



**Essex County Public Schools
Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction
and Continuity of Services
Effective June 1, 2022**

This addendum documents the Local Education Agency's (LEA's) compliance with Section 2001(i)(1) of the ARP Act and U.S. Department of Education's Interim Final Rule; it requires each LEA that receives ARP ESSER III funds to submit a plan that describes how it will safely return to in-person instruction and ensure continuity of services, including LEAs that have already returned to in-person instruction.

Essex County Public Schools ESSER III Application Contact: Dr. Cyndee R. Blount, Phone: (804)-443-4366, cblount@essex.k12.va.us.

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 the Essex County 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. Cyndee R. Blount, Phone: (804)-443-4366, cblount@essex.k12.va.us.

The Essex County Public Schools made a transition as of February 16, 2021, to an "AA/BB" schedule. Wednesday served as the teacher planning day each week. Parents/guardians were given the opportunity to request that their children attend four days per week, instead of the designated two; principals worked with the central office staff to facilitate this when possible.

For the 2021-2022 school year, the Essex County Public Schools returned to five days of in-person instruction. The school division also offered virtual instruction through a partnership with Virtual Virginia.

Section 2: Maintaining Health and Safety

The Essex County Public Schools will continue to take steps to maintain health and safety following the return to full in-person instruction. Based on the policy promulgated by the Essex County School Board on January 31, 2022, the division has returned to pre-pandemic health and safety strategies and is no longer implementing additional protocols. The following outlines the implementation of the Board's action concerning the revision of the division's COVID mitigation protocols:

Masking

- Masking for all students and staff is optional. No further opting out process will be required.

Temperature Checks

- Temperature checks of any kind will no longer need to be administered.

Contact Tracing

- Contact tracing will no longer be required for those within close contact of an infected person.

Quarantine

- The terminology "quarantine" is being phased out. This practice will no longer be employed for those who come into contact with infected persons. However, in the event that we are notified of an individual infected with COVID, the following guidance will be provided by school officials:
 - Isolate for 10 days
 - Isolate for 5 days and mask for 5
 - Return with a negative test result

Testing

- Testing is an option for those who have been infected with COVID to expedite the period of time in which the individual(s) must be away from school/work. This is an elective option.

Social Distancing

- Provided the Board's direction, this mitigation practice is being phased out.

Staff Working from Home

- If a staff member has been diagnosed with COVID, having contracted the disease from work, this type of leave designation will be permitted and the leave will be covered by the school division.

Meals

- Social distancing will no longer be required for students when gathering for meal time. School administrators were given a two-week grace period to arrange the logistics, structure, and procedures necessary to administer meals within the school cafeteria areas.

Sports/Recess

- Mitigation will be relaxed during sports practices and competitions. In the event that a student contracts COVID 19, students may mask for five days following home isolation or may test, if the student and family are so inclined. Recess may resume in a pre-COVID manner.

Section 3: Continuity of Services

The Essex County Public Schools division 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 members' social, emotional, mental health, and other needs.

Academic

ECPS continues its commitment to ensuring that all students have an equitable and positive experience and access to high quality instruction. As of the 2021-2022 school year, the Essex County Public Schools returned to five days of in-person instruction. The school division is offering virtual instruction (Essex Virtual Academy) through a partnership with Virtual Virginia in 2021-2022 and 2022-2023.

Applications for admission into the Essex Virtual Academy for the fall semester of 2022 have been processed. An application window for the spring semester of 2023 will be open beginning in October, 2022. Application criteria will be based on a student's past success in virtual instruction, a student's capacity to operate effectively in the virtual world with minimal parent support, and those significantly predisposed to health challenges (in addition to other admission criteria).

Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Needs

Using funds received from the CARES Act Set-Aside Grant, the division will conduct summer professional learning sessions for teachers and school counselors about social and emotional needs and trauma-informed care in a Train-the-Trainers model.

Section 4: Opportunity for Public Comment

On May 24, 2022, the Essex County Public Schools Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services was posted on the ECPS website for public comment. All comments were submitted electronically via a Google form at this link: <https://forms.gle/jGYJYxUTm9XighTQ6>

Section 5: Periodic Review and Revision of Plan

During the period of the ARP ESSER award (until September 2023), the Essex 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 the Essex 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

The Essex County Public Schools division has taken the following steps to make this plan available to the public:

- The plan is posted on the division website.
- The plan will be available in multiple languages (Spanish and Arabic);
- The plan may be orally translated for parents. Contact: Dr. Cyndee R. Blount, Phone: (804)-443-4366, cblount@essex.k12.va.us 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, accessible format. For information, please contact Dr. Cyndee R. Blount, Phone: (804)-443-4366, cblount@essex.k12.va.us