

The purpose of the *proposed* attached 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 Dickenson 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 Haydee L. Robinson, Division Superintendent at hrobinson@dcpsk.k12.va.us or Dickenson County Schools, P. O. Box 1217, Clintwood, VA 24228. This document was reviewed in June 2023 with no revisions.

Plan for Safe Return To In-Person Instruction And Continuity of Services

Dickenson County Public Schools

Updated: Dec. 1, 2022

Reviewed: June 1, 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 Dickenson 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 Haydee L. Robinson, Division Superintendent at hrobinson@dcpsk.k12.va.us or Dickenson County Schools, P. O. Box 1217, Clintwood, VA 24228.

Dickenson County Schools returned to 5 days per week of in-person beginning the 2021 – 2022 and 2022 – 2023 school year adhering to VDH and CDC guidelines. In collaboration with Region VII, DCPS participates in the Regional Learning Academy to provide online instruction for families that are uncomfortable returning to in-person instruction and meet the criteria set forth by the Regional Virtual Academy and Dickenson County Schools. DCPS strongly advocates and believes that in-person instruction is the best learning environment for children and encourages families to select this option.

Summary of Response to Covid-19: Dickenson County Public Schools response to the Covid-19 pandemic has been and continues to be based upon the most up-to-date guidance from state and local health officials as well as the CDC. At the heart of our response has been our students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. Our ultimate goal has been to return to in-person teaching and learning as quickly and as safely as possible. At the beginning of the pandemic, our primary concern was to ensure continuity of instruction through the use of a digital learning platform and access to devices for all students.

SECTION 2: MAINTAINING HEALTH AND SAFETY

Dickenson County 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.

Dickenson County Schools intends to continue with 5 days per week of in-person learning for 2022 – 2023 school year. The health and safety of all students and staff is our main priority and focus. We intend to use the following health, safety and mitigation strategies and follow the most up-to-date CDC and State and local health department recommendations and guidance.

In addition, Dickenson County Public Schools has policies on each of the following safety recommendation established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

- Universal wearing of masks has been suspended,

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Dickenson County Public Schools continues to utilize ESSER funds to purchase Personalized Protective Equipment (PPE), including a variety of masks and face shields, plexiglass dividers for office areas and classroom use, and hand sanitizer and wipes. We implemented procedures for dispensing and returning of instructional supplies and resources safely. We also provided touchless water fountains, thermometers (handheld and stand-alone), Sewage treatment and HVAC systems are being constantly monitored. We modified school schedules, entry and exit patterns in school buildings, modified bus routes, and beginning and end of day procedures. Additional signage in and around the buildings provided students and families with procedures and requirements of mask wearing and social distancing. Chromebooks were provided to students to allow for facilitation of digital learning

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

- **Handwashing and respiratory etiquette:** Handwashing and sanitizing stations are available throughout the building with proper signage and hand sanitizer available in every classroom; substantial training was provided for staff and students regarding proper procedures and respiratory etiquette.
- **Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities:** DCPS continuously adheres to improving ventilation and emphasis on deep cleaning and disinfecting.
- **Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine,** in collaboration with the State, local, and regional health departments was established. Isolation rooms were established in every building for symptomatic students. DCPS remains in close communication with local health department officials.
- **Diagnostic and screening testing:** A daily requirement of self-screening as well as school-based temperature checks was implemented; a temperature of 99.3 or higher required additional screening.
- **Efforts to provide vaccinations to school communities:** In coordination with the local health departments, all school staff members had access to vaccinations with release time provided; communication regarding student vaccinations and locations within our school facilities has been established.
- **Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies:** Accommodations regarding mask wearing have been provided on a case by case basis. Teaching staff were provided extensive PPE when working with students that could not be masked due to physical limitations. Modified bus routes to allow for space mitigation were in close collaboration with parents regarding mitigation, health needs, training and support.
- **Coordination with state and local health officials:** There has been extensive coordination with state and local health officials regarding school opening practices and procedures, school closings, mitigation strategies, and athletics and extra-curricular activities.
- **DCPS is an active participant in the ViSSTA (Virginia School Screening Tests for Assurance) Program** providing PCR Tests weekly to students and staff. Rapid Tests are also available at each school and are administered by the school nurse to any child or staff member exhibiting COVID symptoms. This has significantly assisted DCPS to early identification of COVID cases in schools, and to be more proactive in taking the necessary precautions to keep students and staff healthier.

SECTION 3: CONTINUITY OF SERVICES

Dickenson 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.

Academic Needs: Dickenson County Public Schools is offering "Wolfpack After the Bell" 21st Century Grant program for students for the 2022 – 2023 school year. It is also providing before and after school tutoring, an extended summer school program for students in grades K-12, and summer school experiences through June 2023. Summer professional development opportunities are planned for all staff focused on effective instructional practices as well as training and utilization of our learning management system. Plans for the 2022 - 2023 school year include expanded tutoring, remediation and intervention opportunities, and the continued use of progress monitoring tools to identify, diagnose, and assess learning gaps

Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Needs: Dickenson County Public Schools is partnering with United Way of Southwest Virginia, Communities in Schools and Behavioral Health to provide on-site mental health support and truancy prevention and intervention strategies. It also acts as a liaison between parents, students, and school personnel

Student Health Needs: Dickenson County Public Schools maintains a concern for student health and well-being, as evidenced by our commitment to a school nurse in every building and a Nursing Coordinator for the entire school division. Training of all staff regarding COVID symptoms, PPE use, and symptom monitoring will be emphasized. DCPS employs a Nursing Coordinator who will also assist in the clinic settings and contact tracing as needed. Through the ViSSTA program, a Testing Coordinator has been hired to facilitate weekly and daily administration of COVID Tests at each school.

Food Service Needs: DCPS will continue to provide breakfast and lunch for all students both in-person and virtual at no cost. Through the use of ESSER funds, additional support and compensation was provided to child nutrition workers during the extended summer programs and on virtual days.

SECTION 4: OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

In developing the ARP ESSER Dickenson County Public Schools sought public input and took such input into account as described below.

During the development of the School Opening Instructional Plan, Dickenson County Public Schools sought input from administrative staff, faculty and staff. Opportunities for parent and community input was provided during the Public Comment section of regular meetings of the Dickenson County School Board. The Dickenson County Education Association provided additional input regarding the opening of schools. All input was considered in the development of the reopening plan.

SECTION 5: PERIODIC REVIEW AND REVISION OF PLAN

During the period of the ARP ESSER award (until September 2024) Dickenson 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 school system 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

Dickenson County Public Schools has taken the following steps to make this plan available to the public:

- The plan is posted at www.dcps.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 Ryan Wallace, Technology Coordinator at rwallace@dcps.k12.va.us.