



Accomack County Public Schools
Return to Learn/Health Mitigation Plan
2022-2023
Updated: June 6, 2023

Accomack County Public Schools remain committed to providing ALL students with the Best education possible in a safe and healthy environment. The ACPS 2021-2022 Return to Learn/Health Mitigation Plan addresses the delivery of in-person instruction five (5) days per week to each student. Our updated 2022-2023 plan will be a Return to Normal/Health Mitigation Plan. This plan will assist ACPS as we return to a Post-COVID operational status. A virtual option for qualifying students will continue to be provided by Virtual Virginia. Mitigation strategies for the 2023-2024 school year are consistent with the new CDC guidelines. Mitigation strategies for the 2023-2024 school year will be flexible. The level of impact in the community and schools will determine how flexible we will be with our “Return to Normal” plan. ACPS will continue with infectious disease prevention strategies as listed in this document. In addition, ACPS will look at COVID-19 hospital admission levels when making decisions for daily operations, as recommended by the CDC. Enhanced prevention strategies also may be necessary in response to an outbreak in the K-12 or ECE setting.

Accomack County Public Schools referenced *Interim Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in Virginia PreK-12 Schools* from the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) and *Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools* from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The February 11, 2022 edition of this document was used to update the plan. Accomack County Public Schools referenced *Operational Guidance for K-12 Schools and Early Care and Education Programs to Support Safe In-Person Learning* from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The May 11, 2023 edition of this document was used to update the plan.

Success in preventing COVID-19 transmission in school settings begins with and is connected to preventing transmission, as long as, impact to schools remains favorable. All schools must make in-person instruction available to all students pursuant to Senate Bill 1303 passed during Virginia’s 2021 legislative session. Under this new law, schools are permitted to switch from in-person to partial or fully virtual instruction temporarily if COVID-19 transmission levels within the school are deemed to be at a high level in collaboration with the local health department.

According to the Executive Summary (February 11, 2022), there is no greater priority than the health and welfare of Virginia’s children, and parents have the fundamental right to make decisions concerning the care of their children. These three core principles found in Executive Order 2 reaffirm: parents are in charge of their children’s health, wellbeing and education;

schools must be open five days a week for in-person learning and; the Commonwealth and school divisions must provide a safe and healthy school environment. With freedom comes responsibility. This guidance clarifies the roles of parents, educators and the schools. The Virginia Department of Health and the Virginia Department of Education will continue to provide quality, actionable and up-to-date information on the pandemic so that parents can continue to make educated health decisions that are best for their child(ren) and family. The virus that causes COVID-19 continues to evolve and the tools to fight the virus have expanded. As new variants emerge, the epidemiology may change; therefore, prevention strategies may need to be adjusted. This public health guidance has been updated to align with the current risk. A key lesson learned from early in the pandemic is that many students and families suffer when schools are not open to in-person learning. Keeping students in school, while also providing a safe environment to students, teachers and staff in K-12 schools, is the goal. Mitigation strategies that reduce COVID-19 transmission can be reduced now that effective vaccines are available, and the current predominant variant (Omicron) is causing less severe disease. Foundational prevention strategies in schools, such as testing and improving ventilation, combined with common-sense actions of personal responsibility, such as staying home when sick, getting vaccinated, and hand-washing, can help reduce transmission in schools. Following public health recommendations to isolate at home after testing positive is also an important layer of safety for our school communities. For those who have tested positive or have been recommended to quarantine, wearing masks for the recommended time period and testing at appropriate intervals can help keep kids in school and keep everyone safe.

2021-2022 Return to Learn/Health Mitigation Task Force

- Chris Holland, Superintendent
- Dr. Rhonda Hall, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction
- Dr. Ronnie Holden, School Board Member
- Beth Onley, Director of Finance
- Karen Taylor, Director of Secondary Schools
- Bobby Bennett, Director Operations and Management
- Tonya Martin, School Health Coordinator
- Paul Brabazon, Transportation Supervisor
- Paul Bloxom, Facilities Management Supervisor
- Brandyn Burkholder, Food Service Supervisor
- Keith Godwin, Custodial Supervisor
- Ruth Tankard, Elementary Principal
- Katie Farrell, Secondary Assistant Principal
- David Sabatino, Teacher
- Miranda Dunston, Parent
- Dr. Gabriella Richardson, Pediatrician, ESRH
- JJ Justis, Local Health Emergency Coordinator, Eastern Shore Health District

2022-2023 recommendations by: Chris Holland, Dr. Rhonda A. Hall, Tonya Martin, Belinda Rippon, Karen Taylor, Beth Onley, and Paul Brabazon.

