

ESSER III - ACPS American Rescue Plan (ARP) Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund III Plan

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. ACPS has been awarded \$34.8 million in ESSER III funds. This plan describes how the awarded funds will be used. Questions about this plan should be directed to Robert Easley, Director of Budget & Fiscal Compliance at robert.easley@acps.k12.va.us or 703.619.8149 ext: 1149.

ACPS has a strong foundation on which to build our ESSER III plan, and our mission remains more important than ever before:

ACPS Mission: To ensure success by inspiring students and addressing barriers to learning.

Our ESSER III funds will be used to drive the goals outlined in **ACPS 2025: Equity for All**. We will ensure that students are engaged in classroom instruction, have access to the educational resources needed to enhance their learning, and participate while in safe, friendly, and welcoming environments. We are committing funds to division-wide priorities and programs that will eliminate opportunity and achievement gaps as well as ensure that all students graduate ready for college, military service, careers and life.

As part of both our Strategic Planning effort and our Reopening Planning, we have gathered context from ACPS staff, leadership, parents, school board members, and representatives from key city and community organizations. We are planning to further expand our family and community engagement in the coming months. We are confident that our ongoing engagement and monitoring plan will keep our actions aligned to the recommendations from city and state agencies, plans from local support organizations, and national guidelines released by the U.S. Department of Education.

We developed our ESSER III plan to align with the following four Focus Areas: (1) Social, Emotional Support and Equity, Academic Learning, (2) Technology Infrastructure, (3) COVID-19 Prevention and Mitigation Projects, and our (4) Human Capital Needs. These teams organized needs from the community, prioritized requests across departments, and budgeted various initiatives to prepare our Virginia Department of Education Application.

Our planning, refining and implementing of these programs will be ongoing throughout the next four years. In alignment with our commitment to our **ACPS 2025: Equity for All - Goal 4 Strategic Resource Alignment**, the Department of Financial Services is committed to increasing transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of funds use.

We will conduct periodic reviews of our plans, and when needed, make revisions to ensure it remains relevant to community needs. We have developed the following processes to monitor compliance and meet the reporting requirements of the Alexandria City School Board, Virginia Department of Education, and U.S. Department of Education.

SECTION 2

Prevention and Mitigation Strategies

ARP Act ESSER III funds may be used to implement prevention and mitigation strategies that are, to the greatest extent practicable, consistent with the most recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance on reopening schools, in order to continuously and safely open and operate schools for in-person learning. ACPS will use approximately **\$8,035,280 (~23%)** of its ARP Act ESSER III funds to implement prevention and mitigation strategies as described below.

As our Facilities and Operations team prepares ACPS facilities to be filled with learning and collaboration, joy and support, we're taking the necessary steps to mitigate the spread of germs and viruses while creating and maintaining positive indoor air quality. You can access ACPS' 2021-2022 Health and Safety Guidance [here](#), which will be updated with new information throughout the year.

Our team has budgeted funds to assist leaders and school teams as they prepare to welcome back students on a full-time basis. Preparation includes appropriate safety and directional signage, PPE provisions for students and staff as needed, continuation of enhanced cleaning, maintaining positive indoor air quality and ventilation, and updating safety protocols regarding facility access and use. For more information about our plans, please see our [Facilities and Operations Department webpage](#).

With ESSER III funds, we will be able to focus on major repairs and upgrades so that all facilities have adequate indoor air quality. Many of these enhancements and changes will put ACPS in a more favorable budget position, reducing long term maintenance costs.

