students in their building.

The roll-out from VDOE was not implemented as first stated and all pilot divisions are just beginning the training process for implementation of the following items:

- Participating divisions such as ACPS will implement a personalized learning plan to guide their recovery of lost learning and to support that student to be on- or above-grade level performance. VDOE will provide best practices and training to support teachers in using data and a learning plan to support student growth. The pilot will assess what types of individualized measures are implemented across schools in participating divisions in an effort to develop and share a model individualized learning plan template.
- Finally, VDOE wants to ensure that parents have the information they need to advocate for their child's success. VDOE will provide training and support for parents to understand the new state report from VVASS and whichever type of individualized learning plan their child's division is using.
- Participating school divisions such as ACPS get:
  - early access to VVASS, (received)
  - ability to share feedback to the VDOE on every aspect of the pilot, (received)
  - parent-facing and teacher-facing training that will be in development. (not received)
  - ACPS will provide:
    - student data for input into VVASS, (submitted to VDOE)
    - details about any forms, methods, or tools they currently use to track the interventions and support provided to underperforming students, (submitted to VDOE)
    - access to parent information to share training and to collect feedback. (submitted to VDOE)

Overall our participation in Bridging the Gap is but one of the ways we, alongside the VDOE will show its commitment to excellence in education throughout Amherst.

- **Professional Development**

- During the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school year teachers were provided continuous opportunities to attend targeted professional development/training sessions related to: COVID Crosswalks, CANVAS, Google Classroom, Instructional Delivery for Hybrid, Remote and Block, Morning Meeting/Advisory, Attendance, Student Engagement, Building Relationships, and Social Emotional Support for Students.
- At the start of the 2022-2023 school year, teachers were provided with professional development/training sessions in each of the areas implemented in 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, as a refresher.
- School leadership received additional training in the areas of Problem Based Learning, Innovation in the Classroom, and 5 C's of Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking, and Citizenship. Specific content training was provided to support areas of need as identified through various data reviews and accreditation meetings.
- During the 2022-2023 school year, school leadership was trained on the importance of providing high quality instruction with rigor and relevance, using data to drive instructional decisions, and how to implement and support professional learning communities in their buildings.
- For the 2023-2024 school year, school leadership will be trained on the expectations and implementation for behavioral management support, equitable discipline practices, classroom management, and instructional support to include differentiation, setting academic expectations, and elements/strategies to support subgroups in striving to close the achievement gap and regain learning loss.

### **Social & Emotional Services**

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. Continuing to ensure that all students and employees are provided with support is essential. Services in the following areas will continue;

- **Employee Social/Emotional Supports**

- All Points Employee Assistance Program is also offered to each employee if they requested assistance and wanted to remain anonymous.
- ACPS granted sick time to all employees impacted by COVID-19, this will adhere to the VDOE/VDH guidance for the 2022-2023 school year and *sunset effective July 1, 2023.*

- **Student Social/Emotional Supports**

- During the 2021-2022, 2022-2023 and continuing into the 2023-2024 school year, ACPS will prioritize our support for students and provide them a safe learning environment where we model a positive social school climate.
- Continuing to build positive relationships with all students and an awareness of our differences will be at the forefront of the School Counseling Program.
- Research based strategies in teaching and promoting resilience was also a focus during the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year.
- ACPS was awarded a School Community Grant from VDOE that will focus on students grades 9-12 in an effort to help re-engage them in school and connect them to the Amherst community.

### **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 *Life 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 Student and Family Wellness for additional support with outside agencies if needed.
- Schools Counselors continued in the 2022-2023 school year to work with all staff to assist in identifying and addressing issues as they arise. This will continue in the 2023-2024 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, 2022-2023, and into the 2023-2024 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 are provided to all students for days that they were both in the building and learning remotely.