2023-2024 recommendations by: Dr. Rhonda A. Hall, Tonya Martin, Karen Taylor

Opportunity for Public Comment

- Accomack County Public Schools sought public input and took such input into account in developing the ARP ESSER Plan.
- Return to Learn/Health Mitigation Task Force was organized which comprised of stakeholders from all areas of the Division.
- The report was presented to the School Board for review on August 3, 2021, and then presented to the public for comment on August 24, 2021.
- Update presented for public comment on May 17, 2022.
- Update presented for public comment on October, 2022
- Update presented for public comment on June 6, 2023

Guiding Principles

- Support in-person learning
- Prioritize younger learners, students with disabilities, and English learners.
- Put education first
- Focus on Prevention
- Consider community needs.
- Be flexible and innovative

Continuity of Services

- Accomack County 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.
- Face-to-face instruction will be provided five (5) days per week.
- Remediation will be provided to all students who demonstrate on Growth Assessments, a learning lag in academics as a result of COVID-19 closures, fully remote/virtual or a hybrid learning model during the 2020-2021 school year.
- Four (4) Mental Health Counselors will serve any students or staff who express an interest or have been referred for additional social emotional and or mental health support.

Instructional Schedule

- Students will resume a pre-COVID instructional program.
- All special subjects such as Music, PE, and Art will resume following safety guidelines.
- Safety Protocol will continue to be implemented.
- Parents and visitors will be allowed in the building for programs and staff interaction.
- Elementary students will arrive at 8:30 AM and their instructional day will begin at 8:45 AM, and end at 3:45 PM.
- Middle School students will arrive between 7:10-7:20 AM, with their instructional day beginning at 7:30 AM and ending at 2:30 PM.
- High School students will arrive between 7:10-7:20 AM, with their instructional day beginning at 7:30 and ending at 2:30 PM.

Pre-COVID-19 daily school operations will resume including the following:

- Use of lockers (Middle and High)
- Small groups for Reading and Math (Elementary)
- Chorus and BETA (Elementary and Middle)
- Field Trips
- Parents access to the building
- Ceremonies and programs
- After school clubs

Strategies to Prevent Transmission of COVID-19 in Schools

When the following prevention model has been implemented, studies have shown that infections and outbreaks in schools were reduced. Factors to guide decision-making about prevention strategies and school operations include:

Steps to Guide Decision-Making about Prevention Strategies and School Operations:

1. Understand community level vaccination coverage
2. Consider the level of impact to a school
3. Understand community and school capacity and needs
4. Determine and implement a layered approach with multiple prevention strategies
5. Evaluate COVID-19 hospital admissions

Periodic Review and Revision of Plan

- During the period of the ARP ESSER award (until September 2023), Accomack 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 Accomack County Public Schools will seek and take into account public input during the review process. Plan revisions will address updated CDC guidelines on safely reopening schools, if any are issued.

Core Indicators

- Input from our Local Health Department
- Number of Positive cases in the schools
- Number of Outbreaks in the schools
- Mitigation Strategies
- COVID-19 hospital admissions

Consideration of School Impact

Accomack County Public Schools will replace COVID-19 community levels with COVID-19 hospital admissions levels to provide prevention decisions per CDC recommendations.

Responding to Outbreaks

If a school or ECE program is experiencing a COVID-19 outbreak ACPS will consider adding prevention strategies regardless of the COVID-19 hospital admission level. ACPS will work with the local health department in accordance with state and local regulations.

COVID-19 Health and Absenteeism

Local Public Health Conditions

- Accomack County Public Schools (ACPS) will follow guidance from the VDOE and our local health department, along with our counterparts at the county and local levels. ACPS will monitor updates on COVID-19 risk levels, numbers of cases, and recommended precautions. Superintendent, school nurses or principal designee will be connected to the most recent information provided by our local health department and will follow the required protocols.