Positive Indoor Air Quality

- Targeted IAQ Testing - Increased IAQ sampling at schools and offices (2 years, 18 buildings)
- Building Envelope Upgrades - Ensuring building envelopes are air-tight help in the prevention of mold, allergens and pests entering facilities (during life of award, division wide)
- Ongoing HVAC Preventative Maintenance - ESSER III resources will complement Operating Funds to allow additional preventative maintenance checks and repairs to assist in HVAC systems remaining fully functional throughout the school year (during life of the award, division wide)

Occupant Health and Safety

- Interior and/or Exterior Repairs based on FCA results - Completion of comprehensive Facilities Condition Assessments (FCA's) to ensure that schools remain in the best condition for all students and staff (during life of the award, division wide)
- Ongoing additional custodial support to maintain enhanced cleaning - Enhanced cleaning is one of the mitigation strategies we will continue to employ to reduce the spread of germs/viruses (up to 3 years, division wide)
- HEPA-6 Filtration Systems for Bus Fleet - Enhanced air purification on our school buses as an additional mitigation strategy (1 year, division wide)

COVID Screening/Testing & Contact Tracing

- Short-term staff to assist with contact tracing (division-wide)
- Contracted services to deliver asymptomatic COVID Screening/Testing including PPE (division-wide)

Additional Health and Safety Measures

- Bus Duty Stipends to increase staff supervision of students during bus pick-up/drop-off (103 Monitors across all 21 school facilities)
- Cafe Monitor Stipends to increase staff supervision of students during lunch periods across all 21 school facilities

SECTION 3

Addressing Unfinished Learning

Section 2001(e)(1) of the ARP Act requires each LEA to use twenty percent of its formula funds to address the academic impact of lost instructional time (learning loss) through the implementation of evidence-based interventions, such as summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive after school programs, or extended school year programs. ACPS will use approximately **\$9,911,217 (~28.5%)** of its ARP Act ESSER III funds to address unfinished learning as described below.

Our Theory of Action has stayed consistent throughout our response to the pandemic and we look to it again to drive our actions to address the social, emotional and academic impact of lost instructional time: If ACPS provides high-quality instruction and differentiated supports, engages the community and families, and allocates resources equitably, opportunity and achievement gaps among underserved student populations will be eliminated and all students will graduate from high school prepared for college, careers, and life. With previous ESSER II funding and our FY 22 Consolidated Budget process, we have funded critical instructional programs and student support services programs for students, staff and families:

- Defining an instructional climate and learning environment that is aligned to our [Teaching and Learning Framework \(PDF\)](#) and our [Multi-Tiered Systems of Support \(MTSS\)](#).
- Preparing staff through professional learning and wellness programs for the challenges and unique potential offered by in-person learning opportunities during the 2021-22 school year.
- Supporting social-emotional health for our students and families through extended support services and programs at ACPS facilities and beyond.

With ESSER III funds, we are focusing our attention, energy, and resources on a limited number of evidence-based interventions that all schools will implement with fidelity. We will spend time identifying what is working in school and program implementations, define their processes, and work to scale and adapt those processes in other settings through protocol development, coaching and networks. Ultimately, we want to ensure that our students are engaged in classroom instruction and have access to the educational resources needed to address lost instructional time while also enhancing their learning experiences.

- Audit of Instructional Initiatives for Tier 1, English Language Learners and students with disabilities
- Talent Development Cohort Pilot Program - Design a pilot program that will utilize a cohort model targeting Academic Acceleration for Students Placed At-Risk
- Monitoring and Evaluation System for Social Emotional and Academic Learning Initiatives, including data analytics, assessment and redesign
- System to Support and Monitor High Quality Instruction at both central services and within schools
- Multi-Tiered System of Supports Analytics Tool to expand current MTSS implementation
- Audit of cultural responsiveness to present findings, recommended actions and update resources

- Mentor Teacher Model- Pre-K through 12th-grade instructional monitoring/support system - support includes setting up a pilot program, providing professional development, and monitoring implementation

Virtual Learning

- Community-Focused Services & Virtual Learning Program - support includes tuition fees, instructional materials and textbooks for Virtual Virginia Academy
- Coordination of the Virtual Learning Program by hiring a coordinator to support students to transition in and out of virtual programs

Extended Day / Extended Learning Opportunities

- Integrated Continuum Extended Learning Opportunities - support includes assessing and redesigning current opportunities, expanding staff and professional development, increasing academic enrichment and tutoring offerings, and procuring aligned instructional materials
- Extended Day Services for Students with Disabilities - support includes expanding staff, procuring aligned instructional materials, and analyzing data to improve programming

SECTION 4

Other Uses of Funds

Section 2001(e) of the ARP Act permits school divisions to use the ARP Act ESSER III funding not reserved to address unfinished learning to address the impacts of COVID-19 in a variety of ways. ACPS will use approximately **\$5,582,484 (~16%)** for initiatives related to Technology Infrastructure and **\$4,530,744 (~13%)** for initiatives related to Human Capital of its ARP Act ESSER III funds in accordance with Section 2001(e) of the ARP Act as described below.

