

Relationships, Opportunities, Achievement



REOPENING

2021

Superintendent's Message

George Arlotto, Ed.D.



As the start of the 2021–2022 school year arrives, families across our county are gripped by a flood of emotions. There is clearly excitement about returning to the environment we cherish the most: students and teachers in classrooms across Anne Arundel County taking part in engaging and exciting educational experiences five days each week.

We must acknowledge, however, that there is also fear and trepidation, as well as anxiety on the part of students, employees, and families about the adjustment of returning to full in-person instruction after more than 17 months.

The pandemic is not entirely behind us, and we are going to have to continue to take precautions in our schools. Our school system has continued its side-by-side collaboration with the Anne Arundel County Department of Health and we have incorporated the guidance of that agency into our reopening protocols. The 24 local school system superintendents also meet regularly to share and discuss information and best practices.

Our focus has been and remains on returning to the school environments we all remember from the years prior to COVID and incorporating some enhancements from lessons we learned during the pandemic.

The foundation of everything we do will be the relationships we forge between and among our students, families, and employees. The creation and enhancement of strong, healthy relationships will allow us to maximize a vast array of opportunities (social, academic, academic supports, co-curricular activities, etc.) that will result in increases in student achievement.

Much like the virus and its variants, the information and guidance on which we rely will change as the school year progresses. Our goal is a simple one: to exercise prudent health and safety precautions and do everything we can to keep schools open through June 21, the last scheduled day for students this school year. Everything that we do will align with that goal.

We will continue our ongoing collaboration with the Department of Health, and I will continue to rely on health experts for health guidance.

To make the most of the enormous potential this school year holds, however, we will need help from all of our stakeholders. The Department of Health offers one avenue for assistance, but we ask students, families, and employees to do their part as well. We all will need to exercise grace, patience, and flexibility as we navigate the road ahead.

As has been the case since March 2020, there are no perfect answers. There is no plan that will meet the specific needs of every student, family, and employee. We will continue, utilizing the most updated advice we are provided, to chart the best possible course we can.

Please take time to read and understand the information in this plan. It offers the best plan we can provide at the outset of the school year. Updates will be made as they occur, and more information can be found on an ongoing basis at www.aacps.org/fall2021.

Thank you for everything you do for everyone involved in Anne Arundel County Public Schools.



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Roadmap to Reopening

Guiding Principles for Reopening Schools

Prioritize

the health and safety of students and staff

Cultivate

healthy relationships and a robust, equitable learning environment

Maintain

support for and communication with students and families

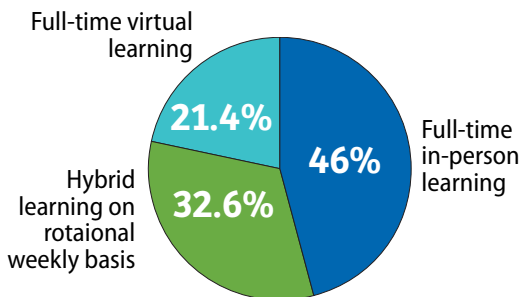


Looking Back to Move Forward

Last summer, in preparation for the 2020–2021 school year, the community survey results noted below provided practical insight on how families felt about possible instructional delivery models for their students. The staff survey results showcased the employee perspectives and priorities related to school operations in the Fall of 2020.

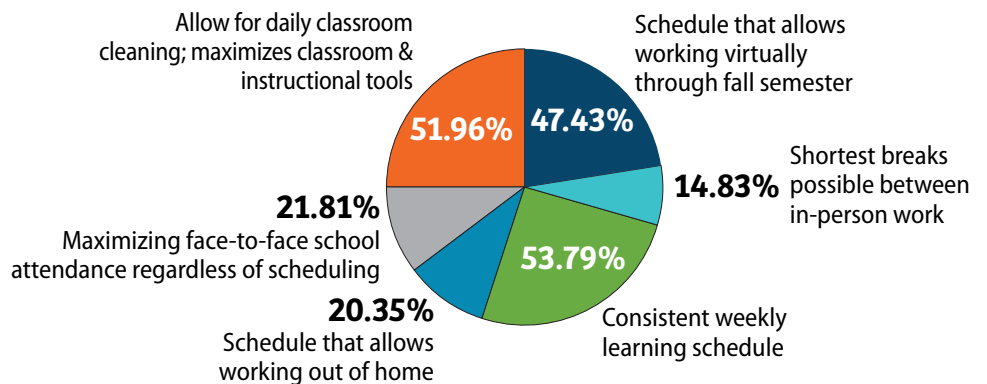
Family Survey of Instructional Delivery Model Choice

(surveyed August 2020)



Employee Survey of Work Schedule Priorities

(surveyed August 2020)



Approximately **49% of AACPS staff** who answered the survey reported **medium to high or high levels of anxiety** about transitioning back to the workplace for in-person work. Based on the health climate with regard to the heightened COVID-19 case rate in September 2020, AACPS began the 2020–2021 school year with all students learning virtually. Educators were teaching from home and office staff were rotating between in-person work and telework. When spring of 2021 arrived with a lower COVID-19 case rate more conducive for increased interactions, AACPS ramped up planning for a large scale return to in-person learning. Limited by social distancing guidelines, students were brought back according to need two days per week starting in February 2021. All students had the chance to return for in-person learning two days per week by the end of March 2021. Eventually, some students were able to physically return to classrooms four days per week before the end of the school year.

At the end of the school year, the following data revealed the percentages of students who participated in each learning model. (**54% virtual-only, 46% hybrid**) Many families chose for their students to remain learning virtually throughout the entire 2020–2021 school year. In most cases, classroom educators were teaching both in-person and virtual students simultaneously throughout the school day. Although workable, this hybrid teaching model taxed our educators and students; we did not find it to be an ideal teaching and learning model.

Shortly after the statewide school shutdown in the spring of 2020, **14 planning committees were convened to address important educational and operational areas** to promote reopening. In total, more than 150 AACPS professionals, county partners, students, parents, and community members met periodically to provide research-based guidance and valuable feedback to inform decision making throughout the school year and in preparation for Summer 2021 and new 2021–2022 school year. Stakeholder feedback is solicited through various avenues and multiple attempts via the school system’s website, automated phone/email/text system, as well as through news releases and social media posts. Climate, funding, and/or other topic-specific surveys are conducted throughout the school year at least every six months. The public also has the option to provide input via email to school staff and board of education members; in addition to a public comment platform at bi-monthly (at least 10 months per year) board of education meetings.

Last spring, AACPS also conducted listening tours throughout the county that welcomed public and employee input on important factors to consider in preparation for the full reopening of schools for the fall of 2021. **The need to support students both social-emotionally and academically was a major feedback element across multiple stakeholder groups.** Students, parents, and educators praised the inclusion of social time, clubs, office hours, and academic support during the school day as a very positive aspect of the 2020–21 school year; they noted that these elements should continue into the future. Other areas/initiatives that received positive feedback from the Listening Tour included:

- convenient meals and technology availability, access, and distribution for all students;
- competent tutoring to support students after school hours; and
- consistent office hours/academic support on Wednesdays;
- collaborative efforts focused on building relationships to increase the positive way students and employees interact with each other.

Through thoughtful consideration of community and employee contributions in conjunction with student data, national examples of success and challenge during the 2020–2021 school year, and advice from federal, state, and local education and health authorities, AACPS has developed a reopening plan that follows its guiding principles for reopening — **build relationships, expand opportunities, increase achievement.**

With that in mind, the instructional delivery model to open **the 2021–2022 school year will be in person, five days per week.** All employees will be working at their respective locations with the expectations that all health-related protocols and mitigating strategies, including **universal masking, will be followed by all who frequent or visit AACPS facilities.**

If the local health climate dictates changing protocols, AACPS will follow state health and education guidance to determine the best course of action for the least disruptive route to continue instruction.

Universal Masking

We will begin the 2021-2022 school year with universal masking in place for all students, staff, and visitors to our buildings. Masking protocols may change as health guidance changes during the school year.

Equity

Every day, AACPS works to impart the values of kindness, acceptance, and inclusion as outlined in the AACPS Educational Equity Policy. In a true effort to elevate all students and eliminate all gaps, AACPS continues to create and provide professional development to empower its workforce to fulfil its duty with a lens focused on equity. As such, AACPS will continue important initiatives that narrow and eventually eliminate the opportunity gaps for students through efforts like 1:1 device allocation, Internet connectivity support, evening tutoring offerings, clubs and academic support offered during the school day, co-curricular options available for all students, and Project Unity days offered throughout the school year.

During the 2021–2022 school year this commitment to equity will expand with the implementation of **Culturally Responsive Teaching**. Culturally Responsive Teaching involves knowing how the brain learns. The brain needs to connect learning to what is personally relevant and meaningful. This differs for each student. What is personally relevant and meaningful is based on the individual’s cultural frame of reference, their lived experience. Culturally responsive teaching views a student’s lived experience as an asset to learning which in turn informs teaching practices for eliciting, engaging, motivating, supporting, and expanding the intellectual capacity of ALL students. In the 2021–2022 school year, AACPS will continue to offer four half-day equity professional development days in order to increase knowledge and commitment to equity-based teaching, learning, and work-based practices for all AACPS staff.

Social Justice

Last summer, AACPS student leaders organized important discussions to highlight and promote social justice. Those conversations continued during the 2020–2021 school year with a focus on eliminating injustices and engendering anti-racism in our school communities.

AACPS will continue to provide resources to students in support of social justice activism, as well as provide a platform for students, families, and staff to be involved. Professional development for Central Office and school-based staff will continue to focus on social justice, antiracism, equity, diversity, and inclusion.



AACPS Virtual Academy

While the majority of students will return to in-person learning at their respective schools, the AACPS Virtual Academy will inaugurally support about 525 students in grades 3–12 who cannot return to in-person learning, providing equitable online teaching and virtual classroom practices to ensure the inclusion of all AACPS learners.

No matter the instructional delivery model, student learning experiences will be safe, relevant, engaging, and effective. MSDE’s [Equity and Excellence Guide](#) and our AACPS Education [Equity Policy](#) and [Regulations](#) guide this important work. Recognizing that eradicating opportunity gaps is larger than the school system, AACPS is working in tandem with county government, families, and community partners through the Joint Initiative to Eliminate the Opportunity Gap. AACPS will continue to take action on recommendations from this task force.

Educator Testimonial

The [equity] opportunities have been critical in ensuring that I am prepared to equip and lead teachers in creating safe spaces for students of color, to foster positive relationships, and to meet students where they are when they return to our buildings. I’m grateful for the year-round sessions, seminars, and collaborative partnerships and look forward to continued growth to benefits our students and educators!

~ AACPS Assistant Principal



Student Readiness — Planning for Success

Preparing for Teaching & Learning

At the beginning of the 2020–2021 school year, instruction was delivered strictly in a virtual environment. Through state mandate, school buildings were closed and AACPS employees were working under hybrid conditions— some remote, some in AACPS buildings, and many through a combination of the two. Using the G Suite (Google) for Education’s complement of applications, teachers shifted to a dynamic, interactive approach to engage students in real-time, synchronous virtual instruction. AACPS educators engrossed themselves in professional development to effectively deliver instruction and manage the virtual learning environment.

For the 2021–2022 school year, **educators will pivot to more traditional physical classroom practices** equipped with new and enhanced technological resources such as a new learning management system (www.aacps.org/lms), Brightspace. Moreover, through many hours of professional growth and development AACPS educators have been given insightful and informed protocols and mitigating strategies to keep students and staff safe; and they are primed with effective methods to support students social emotionally as they transition back to in-person learning.

Regardless of the platform, AACPS is committed to delivering instruction in alignment with the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards at all grade levels. Such commitment will continue to focus on providing an instructional experience that is differentiated to meet student needs, challenging to encourage academic growth, and flexible to accommodate various circumstances.

Recruitment & Staffing

The foundation of strong teaching and learning is built on a base of talented and dedicated teachers. AACPS is fortunate to have a strong teacher base. However, the 2020–2021 school year was one of uncertainty for school districts across the nation as the spread of the COVID-19 virus was unpredictable. Many educators, worried for their health or the health of those in their families or in need of a personal family childcare solution, sought accommodations to allow them to work from home partially or fully throughout the year. Many veteran educators simply retired, and some others requested leaves of absence. Staffing schools was challenging. This challenge increased when AACPS attempted to answer the demand of families who wished for their students to return to hybrid learning in the Spring of 2021.

