



**Return to In-Person Instruction and
Continuity of Services
2021 ARPA ESSER III guidelines**

ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Section 1: OVERVIEW:

As we begin the 2021-2022 school year, we are still facing COVID-19 issues. Rockbridge County Public Schools 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. A return to the traditional face-to-face instructional environment is the ultimate goal. RCPS will open schools on a regular schedule in the Fall of 2021. This plan will incorporate educational opportunities that include full in-person instruction five days a week.

Per an order from the Virginia Public Health Commissioner, each private school and public school division must develop a plan for implementing COVID-19 mitigation strategies before reopening in accordance with the Virginia guidance for schools under the Virginia Return to School plans with ESSER guidelines. Plans must be submitted to the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE).

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 Rockbridge County Public Schools (RCPS) 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 Timothy Martino, tim_martino@rockbridge.k12.va.us.

Please note that this plan is focused on the health and safety of students and staff and to limit the risk of COVID-19 transmission as the reopening of schools begins for Fall 2021. It is not focused on academic programs, teaching and learning, and student-support models. That specific information can be found in the RCPS updated August 2021 Return to School Plan. The information provided here is based on the best information we have at this time and is not exhaustive. These guidelines were created in accordance with guidance from the VDOE, Virginia Department of Health (VDH), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) under ESSER guidelines. These guidelines may be revisited as more public health data become known and/or the Governor's guidance changes.

Referencing the *Virginia Phase III Guidance for Schools*, as well as VDH and *CDC Guidance*, schools must prepare COVID-19 mitigation plans for reopening schools for Fall 2021 as outlined in the ESSER guidelines by the VDOE. It is likely that outbreaks of COVID-19 will continue. Therefore, the plans outlined in this section should consider various contingencies for continuing operations in the event of an outbreak. Schools must report cases and outbreaks to their local health department. In addition, schools will consult with their local health department regarding management of outbreaks, dismissals, or similar decisions such as shutdown of school activities. The VDH contact is Dr. Laura Kornegay, Director of Central Shenandoah Health Department (540-463-3185).

Section 2: Maintaining Health and Safety

RCPS will 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. The RCPS Reopening Plan can be found on our division website under the RCPS Return to Learn tab. The Reopening Plan reflects safety recommendations established by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). A summary description of actions already taken and additional actions planned are also listed below.

- **Instruction**-Provide 5-days per week instruction to the fullest extent possible while still meeting VDH/CDC public health K-12 protocols. This may include modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing in the following ways: Schools will display signs promoting social distancing of all common spaces and in the classroom. Classroom desks will be 3 feet or more from each other in order for students to be socially distanced. Strategic scheduling will be implemented to limit contact for cohorts of students during classes and meals. Teachers are encouraged to use outdoor learning spaces as weather permits.

- **Cloth face coverings**-Consistent use of face coverings for all students, staff, and visitors per CDC guidance and the Code of Virginia. At this time all staff, students, and visitors will wear face masks while in public school buildings.

- **Handwashing and respiratory etiquette**- Washing hands with soap for 20 seconds or using hand sanitizer reduces the spread of disease. Schools and staff will continue to promote cleaning protocols to deter the spread of Covid-19. Schools will display signs promoting good hand hygiene in restrooms and classrooms. Classroom teachers will remind students of hand sanitizers within the classroom and to use them after any completed activity. Schools will display signs about masks and proper wearing of the masks. Classroom teachers will remind students of proper masks wearing and appropriate masks break times.

- **Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation**- RCPS has established procedures for frequently cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing of buildings, especially bathrooms and frequently touched surfaces. Staff will use cleaning products from the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) list of approved products that are effective against COVID-19. Custodial teams will circulate around the school cleaning and sanitizing hallways, restrooms, cafeteria, and other common areas throughout the school day, and afterschool. Teachers will wipe down shared instructional areas and materials after student transitions and throughout the school day, as necessary. In addition, our school system will provide supplies necessary to adhere to recommended infection prevention and control practices. This includes providing hygiene supplies in each school building and classroom. Specifically for classrooms, there will be alcohol-based hand sanitizer (60-95% alcohol) in every classroom. Sinks will be well-stocked with soap and paper towels for handwashing. Garbage cans will be placed in each classroom just inside the door for students and staff members to easily discard items. In addition, tissues will be available in all classrooms for students and staff use. RCPS has contracted with TRANE to oversee the safe ventilation of school buildings. This includes upgrades to HVAC systems and the installation of MERV13 air filters and bipolar ionization units.