Monitoring absenteeism

- Daily absenteeism will be monitored by school building administrators, teachers, and school nurses. Any trends or concerns will be shared with the local health department.
- First, School Nurses will notify their School Health Coordinator and their principal with any trends or concerns. Second, School Health Coordinator/principal will then notify the health department for guidance regarding trends or concerns. Third, School Health Coordinator/ principal will notify the Supervisor of the health departments recommendations regarding trends or concerns. Final, Superintendent will provide direction on how to proceed.

Five Key Mitigation Strategies to Reduce Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in Schools

Regardless of level of community transmission, it is critical that schools use, and layer prevention strategies are essential to safe delivery of in-person instruction and help to prevent COVID-19 transmission in schools:

- Physical-distancing when appropriate (during substantial or high transmission)
- Handwashing and respiratory etiquette
- Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities
- Vaccination (Optional)
- Educate staff and parents regarding their choices pertaining to masking (Optional)
- School officials and staff should adequately and appropriately ventilate
- Encourage students, teachers, and staff to stay home when sick, and to seek care and testing as appropriate.
- Notify students and staff of known cases and/or exposures in combination with isolation and quarantine.
- Notify public health of outbreaks in a timely manner.
- Notify parents and families of a case of COVID-19 in schools when appropriate and ensuring confidentiality of known cases.

HAND HYGIENE AND RESPIRATORY ETIQUETTE

➤ Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

- Teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and increase monitoring to ensure adherence among students and staff.
- If, soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol can be used
- Encourage staff and students to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Hand sanitizers will be located at every student entrance at each school.
- CDC Wash your Hands Posters will be posted throughout the schools.

CLEANING AND MAINTAINING HEALTH FACILITIES

➤ Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities

- Additional hourly custodians will be hired for bathroom and surface cleaning on days of face-to-face instruction
- Clean
 - Wear disposable gloves to clean and disinfect.
 - Clean surfaces using soap and water, then use disinfectant.
 - Cleaning with soap and water reduces number of germs, dirt, and impurities on the surface. Disinfecting kills germs on surfaces.
 - More frequent cleaning and disinfection may be required based on level of use.
- Disinfect
 - ACPS will use EPA approved disinfectant
 - Classrooms will be disinfected each night after face-to-face instruction with an electrostatic disinfectant sprayer and cleaned with microfiber cloths.
 - Staff will follow the instructions on the label to ensure safe and effective use of the product.
- How to clean and disinfect
 - Hard (Non-porous) Surfaces
 - If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.

- For disinfection, ACPS will use EPA approved disinfectant or electrostatic sprayer.
- Always read and follow the directions on the label to ensure safe and effective use.
 - Wear skin protection and consider eye protection for potential splash hazards
 - Ensure adequate ventilation
 - Use no more than the amount recommended on the label
 - Use water at room temperature for dilution (unless stated otherwise on the label)
 - Avoid mixing chemical products
 - Label diluted cleaning solutions
 - Store and use chemicals out of the reach of children.
 - Special considerations should be made for people with asthma. They should not be present when cleaning and disinfecting is occurring as this can trigger asthma exacerbations.
- Cleaning staff and others should clean hands often
 - Immediately after removing gloves and after contact with an ill person, by washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds.
 - If soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol may be used.
 - However, if hands are visibly dirty, always wash hands with soap and water.
- Hand Sanitizer
 - Hand sanitizer dispensers will be located at every student entrance at each school.
 - Keep hand sanitizers away from fire or flame
 - For children under six years of age, hand sanitizer should be used with adult supervision
 - Always store hand sanitizer out of reach of children
 - Always read and follow the directions on the label to ensure safe and effective use.
- Soft (Porous) Surfaces
 - For soft (porous) surfaces such as carpeted floor, rugs, and drapes, remove visible contamination if present and clean with appropriate cleaners indicated for use on these surfaces.
- Electronics

