



RUSSELL COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

American Rescue Plan (ARP)/Elementary & Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) PLAN

Prior to formulating the ARP ESSER LEA Plan, the Russell County School District conducted an extensive course of meaningful consultation with required stakeholders. First, a community-wide survey was administered for a six-day period from July 22 through July 27, 2021 to ensure equitable and timely feedback concerning the prevention, preparation, and response to COVID-19 and its ramifications on the reopening of our schools. Stakeholder feedback was solicited from students, parents, teachers, community members, businesses, KEA representatives, and city and county leaders. Secondly, an intentional effort was given to reach out individually to minority populations such as English Learner (EL) families who are already at a higher risk for learning deficits due to their language barrier. Our EL families noted that Extended School Services and interventions would be very important in the coming year. Lastly, Superintendent Michael Ford and other district administrators conducted interactive interviews on our two local radio stations, WJRS 104.9 and The Wave 92.7, to further inform the community about the formulation of our ARP ESSER Plan and to seek additional input on the needs of the community and how we can best serve those needs as we prepare to reopen and stay in school. Superintendent Ford also spoke at the July 2021 meeting of the Russell County Chamber of Commerce regarding our plan and provided a survey to the Chamber members as well.

Survey results yielded the following data in our pursuit to gather necessary stakeholder feedback pertaining to the safe reopening of Russell County Schools. When asked to provide input regarding Russell County Schools' use of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act Elementary & Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund and safe return to in-person instruction, the top priority was to begin and stay in school for in-person instruction and to ensure this was

possible through continued efforts of sanitation and class/group size reduction. Stakeholders also addressed the need for interventions during the regular school day, as well as, during Extended School Services, in order to mitigate learning loss and to attenuate for the mental health needs of students. Stakeholders further insisted upon acceleration opportunities for students who were not at risk of falling behind.

Preventing COVID-19

The Russell County School District has made a concerted effort in preventing the spread of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases. In our efforts to maintain clean and sanitary facilities, we are closely monitoring guidance and recommendations from CDC (updated 7/9/2021), as well as, the Lake Cumberland District Health Department (LCDHD), to prevent and mitigate situations that impact the return to safe reopening of schools. At present, we are continuing our coordinated preparedness efforts for sanitation and disinfection practices that adhere to strict preventative measures and layered prevention strategies. For instance, our plan for the safe return to in-person instruction involves the following measures of safety and use of funds:

- Require mask mandate for all students and staff riding buses, regardless of their vaccination status
- Recommend mask usage for unvaccinated persons while indoor school facilities
- Provide rapid and PCR COVID-19 testing and screening to be available in all schools on a daily basis and/or at one of our drive through clinics for students, teachers, and staff who are not fully vaccinated
- Offer telehealth option for students who become ill at school and an onsite provider is occupied (full health exam) through our Memorandum of Agreement with the Healthy Kids Clinic and Cumberland Family Medical
- Offer of COVID-19 vaccines to all students age 12 and up, faculty, and staff with *COVID-19 Vaccine FAQs* available to all members of the community
- Develop a *COVID-19 Protocol - "Test to Stay"* for students to stay in school following an exposure IF parents choose for multiple testing opportunities versus quarantine (and provided the testing results are negative and students/employees are exhibiting no symptoms)
- Continual monitoring of community transmission of COVID-19 for positive cases and using the positivity rate to inform decisions about in-person, blended, and/or virtual learning options
- Install touchless hand sanitizer and water fountain stations at each facility and at multiple locations within each facility
- Allow for time between usage space and hire increased custodial staff to sanitize and cleanse high traffic areas throughout the school day

- Provide students and staff with PPE to safeguard against disease
- Promote physical distancing of 3 feet by enforcing safeguards such as hiring class size reduction teachers when applicable, purchasing individual student desks versus tables, etc.
- Enact quarantine and contact tracing in collaboration with LCDHD guidelines to limit exposure to infected persons
- Purchase, installation, and/or usage of air purifiers in existing ductwork/air handlers and prioritize air purification in classrooms/areas without air return
- Purchase and replenish Armour Guard, an antimicrobial that provides a 90-day shield
- Purchase and maintain electrostatic fogger

Preparing for COVID-19

As the Russell County School District prepares for the reopening of schools in the 2021-2022 school year, we are very cognizant of the academic impact of lost instructional time during the previous year. Furthermore, as a 100% free/reduced school district due to high poverty demographics, we have heightened concerns about the sustainability of academic skills acquired during virtual learning. In our efforts to mitigate this learning loss, we will continue to enhance our usage of Google Classroom as our virtual platform by purchasing and incorporating *Google Workspace for Education Plus* into daily lessons and assessments. The majority of ESSER I funds were spent to ensure our technological capacity was 1:1 (iPads for every K-1st grade student and Chromebooks for every 2nd-12th grade student). Additionally, we purchased internet hotspots throughout the community, as well as, Mifi devices for homes that could not afford internet service and/or did not have access to community hotspots. These initial efforts afforded us the opportunity to provide seamless learning experiences at home during school closures due to COVID. Furthermore, this early preparedness provided the foundation for blended learning and the fluidity to transition from in-person to virtual learning with minimal interruptions in coursework. Even so, it is evident that the implementation of evidence-based interventions will be a necessity as we resume in-person instruction for 2021-2022. To ensure these remediation and interventions are successful, we will hire 5 full-time, certified Intervention Specialists to work with students one-on-one and/or in small group settings. Funding for these five positions will be allocated for a minimum of 2 years. Additionally, we will hire 11 full-time Instructional Assistants for each First Grade classroom within the district (RSES=5; JES=3; and SES=3). It is our intent to mitigate early childhood loss of learning which forms the permanent foundation for the progression of literacy, mathematics, and critical thinking skills along the learning continuum. Funding for these eleven positions will also be allocated for a minimum of two years.