Almost **1,000 adult midday monitors** were needed to supervise students during the extended midday break and extra adult support was needed in school classrooms for in-person students when a classroom educator was teaching virtually from home. Many of Central Office staff, retired staff, and hundreds of community members stepped up and in to provide adult oversight needed for the safety and security of the students.

As we plan to return our students to in-person learning this fall, we are once again experiencing staffing challenges. Similar to school districts nationwide, retirements are up and the supply of newly-certified teachers available for hire is down. End-of-year retirements this year is up to 82 in comparison to only 73 last year. Human Resources has held virtual job fairs and student-teacher intern hiring events; increased community outreach to individuals with college degrees who are interested in teaching but do not yet have a teaching certificate; hosted Teach Tuesday web events to chat with interested career-changers; increased the number of teachers in the Resident Teacher Certification (RTC) program; networked with community-based partners to spread the word about employment needs, and used social media to market AACPS as a school district of excellence—a great place to live, work, and raise a family. Despite the aforementioned challenges of hiring during a pandemic, these efforts have been successful in bringing in 125 diverse hires into the AACPS family during this hiring season. However, we are likely to begin the 2021–2022 school year without permanent teachers for some of our classrooms. We have been able to hire 1,700 substitute teachers who will assist us in meeting our staffing needs now and throughout the school year. AACPS will continue to hire educators throughout the school year until all teacher vacancies are filled.

It is important to note that AACPS is not offering COVID-related staff accommodations to teach from home for the 2021–2022 school year. All teachers will be reporting to their assigned schools to teach from their classrooms.

Professional Development

AACPS educators participated in significant professional development (PD) during summer 2020 to learn how to effectively deliver online instruction and manage the virtual learning environment. As the 2020–2021 school year progressed, so did the virtual teaching capacities of teachers through consistent commitment to not only prescribed PD trainings and courses (at 90 minutes per week) focused on equity, wellness, trauma-informed teaching, virtual teaching, and academic content, but also to offerings of choice that equipped them to be exceptionally capable and compassionate for students and each other.

As AACPS shifts back to an in-person learning environment, PD offerings have been enhanced to prepare educators to deliver instruction efficiently no matter the learning environment. With a keen focus on equity, PD offerings address the how-to's of using our new learning management system (Brightspace) to increase our school-home connections, sharing of critical curricular and classroom content and skills and courses that support student and teacher social emotional health and relationship building.

In Spring 2021, 17,787 participants enrolled in 210 available professional development courses. This summer, 184 Courses were offered with 7,243 active participants. Our two-day Brighter with Brightspace Summer Conference had 800–900 employee-participants each day. Professional development is highly valued and sought after by our AACPS employees, especially our educators.

Importantly, we have made the decision to hold all adult professional development workshops and sessions virtually through the first semester of the 2021–2022 school year. We made this decision to increase staff efficiency, lower employee stress, all the while maximizing ease of access to high-quality PD for our staff members while our primary work is focused on the return of all students to in-person learning.

Hiring Statistics

552 teachers hired for fall 2021

Specific areas where we struggle most to fill teacher vacancies:

Special Education
World Languages
Mathematics

Educator Testimonials

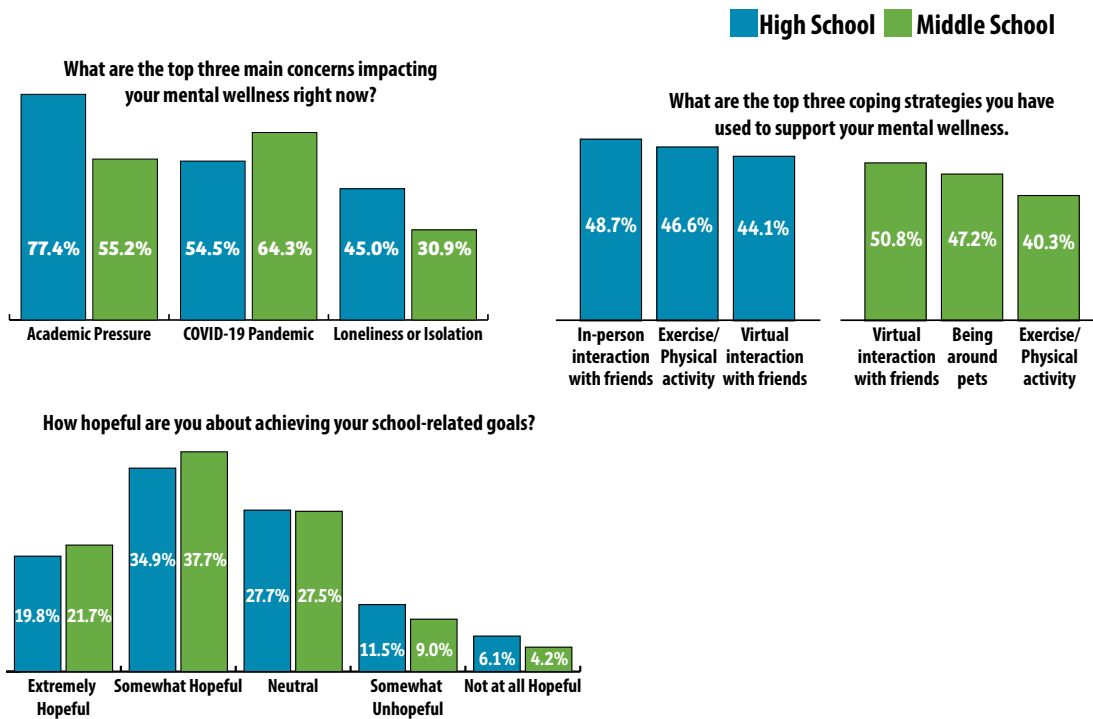
Choice boards are a great way of giving students agency and ownership of their own learning. There is SO much more to some of these resources (Wixie, Discovery Ed, etc.) than I realized and I can't wait to dive in to see what aligns with my curriculum and what I can use to increase my students' engagement
~ Math Teacher, Marley Middle

I admit, after the very difficult year we had last year I was a little apprehensive trying to learn something else that was new, but after participating in the Brighter with Brightspace Conference and this Google Inside Brightspace class, I am feeling much better, more prepared and more confident using Brightspace in the fall with my students. Thank you for offering this course!
~ Teacher, Broadneck Cluster

Lessons Learned from the 2020–2021 School Year

Secondary Student Mental Health Survey Highlights

Below are the highlights from a secondary student questionnaire designed to capture the student mental health stressors related to the pandemic and national unrest during the 2020–2021 school year; survey conducted: 1/21/21–1/22/21.



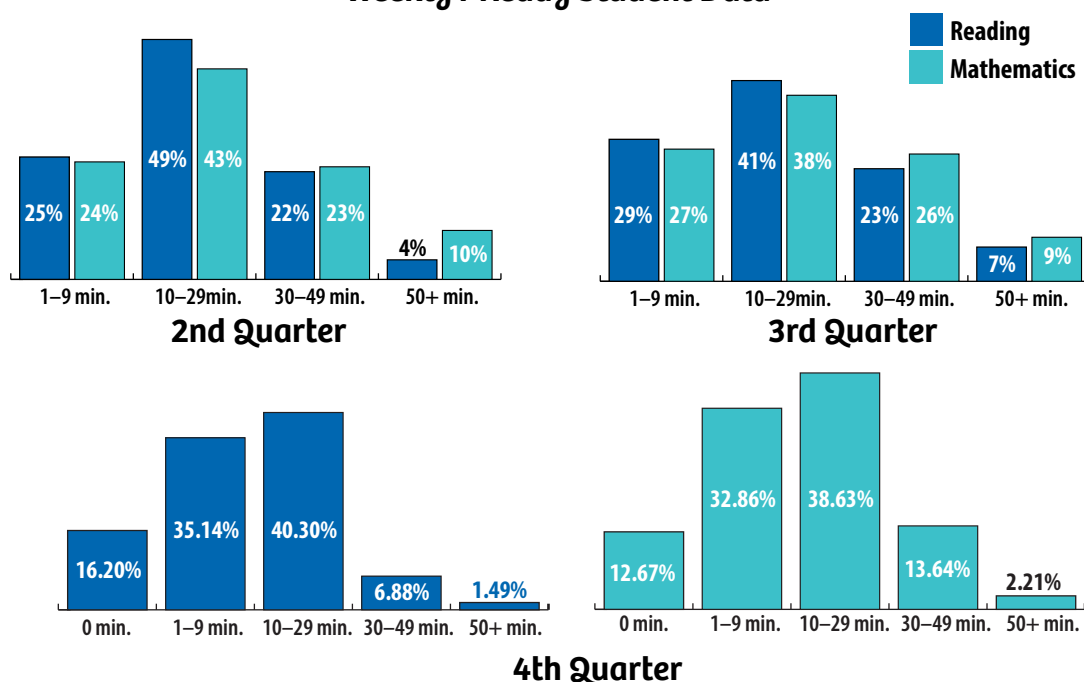
As revealed in the above data, students expressed that they were mainly stressed about being able to focus on their academics, the overall pandemic, and isolation from their friends and loved ones. Students responded that they coped with such stressors by interacting with their friends, engaging in physical activities, and seeking comfort from their pets. Despite the stress, anxiety, and loneliness, students said they were still hopeful about their school-related goals.

AACPS shared the information from the survey with the Anne Arundel County Mental Health Task Force to seek recommendations. The information was also used to inform efforts for reopening under the hybrid instructional model in Spring 2021. Efforts were also made to increase awareness of the school-based and community mental health resources available to students and families and provide mental health training and awareness to students, staff, and families. In response to this survey, AACPS continue or increase supports such as, school-based Student Services staff, partnership with Mobile Crisis, school-based mental health resources, student wellness block in the school day, clubs, Teen Mental Health Advisory, and collaboration with community partners. There are plans to survey students again in the 2021–22 school year.

i-Ready Diagnostics

In preparation for the 2020–2021 school year, the AACPS Academics Team identified critical content, concepts, and skills that teachers would readdress to aid student recovery and mastery. Using the i-Ready diagnostic tool, students in kindergarten through Grade 8 were assessed to establish a baseline for reading and mathematics content knowledge and skills. The results from the first assessments highlighted which reading and math standards individual students needed to review. Teachers used the data to provide targeted support and instruction. In addition, the i-Ready platform automatically created a unique learning path for each student. Students were asked to spend 45 minutes per week working in their i-Ready digital learning pathways, helping them to build skills in which they needed additional support while also providing enrichment and practice for the skills they've mastered. Research on the i-Ready learning tool suggests that students who spend at least 45 minutes per week working individually on the platform show above average growth in the areas on which they focus.

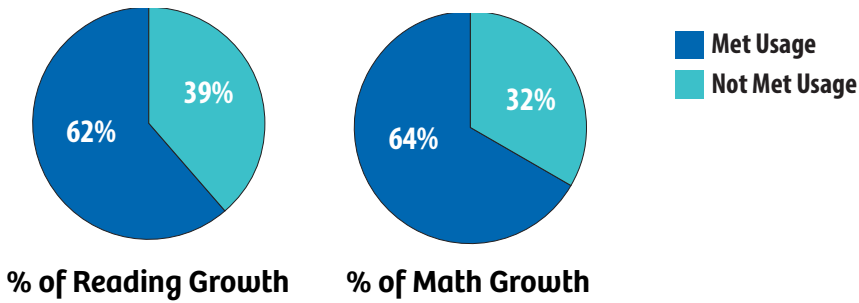
Weekly i-Ready Student Data



The i-Ready use data in the bar graphs above suggests that there is work to do with teachers and students assisting them to better understand and engage with the i-Ready tool meaningfully and for the minimum of 45 minutes weekly in order to see significant academic growth. Additional professional development is needed for teachers to support learners and their families to understand the power of this learning tool. Moreover, this planned professional development will support teachers to use the student data in their lesson planning.

