Section 1: Introduction
The purpose of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) III Fund is to help safely reopen and sustain the safe operation of schools and address the impacts of COVID-19 on the nation’s students by addressing students’ academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. The Essex County School Division has been awarded $3,229,471.87 in ESSER III funds. This plan describes how the awarded funds will be used.

Questions about this plan should be directed to Dr. Kimberley L. Chandler, Senior Director of Federal and Specialized Programs at kchandler@essex.k12.va.us, or at 804-238-4250.

Summary of the School Division’s Response to COVID-19
The primary goal of the Essex County Public Schools continues to be to offer in-person instruction safely and to the greatest extent possible under the guidelines provided by the Governor’s Office, Virginia Department of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Virginia Department of Education. Essex County Public Schools is planning for a return to in-person learning five days a week for all PreK-12 students beginning on August 16, 2021. The instructional staff will focus on the design and delivery of engaging, in-person instructional experiences for all students.

For those families who continue to be interested in a virtual learning option for the next school year, the Essex County Public Schools will be partnering with Virtual Virginia to provide a virtual learning option for the 2021-2022 school year. There will be no virtual learning option for PreK students. Virtual Virginia is a program of the Virginia Department of Education and serves students in grades K-12 throughout the state of Virginia who wish to participate in a full-time
virtual program. Families who completed the application process and whose children were accepted will be receiving additional information directly from Virtual Virginia.

**Section 2: Summary of Proposed Expenditures**

Regulatory provisions for projects funded under the ARP Act ESSER III Fund allow for the expenditure of funds from March 13, 2020 – September 30, 2024. Reimbursement requests must be submitted to the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) by November 15, 2024. This will allow Essex County Public Schools to use the funds to plan for the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years. All positions listed will be supported for those two school years with grant funds.

Each section of this plan provides a narrative about the proposed expenditures, which are summarized in the following table. All proposed expenditures are approximate and subject to change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure Category</th>
<th>Nature of Expenditure</th>
<th>Funds Requested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section 3: Prevention and Mitigation</td>
<td>Supplies for implementation of prevention and mitigation strategies</td>
<td>$100,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 4: Addressing Unfinished</td>
<td>Strategies to facilitate the recovery of learning, mitigate the effects of unfinished learning, and strengthen Tier I instruction through the implementation of evidence-based interventions</td>
<td>$700,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Section 5: Other Uses of Funds</td>
<td>Virtual instruction support</td>
<td>$300,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expansion of the Essex High School track for enhanced physical distancing during PE and athletic activities</td>
<td>$500,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expansion of the Essex High School stadium seating capacity for physical distancing during PE and athletic activities</td>
<td>$500,000.00</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Two electric buses which shall be used for the delivery of meals and used for after school activities to address unfinished learning: The additional buses will allow the school division to ensure adequate social distancing for students being transported.</td>
<td>$200,000.00</td>
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Section 3: Prevention and Mitigation Strategies

ARP Act ESSER III funds may be used to implement prevention and mitigation strategies that are, to the greatest extent practicable, consistent with the most recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance on reopening schools, in order to continuously and safely open and operate schools for in-person learning. The Essex County Public Schools will use approximately $100,000 of its ARP Act ESSER III funds to implement prevention and mitigation strategies as described below:

Essex County Public Schools will use the ESSER III funds to support prevention and mitigation strategies throughout the school system in various ways. Various staff will be required to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to include face coverings, gloves, and face shields when working with symptomatic staff/students or when working with medically fragile student populations that are not eligible for vaccines; therefore, the school system will purchase additional masks, gloves, and face shields.

Each school has a designated clinic area for isolating students who present with symptoms related to COVID-19. These best practice procedures include providing the isolated student with surgical masks, socially distancing the student away from other persons, donning of mask by clinic staff working with the symptomatic student, and keeping the student separate from others.
until the parent/guardian can pick up him/her from school. The clinics will need additional masks, gowns, and gloves to maintain safety for personnel while in the isolation rooms.

