



Poquoson City Public Schools Return to Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan Updated as of May 31, 2023

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 Poquoson City Public Schools (PCPS) 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 Mr. Arty Tillett, Superintendent, at arty.tillett@poquoson.k12.va.us or 757-868-3055.

Section 2: Maintaining Health and Safety

Poquoson City Public Schools has taken and 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. A description of actions already taken and additional actions planned is below.

Poquoson City Public Schools understands the importance of layering health and safety mitigation strategies in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our schools. These health and safety mitigation strategies include:

- Signs are posted around our buildings and frequent announcements are made within our schools reminding staff and students of the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 as well as the importance of frequent handwashing.
- We have increased the number of hand sanitizing stations and have water bottle filling stations in each of our school facilities.
- Where possible, MERV 13 filters are being used in all schools to maximize filtration.
- Plexiglas shields have been added to reception areas at all schools to protect staff and visitors.

In addition to layering health and safety mitigation measures, PCPS has provided in-person learning opportunities for students since September of 2020 with a return to full in-person learning for the 2021-2022 school year. We have planned to maximize all spaces in our school facilities in order to accommodate all of our students for in-person instruction.

In addition, Poquoson City Public Schools has adopted practices on each of the following safety recommendations established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

- **Optional mask wearing.** In accordance with Executive Order Number Two issued by Governor Youngkin and the PCPS School Board's decision on January 18th, 2022, mask wearing is now optional for students, staff and visitors.
- **Handwashing and respiratory etiquette.** Signs about the importance of handwashing and proper respiratory etiquette are visible in all of our school facilities. Frequent reminders are provided within our schools informing staff and students of the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 as well as the importance of frequent handwashing.
- **Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation.** PCPS's cleaning protocols are aligned with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines. All disinfecting products are Environmental Protection Agency-approved and aligned with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations. In terms of ventilation, PCPS has

maximized fresh air intake in HVAC equipment as much as outdoor temperatures will allow. Where possible, MERV 13 air filters are being utilized to maximize filtration.

- **Quarantine and Isolation.** PCPS continues to recommend all CDC and VDH guidelines for isolation and quarantine and will continue to maintain the COVID-19 dashboard with the number of up-to-date positive cases. PCPS continues to require all COVID-19 positive individuals to isolate in accordance with the CDC guidelines in place.
- **Diagnostic and screening testing.** In April 2021, PCPS began a pilot program with rapid diagnostic testing which has continued. If a student displays symptoms consistent with COVID-19, a parent or guardian may consent to an on-site. Additionally, PCPS offers testing to students who self-identify as a close contact.
- **Efforts to provide vaccinations to school communities.** With the assistance of the Williamsburg Drug Company, PCPS coordinated vaccine clinics for employees, students, and their families who were interested in the vaccinations or booster shots. PCPS held three vaccine clinics during 2021-2022 school year at our high school to encourage all students between the ages of 5 and 18 to be vaccinated. As new vaccination regulations are announced or if the school community requests additional clinics PCPS is open to hosting more with the assistance of Williamsburg Drug
- **Coordination with state and local health officials.** PCPS has worked very closely with the local health department throughout the pandemic. PCPS has consulted with the health department on various matters including reopening schools, health and safety mitigation measures, contact tracing, protocols for students and staff to return to school after being sick, vaccine clinics, and testing.

Section 3: Continuity of Services

Poquoson City Public Schools 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 social, emotional, mental health, and other needs.

Academic:

Poquoson City Public Schools has prioritized the continuity of academic programming for students since the first day of the statewide shutdown in March 2020, and every day since. In fact, we brought teams of teachers and instructional leaders together to prepare asynchronous lessons for students at all levels before the statewide shutdown in anticipation of that possibility. Students left our schools at the end of that week in March with digital and hard copy resources in order to continue their learning during those initial weeks of the school closure.

Our focus quickly turned to training for our instructional staff to support their efforts to begin virtual learning. Poquoson City Public Schools was a partial 1:1 student computing school division. Upon the school closure, PCPS was able to quickly purchase additional devices to complete the move to becoming a complete 1:1 student computing school division, with every student in grades K-12 having their own division-issued learning device. Students in kindergarten through 1st grade have iPads, and students in grades 2-12 have Chromebooks. This 1:1 program contributed to our ability to quickly transition to a virtual learning academic environment. While student devices were in place, high speed internet connectivity in homes remains a challenge in some of our community. Our school division has worked hard to bridge this divide by supplying students in need with mobile hotspot devices at no cost to families. This is another example of our commitment to ensuring the continuity of student learning.

Virtual instruction continued through the conclusion of the 2019-20 school year. Our team worked tirelessly over the summer to prepare for the opening of the 2020-21 school year, preparation that accounted for opening the new school year in a virtual environment, in-person, or some combination of the two. On August 11, 2020, the School Board approved a Reopening Plan. Families had two options at

the beginning of each semester, which allowed them to choose Poquoson Online, a fully virtual learning environment, or the Continuum of Learning plan. The Continuum of Learning plan was based on the *Phase Guidance for Virginia Schools* set forth by the Governor. Virginia's Return to School Plan states that divisions must be ready to move within phases and to shift instructional practices depending on the phase. The Continuum of Learning plan provided movement between instructional delivery models of virtual, hybrid and traditional learning based on guidance from the CDC, Virginia Department of Health, or federal, state or local orders.