For the 2021–2022 school year, i-Ready will still be utilized as a tool to develop individual student learning trajectories. AACPS will initially concentrate on supporting more students to meaningfully engage for the targeted minimum time of 45 minutes per week. Then, AACPS will focus on supporting teachers to use the i-Ready data from each student to reframe the instructional focus for individual students based on their unique needs. Ultimately this tool is a learning asset for students and families and a teaching asset for our educators.

I-Ready Student Gains—By Met or Not Met Usage



The data noted in the pie charts above showcases the importance of students using the i-Ready learning tool. Students who met the targeted usage minutes made significantly greater growth in reading and math than students who did not engage fully with i-Ready.

For middle school content areas other than reading and math, as well as for high school courses, teachers will continue to use previously provided resources to choose appropriate diagnostic activities to determine any gaps in knowledge or skills that need to be retaught or reviewed before introducing new material. Teachers will continue to have curriculum guides that include suggested resources and activities to help teachers and students address identified gaps to master course and grade level expectations. Moreover, in targeted courses where we have high percentages of students who struggle or fail, some assessments will be designed by central office teams to be used across the school district. Data will be analyzed so strategies can be developed and implemented to assist students to achieve in these courses.

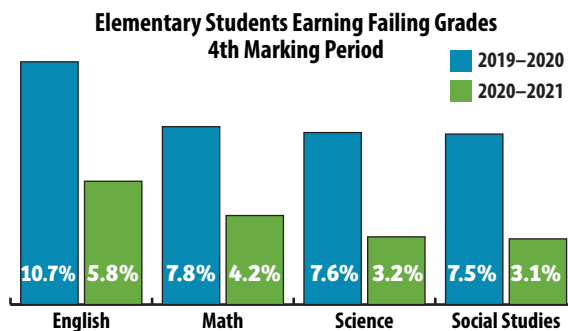
This plan will be updated with more comprehensive data (disaggregated by race, service group, and gender) once it is available.

Academic Outcomes

In order to adequately support students in the 2021–2022 school year, AACPS pored over data regarding students who earned failing grades during either the 2019–2020 and/or the 2020–2021 school years. Extensive assessment of this data informed and identified targeted learning recovery efforts for Summer 2021 into the 2021–2022 school year. This work was essential to AACPS’ All Means All approach to meeting the needs of every student and to address the likely academic aftershocks of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite relatively low percentages across the board, the opportunity gap persists as students who generally are eligible and/or receive free- and reduced-price meal services (FARMS) were the largest group that suffered failing grades over the aforementioned time periods. AACPS further disaggregated this information to ensure targeted efforts, enhance outreach and instruction, and eliminate barriers to readiness.

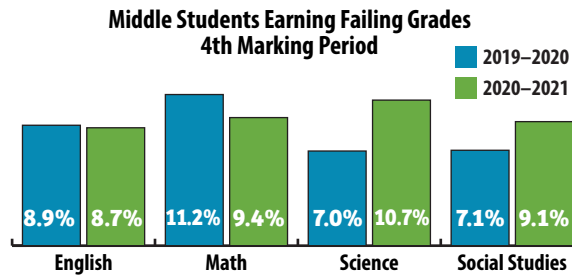
Elementary

Examination of fourth marking period failing grades for elementary students shows a dramatic decrease, across all subject areas, in percentage of students who had failing grades at the end of the 2020–2021 school year when compared to the 2019–2020. The bar graph to the right shows that the total percentage of all elementary students who earned failing grades in core subject areas during the specified two-year timeframe. As previously mentioned, closer examination of these failure percentages reveals a high failure rate for students identified as FARMS. Students identified as FARMS account for approximately 81% of the English failure rate and 84% of the math failure rate. In addition, African American students represent approximately 35% of both the English and math failure rates. Hispanic students represent approximately 31% of the English failure rate and 32% of the math failure rate.



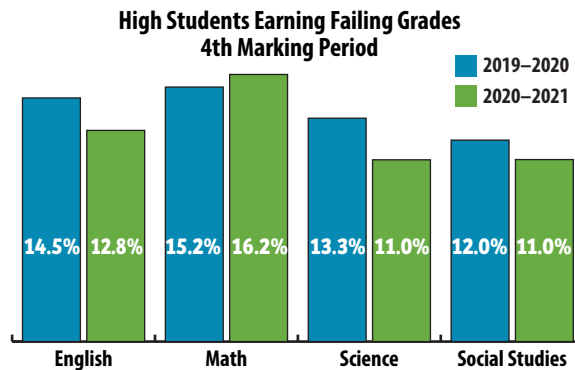
Middle

At the middle school level, fourth marking period data from 2019–2020 and 2020–2021 school years, respectively shows decreases in failing grades in English and mathematics compared to an increase in science and social studies. Examining these failure percentages more closely reveals a high failure rate for students identified as FARMS. Students identified as FARMS account for approximately 70% of the English failure rate and 69% of the math failure rate. In addition, White students represent approximately 35% of the English failure rate and 38% of the math failure rate. African American students represent approximately 29% of the English failure rate and 26% of the math failure rate. Hispanic students represent approximately 27% of the English failure rate and 26% of the math failure rate. Approximately 1.5–2.0% more male students are failing than their female counterparts across all four of the core subject areas in middle schools.



High School

The high school fourth marking period failing grades data shows a small rise in percentage of failure in mathematics between the 2019–2020 and 2020–2021 school years while seeing a decrease in English, science, and social studies. Given that the fourth marking period represents half of the second semester grade,



it is worth noting that some students may have earned a high enough grade during the 3rd marking period to still be awarded credit for the course. In complement to this fact, students who struggled early in the semester were provided additional supports to help them finish the school year strong. Examining these failure percentages more closely reveals a high failure rate for students identified as FARMS. Students identified as FARMS account for approximately 57% of the English failure rate and 58% of the math failure rate. In addition, White students represent approximately 41% of the English failure rate and 38% of the math failure rate. African American students represent approximately 26% of the English failure rate and 25% of the math failure rate. Hispanic students represent approximately 25% of the English failure rate and 29% of the math failure rate. Approximately 4.0 - 5.0% more male students are failing than their female counterparts across all four of the core subject areas in high schools.

This plan will be updated with more comprehensive data (disaggregated by race, service group, and gender) once it is available.

Attendance vs. Engagement

Student attendance in school is critical to academic achievement. Historically, average daily student attendance in AACPS is high—over 92%. Although last year was challenging for many, average daily attendance remained over 90% for all student groups. It is engagement, rather than attendance that requires attention. In the new year, AACPS looks to increase student participation in school, bolster student academic and co-curricular engagement, and encourage student use of academic supports. This will be done in a myriad of ways including creativity with student schedules, plentiful tutoring, and academic coaching. AACPS seeks to ensure that students feel a part of their school community by engaging them inside and outside of the classroom, thus leading to increases in their overall academic performance.

Initial Learning Recovery – Spring and Summer 2021

The 2020–2021 school year was significantly challenging for many of our students, as evidenced by the secondary mental health survey and failing grades data. Moreover, many students found it difficult to engage fully in the virtual learning environment. When engagement waned, an increase in social emotional challenges frequently occurred and a decrease in academic success often followed. Academic data indicated a need to plan for additional targeted academic support and learning recovery opportunities for the spring and summer of 2021.

With the use of ESSER federal funds, we began targeting students in the Spring of 2021 to receive additional tutoring. We followed this effort by expanding our traditional summer school and summer camps to meet the social emotional and academic needs of our students as they finished the 2020–2021 year and prepared for the coming school year. Our learning recovery efforts from the spring and summer of 2021 are detailed below.

Ready to Soar Program

The Title I and Early Childhood Programs combined grant funds to bring more than 600 incoming Kindergarten and Grade 1 students to their home schools for a four-day Ready to Soar Program in early August. This program, designed specifically for young learners who remained virtual last year, was provided in all 31 AACPS elementary schools that receive Title I funds. Each school was given the autonomy to design the program that best introduced students to their school. Teachers and principals worked to help students learn what a full day of in-person school was like. Students rode the bus, ate in the cafeteria, played on the playground, checked out library books, learned how to sit on the classroom carpet, met the principal and custodian, and rotated through learning stations where teachers were able to get a better idea of the learning needs of our incoming students. Counselors and music and art teachers delivered social-emotional lessons that helped students learn how to ask for help and to make friends while playing with rhythm sticks, coloring, and completing physical obstacle courses. One parent wrote to thank those who put the program together, saying that her daughter, “came home happy and stimulated every day. And that her older son was jealous that he couldn’t attend.”

Middle School Spring 2021 Intensive

More than 750 middle school students were in danger of failing one or more courses in the Spring of 2021. Rather than wait until summer, a twilight tutoring program was designed to help them pass at least one class in which they were struggling. Teachers from each middle school served as tutors for small groups of students who enrolled in this program. 533 middle school students enrolled and 264 successfully passed (50% pass rate) the class for which they received tutoring. Subsequently, competent summer school offerings were also an option for those middle schoolers who either did not pass or did not take advantage of the Spring 2021 Intensive program.

8th Grade Summer Intensive Program

An intensive summer program for all those eighth graders who failed all their Grade 8 core courses was held in Summer 2021. Among the 215 students who qualified for this support, 174 registered; 65 participated in the virtual program, and 109 engaged in the in-person version of this program. Sixty percent (60%) of the participants were students of color, 15% were English Learners, 17.8% had IEPs, and 73.6 percent were FARMs students. The students who participated worked on content and skill recovery as well as social emotional strategies and time management strategies that they will need as they transition to high school.

The ESSR federal funds used to support summer offerings required us to consider unfinished learning and need as student selections were made for summer opportunities. If the student demand exceeded the number of seats available, we used need to make final student selections.

Student Reflections

*“We are now friends forever”
~ Two Kindergarten Students*

*“This week was the best awesome!”
~ First Grader*

Eighty-two percent (82%) of the students who participated successfully finished the intensive program. These rising ninth grade students, along with the rising ninth graders who qualified for this program but failed to register, will all transition to high school where they will be enrolled in a special ninth grade program that includes community building with student teams, additional time management and skill building support, and extra academic assistance built into their daily schedule.

Secondary Summer School

To maximize targeted student enrollment, AACPS operated secondary summer school in the virtual environment this year. This decision also made the staffing of summer school more manageable as many teachers were more amenable to working if part or all of the work was virtual. Over 3,500 middle and high school students enrolled in summer school where the majority participated in one or two courses for credit recovery. Students enrolled in a total of 5,763 courses; students passed 80% of these courses. Students earned a grade of C or better in over 60% of their summer courses.

For the first time this summer, we offered credit recovery for high school students enrolled in honors courses. 159 students enrolled in at least one honors course and 40 students enrolled in more than one courses. 91% of these students passed the courses in which they were enrolled. Mathematics was the course discipline area with the highest student enrollment.

Summer Camps

In an effort to support the whole student, summer camps that focused on engaging students social-emotionally, physically, and academically were available. Approximately 200 camps were offered to students from Pre-K through Grade 12 in addition to Extended School Year (ESY) camps available to over 1200 students who have ESY written into their IEPs. Title I funded schools supported over 1300 students to engage in learning and enrichment this summer. More than 6,500 students participated in camps offered by AACPS staff and/or by our partner organizations:

Annapolis Maritime Museum
Annapolis Police Department
Anne Arundel Community College
Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts

Anne Arundel County Recreation and Parks
Center of Help/Centro de Ayuda
Chesapeake Arts Center

The themes of the camps varied from topics in STEM to the Humanities, arts-related opportunities, recreation and sports, world language conversation clubs, and mindfulness meetings. The successes of summer school and summer camps will be carried into the new school year through co-curricular offerings, twilight school, and tutoring. Engagement, climate, and achievement data was tracked for all summer student participants and this type of data will continue to be collected and analysed moving forward. Our partner organizations will continue to offer opportunities to our students during the school year.

