

ESSER III - ACPS Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services

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 impacts of COVID-19 on the nation's students by addressing students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. This plan describes how Alexandria City Public Schools 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. Questions about this plan should be directed to Dr. Greg Tardieu, Manager of Grants and Partnerships, gregory.tardieu@acps.k12.va.us, 703-619-8162.

SECTION 2

Maintaining Health and Safety

Alexandria City Public Schools 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.

- ACPS' 2021-2022 Health and Safety Guidance can be found [here](#), which will be updated with new information throughout the year.
- ACPS uses a [COVID-19 Dashboard](#) to track and communicate case data. This information is updated every Monday afternoon by 4 p.m.
- [City of Alexandria COVID-19 Dashboard](#) is an interactive chart with details of the seven-day moving average number of COVID-19 cases, and the daily and cumulative case and fatality counts in Alexandria.
- The [Continuity of Learning Fall Reopening Playbook 6.0](#) includes a detailed analysis of the following key protocols: cleaning and sanitation, use of personal protective equipment (PPE), security precautions, student health services, nutrition, and food service supports, transportation logistics, and facilities management and operations.
- For our facility plans, please see our [Facilities and Operations Department webpage](#).

In addition, Alexandria City Public Schools has adopted policies on each of the following safety recommendations established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

- Vaccination/Testing - see the following link for the [School Board Motion of COVID Vaccination and Testing](#); Adopted August 19, 2021
- GBE - Staff Health (Amended September 9, 2021)
<https://www.acps.k12.va.us/cms/lib/VA01918616/Centricity/Shared/documents/school-board-policies/gbe.pdf>
- GBE-R/JHCC-R - USE OF PROTECTIVE FACE COVERINGS (MASKS) TO MITIGATE THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 (Established September 9, 2021)
<https://www.acps.k12.va.us/cms/lib/VA01918616/Centricity/Shared/documents/school-board-policies/GBE-R-JHCC-R.pdf>

- JHCF-R - Student Wellness Guidelines (Revised September 9, 2021)
<https://www.acps.k12.va.us/cms/lib/VA01918616/Centricity/Shared/documents/school-board-policies/jhcf-r.pdf>
- KG-R - Community Use of School Facilities Regulations and Application (Revised September 9, 2021)
<https://www.acps.k12.va.us/cms/lib/VA01918616/Centricity/Shared/documents/school-board-policies/KG-R.pdf>
- KK - School Visitors (Amended September 9, 2021)
<https://www.acps.k12.va.us/cms/lib/VA01918616/Centricity/Shared/documents/school-board-policies/kk.pdf>

Below is the Health and Safety Guidance as of September 09, 2021

Masks

- Required in ACPS facilities and on buses, regardless of vaccination status

Physical Distancing and Capacity

- Normal classroom capacity to accommodate five days a week, in person learning
- Normal capacity on school buses to accommodate regular bus runs without service delays
- No masks required outside for recess
- Consider podding classes at recess for contact tracing
- For indoor athletics and activities, masks required and contact tracing requirements for students and employees

Ventilation

- Continued Preventative Maintenance of HVAC systems
- Continued use of MERV-13 filters
- Continued HVAC system repairs as/when necessary
- Continued use of air purifiers in classrooms/common areas

Cleaning, PPE and Handwashing

- Continued enhanced cleaning measures with EPA-certified chemicals
- Masks available for all students, staff and visitors (if they do not have their own)
- Hand sanitizer readily available in all facilities
- Continued focus on regular hand washing throughout the school day

Health Screenings

- Continue Daily Symptom Checklist completion
- Continue temperature screening upon entry to facility/schools
- Requesting staff and/or students remain home if not feeling well

Health Annex Rooms

- Schools will continue to have a health annex room for individuals experiencing COVID symptoms
- The health annex will be staffed with a monitor

Contact Tracing

- The Department of Student Services & Equity will work with AHD and the involved school to identify any close contacts

