



**Return to In-Person Instruction and
Continuity of Services
2021 ARPA ESSER III guidelines
Revised April 15, 2022**

ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Section 1: OVERVIEW:

As we are reaching the end of 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 opened schools on a regular schedule in the Fall of 2021, and have continued this schedule all year. This plan incorporates 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 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. 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: Classroom desks may 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**- At this time all staff, students, and visitors are not required to wear face coverings while in public school buildings or on school buses.
- **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 good hygiene.

Mitigation Strategies

- **Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation**- RCPS established procedures for frequently cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing of buildings, especially bathrooms and frequently touched surfaces. Staff continue to use cleaning products from the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) list of approved products that are effective against COVID-19. Custodial teams circulate around the school cleaning and sanitizing hallways, restrooms, cafeteria, and other common areas throughout the school day, and afterschool. Teachers wipe down shared instructional areas and materials after student transitions and throughout the school day, as necessary. In addition, our school system continues to 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, alcohol-based hand sanitizer (60-95% alcohol) is available in every classroom. Sinks are well-stocked with soap and paper towels for handwashing. Garbage cans are placed in each classroom just inside the door for students and staff members to easily discard items. In addition, tissues are 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.
- Weekly COVID-19 testing was made available to all staff in 2021-2022 as an additional mitigation measure. RCPS reports that 28% of staff regularly participated in this voluntary weekly testing option.

- **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 is cleaned and disinfected accordingly. Also, all areas used by the ill staff member or student are 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 ensure families are able to access communication channels to appropriate staff at the school with questions and concerns. The RCPS School Nurse Coordinator serves 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. RCPS staff clean transportation vehicles at the end of each day.

Symptom Monitoring-

All RCPS employees are encouraged 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.

VDH will continue to monitor the science regarding COVID-19 protocols and will update guidance as necessary.

Direct Exposure Guidance-

- VDH/CDC recommends notifying parents/ guardians, students, and staff about the situation while maintaining confidentiality.
- When RCPS is notified of a positive case, the RCPS school nurse coordinator communicates with the person or their parent/guardian about who they, or their child has spent time with outside of school. The name and identity of the person with COVID-19 is not 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.

RCPS continues to follow VDH/CDC isolation and quarantine guidance for direct exposure to COVID-19.

If an individual is not up to date on vaccines, the close contact needs to be quarantined for at least 5 days from the date of last close contact. The close contact should monitor for symptoms, get tested at least 5 days after the close contact,

and wear a well-fitting mask around others for 10 days from the date of the last close contact with someone with COVID-19. If they test positive, they should isolate themselves. Regardless of vaccination status, if a close contact develops symptoms, they should isolate, get tested immediately, and continue to isolate if they test positive.

If an individual is up to date on vaccines, the close contact does not need to be quarantined. The close contact should monitor for symptoms, get tested at least 5 days after the close contact, and wear a well-fitting mask around others for 10 days from the date of the last close contact with someone with COVID-19. If they test positive, they should isolate themselves. Regardless of vaccination status, if a close contact develops symptoms, they should isolate, get tested immediately

If they have had COVID-19 within the past 90 days, completed isolation, and recovered (regardless of vaccination status) the close contact does not need to be quarantined. The close contact should monitor for symptoms, get tested at least 5 days after the close contact, and wear a well-fitting mask around others for 10 days from the date of the last close contact with someone with COVID-19. If they test positive, they should isolate themselves. Regardless of vaccination status, if a close contact develops symptoms, they should isolate, get tested immediately and continue to isolate if they test positive.

- 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 will conduct staff/student vaccinations clinics again as appropriate.

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 returned to school in-person for the 2021-2022 school year. Students attend five days a week for the full school day. Plans for the 2021-2022 school year and beyond have included 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 have partnered with local mental health agencies to provide on-site mental health support and day treatment services. RCPS has created a plan to identify and address social-emotional needs of students and staff. This plan includes professional development, additional staffing and or the implementation of SEL programs

Food Service Needs: All students continued to eat breakfast and lunch free of charge for the 2021-2022 school year.

Athletics: Athletics resumed as normal during the 2021-2022 school year and followed 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.