Summer School Enrollment

62.6% *Students of Color*

64.4% *FARMS*

12.0% *EL Students*

High School Graduates

134 *students graduated from our Evening & Summer High School Programs in 2021; Extra support helped them to cross the finish line*



Moving Forward

The School Day

Regardless of the learning environment, students must be prepared for success through a daily routine that emphasizes growing in personal self-confidence and self-esteem, developing organization and communication tools for success, and providing practice time and support for mastery of academic content and skills. With enthusiasm and excitement, AACPS will offer a largely in-person learning environment for the 2021-2022 school year.

Last school year, the virtual schedules allowed all schools (by levels) to begin at the same or similar times. Once the hybrid model was implemented in the spring, schedules shifted to allow for appropriate and safe transportation. The virtual and hybrid schedules afforded teachers structured flexibility to address student academic needs, have time for sufficient planning, and offer office hours to provide academic support to students and families.

For the 2021–2022 school year, **AACPS will return to pre-COVID operating school hours**. Emphasis on social emotional health for student and staff will continue to be integrated as entire school communities adjust to returning (or beginning) to school. Schedules at all grade levels create accessibility during the school day for, social-emotional wellness, teaching and learning, academic support, and socialization. Community building will also continue in this school year.

At the elementary and middle school levels, the instructional day will begin according to published start times. **The instructional day will start at 7:30 a.m. for high school students.** Across most grade levels, the school day will last approximately 6.5 hours, similar to pre-COVID school day length.



2021–2022 School Year

School will begin in a staggered fashion on **Wednesday, September 8, 2021.**

Students in grades 1–5, 6, and 9 will start on **Wednesday, September 8, 2021**, while students in grades 7, 8, and 10–12 will start on **Thursday, September 9, 2021.** ECI, pre-kindergarten, and kindergarten students will have staggered start dates between September 8–17, 2021 and will receive direct instructions from their schools.

The first semester of the 2021–2022 school year is September 8, 2021 through January 28, 2022.

The first marking period ends on November 12, 2021. The second marking period begins on November 15, 2021.

Relationships

There were many lessons learned from the 2020–2021 school year. Of paramount importance entering the new school year is supporting students and staff to have a healthy transition back to in-person learning. AACPS will be purposeful with allocating time for students to talk to each other, share their excitement and potentially their fears about the new school year. To encourage essential social-emotional expression, community, circle, or wellness time have been built into the student schedules at every grade level (as was the case last school year).

The Second Step program will be implemented in elementary and middle schools and Advisory will continue in middle school. Over 40 wellness sessions have been created and will be distributed to all high schools for use within Wellness block. Based on student, educator, and parent feedback, it is clear that AACPS must address the needs of the whole child in order to cultivate a healthy student who is ready to learn.

Course Expectations

All grade-level curricula are **developed using the Pre-K–12 Maryland College and Career Ready Standards (MCCRS) Frameworks**. The standards include requirements for environmental literacy, financial literacy, and health which are infused in instruction during the major content area blocks at the elementary level and in STEM and specific courses at the secondary level. All schools in AACPS deliver curricular content as prescribed by the MCCRS Frameworks under the supervision, monitoring, and accountability of the AACPS Division of Academics & Strategic Initiatives, in partnership with the Office of School Performance. Educators will focus on using culturally responsive teaching practices as they facilitate instruction in order to reach and engage all learners.

Secondary students are registered according to staff availability and preferred course selections per the middle and high school programs of study. AACPS graduation requirements remain unchanged for the 2021–2022 school year and can be reviewed at www.aacps.org/graduationrequirements.

Schedules

Filled with core, encore or elective courses, club activities, community building or wellness, and flex support time, these [schedules](#) showcase the daily learning timelines for all grade levels for the 2021–2022 school year (sample schedules can be found on the following pages).

For secondary students, the [A/B Day calendar](#) is available online on district and school websites.

Brightspace (LMS) will house AACPS curricula, standards & assessments for easy accessibility by teachers. Pre-K–12 MCCRS and State Standards are included.

Elementary Student Schedule: Pre-Kindergarten

In addition to the regular Academic and Cultural Arts classes, the school day for Full-Day Pre-K students includes a 25-minute morning Wellness block, a 25-minute lunch, and a 30-minute recess. Actual class start and end times are determined by the start time of individual schools.

The Wellness block will serve multiple purposes. This is a student-centered time to engage students in listening, sharing and building healthy relationships. This time will ground students in productive social experiences allowing them to share and grow as a community.

Academic Flex will be incorporated in the mathematics and literacy blocks. Academic Flex is time for students to receive support or extension individually or in small groups with a teacher, resource teacher and/or teaching assistant. This is time for targeted practice on skills previously taught and without new instruction taking place. This should occur twice a week for 15-20 minutes.

Actual class times are determined by the start time of each elementary school.

Half-Day Pre-K	Full Day Pre-K
Wellness (25 minutes)	Wellness (25 minutes)
Literacy (35 minutes)	Literacy (75 minutes)
Math (30 minutes)	
Science/Social Studies (20 minutes)	
Literacy (20 minutes)	Math (55 minutes)
Developmental Centers (20 minutes)	
Mission Debrief (5 minutes)	Lunch (25 minutes)
	Recess (30 minutes)
	Science/Social Studies (25 minutes)
	Cultural Arts (60 minutes)
	Literacy (40 minutes)
	Developmental Centers (25 minutes)
	Mission Debrief (5 minutes)

Weekly Scheduling of Wellness Period

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Community Circles	Second Step	Community Circles	Second Step	Community Circles

Elementary Student Schedule: Grades K–5

In addition to the regular Academic and Cultural Arts classes, the school day for students in grades 1–5 includes a 25-minute morning Wellness block, a 25 minute lunch and a 30-minute recess. Actual class start and end times are determined by the start time of individual schools.

The morning Wellness block will serve multiple purposes. This is a student-centered time to engage students in listening, sharing, and building healthy relationships. This time will ground students in productive social experiences allowing them to share and grow as a community.

Academic Flex will be incorporated in the mathematics and literacy blocks. Academic Flex is time for students to receive support or extension individually or in small groups with a teacher, resource teacher, and/or teaching assistant. This is time for targeted practice on skills previously taught and without new instruction taking place. This should occur twice a week for 15-20 minutes.

Actual class times are determined by the start time of each elementary school.

Kindergarten	Grade 1–2	Grade 3–5
Wellness (25 minutes)	Wellness (25 minutes)	Wellness (25 minutes)
Literacy (75 minutes)	Literacy (70 minutes)	Social Studies (25 minutes)
Math (55 minutes)	Math (60 minutes)	Cultural Arts (60 minutes)
Lunch (25 minutes)	Recess (30 minutes)	Math (65 minutes)
Recess (30 minutes)	Lunch (25 minutes)	Recess (30 minutes)
Science/Social Studies (25 minutes)	Science/Social Studies (30 minutes)	Lunch (25 minutes)
Cultural Arts (60 minutes)	Cultural Arts (60 minutes)	Science (25 minutes)
Literacy (40 minutes)	Literacy (60 minutes)	Literacy (105 minutes)
Developmental Centers (25 minutes)		
Mission Debrief (5 minutes)	Mission Debrief (5 minutes)	Mission Debrief (5 minutes)

Weekly Scheduling of Wellness Period

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Community Circles	Second Step	Community Circles	Second Step	Community Circles

Middle School Student Schedule

The Middle School schedule seeks to create accessibility during the school day for academics, academic support, social emotional wellness, and socialization. This schedule allows students to connect and build community within their school above and beyond their academic learning experience.

Periods 1–6 run for 45 minutes each. Two 30-minute Flex periods serve multiple purposes for students. Actual class start and end times are determined by the start time of individual schools.

During the AM Flex block, students will engage in Community Circles on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. This time will ground students in productive social experiences and allow them to share and grow as a community. The Tuesdays and Thursdays Flex blocks will be opportunities for Second Step, Advisory, academic support, and clubs.

During Midday Flex, students will be engaged in a mix of academic support, clubs, and social/emotional time. Individual schools will schedule the content of Midday Flex based on the needs of the individual students and school.

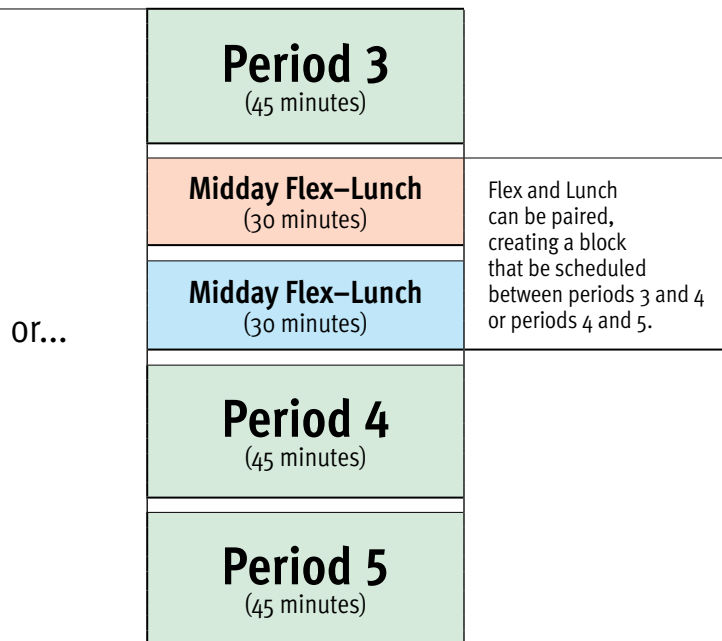
Actual class times are determined by the start time of each middle school.

A-Day/B-Day Schedule
Advisory–AM Flex (30 minutes)
Period 1 (45 minutes)
Period 2 (45 minutes)
Midday Flex (30 minutes)
Period 3 (45 minutes)
Lunch (30 minutes)
Period 4 (45 minutes)
Period 5 (45 minutes)
Period 6 (45 minutes)

Weekly Scheduling of AM Flex Periods

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Community Circles	Second Step or Advisory or Clubs	Community Circles	Second Step or Advisory or Clubs	Community Circles

Alternate scheduling for Periods 3–5



High School Student Schedule

The High School schedule seeks to create accessibility during the school day for academics, academic support, social emotional wellness, and socialization. The This schedule allows students to connect and build community within their school above and beyond their academic learning experience.

The schedule is aligned to the county’s high school schedule— 7:30–2:18PM. Periods 1, 2, and 4 are 71 minutes and Period 3 runs 76 minutes. Two 30-minute Flex periods serve multiple purposes for students.

During AM Flex on Monday and Friday, schools will engage students in productive social experiences allowing them to share and grow as a community. On Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, schools will offer academic support, clubs or additional SEL/Wellness experiences for students.

During Midday Flex, students will be engaged in a mix of academic support, clubs, and social/emotional wellness time. Individual schools will schedule the content of Midday Flex based on the needs of the individual students and school.

A-Day/B-Day Schedule	
7:30–8:41AM	Period 1 (71 minutes)
8:46–9:16AM	AM Flex (30 minutes)
9:21–10:32AM	Period 2 (71 minutes)
10:37–11:07AM	Midday Flex–Lunch (30 minutes)
11:12–11:42AM	Midday Flex–Lunch (30 minutes)
11:47AM–1:03PM	Period 3 (76 minutes)
1:07–2:18PM	Period 4 (71 minutes)

Consistent period start and end times across all high schools.

Schools have the option to arrange these blocks to meet their needs

Consistent period start and end times across all high schools.

Weekly Scheduling of AM Flex Periods

Monday	Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday	Friday
Community Circles Social/Emotional Learning-Wellness	Academics Clubs Social/Emotional Learning	Community Circles Social/Emotional Learning-Wellness

Alternate scheduling for Period 3

Midday Flex (30 minutes)	
Period 3 (with lunch break) (11:11–1:03PM)	A Lunch: 11:11–11:36AM B Lunch: 11:40–12:05PM C Lunch: 12:09–12:34PM D Lunch: 12:38–1:03PM



Supplies for Students

AACPS will provide school supplies for every student in pre-kindergarten through Grade 5. This school year, families will be asked to supply more personal items such as backpacks and lunchboxes; however, materials necessary for learning will be largely provided by schools.

General supplies for secondary students should include notebook, paper, pencils, pens, markers, coloring pencils, and headphones. Families with middle and high school students should check the website to see what materials and supplies to purchase.