- For electronics such as tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls, and remove visible contamination if present.
 - **DO NOT APPLY LIQUIDS DIRECTLY ONTO ANY ELECTRONICS.**
 - Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products.
 - Consider use of protective and wipeable covers for electronics.
 - If no manufacturer guidance is available, consider the use of alcohol-based wipes (damp cloth type) containing at least 70% alcohol to disinfect touch screens and keyboard/keypad surfaces.
 - Dry surfaces thoroughly to avoid pooling of liquids.
- Linens, Clothing, and Other Items That Go in the Laundry
 - In order to minimize the possibility of dispersing virus through the air, do not shake dirty laundry.
 - Wash items as appropriate in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. If possible, launder items using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and dry items completely. Dirty laundry that has been in contact with an ill person can be washed with other people's items.
 - Clean and disinfect hampers or other carts for transporting laundry according to guidance above for hard or soft surfaces.
 - Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Hand Hygiene
 - The risk of exposure to cleaning staff is inherently low. Cleaning staff should wear appropriate PPE for all tasks in the cleaning process, including handling trash.
 - PPE should be compatible with the disinfectant products being used.
 - Additional PPE might be required based on the cleaning/disinfectant products being used and whether there is a risk of splash.
 - PPE should be removed carefully to avoid contamination of the wearer and the surrounding area. Be sure to clean hands after removing gloves.
 - PPE should be removed after cleaning a room or area occupied by ill persons. Clean hands immediately after gloves are removed.
 - Cleaning staff should immediately report breaches in PPE such as a tear in gloves or any other potential exposures to their supervisor.
 - Cleaning staff and others should clean hands often, including immediately after removing gloves and after contact with an ill person, by washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol

may be used. However, if hands are visibly dirty, always wash hands with soap and water.

- Cleaning and disinfecting outdoor areas
 - Outdoor areas, like playgrounds in schools generally require normal routine cleaning, but do not require disinfection.
 - Do not spray disinfectant on outdoor playgrounds-it is not an efficient use of supplies and is not proven to reduce risk of COVID-19 to the public.
 - High touch surfaces made of plastic or metal, such as grab bars and railings should be cleaned routinely.
 - Cleaning and disinfection of wooden surfaces (play structures, benches, tables) or ground covers (mulch, sand) is not recommended.
 - Spread of COVID-19 from these surfaces is very low and disinfection is not effective.
 - Custodial manager will ensure adequate cleaning supplies will be available for employees.

- Correct use/storage
 - Follow manufacturer's guidelines for correct application and use of EPA approved disinfectants. Keep products out of reach and away from children, preferably in a locked cabinet.

- Ensuring adequate supplies to minimize sharing to the extent possible (e.g., dedicated student supplies, lab equipment, computers, etc.)
 - Keep each student's belongings separated from others' and in individually labeled containers, cubbies, or area
 - Ensure adequate supplies to minimize the sharing of high-touch materials to the extent possible (e.g., art supplies) assign supplies to a single student, or limit the use of supplies and equipment by one group of children at a time and clean and disinfect between use.
 - Avoid sharing of drinks, food, and utensils.
 - Avoid sharing electronic devices, toys, books, and other games or learning aids.
 - Avoid allowing students to bring toys to school.
 - If possible, at nap time, ensure that children's naptime mats (or cribs) are spaced out as much as possible, ideally 6 feet apart. Consider placing children head to toe to further reduce the potential for viral spread. Each child will need to be assigned their own cot. These need to be cleaned daily. Each child has their own blanket. Should be washed weekly.

➤ **Ventilation Systems**

- Classrooms and spaces without windows have the same air quality as those with windows.
- Opening of windows would adversely affect our HVAC systems.
- All systems are on an 11-week rotation of Preventative Maintenance (PM) which includes changing of filters in all filtrations.
- Current fiber filters meet state mandates.

➤ **Water Systems**

- Facilities management will ensure that water systems and features are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown.

➤ **Water Fountains**

- Water coolers will be in each school for water bottle filling for students and staff.
 - Feeds into existing water supply for water fountains.

➤ **Transportation**

- Operating on a system of Tiered Runs
 - All drivers will complete both an elementary and a secondary run for each day of face-to-face instruction except for those who serve in an instructional position.
 - Secondary schools will arrive/leave first, followed by elementary schools.
- Buses will be sanitized and cleaned between each run with electrostatic disinfectant sprayer and microfiber cloths.
 - Each school has a designated person in charge of cleaning buses and maintaining documentation.