- Vaccinated staff and/or students do not require quarantine unless symptomatic

Close Contact Guidance

- A close contact is anyone who is within 6 ft or less of the person with COVID for 15 minutes or more in a 24 hour period.
- In indoor K-12 settings, a student who is within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student is not considered a close contact as long as both students are wearing masks and the school has other prevention strategies in place.
 - This exception does not apply to teachers, staff, or other adults in indoor K-12 settings.
- Close contacts are advised to [get tested for COVID-19](#) as soon as possible, self-quarantine, actively monitor for [COVID-19 symptoms](#), and get tested again 7-10 days after their exposure if their previous test(s) were negative. (AHD recommends PCR testing for contacts)
- All close contacts should get tested immediately if they develop symptoms.
- The following individuals do not need to quarantine, even if they are identified as a close contact:
 - Individuals who were fully vaccinated at the time they were exposed.
 - Individuals who had COVID-19 within the last 90 days of their exposure.
- Close contacts who do not need to be quarantined should still monitor for [COVID-19 symptoms](#), get tested immediately if they develop symptoms, and stay home until they receive test results.

Quarantine

- 14 days
- Fully vaccinated individuals who are not experiencing symptoms are exempt from quarantine.

Visitors and Volunteers

- No non-essential visitors/volunteers.
- Essential visitors and volunteers will be limited to:
 - Individuals supporting the provision of in-person student supports, to include city and partner programs
 - Individuals supporting/performing ACPS operations and maintenance;
 - Individuals when necessary, while picking up/dropping off a child (in accordance with ACPS arrival/dismissal procedures).
 - Individuals picking up students who have become ill during the school day.
 - Parents/guardians attending school meetings (e.g., IEP, 504, MTSS).
- All approved visitors will adhere to safety mitigation strategies established by ACPS, to include masks and temperature screenings

COVID Vaccinations

- Secondary
 - Vaccinations for those eligible are available at the Teen Wellness Center located at Alexandria City High School.
 - Additional vaccination sites and schedules can be found on the [City of Alexandria website](#).
 - On-site vaccinations one day per week with signed parental consent – pending
- Elementary - Pending

Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies

- Details can be found on page 69 of our [Continuity of Learning Fall Reopening Playbook 6.0](#)

SECTION 3

Continuity of Services

Alexandria City 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. ACPS is committed to following all federal, state, and local guidelines to ensure the safety and health of all members of the learning organization.

Our team has developed a [Continuity of Learning Fall Reopening Playbook 6.0](#), as a resource toolkit rather than a set of rules. It is a clear and easy-to-follow set of guidelines and strategies to ensure a smooth and consistent opening of ACPS during the 2021–2022 academic year. It provides tangible tools and guidance, adapted to the unique strengths, needs, and organizational culture of each school. Ideally, it will ensure consistent, equitable decision-making and problem-solving aligned with the [ACPS 2025: Equity for All Strategic Plan](#) (PDF), [Theory of Action](#) (PDF), as well as guidance from the Alexandria Health Department (AHD), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and Virginia Department of Health (VDH). The users for this Playbook will include all principals, assistant principals, school administrative teams, instructional support staff, teachers, parents, and families.

We are committed to equitable access to improving learning outcomes for all students. We will ensure the inclusion of the voices of parents, families, and students. We will also provide social, emotional, and academic learning supports and services for all students to meet their needs. Continuous improvement is essential, with a commitment to studying lessons learned and data prior to the execution of actions. ACPS values community coordination and collaboration. To ensure effective continuity of instructional and support services, we will build trust and incorporate creative ideas for reopening. Part of reopening will involve the need to embrace flexibility while facing unprecedented challenges. We will ensure clear, consistent, and frequent communication as part of this process. Finally, our division will ensure that all students have access to technology and connectivity to support their learning process and progress.

Below is a summary of the detailed guidance provided on pages 30 - 106 in the [Continuity of Learning Fall Reopening Playbook 6.0](#).

- **Articulating Clear Curriculum and Instruction for Supporting All Learners** It is essential that we address the needs of all learners as we progress back to in-person learning. This section of the Playbook will articulate master scheduling expectations and information concerning state guidelines for ensuring appropriate time on learning. A major component of this section involves the importance of creating an instructional climate and learning environment that is aligned with the [ACPS Teaching and Learning Framework](#) (PDF) and the [ACPS Multi-Tiered Systems of Support](#) (MTSS), including standards-aligned planning, instruction, assessment, and progress monitoring as well as adjustment to accommodate emerging student needs and issues. Schools will need to address learning loss that may be the result of the unique circumstances confronted by students and parents during the recent year. This component extends to addressing the unique needs of Pre-Kindergarten learners, English Learner (EL) students, Students With Disabilities (SWD), and Talented and Gifted (TAG) students. It also presents a focus on those responsible for Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID); Career and Technical Education (CTE); Humanities;

Literacy; Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM); and Adult Education. This part of the Playbook presents expectations for staff collaboration as well as the critical importance of instructional personalization and differentiation.