Special education students in ECI, K–12 specialty programs (ACC and Autism), the three developmental centers, and students attending non-public school who are working towards certificate of program completion will receive learning materials and other resources such as basic school supplies, various learning visual aids, and math manipulatives. School supplies website: www.aacps.org/schoolsupplies

Attendance and Grading

Daily attendance is expected and is recorded. Teachers will continue to use PowerSchool Teacher Portal to record attendance. Families should keep open lines of communication with schools to share important information regarding student attendance as outlined in the [AACPS Parent Handbook](#). Families receive automated notifications when students are absent from any part of a given school day.



Teachers, counselors, and school administrators will continue to monitor student attendance to ensure that students are attending school regularly. Schools will continue to reach out to families whose students are challenged with habitual absenteeism. Initially, the student's teacher will reach out via a phone call or email. This is followed by a call from the school's counselor or administrator. All outreach is intended to ascertain why the student is not attending school and offer support as needed. If necessary, an AACPS Pupil Personnel Worker will meet with the family if none of the previous outreach supports are successful in helping the student to attend school on a regular basis.

The quarantining of students require augmentation to our attendance and grading schema. AACPS continues to follow our established attendance policy and use our AACPS absence codes and procedures with the addition of the Q code indicating that a student has been quarantined. There may be occasions when students need to be quarantined at home due to a COVID-19 exposure, but are still healthy and able to engage in school. A student will be marked **quarantined-present (Q-p)** in PowerSchool by their virtual teacher-coach if they check in online with their assigned virtual teacher-coach of the day, collect their work from Brightspace (LMS), attend class or tutoring, and submit their work via Brightspace. Healthy students are expected to engage in schooling and complete and submit work to the best of their ability while in quarantine. If quarantined healthy students do not attend virtual coaching with their assigned virtual teacher, they will be marked **quarantined-absent (Q-a)** in PowerSchool and flagged for potential unexcused absence. Certainly, if they are quarantined, but sick and unable to do their work, students will be marked **quarantined-absent (Q-a)** for the school day. Students who are sick will not be expected to work while they are recovering. Grace and patience will be given to quarantined students completing and submitting work. Teachers have been asked to be lenient with the grading of work from quarantined students and to concentrate on making sure that students are given support to learn any content and skills missed due to quarantining. More information about students under quarantine may be found under the Health and Safety section of this plan.

Quarantining requires that AACPS school teams (Principals, Nurses, Attendance Administrative Assistants), AACPS Central Office Team members leading the Academic Support for quarantined students, and Anne Arundel County Department of Health to work in concert with one another to align the quarantining of students with the academic support for these students while on quarantine. [See page 30 for more information regarding the quarantining of students.]

Brightspace and Parent Portal

Families will be able to monitor and review student attendance and assignments, as well as communicate concerns and questions with teachers via the new *Brightspace Learning Management System (LMS)*. AACPS has developed web resources and videos to help families access and effectively utilize the LMS to ensure a strong home-school connection. As in the past, grades will be viewable in the *Parent Portal*.

All schools abide by the standard grading policy (*II-RA, Grading; Administrative Regulation II-RA, Grading*) to ensure consistency among schools and define how schools will work with students to encourage achievement and mastery. In the transition back to in-person learning for all, teachers will be operating with grace and patience with students, as they become comfortable with the new school routines. Grading practices are also detailed to provide guidance to families in the AACPS Parent Handbook. AACPS graduation requirements remain unchanged for the 2021–2022 school year and can be reviewed at www.aacps.org/graduationrequirements.

Students are responsible for adhering to the Code of Student Conduct as part of the *AACPS Student Handbook*.

School Meals

Free summer meals continue throughout the summer of 2021, while the AACPS Food and Nutrition Services team prepare for the reopening of school. AACPS is pleased to announce that **free breakfast and lunch will be provided to all students in all schools during the 2021–2022 school year**. Many schools with afterschool activities will also provide free dinner meals to children attending programming. Cafeteria serving lines will be open providing all students the opportunity to select whole grains, protein, fruits, vegetables, and milk from the serving line. Children will select food items from the cafeteria lines while consuming meals in the school cafeteria or alternate locations. Monthly menus are posted on the www.aacps.org website.

For students attending the AACPS Virtual Academy, free breakfast and lunch may be picked up at a location close to the student’s home. Parents or guardians of a virtual learner must call the Division of Food & Nutrition Services at 410-222-5900 to determine an appropriate pick up time and location.

Meal Benefit Applications are available online. Please continue to complete a Meal Benefit Application if you believe you are eligible for free or reduced-price meal benefits. Students eligible for free or reduced-price meals may also receive other benefits. Schools also receive additional funding and resources based on the free and reduced-price eligibility of the school.





Social-Emotional Learning and Support

Routine social-emotional activities and lessons in the curriculum are scheduled into the school day—Wellness Time in elementary school, Advisory in middle school, and Community Meeting or Wellness block in high school. Student Wellness offerings also wrap students in social-emotional support as they transition back into in-person learning. Through age-appropriate exercises from peer discussions to collaborative activities to mini-lessons, Wellness time, Advisory, and Community Circle participation helps students acquire the attitude, skills, and knowledge to become resilient, motivated, and focused learners.

During Student Wellness time in the schedule, students have the opportunity to learn and practice wellness strategies which support social, mental, and physical wellbeing. Through use of the Mindful Choices Curriculum, students explore mindfulness techniques, breathing strategies, and focused movements that can be used to overcome stress, anxiety, negative thinking, and frustration. In late spring of 2021, a student survey reported the following as ‘favorite sessions’ from the wellness modules taught at the high school level: exploring stereotypes, gratitude, exploring identity, positive thinking and healthy optimism, and healthy relationships and boundaries. Students at all levels are responding well to the opportunity to focus on self and the relationships they have with one another. Providing students with healthy opportunities for growth and high-quality coping strategies helps to increase their ability to handle stressful situations and academic challenges.

School counselors, at every level, will continue to provide **essential counseling services and supports to students and families throughout the school year**. During the first few weeks of school, counselors will spend the majority of their time focused on the removal of barriers to learning, acclimating or reacclimating students to the physical school environment, and providing mental health support to students through schoolwide programming and individual counseling. They will reach out to students and families through a variety of platforms, including email, phone, video calls, and meeting in the school counseling office. To ensure that all students have access to a comprehensive school counseling core curriculum, which covers the three domains: academic, personal/social, and college and career readiness, school counselors will partner with teachers to deliver classroom guidance lessons. As always, school counselors will be available during regular school hours to assist students and families, as needed.

In addition, school counselors, psychologists, social workers, and pupil personnel workers will continue to provide mental health services for students as needed. They will offer individual and group counseling sessions to support students as they cope with their return to school. Group session activities include mindfulness, coping skills, emotional regulation, social skills, and community circles. Students at the Virtual Academy may receive tele-mental health services offered by their school counselor, school psychologist, school social worker, or pupil personnel worker. Please contact your school’s counseling office should you need services for your student.

Mental Health Resources

Dealing with a pandemic and its consequences has created stress and anxiety among many. AACPS Student Services professionals are devoted to supporting the many social and emotional needs of families. Similarly, the AACPS Division of Human Resources has resources in place to assist employees with stress and other important health matters.

School counselors, school psychologists, social workers, and pupil personnel workers at schools are key consultants for families, especially in crisis. AACPS also offers Expanded School-Based Mental Health, a unique partnership with five clinical counseling agencies through which mental health clinicians provide more intensive therapy for students in the

school building. In addition, a list of mental health and community resources can be found at www.aacps.org/crisisresources.

In addition, the school system safety hotline is an anonymous resource to report safety concerns related to schools. The Safe Schools Maryland Tip Line at 833-MD-B-SAFE (833-632-7233) can be used to report issues such as:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Mental health crises | Drug activity |
| Bullying | Abuse |
| School and community violence | Harassment |
| | Other issues affecting students |

AACPS employees have 24/7 access to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at (800-327-2251). The EAP provides, free, confidential telephonic, virtual, or face-to-face counseling to help with family, personal, or work-related problems (www.aacps.org/eap).

Meeting the Needs of Special Populations



Special Education

As in the 2020–2021 school year, **AACPS remains committed to providing all students with an IFSP/IEP a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)** upon returning to in-person instruction in September. Services to students with IEPs and 504s will continue to be implemented and all procedures will be followed pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004, Section 504, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Education Act (ADA). These services are designed to reflect the Anne AACPS' commitment to quality education and equity for all students.

Special education teachers and related service providers will work collaboratively with other school staff creating opportunities to develop connections, foster active engagement, and establish and maintain positive relationships with students. TAs and TSAs will continue to provide instructional and social/emotional support to students with disabilities.

AACPS will continue to work to ensure students with disabilities have full access to the curriculum. Barriers created by the individual circumstances and needs of students with disabilities will be mitigated through responsive and appropriate special education and related services, including accommodations, modifications, and supports. Students will be afforded proper and appropriate technology (e.g., Chromebooks), equipment, and materials, including assistive technologies, to allow students to participate and engage with the instruction.

Tools, guidance, and implementation support are being provided to all special education teachers, related service providers, IEP and 504 Facilitators, school psychologists, school social workers, administrators and others as needed. Examples include self-paced professional development modules, TieNet announcements, TieNet support messages, Special Education e-Resources webpage, MSDE Technical Assistance Bulletins, Special Delivery Insights & Communication (a monthly newsletter), and support from the Special Designed Instruction Resource and Compliance Teams.

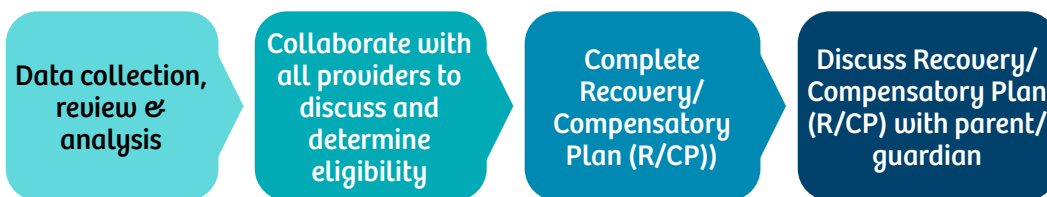
On August 27, August 30, and September 3, 2021, AACPS special education teachers, related service providers, school psychologists, and school social workers attended professional development that combined virtual-facilitated sessions with virtual self-paced sessions. The goal of these professional development presentations was to: (1) Recognize updates to the

AACPS will continue to honor and recognize provisions, stipulations, and agreements as a part of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504), and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

2021-2022 IEP and apply changes to develop compliant IEPs, and (2) Examine and construct standards-based IEP goals and objectives that include the five (5) required components: Child Find, evaluation, service provision, progress monitoring, and annual team meetings.

Implementation of the Special Education Learning Continuity Plan (SB 300/HB714) was included in the self-paced session. As a result, beginning October 1, 2021, IEP teams will discuss and complete the required sections of the IEP that specify a learning continuity plan to be implemented during emergency conditions, as defined by law (Education Article 8-405(d)).

The Recovery/Compensatory Plan (RCP) process was the focus of the second portion of the back-to-school special education professional development. AACPS staff will continue to implement the RCP process in accordance with guidance provided. The emphasis through the first quarter will be on the collection, review, and analysis of student data. A program manager was hired to provide monitoring and oversight of the referral, hiring, and service delivery required of the RCP process. Data will be submitted to MSDE in accordance to established timelines and requirements.



AACPS is offering a Virtual Academy for a limited number of students entering grades 3-12, including students with IEPs. While not offering a full continuum of special education services, students participating in the general education curriculum will be receiving their special education and related services in co-taught and self-contained settings, in accordance with their IEPs. The Virtual Academy has hired 6.5 special education teachers, 1.0 speech therapist, 1.0 school psychologist, 2.0 teacher assistant and 1.0 IEP/504 facilitator (other related services are being provided by shared providers) to ensure students with disabilities are provided a free appropriate public education in this virtual environment. The IEP and 504 teams are expected to follow established policies and procedures regarding IEP and 504 implementations. Members of the specially designed instruction (SDI) resource team (special education resource teacher, literacy specialist, behavior specialist, etc.) have been assigned to provide monitoring and support in the same manner as provided to brick-and-mortar schools.