- **Handling Suspected, Presumptive or Confirmed Cases of Covid-19**-Taking appropriate steps to address suspected, presumptive or confirmed cases of Covid-19 is critical to containing spread of Covid-19 both in and out of school. If a staff member or student becomes ill for any reason during the school day (COVID or

non-COVID), the area will be cleaned and disinfected accordingly. Also, all areas used by the ill staff member or student will be cleaned and disinfected. These areas include classrooms, shared areas, common areas, etc.

- **Communication and Combating Misinformation-** Staff, students and families need ongoing, reliable information to promote behaviors that prevent the spread of Covid-19. Current information can be found on the RCPS dashboard. Schools will ensure families are able to access communication channels to appropriate staff at the school with questions and concerns. The RCPS School Nurse Coordinator will serve as the point of contact for all health related information. RCPS will continue to use the following methods to share information with all stakeholders: Division Website- Return to Learn Tab and School Websites, Phone, Email , RCPS Facebook Account ,Automated Call System and School Information Packets.

- **Transportation-** School buses/vehicles must take similar key steps to protect against the spread of Covid-19 including adhering to consistent use of face coverings and following cleaning and hygiene protocols. RCPS will ensure all students and staff wear face coverings when they are on a bus or other transportation vehicles. RCPS staff will clean transportation vehicles at the end of each day.

Symptom Monitoring-

All RCPS employees are required to monitor themselves for Covid-19 symptoms each day before reporting for work. Parents are asked to monitor and screen students for Covid-19 symptoms each day before they attend school. RCPS will establish and enforce sick policies to prevent the spread of disease, including: –

- Enforcing staff to stay at home if sick.
- All students suspected of having Covid-19 symptoms must be referred to the School Nurse for assessment.

Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine-

Close contact means:

- Being within 6 feet of a person who has COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period, or
- Having direct exposure to respiratory secretions (e.g., being coughed or sneezed on, sharing a drinking glass or utensils, kissing), or
- Caring for a person who has COVID-19, or living with a person who has COVID-19.

Exception: In indoor and outdoor K-12 settings, a student who was within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student is not considered a close contact as long as both students wore well-fitting masks the entire time (see Table 1, below). This exception may also be applied to school buses when the following criteria are met:

- Documented seating charts and assurance that masks are worn and students remain in assigned seats, either via video monitoring if available, or attestation from the bus driver or monitor. Students who were less than 3 feet apart for a total of 15 minutes or more are considered close contacts, even if both students wore masks.

The K-12 exception does not apply to teachers, staff, or other adults. This means that the standard close contact definition is applied when assessing exposure in a K-12 setting that involves a student with an infected adult or an exposed adult. VDH will continue to monitor the science regarding the effectiveness of this close contact definition and the associated K-12 exception, and will update guidance as necessary.

Contact Tracing Guidance-

- VDH/CDC contact tracing guidance recommends to notify parents/ guardians, students, and staff about the situation while maintaining confidentiality.
- When RCPS is notified of a positive case, the RCPS school nurse coordinator will communicate with the person or their parent/guardian about who they, or their child has spent time with in school and outside of school. This may include: Talking to school staff (teacher, bus driver) to obtain class schedules, seating charts, or other information. The name and identity of the person with COVID-19 will not be shared publicly. When RCPS is notified of a positive test of Covid-19, data is gathered from a variety of sources to determine if there has been exposure to additional staff or students. This may include: seating charts in classrooms, in the cafeteria, and on buses, information from phone calls, teacher conversations and, building administrative and school nurses to determine who needs to quarantine.