- **Preparing Staff to Be Successful in Transitioning Back to In-Person Learning** This section highlights back-to-school professional learning and the need for ensuring that all staff are prepared for the challenges and unique potential offered by in-person learning's return during the next academic year. A major commitment to professional learning this year will be a continuation of the division's exploration of equity and the need to ensure the success of all learners. An extended section of this part of the Playbook involves ensuring that the technology infrastructure is in place to ensure a smooth transition to in-person learning, the need for continuous integration of technology into students' daily learning experience, and the software support services available to all schools and school staff members.
- **Ensuring a Smooth Transition Involving Communications, Operations, Human Resources (HR), and Financial Processes:** A critical component of a successful reopening will be the assurance of smooth operations involving critical aspects of school and division service delivery. This section of the Playbook articulates key HR requirements, budget and payroll processes, and related issues of HR services. This component will also identify [communication expectations](#), including strategies and recommendations for support to parents, families, and community members in keeping updated about the transition to in-person learning.
- **Supporting Students' Social-Emotional Health and Parent and Community Outreach:** This time of great transition necessitates a clear alignment between instructional service delivery and the need to provide students and families with extended support services and programs. This section of the Playbook provides a synthesis of available student support services. It also includes an analysis of Family and Community Engagement (FACE) and the services available to parents and families. The Playbook presents information about the ACPS Helpline and the range of services available to individuals and families requiring mental and physical health support, counseling services, and referral services. This section also includes "Learning Tips for Parents and Students" with great ideas for staying organized, stimulating conversations, and remaining abreast of daily needs, due dates, etc.
- **Principals' Reopening Checklist:** The Playbook includes a checklist for principals, synthesizing their major leadership responsibilities to ensure a smooth reopening of schools. The checklist includes essential action steps for all facets of school operations. The focus areas include a range of topics from school resources and textbooks to technology, HR management, effective and efficient operations, and staff and community outreach and communication. It is critical that the principal be the true instructional leader of the school building, helping all stakeholders to ensure a safe, engaging, inviting, and collaborative learning community.
- **"A Day in the Life" Simulation:** The simulation activities will provide a framework for the steps each ACPS school will take to reopen for the 2021–2022 school year. It is currently under development, and it will identify categories for teachers and staff to consider as they prepare for a return to their physical school buildings.

SECTION 4

Opportunity for Public Comment

In developing the ARP ESSER Plan, Alexandria City Public Schools sought public input and took such input into account as described below.

- Involved a variety of stakeholders across schools and district administrators, teachers, principals, school leaders and other educators and school staff in the development of our Continuity of Learning Plan throughout SY 2020-2021. Details of our stakeholder engagement can be found in our [Continuity of Learning Plan 6.0 Fall 2021 Reopening Playbook](#) (page 12)
- Engaged with our Thought Partners across Alexandria City to transparently provide updates, create alignment with other agencies and organizations, and create a feedback loop across the community.
- Posted our ESSER III plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services, translated into four languages and in an understandable and uniform format, written in a language that parents can understand.
- Sought public comment on the plan during [The Special Called School Board Meeting and Public Hearing](#) held on Thursday, June 17, 2021, at 5 p.m.
- Incorporated comments and questions, as applicable to the plan.

SECTION 5

Periodic Review and Revision of Plan

During the period of the ARP ESSER award (until September 30, 2024), Alexandria City 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 Alexandria City 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

ACPS has taken the following steps to make this plan available to the public:

- The plan is posted at: <https://www.acps.k12.va.us/domain/1554>
- The plan is available in multiple languages English, Spanish, Amharic, and Arabic
- The plan may be orally translated for parents.

Contact:

Mr. Victor Espinosa Sanchez
Language Access Manager
703-619-8347

victor.espinosa.sanchez@acps.k12.va.us

- Upon request, a parent who is an individual with a disability as defined by the ADA may be provided with the plan in an alternative format accessible by contacting:

Contact:

Ms. Theresa Werner
Executive Director Specialized Instruction
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703-619-8162