Technology Infrastructure

We are building a streamlined and sustainable technology infrastructure across our division to ensure a smooth transition to in-person learning, the need for continuous integration of technology into students' daily learning experience, and that software support services are available to all schools. You can read more about our [2018-2023 Technology Plan here](#).

In the coming months, our team has budgeted funds to provide devices for students to use, as appropriate, at school and at home; WIFI and internet access so that families have the access they need, and information sessions / events to expand knowledge and access to technology resources. We have also expanded our support of teachers and staff as they address the social, emotional and academic needs of students: through coordinated communications, improved data sharing, in-person support hours, and synchronous/asynchronous professional learning opportunities.

With ESSER III funds, we are able to provide a reliable, scalable and transparent technology infrastructure that facilitates the operation of the school division and supports greater access and equity.

- Modernize communication systems in all schools. This includes server rooms and electrical and room conditioning. Communication systems include PA systems, unified emergency notification, and phone systems with paging integration. Upgraded equipment rooms with proper electrical and backup support in 18 of our schools.
- Modernize server and user management infrastructure in 15 of our schools.
- Upgrade building WIFI equipment to current standards in 15 of our schools.
- Replace aging fiber optic backbone in buildings in 15 of our schools.

- Upgrade on premises devices and cloud services (ex New servers and Cloud Services - Google/O365)
- Contracted services to pilot ACPS owned WIFI networks in a couple of densely populated areas for populations with low access to broadband services Piloted in 9 communities.
- Contracted project management services to oversee major system upgrade initiatives; Network architect to consult on upgrade; Staff augmentation as needed to implement infrastructure initiatives.
- Contract disaster recovery services off site
- Maintenance Fee- ACPS owned WIFI network annual renewal costs

Human Capital Needs

In support of reopening our schools and achieving the goals outlined in our Strategic Plan, we are expanding the ways in which we support our existing staff while building an inclusive work environment for all. Our team has made commitments to improve our strategic and operational planning, create collaborative communications and grow relationships, and expand our benefits so that they are market competitive and pay equitable. For more information about our plans, please see our Human Resources [Department Improvement Plan \(PDF\)](#).

- Expand Wellness Program & Compensation Program
- Expand Employee Engagement Programing
- Redefine Recruitment & Retention Programming
- Increase capacity in ACPS Onboarding Program
- Advisory Services on Labor Relations
- Staff Pulse Surveys - Contracted services to build and release Pulse Surveys on retention, attrition and employee wellness (three years)

Communications

- Scale communications support to provide additional / augmented communications support and public relations support
- Communications studio support - Upgrade TV Studio (for students to access and apprentice, internship opportunities), School Board, Family and Community Engagement re- engagement, including video content producing
- Communications professional learning and resource support- Professional development and marketing materials for communications, media and crisis communication

Grants Management

- Strengthen Grants Management - Staffing to oversee federal relief grants portfolio and ensure timely implementation of grant activities
- Contracted services to design & implement a new division-wide Grants Management System with centralized knowledge management and reporting capabilities.
- Software Licensing / Fees for Grants Management System

SECTION 5

Addressing Students' Academic, Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Needs

In addition to the funds to address unfinished learning and the academic impact of lost instructional time (Section 3), ACPS will use an additional **\$6,733,056** of its ARP Act ESSER III funds to broadly address Students' Academic, Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs. This totals **\$16,644,273 (~48%)** for Academic, Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs.