Beginning August 25, 2021, school staff will be expected to hold IEP meetings, review IEP goals and services, and conduct evaluations and re-evaluations in accordance with established procedures and timelines. Virtual IEP meetings were well received by all stakeholder-participants in the 2020–21 school year; therefore, the meetings will continue to be held virtually this year, unless the family or school team requests an in-person meeting. Meetings held in person will honor face covering and physical distancing guidelines.

Teachers and related service providers will be supported to meet each student’s IEP goals by their school-based administration and the resource professionals at Central Office. In addition, they will be guided and supported to prepare documents and processes to follow when reviewing a student’s IEP, conducting IEP meetings, and discussing recovery/compensatory services. Clear directions will be given to all special educators to ensure the development, implementation and monitoring of IEPs in is accordance with IDEA, COMAR, and MSDE. These directions will be conveyed in Special Education Department meetings and school-wide meetings at the three developmental centers.

2021 Extended School Year Summer Camp (ESY)

1275 students invited to register; 833 attended

Community-based Services Office

512 students currently served; services provided in homes, childcare settings, and via virtual support meetings.

Beginning August 2, 2021, Infants and Toddler staff reinstated the practice of visiting homes to provide their services and supports. AACPS continues to implement universal masking practices in an effort to protect students and staff from the impact of the COVID-19 virus. As private homes and preschools based in private homes are an extension of the school system, all family members and students must wear masks when AACPS staff are providing services in private homes. Should this be impossible due to extenuating circumstances, AACPS will provide services outdoors with no masks as long as the weather allows. If neither of these options are a possibility, AACPS will offer services will be offered virtually to infants and toddlers. Students receiving IEP or IFSP services in community preschools will receive services within those settings.

Mask Accommodations

AACPS has an established process for parents/guardians to request a mask accommodation through the Strategic Safety Coaching Committee. Working under the authority of the Superintendent of Schools, a committee reviews requests and renders decisions regarding the requested accommodation. The committee consists of representatives from school health, student support services, and special education. The School Health Services Program, under the Anne Arundel County Department of Health, provides care for all AACPS students. Based on input from the families, service providers, and a review of documents students can be approved for an exemption, the development of a Safety Coaching Plan with a regular mask, the development of a Safety Coaching Plan with an approved alternative mask, or no accommodation is needed. The Safety Coaching Plan may include accommodations such as increased mask breaks, physical assistance, prompting, and if appropriate, behavior supports such as social stories. The student's case manager works collaboratively with the parent/guardian to develop this plan. Like any other plan developed, supports and resources are provided by the school, and progress is monitored.

Students with increased and ongoing medical needs may submit documentation to be considered for Home and Hospital Teaching (HHT) Services. Eligible students will have their IEPs/504 plans reviewed in accordance with established procedures. For the 2021–2022 school year, the HHT will be offering both virtual and in-person services.

Students with 504 Plans

AACPS will continue to honor and recognize provisions, stipulations, and agreements as a part of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504). In doing so, teachers will meet the needs of students with 504 Plans in the classroom environment as they did last year in the virtual environment. ***Through live instruction and the organization applications in the Google Suite for Education, teachers will be able to guide students to use their physical tools, time management, techniques, and learning strategies while at home.*** Teachers will continue to use graphic organizers, rubrics, incentive charts, and monitoring to best support students.

Home & Hospital Students

AACPS offers students on Home and Hospital Teaching (HHT) both online and in-person learning options. As was the case pre pandemic, the AACPS HHT Office will provide a wide range of online learning courses to accommodate students with medical conditions that inhibit or prevent in-person learning. It is anticipated, however, that most HHT educators will fulfill their duties via in-person instruction during the 2021–2022 school year.

Homeless & Displaced Youth

Pupil personnel workers and social workers remained in close contact with families to provide access to materials and equipment, transportation, and student services support last year. Staff worked hard to make sure that all students who were homeless received Chromebooks and all materials and equipment given out to students for both virtual and hybrid learning. Attention was focused on locating and engaging all our youth who were displaced or homeless, especially those marginalized by the COVID virus.

English Learners

ELA staff crafted an eLearning version of the AACPS English Language Development (ELD) curriculum for use in the 2020–2021 school year. This edited curriculum addressed the WIDA Standards and the four domains of language development. ELA teachers delivered these lessons to English Learners (ELs) in grades K–12 via Google Classroom. Additionally, all ELs in grades 3–12 continued to have access to the web-based program, Imagine Learning: Language & Literacy as a supplemental language development support. English Learners were also invited to summer offerings—academic and enrichment opportunities. ESOL or bilingual support was offered to English Learners who attended summer offerings.

In the fall of 2021, English learners (ELs) in AACPS will receive explicit English language development support through dedicated ESOL classes and small group instruction facilitated by ESOL teachers. The English Language Development (ELD) curriculum is designed to empower students to both interpret and express ideas with greater flexibility when using multimodal resources, including technology and multiple languages. Aligned to grade-level content standards, the ELD curriculum addresses the five WIDA ELD Standards:

Language for Social and Instructional Purposes
Language for Language Arts

Language for Mathematics
Language for Science
Language for Social Studies

For the 2021–2022 school year, focus areas of instruction for EL academic success include developing and leveraging oral language skills in English as well as ensuring access to rigorous grade-level content through appropriate scaffolds and teacher collaboration.

In addition to supporting English learners, multilingual families are supported by bilingual facilitators and the International Welcome Center. Ongoing workshops engage families with training on accessing AACPS instructional technology and communication systems, as well as providing information about community resources that support multilingual families, including Internet access.

Evening and Twilight High School Programs

Students who attended evening high school in 2020–2021 enrolled and engaged in virtual-only learning. This school year, the intention this year is for evening high school students to fully engage and enjoy their schooling in-person on traditional evening schedules that align with their needs. Like their day school peers, evening high school students will continue to receive Chromebooks to complement their learning. Due to staffing and/or student need, some courses will be available for students virtually.

AACPS is expanding Twilight (after school) high school support programs to afford high school students the opportunities to recover learning and credit in the hours immediately following the school day. With support from activity buses, more students—especially FARMs students with limited resources—will be able to take advantage of this learning and credit recovery opportunity.

Inaugural Middle School Newcomer Camp

24 English Learners attended

They engaged in English language and social emotional support activities readying them for school in the fall.

90 students graduated from Evening High in Spring 2021

Gifted & Talented Students

Students identified as Gifted and Talented received specialized curriculum and differentiated instruction last year in both virtual and hybrid learning formats. This year, AACPS' Advanced Learner Programs (ALPs) for grades 3-5 elementary students and Differentiated Advanced Learning Initiative (DALI) for middle schoolers will revert to employing materials, resources, and lessons in the in-person learning environment that engage gifted students to think more deeply, synthesize, and create connections within their learning to support their academic growth needs. In compliance with COMAR, advanced curricular materials, resources, and lessons will be available and implemented in our schools. Learning Expeditions, Explorations, Virtual Field Trips, and Maker Space Ideas, are also designed to support teachers and parents to engage gifted students to think more deeply, synthesize, and create connections within their learning to foster personal growth.

The Advanced Studies and Programs team is working hard to support teachers to learn more about giftedness so they are able to recognize students with high potential who may not show their giftedness on traditional assessments. Through Advanced Learner Programs (ALPs), AACPS is attempting to create more opportunities for all students to receive and practice advanced learning strategies in their classrooms, after school, and at home.

Career Technology Education

Although hundreds of CTE students studying in the Centers for Applied Technology participated in some in-person learning during the 2020–2021 school year, the need and desire is still great to return all CTE students to full in-person learning. Career and Technology Education staff are enthusiastic about the return of in-person instruction during the upcoming 2021–2022 school year in order to deliver essential hands-on guidance that propels student achievement. The virtual learning journey did, however, provide CTE instructors with a suite of online resources and tools (e.g., MyLady, NCCER, FACETS, CAREER SAFE, ServSafe, Everfi, Virtual Job Shadow) that they will continue to use inside their classrooms and with students as they work at home on projects. It is important to note that the student-centered CTE offerings are models of excellence in among AACPS schools. Moreover, professional development and online resources aligned with *MSDE Career and Technology Education Standards* and industry standards will continue to grow this year to ensure that CTE student support, growth, and excellence does not waver.

Internships

Internships unexpectedly flourished during the 2020–2021 school year. Many partners pivoted to allow for students to engage in their internship virtually and others committed to following our COVID protocols so that students could engage in person. A full complement of in-person internship offerings will resume this year with a large host of business partners who will provide safe, relevant, and meaningful experiences for students. Business and community partners will continue to be vetted to confirm that they are following CDC and MDH/MSDE guidelines for a safe working environment before they can begin hosting AACPS student interns.

Approximately 35% of current AACPS students graduate from a high school having engaged in a community-based internship. Our goal, within the next three years, is for all students in AACPS schools to enroll and earn credit for an internship or apprenticeship before graduating from any one of our high schools.



Tutoring

AACPS recognizes that many students and families will continue to need extra academic support after school hours as they did in the 2020–2021 school year. Over 8,000 tutoring meetings were held for middle and high school students who made appointments or simply attended a drop-in session last year. The largest number of sessions were booked for help with mathematics.

Based on the positive tutoring response over time, AACPS will continue to offer the evening virtual tutoring program to support middle and high school students in the new school year. These secondary students will be able to access support Monday through Thursday and Sunday evenings. In addition, AACPS will provide in-person tutoring opportunities for students in grades 4–12 after school or at libraries on targeted days of the week, depending on staff and activity bus availability. Tutoring schedules will be developed at each school to be shared with families by the end of September. Teachers will encourage students to seek help from their classroom teacher or from the AACPS tutor pool.

A learning support program for families of elementary students will be available Monday through Thursday evenings to parents/guardians assist their students with any reading and mathematics concepts or skills. We want to make sure that students and families receive the support they need to understand and move forward successfully with classwork, homework, and project assignments.

It is a common misconception that tutoring is relegated to socio-economic or academic performance status. AACPS hopes to shatter this perception by showing students and families that tutoring is an appropriate, available accessory to support all learners. To that end, AACPS will use the following strategies to educate and encourage tutoring resources to students and families:

- Brightspace e-mails to parents (weekly)
- Advisory lessons at middle and high school levels (September '21)
- E-mails via Content and Program Coordinators to Department Chairpersons
- Informational websites for all stakeholders
- Optional messages on report cards (via Office of Student Data)
- School-based weekly e-newsletters
- AACPS TV Interviews
- Informational meetings for all Principals (Leveled meetings throughout SY 21–22)

[Tutoring Information: www.aacps.org/tutoring]

Talented Tutors

AACPS has 366 Nationally Board Certified Teachers – Many serve as tutors after school hours

Athletics, Clubs, and Activities

To promote more opportunities for student participation, accessibility, and engagement, many co-curricular program offerings and extracurricular activities will occur during the school day this coming year as occurred in the 2020–2021 school year. We must engage the students in enjoyable activities if we want to reach the whole student; learning success is built more easily when a child feels safe and happy. **AACPS will continue to facilitate as many safe and meaningful in-person athletic, extracurricular, and co-curricular opportunities as possible.** Because we witnessed success engaging students virtually in clubs and co-curricular activities in the virtual space, **we will continue to offer some virtual co-curricular opportunities** in the 2021–2022 school year so all students have the ability to join after school activities, if they wish to do so.



The goal for athletics remains to provide a flexible framework for all sports seasons with guidance from the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA). ***We continue to focus on sportsmanship and building inclusive team cultures.*** Plans that meet local, state, and CDC health guidelines continue to be evaluated to promote safety while balancing engaging competition. The AACPS Athletics Office in collaboration with the high school Athletic Directors will be the stewards of the health and safety guidelines for our athletes.