The implementation of evidence-based interventions will be paramount in diminishing academic deficits incurred as a direct result of COVID-19 restrictions in schools and the classroom teacher's inability to effectively group students and closely monitor their progression. ARP ESSER Funds will be utilized to purchase various instructional support materials with the intent of targeting academic deficits and mastery of grade level content standards. The following researched and evidenced-based interventions and strategies will be funded (if required) and implemented through teacher training and used with fidelity to mitigate COVID-19 loss of learning and its associated mental health issues:

(1) Reading Plus

Reading plus® adolescent literacy. WWC | Reading Plus®. (n.d.).
<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/EvidenceSnapshot/419>.

(2) Lexia Reading

Lexia reading beginning reading. WWC | Lexia Reading. (n.d.).
<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/EvidenceSnapshot/274>.

(3) MAP Benchmarking Assessments

Cordray, D., Pion, G., Brandt, C., Molefe, A., & Toby, M. (2012, December). The Impact of the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Program on Student Reading Achievement. National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance.

(4) Leveled Literacy Interventions (LLI)

Leveled literacy intervention beginning reading. WWC | Leveled Literacy Intervention. (n.d.).
<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/EvidenceSnapshot/679>.

(5) Data Driven Instruction

Gleason, P., Crissey, S., Chojnacki, G., Zukiewicz, M., & Silva, T. (2012, December). Evaluation of Support for Using Student Data to Inform Teachers' Instruction. National Center for Education Research & Evaluation, LLC.

(6) Hattie's Visible Learning

Marcus, J., Klute, M., Schaefer, V., Pellerin, E., Peery, B., Shibre, E., Biagas, K., Mislevy, J., & Wilkerson, S. (n.d.). Research-Based Strategies for Effective Remote Learning: Monitoring Student Progress and Providing Feedback. Institute of Educational Sciences.

(7) Before/After School Tutoring with Certified Staff

Nickow, A., Oreopoulos, P., & Quan, V. (2020, July). The Impressive Effects of Tutoring on PreK-12 Learning: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of the Experimental Evidence. Northwestern University.

(8) Formative Assessment

Klute, M., Apthorp, H., Harlacher, J., & Reale, M. (2017). Formative assessment and elementary school student academic achievement: A review of the evidence (REL 2017–259). U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Central.

(9) Imagine Learning

Russo, M. (2017, November 30). *The effectiveness of imagine learning as a Tier II Intervention*. ProQuest LLC. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED588547>.

(10) IXL Math

See the evidence. IXL. (n.d.). <https://www.ixl.com/membership/teachers/research>.

(11) Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS)

Center on pbis: Resource: Examining the evidence base for school-wide positive behavior support. Center on PBIS | Resource: Examining the Evidence Base for School-Wide Positive Behavior Support. (n.d.). <https://www.pbis.org/resource/examining-the-evidence-base-for-school-wide-positive-behavior-support>.

(12) Sanford Harmony

Social emotional learning (sel) program, activities & curriculum. Harmony. (2021, July 8). <https://www.harmonysel.org/>.

Responding to COVID-19

In addition to the above mentioned interventions for mitigating academic and mental health concerns, Russell County Schools will continue to increase its efforts in responding to social, emotional, and mental health needs of all students. According to the School Mental Health Assessment Research & Training Center (SMART) and the Center for Disease Control (CDC), “The proportion of emergency visits for mental health issues for youth 12-17 increased by 31% during the pandemic” (www.k12.wa.us). It is incumbent upon the school district to provide support for the social and emotional health of our students affected by the pandemic. We intend to utilize our Extended School Services, both “before” and “after” school, to provide opportunities for students to re-engage in social environments. One such endeavor will involve a local organization, Artworks, which specializes in using artistic thinking to promote emotional well-being and stability through art expression. Another method for promoting social/emotional well-being will occur through the implementation of *Sanford Harmony*, a CASEL select program that develops key social and emotional competencies in the classroom, at home, and/or in extended school settings. Students at the elementary level will also receive

mental health supports from *Satchel Pulse*, an adaptive educational mental health and school safety program designed to provide Social Emotional Learning (SEL) activities, universal screeners, diagnostic assessments, interventions, and progress monitoring tools. Russell County Middle School students will receive SEL support through *Second Steps*, a fully loaded program that addresses current social and emotional issues relevant to middle schoolers. Russell County High School will be utilizing *Sources of Strength* to support their SEL needs concerning suicide, bullying, and substance abuse, as well as, empowering teens to care about their impact in the world.

Plan for Spending Remainder of Funds

Based upon stakeholder feedback and discussion, the Russell County School District plans to spend the remainder of its ARP ESSER III Funds in the following manner:

- Continuation of Extended School Services at all 5 schools for 5 days per week beginning on Monday, August 23, 2021; funded for a minimum of 2 years
- Modifications/upgrades of science labs across the district (beginning at Russell County High School)
- Providing transportation for any student attending Extended School Services
- Hiring of an additional Home/Hospital Instructor
- Continuation of contract for additional School Mental Health Specialist (hired in 2020)
- Providing instructional support materials for closing achievement gaps across content areas and grade levels, including textbooks, for replacing outdated and/or missing materials
- Providing teacher training for the implementation of necessary intervention methods and strategies (consultants, travel, lodging, registration fees, etc.)
- SEL resources and training