➤ **Food Services**

- Disposable aprons and gloves will be utilized.
- Continue to practice the breakfast in the classroom meal service model for all elementary schools, and Grab N' Go breakfast in all middle & high schools
- Lunch will be served in the cafeteria at all school levels. Cafeteria lines will be used. Once students pick up their meals from the cafeteria line, they will proceed to their seats. A la' carte sales will be permitted.
- Students will be dismissed by table to dispose of their garbage in nearby trash cans as they exit the cafeteria for their next class.

ISOLATION AND QUARANTINE

STAYING HOME WHEN SICK

➤ Staying Home when Sick

- Students, teachers, and staff who have symptoms of infectious illness, such as influenza or COVID-19 to stay home from school. Recommendation from the *Interim Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in Virginia PreK-12 Schools* includes following up primary care provider for testing and care.
- Provide excused absences for students who are sick if the student completes their work.
- School nurse or school nurse designee will use the CDC Guideline: https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/182/2020/10/Child-School_COVID-19_Booklet.pdf

What to do if a Student Becomes Sick or Reports a New COVID-19 Diagnosis at School

- Student(s) show signs of infectious illness consistent with COVID-19.
- Teacher or staff excuses student(s) from classroom, cohort, or area within the school. Alert the school nurse or principal designee.
- The student(s) will be taken to the isolation room/area and ensures student(s) is properly supervised and masked. The parent, guardian, or caregiver is called. Arrangements are made for student(s) to either go home or seek emergency medical attention.
 - Note: If multiple ill students must be placed in the same isolation room/area, ensure mask use, and stay at least 6 feet apart while supervised.
- Parent, guardian, or caregiver picks up student(s). Parent, guardian, or caregiver contacts healthcare provider for evaluation and possible COVID-19 test.
- Clean and disinfect areas that the ill student(s) occupied.
- Ventilate the area(s), wait as long as possible before cleaning to let virus particles settle (at least several hours, and use personal protective equipment (including any protection needed for the cleaning and disinfection products) to reduce risk of infection.
- If student(s) negative COVID-19 test result.
- Student(s) return to school following existing school illness management policies.

COVID-19 Test Result

- Students and staff who test positive for COVID-19, regardless of their vaccination status, will need to isolate for five days. During this isolation period, students will be allowed to learn remotely.
- If the student or staff no longer has symptoms after day five, they can return to school. If they still have symptoms, they should continue to isolate at home until day 10.
- On days six-10, students and staff will be required to wear their masks at all times, including while outdoors. The only exception will be when eating or drinking. However,

they will be encouraged to refrain from talking if possible when not wearing masks and are closer than 6ft social distance.

- Students and staff who have been identified as a close contact of a person who tested positive for COVID-19, will not have to quarantine unless they develop symptoms. Testing is recommended.

Mental Health Services

- The COVID-19 outbreak has caused major disruptions in daily life among our students. As we are preparing to return to school, Accomack County Public Schools will be providing Mental Health Services that will address the emotional stressors experienced by our student body.
- ACPS has one Coordinator of Student Services, **two** School Social Worker, and four Mental Health Counselors. The Mental Health Counselors are housed in four of our schools here in ACPS and are able to provide services to any student, faculty, or staff as the need arises for Mental Health counseling. In the event more services that are intensive are needed, the team collectively will work in a concerted effort to provide other resources and services from outside community agencies.
- Our Mental Health team will be working to provide an array of resources needed to address the needs of students who may need more emotional support than the content provided in the classroom.

Making the Plan Available to the Public

- Accomack County Public Schools has taken the following steps to make this plan available to the public.
- The plan is posted on the ACPS webpage.
- The plan is posted on each schools' website.
- The plan is available in Spanish and Haitian Creole.
- The plan may be orally translated for parents. Contact the Coordinator of EL services to request translation.
- 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 Director of Special Education.

Disclaimer

Changes to the health care plan will change frequently based on the minimum CDC recommendations and Accomack County Public Schools may or may not change in concurrence. Accomack County Public School system reserves the right to implement stricter guidelines to ensure the safety of all staff and students.

Contact information and Procedures for Reaching the Local Health Department.

- J.J. Justis
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- Jon Richardson, REHS, AOSE-Master
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