[Athletics Information: www.aacps.org/athletics]

Relationships, Opportunities, Achievement:

A Summary

It is worth reiterating that fostering meaningful relationships with students, staff, families, and community partners is the most important ingredient to meet all school system goals which are designed to provide opportunities and promote achievement. Through curricula, scheduling, data analysis, technological resources, and personal outreach that is responsive to student input and needs, AACPS is moving forward and beyond the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic by equally addressing the social-emotional, mental health, and academic needs of students. Such efforts are the true building blocks for showing students how much AACPS cares about them. This work also requires collaborative contributions where students, staff, families, and community members and partners connect to discuss and strategize about how to realize school system goals. Established at the onset of school closings, 14 planning committees made up of more than 150 of these key stakeholders will continue to use a lens of equity to inform and drive decision making that is focused on eliminating opportunity gaps and increasing engagement and achievement for all students. Regardless of the everchanging health and social climate, these committees will continue to do the research and analysis necessary to meet the needs of all students.



Health and Safety

AACPS has developed a suite of safety and health protocols to standardize proper procedures across school system facilities and for students and staff to follow. These guidelines are frequently updated in accordance with local, state, and federal guidance and are always accessible at www.aacps.org/safetyprotocols. Adherence to these guidelines keeps everyone safe. Concerns regarding compliance to protocols may be addressed with school administrators, supervisors, or the AACPS Office of Investigations.

The protocols include:



Welcoming Students Back: What Families Can Do

a checklist of what families should do in preparation for in-person instruction



Tips for Staying Healthy: What Employees Can Do

a wellness checklist for employees



Face Coverings & Safety Practices

a detailed list of requirements and expectations for to keep all safe in all school system facilities



Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Procedures

a summary of the measures in place for staff to use PPE in their duties



Cleaning Protocols

an outline of the daily steps taken to prevent contamination and public spread of COVID-19



Confirmed Case Guidance

an overview of what actions should be taken by families, staff, or supervisors if a school system facility is affected by a laboratory confirmed case of COVID-19

Health Equity

All Means *ALL* in AACPS also includes addressing the needs of student groups that are disproportionately affected by COVID-19. Based on recommendations and insight by the CDC, AACPS works closely with the county health department to provide opportunity, access, and communication to all stakeholders regarding health-related issues, especially related to COVID-19. To that end, vaccination clinics (for COVID-19, as well as state-mandated school immunizations) were publicized and available at large scale throughout the summer at convenient times and school locations so that all student community members who qualified. AACPS seeks to sustain this partnership in every effort to achieve health equity among school-aged children in Anne Arundel County. In addition, each of our schools, especially our Community Schools, continue to support our families in need by sharing health-related information, healthcare access pathways, and health-related resources routinely via school newsletters and social media.

Contact Tracing

When an AACPS school or office is made aware of a COVID-19 positive case involving a student or staff member, the AACPS Contact Tracing Team, working in collaboration with the Anne Arundel County Department of Health, begins an investigation to determine those who were in proximity to the COVID-positive person during the exposure period (usually 48 hours prior to the onset of symptoms or, in the case of an asymptomatic person, the date of the COVID-19 test). With some limited exceptions, those determined to have been within 6 feet of the COVID-positive person for 15 total (not consecutive) minutes over a 24-hour period are identified as “close contacts.” Depending on vaccination status and in accordance with federal, state, and county medical guidelines, those identified as close contacts may be required to quarantine for up to 10 days. For updated information on the contact tracing process, visit www.aacps.org/contacttracing.

Quarantining of Students and Staff

Anticipating the need for the potential quarantining of students or staff requires a plan for quarantined student learning engagement and quarantined staff teaching engagement, respectively. Students who are quarantined due to exposure of a close contact who has tested positive for the COVID-19 virus, yet are still healthy and not experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, should continue to engage in school. Any healthy quarantined student will be assigned a virtual teacher-coach of the day and given time-certain meeting times along with a Google Meet code to log in virtually for attendance and academic support purposes. Pre-K–Grade 5 students will be assigned a virtual teacher-coach by grade level while middle school and high school students will have an assigned virtual teacher-coach generalist for grades 6–8 or grades 9–12 assigned to check them in daily.

All quarantined students will continue to have access to their Brightspace learning environment where they will find their assignments given by their grade level or discipline-based course teacher(s). Students should bring these assignments to their time-certain virtual meetings with their virtual teacher-coach to ask any questions they may have or seek support for anything they do not understand.

Elementary School Quarantined Students

AACPS will offer quarantined elementary students (K–5) synchronous teaching in Language Arts/Literacy, Science/Social Studies, and Mathematics daily. Teaching will be offered by assigned central office certificated teacher-staff serving as virtual teacher-coaches. All quarantined K–5 students will receive 45 minutes of Literacy/Language Arts, 30 minutes of Science/Social Studies, and 45 minutes of Mathematics teaching each day. Students will receive this teaching along with independent time to complete assigned work. Classwork and homework will be graded by the assigned virtual teacher-coach. This graded work will be returned to the students' classroom teachers upon the end of their quarantined period. Students will not be expected to complete all work assigned by the classroom teacher while under quarantine, but rather to focus on the work assigned by the virtual teacher-coach; exceptions will be for work that is part of a project or assessments that are cumulative (end of unit). AACPS is asking the classroom teacher to use the grades earned from quarantine classwork to serve as the grades to be used by the classroom teacher for assessing student understanding and mastery. Grace and patience will be afforded students who need extra time to learn material and submit work following the quarantine period. Office hours will also be provided daily for elementary students who wish to meet with their virtual teacher-coach for extra support in targeted areas of need.

Middle School Quarantined Students

AACPS will offer quarantined middle school students (gr 6–8) synchronous mathematics and English content lessons from a certificated AACPS teacher on a rotational every other day basis in conjunction with a check-in organizational meeting with their assigned virtual teacher-coach where they will be able to ask questions about their assigned work found in Brightspace, plan their day, and sign up for evening tutoring in course areas in which they are in need of support. English and math student work will be assessed by the virtual teacher-coach and the graded work will be returned to the students' classroom teachers upon the end of their quarantined period. Students will also be expected to work on their classroom/coursework located in their Brightspace classrooms. Grace and patience will be afforded students who need extra time to learn material and submit work following the quarantine period. They will be helped to sign up for small group tutoring and homework help offered during evening hours. [AACPS Tutoring website to sign up for support: www.aacps.org/tutoring]

High School Quarantined Students

High school students will not receive synchronous teaching while quarantined, but they will have access to their assigned virtual teacher for office hours and academic support as well as access to certified AACPS teachers on five evenings per week to provide homework help or small group tutoring support. High school teachers will be responsible for grading the work submitted from quarantined students. Grace and patience will be afforded students who need extra time to learn material and submit work following the quarantine period. Virtual Teacher-Coaches will meet with the high school student to make sure they retrieve all their work from their Brightspace classroom folders, ask any questions they may have, and help them sign up for evening tutoring. Targeted office hours for Math and English along with evening homework help are also available. [AACPS Tutoring website to sign up for support: www.aacps.org/tutoring]

All quarantined students who fully participate by logging into their Google Meet session with their assigned virtual teacher and submit their work via Brightspace in a timely way will be marked present for each school day for which they are under quarantine at home, away from in-person

learning in the school setting. Details regarding the coding of absences for quarantined individuals can be found under the topic of Attendance and Grading in this document.

Similarly, quarantined teachers who are sent home due to exposure to someone with COVID-19, will be expected to teach their classes virtually from home. A substitute teacher will be hired to monitor the classroom where the students are learning, but the teacher of record will be teaching the students virtually. Students will participate in the class via their Chromebooks. They will receive and submit their assignments via Brightspace. This will be a synchronous virtual teaching and learning format where all students will be present in the classroom and the teacher will be facilitating all learning virtually from home via their laptop computer.

As outlined in the Confirmed Case protocol for schools, a school community is sent a letter via email and posted at the applicable school web site when there is a positive COVID case. Further advice (via letter and/or phone call) from the county health department/AACPS Contact Tracing Team regarding quarantining, isolation, etc. is sent to individuals who are identified as close contacts to individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19. Upon being put on the quarantine list, students' names are forwarded to the Academic Support for Quarantined Students Team who then emails each quarantined family a letter describing the what, how, and when of support students will receive during their days in quarantine, including the assignment of a virtual teacher-coach and the Google Meet codes for the Check-in sessions and virtual teaching sessions.

NOTE: All families of quarantined students are invited to contact the school should they wish to pick up lunch(es) for their quarantined student(s). The school will ready the bagged lunch(es) for lunchtime pickup. Families should send a healthy adult to school to pick up the free lunch(es) daily for their quarantined student(s).

Vaccinations and Screening

In collaboration with the Anne Arundel County Department of Health and the Anne Arundel County Fire Department, we offered 5 first-dose vaccination clinics for AACPS employees in the spring of 2021, from February 11th through March 11th. Our second-dose clinics ran from March 11th through April 8th. We officially administered 6,800 first-doses of the COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson). In the summer, we ran vaccination clinics around the county at four middle schools—each week rotating from one school to the next in order to best serve students and families across the county. We have run three to four clinics per week since the middle of May. A significant number of our employees and students (>12 years old) took advantage of these opportunities to be vaccinated for the COVID-19 virus. We will continue these partnerships into the future to serve our employees and students as needed.

Beginning in the Spring of 2021, in conjunction with the Anne Arundel County Department of Health, we made testing/screening available to symptomatic students and employees at all school sites. This available screening will continue this coming fall. We are also embarking on a surveillance screening program for asymptomatic students and employees on a volunteer basis, with the support from the Department of Health and an outside contractor.



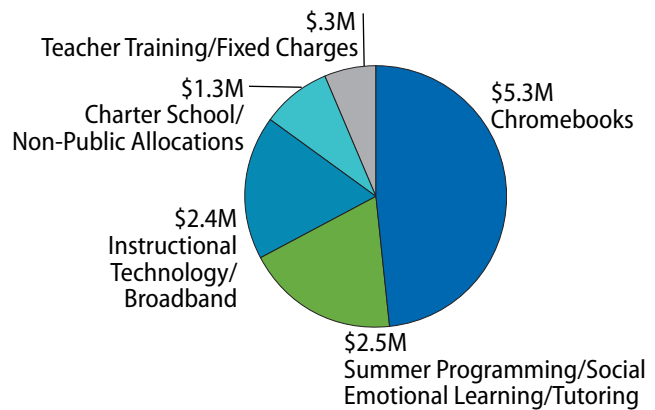
Infrastructure

COVID & POST-COVID Funding Support

AACPS continues to work closely with state, city, county, civic, and business partners to ensure any and all funding resources are explored and exhausted to bolster an abundance of opportunities for students. Last school year, AACPS received significant funding for academic and operational support to students and families as part of pandemic response and relief. Moving forward, the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds are available as grants for those who apply. AACPS has applied for all ESSER grants for which we qualify. These funds will support targeted efforts for the next three years.

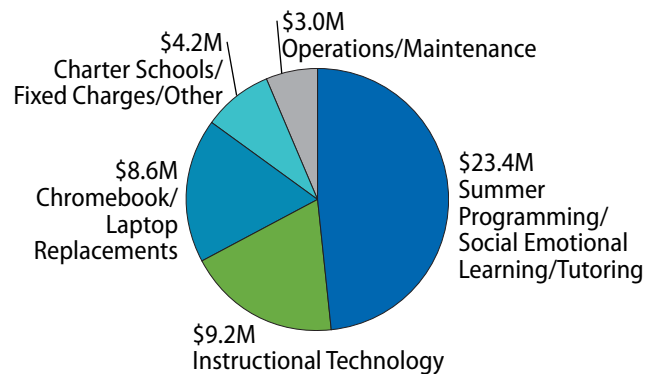
Phase 1 – ESSER Funding Support

AACPS allocated **\$11.8 million** in ESSER funds from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act, March 2020).



Phase 2 – ESSER Funding Support

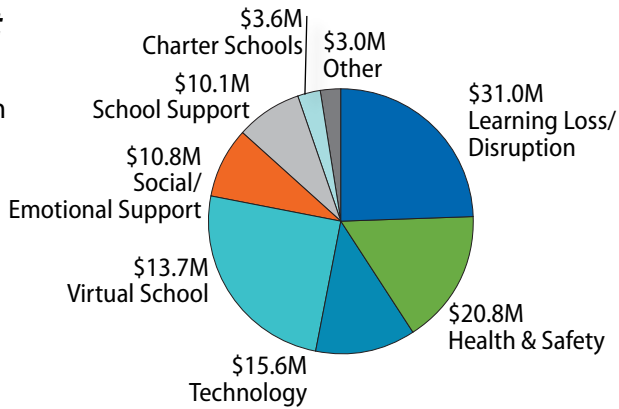
AACPS allocated **\$48.4 million** in ESSER funds from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA Act, December 2020).