As part of our commitment to eliminating opportunity and achievement gaps, we have designed our plan to ensure access to and engagement with high-quality instruction and programs that

reduce barriers to learning. We also recognize that reopening our schools will involve the need to embrace flexibility while facing unprecedented challenges. Therefore, with previous ESSER II funding and our FY 22 Consolidated Budget process, we have funded critical instructional programs and student support services programs for students, staff and families.

When planning for the use of ESSER III funds, we aim to support all staff with the implementation of high quality programs, increase effectiveness of programs, and direct support to students and families that need it most. In addition to the initiatives highlighted in Section II: Addressing Unfinished Learning, we are investing in the following areas:

- Expand Social Emotional Learning Curriculum (RULER) Implementation to incorporate lessons into the core curriculum on emotions, relationships and decision making. Support includes stipend, professional development and implementation support.
- Trauma-Informed Universal Screener Implementation focusing on student strengths.
- Expanding Staff Expertise in Youth Mental Health and Trauma Informed Care - support includes professional development and certifications for school staff.
- General Supporting SEAL implementation by hiring a Director of Guidance to expand services K-12
- Expanding Student Support Team Staff at each school based on student and staff needs, including School Counselors, School Psychologists, School Social Workers and Mental Health Specialists to support increased need of Students and Families for in-school and at home support with wrap-around services
- School-Based Funding Allocation for Direct Student SEAL Support Services, Health & Safety Measures and/or Welcoming School Environment at our 18 ACPS Schools, to be determined by school communities

Family Engagement

- Professional Development for FACE & Parent Liaisons
- Hiring bilingual parent liaison
- Scaling family engagement collaboration forums.
- Expanding partner support at specific school sites for three years

For more information about our Social, Emotional and Academic Programming planned for School Year 2021-22, please see our [Continuity of Learning Plan](#).

SECTION 6

Consultation with Stakeholders and Opportunity for Public Comment

In developing the ARP ESSER Plan, ACPS has conducted consultation in the following ways:

- 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.
- All members of the ACPS community were welcomed to submit their input via the ESSER III Community Feedback form. The request for Community Feedback was first advertised on June 4th via the ACPS Site Home Page and ACPS Express.
 - The Community Feedback form was accessible in English, Spanish, Amharic, and Arabic It was accessible to the public until 11:59 p.m. on Friday, June 18, 2021.

- 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 two School Board Meetings. Details about the meetings are accessible on the ACPS School Board Meetings Archive webpage.
 - Public Hearing on the School Reopening Plan on Thursday, June 17, 2021, at 5 p.m. Incorporated comments and questions if applicable to the plan.
 - The Special Called School Board Meeting and Public Hearing on ESSER on August 3, 2021 at 7 p.m. Incorporated comments and questions if applicable to the plan.

After the plan development, consultation with stakeholders and opportunity for public comment will not cease. Public engagement is crucial to our implementation and accountability.

Throughout the implementation and execution phases of the next few years, we will conduct periodic reviews of our plans through our Budget Review process, and when needed, revise to ensure they remain relevant to community needs. We have developed processes that will allow us to monitor compliance and meet the reporting requirements of the Alexandria City School Board, Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), as well as the U.S. Department of Education.

SECTION 7

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/Page/3704>
- 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
 703-619-8162
theresa.werner@acps.k12.va.us

We are at the beginning of our journey, with ESSER funding available for multiple years and throughout the life of **ACPS 2025: Equity for All**. To meet Virginia Department of Education requirements and to further engage the community we will revisit our ESSER Plan every four months. ACPS will host a Public Forum in October (exact date will be finalized with the approval of the Budget Calendar in September) where we will discuss the Budget Process as well as provide updated information on the ESSER Plan.

July 2021

COMPLETED

	Release draft plan to community
Aug 2021	<p>COMPLETED</p> <p>Facilitate public hearing process</p> <p>Finalize our plan with community input</p> <p>Submit ESSER III funds application to VDOE</p>
Sept 2021	Receive funds from VDOE and allocate resources to priority programs
Oct 2021	Conduct Board Workshop and Community Conversations
Nov 2021 - Dec 2021	Monitor progress and adjust course based on data and feedback
2022 - 2024	Report and Revise at four month increments