We opened school on time in September with grades K through 3 on the hybrid model where students were assigned to either an A or B group to accommodate spacing in the schools. Students attended school for in-person instruction 2 days per weeks and learning virtually at home for 3 days per week. During this month, all other grades remained fully virtual. In October, grades 4-5 started using the same hybrid model. Primary and elementary teachers were assigned to either in-person or virtual classrooms. In December grades 6-8 and January grades 9-12, began using the hybrid model. Then, in March, all grades began in-person 4 days per week and virtual learning 1 day per week. For grades 6-12, the same teacher provided concurrent instruction to students, serving both in-person and virtual learners simultaneously. Organizing our instructional team in this manner allowed us to offer family choices, and allowed a transition from fully virtual to hybrid instructional delivery.

We opened the 2021-22 academic year with our students in person. Students who are not able to participate in an in-person instructional experience may opt to enroll in Virtual Virginia to receive their instruction virtually. We have invested heavily this year in health mitigation efforts, and these investments have allowed us to safely bring students back into our schools for an in-person school year for 2021-22.

We have a strong structure in place for monitoring student academic performance and we have continued to rigorously monitor student performance throughout the past fifteen months. Data analysis of individual student growth, traditional academic achievement, and qualitative data by way of student surveys has allowed our instructional team to continuously adjust pacing and curriculum in real time to ensure as much academic success as possible. Furthermore, that same data analysis has contributed to our programming decisions throughout the 2020-21 school year, for the upcoming summer, and for the 2021-22 school year and beyond.

Social and Emotional:

Poquoson City Public Schools has continued to support the social-emotional needs of our students throughout the pandemic. School counselors, school psychologists, and our social worker have been available to students and staff since schools shut down in March of 2020. As we reopened schools in September, our mental health team members continued to provide social-emotional support to students who opted for in-person instruction as well as students who opted for virtual instruction. Additionally, PCPS continued to offer school activities to promote kindness, inclusion, and healthy decision making. Examples of these school-wide activities include Kindness week activities and activities during Bully Prevention month. We will continue these activities during the 2021-22 school year and beyond.

Some of our schools have incorporated morning meetings into daily instruction in order to foster a positive classroom climate, encourage connections between students, and build a strong sense of community in classrooms. Additionally, our primary and elementary schools have implemented a data collection tool called the *Devereux Student Strengths Assessment*, or DESSA to support our students in developing essential social and emotional skills that will help them become successful and responsible adults.

Mental Health:

As mentioned above, our mental health team has continued to support our students and families throughout the pandemic. Poquoson City Public Schools' mental health team consists of school counselors, school psychologists, and a social worker. Our mental health team provides a variety of services and supports to students including individual counseling, small group counseling, and class-wide counseling lessons. We have one school counselor each at the primary and elementary schools, two school counselors at our middle school, and three school counselors at our high school. Additionally, we have 2 school psychologists and 1 social worker who support students across our four schools.

Student Nutrition:

Poquoson City Public Schools Student Nutrition Team has maintained provision of service to students before and since the return to learning. Staffing and processes were adjusted as of March 2020 to provide daily meals through curbside meal distribution at one school location, to include breakfast and lunch meal service available to all students. This continued throughout the summer. As in-person learning started in September of 2020, curbside meals continued to be made available for all students while cafeteria meal service was simultaneously re-established on site at all schools. Initially, all meal services while in-person learning was delivered to classrooms for primary and elementary students. Beginning in March, meal services were provided in the cafeteria where students would pick up meals in the cafeteria and eat with 6 foot spaced intervals in the cafeteria. Due to the adjusted academic schedules at the middle and high school, grab-and-go meal service was provided to these students who attended in-person learning. Equipment was purchased to effectively seal prepared meals in trays, allowing for safe, clean, and better preserved meals for those receiving curbside or classroom distribution.

The provision of breakfast and lunch for students who qualify for free or reduced cafeteria service in all schools has supported the overall well-being of our students and has relieved some of the financial strain associated with funds needed to purchase meals for families. School staff also worked with County staff to provide P-EBT cards for economically disadvantaged families to purchase their own food, beyond the breakfast and lunch meals available from the school nutrition program.

Section 4: Opportunity for Public Comment

The public comment process for the division's "return to instruction and continuity of service" plan started in the summer of 2020 during regular and specially called School Board meetings, especially during the Fall as we shifted from all virtual to hybrid in-person instruction. The division has canvassed students, families, the community and staff with surveys from March 2020 to the present on everything from adequate internet access to child care needs to their virtual or in-person experience. The Superintendent updates the School Board and the public (in-person or live streaming) each month on the status of cases, quarantines, staff absences, and community survey results. There was a Steering Committee formed during the Summer of 2020, which consisted of school administrators, teachers and parents, to discuss the school reopening plans, as well as academic and mitigation strategies. Each of these stakeholder groups have representation from our public and our internal school community.

As we move into the Strategic Planning process, opportunities for input will be provided to staff, students, parents, and community members.

Section 5: Periodic Review and Revision of Plan

During the period of the ARP ESSER award (until September 2024), Poquoson City 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 Poquoson City 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

Poquoson City Public Schools has taken the following steps to make this plan available to the public:

- The plan is posted at www.poquoson.k12.va.us (under Families/COVID-19 Information);
- The plan may be orally translated for parents. Contact the Department of Student Services, at 757-868-3050 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 the Department of Student Services at 757-868-3050.