In July 2021, AACPS families, staff, students, and the community were surveyed to provide input on how the third phase of ESSER funding (\$108 million) should be spent. The results of that survey can be found here [[English survey results](#)][[Spanish survey results](#)].

Phase 3 – ESSER Funding Support

AACPS allocated **\$108.6 million** in ESSER funds from the from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARP Act, March 2021).



A steering and advisory team will meet quarterly to ensure that appropriate allocations and spending are aligned with ESSER funding expectations/requirements and student need.

Facilities

Cleaning and Disinfection

As established in the Cleaning Protocol, AACPS operations staff will apply routine and specialized cleaning and disinfecting methods to maintain sanitary facilities and prevent the public spread of COVID-19 this school year as they have done since the pandemic began in the Spring of 2020, including the following:

- Conducted thorough summer cleaning and returned stored furniture to classrooms
- Delivered (Logistics staff and our vendors) PPE such as masks, wipes, and hand sanitizer to schools

Ventilation

Facilities staff will continue to review and monitor the HVAC equipment and schedules to ensure the ventilation systems operate properly and enhance circulation of conditioned outdoor air as much as possible. Similar to their work in 2020–2021, the Facilities Division will continue to follow and adhere to state health and safety mandates regarding proper ventilation in all facilities. Importantly, to ready specifically for the Fall 2021 reopening of schools, the Facilities Division addressed the following:

- Delivered MERV 13 filters to all schools and installed them in units approved for their use
- Set operating schedules for HVAC to 2 hours before and after school hours to increase air filtration in our schools

Water Systems

To minimize the risk of Legionnaires disease and other diseases associated with water, maintenance staff will take steps to ensure that all water systems are available for use, especially after a prolonged facility shutdown. Water fountains should only be used to refill water bottles. Students are encouraged to bring a water bottle from home daily; they will be able to refill it as needed throughout the school day.

Physical Barriers and Guides

Similar to the 2020–2021 school year, physical acrylic barriers will not be used in instructional areas but may be utilized in offices or areas with a high volume of public interaction and/or difficulty to manage physical distancing. Signage, stickers, and tape will be strategically positioned in our buildings to designate social distance, traffic patterns, and other health and safety expectations.

Classroom Layouts

Classrooms will be organized to maximize space and promote at least 3 ft. distancing, to the extent possible, between students. Classrooms will be configured in traditional fashions to accommodate the number of students enrolled for that class. When possible, additional furniture will be removed from classrooms, meeting rooms, and other areas to allow for physical social distancing and safe traffic flow.

Shared Objects

During the 2020–21 school year, AACPS discouraged the use of shared materials (e.g., electronic devices, toys, books, learning aids) in classrooms by providing enough materials for each student and/or avoiding activities that would promote such sharing. Student items at schools were labeled and stored individually and separately. As the new school year begins, Anne Arundel County Department of Health has informed us that we can begin the sharing of learning manipulatives and play toys as long as students wash or sanitize their hands before and after the use of shared objects. Additionally, the shared items must be cleansed according to cleaning protocols at the end of each school day.

Communal Spaces

Large spaces such as the cafeterias, libraries, and gymnasiums will be used for their traditional purposes, eating, learning, and playing/exercising, respectively. Playground use will be open for students to play freely, socially distanced to the extent possible. Bathroom use will be staggered so that physical distancing can be maintained. Students will be expected to wear face coverings in classrooms, hallways, bathrooms, while arriving/departing school, and on school buses. Masks may be removed when eating, drinking, and learning or playing outside.

Security & Building Access

AACPS will continue to implement plans that balance the health needs to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and the security measures that keep students and staff safe on a regular basis. These plans include traditional ingress and egress access as well as providing multiple points of entry to allow for physical distancing. Minimizing congested traffic flow is one of the many considerations that will support current safety and security measures for buildings. Movement procedures,

including hallway traffic patterns and class rotations will continue to be evaluated to uphold proper health and safety expectations.

Employees, visitors and contractors are required to wear face coverings at all times in all AACPS buildings. Visitors to schools and Central Office will be required to go through the usual identification-check process, but access to buildings or parts of buildings may be limited based on the health protocols in effect at any given time. Virtual meetings will be encouraged to mitigate health and security concerns.

Food and Nutrition Services

School Meals Program

AACPS Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) staff will continue to safely provide a program that meets student needs. Staff will wear face coverings and gloves during preparation and serving of meals, as well as anytime they are in a school and/or cannot maintain physical distancing. In accordance with traditional procedure, Food and Nutrition Services staff will monitor meal offerings with considerations for student food allergies. School meals will be served in school cafeterias in the traditional fashion. Some schools will have meal kiosks in operation throughout the school building.

Cleaning and Disinfection

Meal preparation areas will be properly cleaned, disinfected, and sanitized per usual methods and protocols performed by Food and Nutrition and Operations staff and in accordance with Anne Arundel County Department of Health Safety and Sanitation Standards.

Technology

Chromebooks & Connectivity

Before the end of the first semester of the 2020–2021 school year, 83,044 Chromebooks were made available to students, creating a 1:1 device ratio for students to fully participate in virtual instruction. AACPS educators were supported in similar fashion as 5,898 laptops were distributed to teachers. In addition, AACPS distributed more than 500 hotspots to families and assisted more than 1,500 families with obtaining Wi-Fi connection. There remains only one small area of Anne Arundel County unserved by Internet service providers. We are addressing these communities' needs on a case by case basis.

As AACPS returns to in-person instruction for the 2021–2022 school year, students will use Chromebooks as a component of a robust, multi-dimensional learning environment that incorporates, but does not depend on, technology. The Chromebooks for Every Student initiative does, however, provide the proper resources to afford the flexibility to conveniently and seamlessly shift teaching and learning models, as deemed appropriate by the teacher or as needed by the students.

Communication: School-Home Connection

Using our new **Brightspace** learning management system teachers and students will have a learning home for assignments, assessments, and communication. Families—parents and guardians—will also have the ability to see more deeply into the learning environment. For the first time, we will be able to realize a **families as partners** philosophy because through Brightspace the key adults in a student’s life will be able to see assignments and due dates, chat with their student’s teacher, and offer targeted and timely support to their young person as they navigate their learning journey. Teachers will be able to easily communicate proactively with students and their families with ease inside the safe and secure Brightspace environment. Parents/Guardians will use the same password to access Brightspace for Families as they use to see student grades in our AACPS Parent Portal.

Students and teachers will be afforded the opportunity to learn and become familiar with Brightspace during quarter one of the school year. Parents will be invited into Brightspace beginning in quarter two in November of 2021.

[Learn more about Brightspace: www.aacps.org/lms, www.aacps.org/brightspaceforfamilies, and www.aacps.org/fall2021]

Transportation

AACPS transportation subject matter experts and all bus operators are committed to the safe transport of students every day. In collaboration with the bus contractors, AACPS offers bus driver and bus aide pre-service training in advance of the start of each academic year and then again throughout the school year. Daily routine inspections of buses and the daily cleaning and disinfection of buses follow all applicable MSDE protocols and CDC recommended procedures. The Department of Transportation trained all contractors and bus drivers prior to the start of the school year to follow the district’s approved cleaning and disinfection protocols.

Traditional bus transport service will resume for all students during the 2021–2022 school year. Given that the required social distancing and ridership capacity emergency orders have been lifted, bus capacities have returned to the pre-pandemic levels in order to support the MSDE required full return of in-person instruction within the district. Bus capacities will once again be capped at the manufacturer’s federally proscribed ratings. All bus drivers, bus aides, and students riding buses are always required to wear sanctioned face coverings (masks), in accordance with all federal, state, and locally issued guidelines and regulations. Principals and bus drivers will encourage social distancing on our school buses to the extent possible based on ridership.

In accordance with the Department of Education’s COVID-19 Handbook (Transportation Considerations Section, p.15-16), parents and guardians have been notified of the federally mandated masking requirements and will be afforded alternative options such as family or self-transport should they not wish to or be able to mask while on the school bus. AACPS has a mask accommodation application process available for families who believe their student cannot wear a mask while in schools or on school buses. The mechanically assisted ventilation rates on all buses will be maximized and all occupants will have the ability to lower the windows in the passenger compartment in order to enhance localized ventilation rates.

Transportation acknowledgements to be signed by parents/guardians will be administered by all schools. All bus riders’ guardian(s) must sign and return a Transportation agreement to their student’s school. A sample of the document can be viewed at www.aacps.org/fall2021. Additional bus stop and transportation information is available at www.aacps.org/buses.

Steering & Oversight Committee

The Steering Committee who led the planning and design work for the 2020–2021 school year will continue to steer the planning, design, implementation and evaluation of the 2021–2022 school year. All major Divisions of the school district, including the Office of Equity and Accelerated Student Achievement, are represented on the Steering Committee. The Chairs of the 14 planning committees will serve as the Oversight Committee. They will work with their individual committee members, Regional Assistant Superintendents who oversee our schools, and members of the community to gather the information and data needed to evaluate the implementation of each aspect or component of the 2021–2022 Reopening Plan. The Oversight Committee, including a student, parent, and community member representative selected from the membership of the 14 planning committees, will meet monthly to conduct business. The Oversight Committee will analyze the appropriate data quarterly and submit it for review to the Steering Committee. The Steering committee will review the Oversight Committee’s work, make recommendations, and submit it to the Superintendent’s Executive Team quarterly. Adjustments to the plan or the implementation of the plan will be made as needed throughout the school year.

The Steering and Oversight Committees are focused on eliminating opportunity gaps and increasing engagement and achievement among our students in greatest need. We will use a lens of equity when evaluating student data. Students will receive what they need based on the data collected and analyzed. While striving to meet the needs of all students, we will focus on students of color, FARMs students, students with IEPs and English Learners to ensure that these often underserved student populations are well supported. Strategic and timely data-driven decision making will be the hallmark of the work of these committees.



Staying Informed—Communication

Resources at your fingertips

The AACPS Communications Office is the primary source for outreach to families, school system staff, and the general public. From designing and managing the school system and individual school web sites to forging social media campaigns to developing and distributing important staff memos and information, the Communications Office works closing with school system personnel, students, community members (including planning committees), and other agencies to provide timely information in accessible and relatable formats. All AACPS web sites seek to uphold ADA compliance standards. Students, families, AACPS staff, and the public are encouraged to stay informed through the following methods.

Visit www.aacps.org/fall2021 for the latest updates, FAQs, and resources to help navigate the 2021–2022 school year. Visit the Family Information Line website at www.aacps.org/FamilyInformationLine or call **410-222-5001** with any questions you have regarding our Fall 2021 reopening. Information is available in English and Spanish. Follow **AACPS @AACountySchools on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram** and don't forget to download the school system app! Also, be sure to subscribe to the **AACPS YouTube Channel** at www.aacps.org/YouTube.

Video Outreach

Reopening Reports

Every Wednesday in August through to the beginning of the school year, Superintendent George Arlotto delivers video updates on the reopening of schools. They are archived for your access at www.aacps.org/reopeningreports.

Brightspace (LMS) Family Quick Tips

The AACPS Office of School & Family Partnerships will produce short video clips recorded in English and Spanish to get families acclimated to Brightspace (www.aacps.org/lms), our new learning management system, to deepen the home-school connection.

Automated Avenues

As always, families and staff can receive the latest news via phone, email, text, push notification, and social media via the automated contact system. Please make sure that important contact information is up to date by contacting your student's school.

Quick Links

www.aacps.org/fall2021
[www.aacps.org/
FamilyInformationLine](http://www.aacps.org/FamilyInformationLine)

www.aacps.org/safetyprotocols
www.aacps.org/chromebooks
www.aacps.org/getinternet

www.aacps.org/crisisresources
www.aacps.org/schoolsupplies
www.aacps.org/lms