**Plan for Continued Use of Funds:** Of the \$7,306,875.43 awarded funds, \$2,358,565.01 (32%) is being used 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 uses CARES funds to continue the following:

- a. MAP was funded for two years and ended during the 2022-2023 school year. 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.*

- b. In an effort to have equitable services to all students ACPS provided 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. Hot-spots were funded for two years and ends on June 2, 2023 for students and June 6, 2023 for employees.
- c. Continued support in providing additional custodians at all schools to address cleaning and disinfecting the buildings. The additional custodial support was funded for one year and ended July 1, 2022.
- d. Cover the tuition to the Virtual Virginia program for identified students that could not return to in person instruction therefore needed to continue their education remotely.
- e. Integrate technology learning programs such as Readspeak and Panopto to support students learning virtually. Panopto services will end July 1, 2023.

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

- f. The plan called for one virtual instructional support staff at the elementary levels to assist with virtual 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 due to remote learning.
- g. An additional Attendance Officer was added during the 2021-2022 school year and continued for the 2022-2023 school year in order to meet the Board approved plan for providing more than two Attendance Officers to help facilitate and ensure student attendance and compliance for students in Grades Pre-K through twelve.
- h. Provide two Instructional Specialists in fiscal year 2023-2024 to address individual and small group instructional needs for students in the area of reading and math, as well as, support teachers in providing strategies to support academic success and close achievement gaps. At the secondary level the plan calls for providing both math and reading support (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.
- i. In order to support students' transition out of COVID the plan called for providing a total of one and a half School Counselors, one School Counselor at secondary (Based at ACHS) and a half School Counselor for Elementary/Virtual Learning (Based at TES), who will work with students in the division to provide mental, emotional, and physical health supports and assist with issues as they arise.
- j. One CTE Coordinator 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 was included in the plan in order to help students meet graduation requirements.
- k. Provide one CTE/STEAM position for Career Awareness at the Secondary level who would work collaboratively with the CNA instructor and the Coordinator of Internships

to partner with local senior care and medical facilities to assist with the COVID crisis in our community. This position moved to the middle school during the 2022-2023 school year to provide targeted support with Career Awareness at a younger age. The CTE/STEAM position was funded for two years and ends July 1, 2023.

- l. Provide a part-time Family and Consumer Science instructor to provide secondary students additional opportunities to gain the necessary CTE courses mandated under the VDOE graduation requirements. This assistance went to those students impacted by not having the ability to get hands-on experience in the CTE programs during COVID-19.
- m. The plan allotted 10 contracted additional Day Treatment slots to support student social, emotional and behavior needs.
- n. Partial funding of a Grant Writer to oversee the ESSER III grant and its full implementation.
- o. The final funds allotted in the plan to address learning loss was to support the Summer Extended School Learning Programs Pre-K through 12th grade during the months of June and July. Summer programs were fully funded for two years and ends July 1, 2023.

**(This section was added from the original Appendix B) Section 4 Part A: 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.

- A. Auditorium - new auditorium with 1200 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. Old Auditorium will be reconfigured into three additional classrooms as well as areas to include the new 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. Lab space and additional classrooms would make-up the remainder of the old space.
- 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. Old Cafeteria will be reconfigured into 4 additional classrooms, a new CTE Lab and Collaborative Learning Labs - the space will accommodate a large group of approx. 74 students with social distancing.

**Section 4 Part B: 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 regular School Board meetings, public comment is allowed at the beginning of the meeting in order to provide all citizens an opportunity to have input into the 2023-2024 school year. The Superintendent reviewed the plan outlining aspects of the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services portions of the plan. The meeting is 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 Amherst County School Board is provided the data and comments from citizens which are taken into consideration when the plan is updated regularly.

**Section 5: Periodic Review and Revision of Plan**

During the period of the ARP ESSER award (until September 2024), 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 6: 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 the original plan of 2021-2022 Instructional Plan & Continuity of Services and each revision is dated accordingly by school year. The updated version is posted after each public comment time period ends. Plans are available in printed versions upon request.
- 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, Chief of Student Services.

**Timeline for Review**

Initial Plan Presented	August, 2021 <i>(Completed)</i>
First Review	December 2021 <i>(Completed)</i>
Second Review	June 2022 <i>(Completed)</i>



Third Review	December 2022 <i>(Completed)</i>
Fourth Review	June 2023 <i>(Completed)</i>
Fifth Review	December 2023 <i>(Completed)</i>
Final Review	June 2024