



Gloucester County Public Schools

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Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services

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 Gloucester 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:

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Summary of response to COVID-19 during the 2020-21 academic year:

Local/regional health conditions, as well as operational challenges, prompted the GCPS School Board, on 7/28/20, to approve remote learning for all students at the beginning of the 2020-21 school year. As conditions improved, a scaled return to in-person learning was implemented in an effort to establish a safe and secure in-person learning environment for all students and staff, while prioritizing learning opportunities for the most vulnerable populations.

Hybrid return to in-person learning 2 days/week:

- 9/21/20 - Regional Special Education
- 9/28/20 - Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten
- 10/19/20 - Grades 1-3
- 10/26/20 - Grades 6 and 12
- 11/12/20 - Grades 4,5 and 7-11

Return to in-person learning 4 days/week:

- 2/4/21 - School-based self-contained Special Education
- 3/8/21 – Regional Special Education
- 4/19/21 – All remaining students who otherwise were not fully virtual

Survey results from July 2020 demonstrated that approximately 23% of families indicated an initial preference for a fully remote learning option for fall semester. GCPS honored requests from families to continue fully remote learning for the duration of the 2020-21 school year.

GCPS intends to begin the 2021-22 academic year with full in-person instruction, five days per week.

Section 2: Maintaining Health and Safety

Gloucester 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.

As GCPS transitioned to in-person learning, a COVID-19 Mitigation Health Plan was created. The health plan was assembled with guidance from the CDC, VDOE, DOLI, Three Rivers Health District, and the Governor's Executive Orders. The health plan will continually be updated to mirror the COVID-19 response of each respective organization. The local community spread also impacts current and future mitigation strategies.

The division's [COVID-19 Mitigation Health Plan – Phase III](#) was updated May 25, 2021.

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

- **Universal and correct wearing of masks** - GCPS acknowledges recommendations from the CDC and VDH. Changes to our practice will be adopted following an amendment to the Governor's Executive Order 79. Current practice is aligned with Section D:
 - D. Masks – Public and Private K-12 Schools All students, teachers, staff, and visitors must wear a mask over their nose and mouth while on school property subject to section C:
 - C. Masks – Exceptions 1. Where required to wear a mask, the requirement does not apply to the following: a. While eating or drinking; b. Individuals exercising or using exercise equipment; c. Any person who is playing a musical instrument when wearing a mask would inhibit the playing of the instrument (e.g. wind or brass instrument) so long as at least ten feet of physical distance can be maintained from other persons, whether the rehearsal or performance is indoors or outdoors; d. Any person who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance; e. Any person seeking to communicate with people who are deaf or hard of hearing and for 3 ATTENTION: This Order is not effective until midnight on May 28, 2021. which the mouth needs to be visible; f. When temporary removal of the mask is necessary to secure government or medical services; g. When necessary to participate in a religious ritual; and h. Persons with health conditions or disabilities that prohibit wearing a mask. Nothing in this Order shall require the use of a mask by any person for whom doing so would be contrary to his or her health or safety because of a medical condition. Adaptations and alternatives for individuals with health conditions or disabilities should be considered whenever possible to increase the feasibility of wearing a mask to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading if it is not possible to wear one. 2. Any person who declines to wear a mask because of a medical condition shall not be required to produce or carry medical documentation verifying the stated condition nor shall the person be required to identify the precise underlying medical condition.
 - [Governor's Executive Order 79.pdf](#)
- **Modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing** - Students are separated to the greatest extent possible, with seating facing the same direction. When classroom floor spacing does not accommodate individual desks and tables are used, tabletop partitions are installed. Students will sit one per seat when riding the school bus. Students from the same household may sit together.
- **Handwashing and respiratory etiquette** - Hand sanitizing dispensers have been installed in the hallways of each school building. All teachers have received a classroom bottle of hand sanitizer with available refills. The health plan provides the following handwashing guidance.
 - Wash hands often.
 - Use warm water and soap, scrubbing for at least 20 seconds.
 - Use hand sanitizer with an alcohol content greater than 60% when water and soap are not available.

Hand washing should be done before every meal, after using the restroom, coughing, sneezing, blowing your nose, and any time the hands are visibly dirty, or upon entry into a room or space and prior to exit.

[CDC Coronavirus Hand Hygiene](#)

Students and employees are expected to use respiratory etiquette, covering their mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, using tissues when available then throwing them into a trash receptacle, followed by washing or sanitizing hands.

- **Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation** - A cleaning/disinfecting regimen has been established and incorporated into the Health Plan (see pages 13-14 and page 25).

