



Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services

2021 ARPA ESSER III guidelines

***Reviewed- No changes made**

December 1, 2023

ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Section 1: OVERVIEW:

As we are reaching the end of 2023, the impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic are still prevalent in our division, although not as widespread and critical as in the three years prior. Rockbridge County Public Schools (RCPS) 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 and always will be the ultimate goal. RCPS re-opened schools on a regular schedule in the Fall of 2021, and have continued this schedule since then. 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. It is not focused on academic programs, teaching and learning, or student-support models. That specific information can be found on the Return to School Plan on the RCPS website. The information provided there 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*, RCPS prepared COVID-19 mitigation plans for reopening schools in Fall 2021 as outlined in the ESSER guidelines by the VDOE. The plans outlined in this section considered various contingencies for continuing operations in the event of an outbreak. RCPS will continue to consult with the 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. Specific COVID-19 information can be found on our division website. This Return to In Person Instruction and Continuity of Services document reflects safety recommendations established by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Virginia Department of Health (VDH). 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. If necessary, this may include modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing. Strategic scheduling may 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 encourage use after any completed activity. Schools will display signs about good hand hygiene.
- **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, bathrooms, and 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 website. 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, 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 cleans transportation vehicles at the end of each day. Buses are thoroughly sprayed with disinfectant monthly.

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 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 are encouraged to wipe down shared instructional areas and materials after student

transitions and throughout the school day, as necessary. In addition, RCPS 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.

Symptom Monitoring-

All RCPS employees are encouraged to monitor themselves for any illness each day before reporting for work. Parents are encouraged to monitor and screen students for any illness each day before they attend school. RCPS will establish and enforce sick policies to prevent the spread of disease, including: –

- Requesting parents to keep students home from school if they are sick
- Enforcing staff to stay at home if sick.
- Referral of students suspected of having Covid-19 symptoms to the School Nurse for assessment.
- Covid-19 test kits are available to staff and students for anyone who may need one.

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

Quarantine and Isolation Guidance from VDH from August 2022

Revised VDH guidance outlines that quarantine is no longer routinely recommended for asymptomatic individuals after exposure to COVID-19 infected individuals.

- **Regardless of vaccination status, if a student or staff member tests positive:**

The student begins isolation at home and contacts the school immediately. Day 0 is the day the symptoms began. The student must Isolate for 5 calendar days. The student may return after Day 5 if asymptomatic or symptoms are resolved and fever-free for 24 hours.

Students are encouraged to wear a mask Days 6-10, but not required.

Staff members are required to wear a mask Days 6-10, unless medical documentation of an exemption is on file from a healthcare provider.

- **Regardless of vaccination status, if a student is asymptomatic and exposed:**

Students and staff members do not have to be quarantined and may stay in school as long as they remain asymptomatic.

Efforts to provide vaccinations to school communities- RCPS will provide vaccination clinics as necessary and as appropriate.

Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies-RCPS 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-RCPS consults with local VDH officials in regards to COVID-19 quarantining and 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: RCPS re-opened schools on a regular schedule in the Fall of 2021, and have continued this schedule since then. All students attend five days a week for the full school day. Learning Loss initiatives have included expanded tutoring, remediation, 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 as necessary for the purpose of individualized learning.

Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Needs: RCPS partners 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 have breakfast and lunch available to them free of charge through our CEP eligibility status.

Athletics: Athletics resumed as normal during the 2021-2022 school year and followed the Virginia High School League (VHSL) and RCPS 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 and revising the ARP ESSER Plan, RCPS seeks public input and continues to take such input into account as described below. RCPS conducts 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 – are provided an online survey to express their thoughts. Additionally, small group discussions are held in principal and teacher leader forums with RCPS Senior Staff to gather additional feedback.

- Community members, local organizations, and businesses have access to an online survey to express their thoughts in regards to allocating funds; and
- The public has 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.

The most recent survey was conducted in November 2023.

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/> under the Resources link.
- 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 Timothy Martino, tim_martino@rockbridge.k12.va.us, (540) 463-5555 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 Ashley Rhodenizer, ashley_rhodenizer@rockbridge.k12.va.us, (540) 463-7386.