RCPS continues to follow VDH/CDC isolation and quarantine guidance:

- Anyone that tests positive for Covid 19 needs to be isolated for 10 days and/or quarantined for 14 days after last exposure.
- It can take up to 14 days after an exposure for you to develop COVID-19. This is why VDH and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) warn people to stay home (quarantine) for 14 days after their last contact. It is safest to stay home for 14 days.
- It is **very important** to continue monitoring for symptoms and follow all recommendations (e.g., wear a mask, stay at least 6 feet away from others/ 3 feet if masked, avoid crowds and spaces with poor airflow, and wash hands often) for the full 14 days after the last exposure.
- See the [VDH When to End Home Isolation and Quarantine Infographic](https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/182/2021/09/VDH-K-12-Close-Contact-Definitions-and-Quarantine_FINAL.pdf) or https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/182/2021/09/VDH-K-12-Close-Contact-Definitions-and-Quarantine_FINAL.pdf for more information.

Efforts to provide vaccinations to school communities

Rockbridge County Public Schools has conducted several vaccination clinics for staff and student aged children throughout the school year. RCPS staff is over 85% vaccinated, with some medical exceptions. RCPS will conduct staff/student vaccinations clinics again in Fall 2021.

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

Rockbridge County Public Schools follows the CDC recommended guidelines for COVID protocols to the greatest extent possible within the school building, individual classrooms and during transportation of students. Accommodations to these protocols are made on a case-by-case basis to address the individual needs of our students with disabilities.

Coordination with state and local health officials-Rockbridge County Public Schools is in daily contact with local VDH officials with COVID case reporting and reviewing COVID quarantining /isolation protocols.

Section 3: Continuity of Services

Rockbridge County Public Schools 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.

Academic Needs: All students will be allowed to return to school in-person for the 2021-2022 school year. Students will attend five days a week for the full school day . Plans for the 2021-2022 school year include expanded tutoring, remediation and intervention opportunities and the use of a progress monitoring tool to identify, diagnose and assess learning gaps. Additional personnel may be provided to each school for the purpose of individualized learning.

Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Needs: Rockbridge County Public Schools will partner with local mental health agencies to provide on-site mental health support and day treatment services. RCPS will create a plan to identify and address social-emotional needs of students and staff . This plan may include professional development, additional staffing and or the implementation of SEL programs

Food Service Needs: All Rockbridge County Public School students will continue to receive the P-EBT benefits through August 25, 2021. All students will continue to eat breakfast and lunch free of charge for the 2021-2022 school year.

Athletics: Athletics will resume as normal during the 2021-2022 school year and follow the Virginia High School League (VHSL) and Rockbridge County Public Schools Activities guidelines. The VHSL continues to monitor COVID-19 and is in regular communication with the RCHS Athletic Department, as well as, public health officials to provide a healthy and safe environment for those participating in athletics.

Section 4: Opportunity for Public Comment

In developing the ARP ESSER Plan, RCPS sought public input and took such input into account as described below. RCPS conducted consultation in the following ways:

- With stakeholders, including: students, families, school and district administrators (including special education administrators), teachers, principals, school leaders, other educators, school staff, and their unions – were provided an online survey to express their thoughts. Additionally, small group discussions were held in principal and teacher leader forums with RCPS Senior Staff to gather additional feedback.
- Community members, local organizations, and businesses were provided access to an online survey to express their thoughts in regards to allocating funds; and
- The public had the opportunity to provide input through an online survey and comment publicly at regularly scheduled school board meetings allowing division level leadership to determine needs and allocate funds accordingly.

Section 5: Periodic Review and Revision of Plan

During the period of the ARPA ESSER award, Rockbridge 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 revisions of the plan will address updated CDC guidance on safely reopening schools, if any are issued.

Section 6: Making the Plan Available to the Public

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

- This ESSER plan for Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services is posted at <https://www.rockbridge.k12.va.us/>; on the Return to Learn Tab. Additionally, a more detailed plan with specifics posted on that same page.
- The plan is available in multiple languages and can be translated into 105 languages using the RCPS website;
- Upon request the plan may be translated for parents. Contact Dr. Angie Wilder, angie_wilder@rockbridge.k12.va.us, (540) 463-7386 to request translation; and
- 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 Dr. Angie Wilder, angie_wilder@rockbridge.k12.va.us, (540) 463-7386.