- HVAC systems are inspected and cleaned routinely. The systems are not HEPPA filter compatible, however are set to consume the highest level of outside air possible to circulate air within the building at an optimal level. Preventative maintenance is maintained through a Honeywell contract. Bipolar ionization units have been installed in each school's HVAC units to remove bacteria and viruses.
- Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments – (See Health Plan pages 7-8). GCPS employs the protocols below for COVID-19 positive employee or student:
 - Employee
 - If an employee has COVID-19, Director of Nursing will interview the employee for a list of close contacts, defined as those identified to have been within 6 feet for longer than 15 minutes.
 - Close contacts will be verbally notified that they have been exposed to a person who has COVID-19. They will be instructed to enter quarantine, isolating themselves for 10 days away from others.
 - If the close contact has received a COVID-19 vaccination and they are 14 days after completing the vaccine series, they will not need to quarantine.
 - The supervisor will determine if the employee can work remotely.
 - The payroll specialist will initiate COVID-19 FMLA if necessary.
 - The Three Rivers Health District will receive names and contact information of those identified as close contacts. The health department will contact with these individuals and monitor them throughout their quarantine period.
 - The Three Rivers Health District will also follow the employee who is COVID positive and provide a return to work letter after their isolation period.
 - Once all close contacts have been notified, employees, students, and their families of the respective school will receive notification that there was an exposure within the building. Itinerant employees will also be notified.
 - Student
 - If a student is reported to have been diagnosed with COVID-19, the school nurse will notify the School Nurse Coordinator and the Administrator.
 - The School Nurse will contact the parent/guardian to confirm.
 - The School Nurse will work with Teachers to identify close contacts. The student may also be interviewed, if appropriate.
 - Additional interviews with Resource Teachers, Support Staff, or Coaches may also be necessary to identify close contacts.
 - Verbal contact will be made to parents/guardians of those identified as close contacts. They will be instructed to quarantine their student for 10 days.
 - If the close contact has received a COVID-19 vaccination and they are 14 days after completing the vaccine series, they will not need to quarantine.
 - The Three Rivers Health District will receive names and contact information of those identified as close contacts. The health department will contact with these individuals and monitor them throughout their quarantine period.
 - The Three Rivers Health District will also follow the student who is COVID positive and provide a return to school letter after their isolation period.
 - Once all close contacts have been notified, employees, students, and their families of the respective school will receive notification that there was an exposure within the building. Itinerant employees will also be notified.
 - Additional Information for COVID-19 Exposure or Diagnosis
 - All notifications of a student seeking testing, presumed or confirmed positive, should be immediately relayed to the school nurse. If the school nurse is not available, information should be passed to the Director of Nursing.
 - All reports of an employee seeking testing, presumed or confirmed positive, should be immediately relayed to the Director of Nursing.
 - Employees and/or students are encouraged to contact their Medical Provider during the quarantine/isolation period if they develop symptoms or have concerns.
 - During a quarantine/isolation period, a negative COVID test does not change the required length of time to be physically absent from work or school.

- A negative COVID test is not required to return to work/school.
 - HIPAA information is protected for all.
- **Diagnostic and screening testing** – As of 5/28/21, GCPS is not conducting COVID-19 diagnostic or screen testing.
- **Efforts to provide vaccinations to school communities** - GCPS coordinated with Riverside Health System and the Three Rivers Health District to offer all employees an opportunity to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Currently, there are conversations with Riverside Health System and the Three Rivers Health District to offer students 12 years old and older a COVID-19 vaccine.
- **Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies** –
- **Coordination with state and local health officials** - GCPS will remain in close contact with the Three Rivers Health District's Director, Dr. Richard S. Williams, District Epidemiologist Phillip Carr, and the Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, Matt Carpentier. GCPS will also maintain close contact with Gloucester County's Emergency Management Coordinator, Brett Major.

Section 3: Continuity of Services

Gloucester 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**
 - GCPS has initiated a summer learning program for students who have demonstrated the most academic need as a result of the pandemic and return-to-learn schedules. In addition, instructional specialists are working to revise curriculum to identify and emphasize key skills and competencies in a “vertical” approach to help ensure that students in subsequent grades (in Fall 2021) are able to learn required content and skills.
 - GCPS has invested in new academic screening tools to help teachers identify and remediate skill gaps. Intervention, Special Education, and Title I teachers at each elementary school use these data to design the most effective interventions and specialized instruction.
 - GCPS is planning to utilize ESSER III funding for Intervention teachers at middle schools, as well as intervention programs in Math and Language Arts for middle and high school.
 - GCPS also is planning to utilize ESSER III funding for academic curriculum support in Science and Social Studies.
- **Social/Emotional/Mental Health**
 - As a VTSS division, GCPS has invested in a social-emotional screener (DESSA) for all students in grades K-8, and has invested in the Second Step[®] social-emotional curriculum for all PK-5 classroom teachers. Middle and high school will implement an Advisory period to address SEL, as well.
 - GCPS is considering utilizing ESSER III funding for a division Behavior Specialist, as well as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (for high school) to provide counseling services and support student needs.
 - All GCPS staff have participated in required Mental Health Awareness Training.
 - In summer 2021, all GCPS school leaders will participate in Youth Mental Health First Aid.
- **Food & Child Nutrition Services**
 - For 2021-22, GCPS will continue its meal services for all students. In collaboration with Food Services, each school Principal will design a safe course of breakfast and lunch meals for students each day of school.

Section 4: Opportunity for Public Comment

In developing the ARP ESSER Plan, Gloucester County Public Schools will seek public and constituent/stakeholder input through a feedback portal on the division's website. The Division Superintendent will include this information in regular news broadcasts to division families, and the division also will announce the feedback opportunity through its social media platforms.

Section 5: Periodic Review and Revision of Plan

During the period of the ARP ESSER award (until September 2023), Gloucester 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 GCPS will seek and consider 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

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

- The plan is posted at <http://gets.gc.k12.va.us>
- For assistance with printed or oral translation, please contact:
 - Julie Bryant – julie.bryant@gc.k12.va.us
 - (804) 693-4795
- 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:
 - Dr. Jennifer Tingley, Director of Special Education – jennifer.tingley@gc.k12.va.us
 - (804) 693-7880