Social distancing in classroom and campus educational settings is one prevention strategy to utilize, as feasible, with other key mitigation strategies to implement healthy campuses. There are currently no recommendations or requirements for social distancing for vaccinated individuals. As campus sites have a combination of both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals, it is recommended to utilize 3 feet of distancing as feasible while indoors on campus. The purchasing of signage will be utilized to remind individuals, especially in areas where large groups congregate, to use as much physical distancing as feasible. To promote healthy protocols in the schools, the district will provide adequate supplies to promote healthy hygiene (Clorox wipes, soap for dispensers, and paper towels). During the 20-21 school year, hand sanitizers were installed in all classrooms and hallways at every school in the system. Additional sanitizer agent is necessary to refill the machines in these areas.

Section 4: Addressing Unfinished Learning

Section 2001(e)(1) of the ARP Act requires each LEA to use twenty percent of its formula funds to address the academic impact of lost instructional time (learning loss) through the implementation of evidence-based interventions, such as summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive after school programs, or extended school year programs. According to the provisions of the ARP Act, a minimum of 20% ($645,894.37) of available funding must be devoted to extended day, extended year, summer school programs, or other instructional programs. The Essex County Public Schools plans to designate $700,000 of its ARP Act ESSER III funds to address unfinished learning as described below:

The LEA will use ESSER III grant funds to facilitate the recovery of learning, mitigate the effects of unfinished learning, and strengthen Tier I instruction. Small group instruction will be facilitated by hiring additional paraprofessionals so that classes may be organized into small groups to work on targeted skills. As part of the professional learning component for teachers, an emphasis will be placed on how to arrange students effectively for such instruction and how to collaborate effectively with paraprofessionals. Teachers and paraprofessionals will participate in professional learning sessions about the related pedagogical skills needed for effective Tier I instruction, differentiation, and specific content-related (mathematics and English language arts) interventions.

Grant funds will also be used to support payments for teachers to provide after school, targeted remediation, extension, and enrichment opportunities for students. Multiple opportunities for learning beyond the traditional school day will be provided. In addition, each school will host after-school bridge programs (to narrow the learning gaps) in which remediation activities will be conducted two or three days per week. In each school, 15 minutes per day will be devoted specifically to the recovery of learning activities, which will be facilitated by teachers and paraprofessionals.
Another use of grant funds will be the development of an extended day program focused on supporting students with behavioral problems through focused instructional interventions and assistance with social and emotional concerns.

ESSER III funds will also be used to support the salaries and benefits of additional staff to help address COVID-related learning needs and the strengthening of Tier I instruction. An English/History Curriculum Specialist and a Mathematics/Science Curriculum Specialist will support teachers in the classroom, and provide schoolwide professional development to address learning loss among students. An Administrative Assistant will be hired to serve as a liaison between the school division and Virtual Virginia, and also to assist three central office administrators who support teachers and administrators and supervise curriculum and instruction.

Section 5: Other Uses of Funds

Section 2001(e) of the ARP Act permits school divisions to use the ARP Act ESSER III funding not reserved to address unfinished learning to address the impacts of COVID-19 in a variety of ways. The Essex County Public Schools will use ARP Act ESSER III funds in accordance with Section 2001(e) of the ARP Act as described below:

The Essex County Public Schools (composed of an elementary, intermediate, and high school) began in-person instruction in late October, 2020. As the year progressed, with various changes in schedules, the number of in-person instruction days increased from two days to four days per child by mid-January (if requested by parents/guardians). The return to five days per week for in-person instruction in 2021-2022 will provide opportunities to assist students in various ways. For those families who may still be interested in a virtual learning option for the next school year, the Essex County Public Schools will use grant funds to procure Virtual Virginia seats for students in need of a virtual option. This will alleviate the need for the ECPS teachers to teach both in-person and virtually, thus allowing teachers to focus on face-to-face and small group instruction.

Parents with children who have significant cognitive impairments have requested that their children continue to receive virtual instruction due to medical reasons. To support these students and to meet their educational needs, Essex County Public Schools will need to use a virtual platform from an outside source. A certified special education teacher will continue to serve as the case manager for the children. However, a paraprofessional will need to participate with the students virtually to ensure their accommodations are met and to assist them in an educator role. To provide support for those special education students who continue to participate in 100% virtual instruction, the salary and benefits of this additional paraprofessional will be supported through the ESSER III funds.

The funding requested to support virtual instruction (Virtual Virginia and an additional paraprofessional) is $300,000.

The ECPS administration strongly believes the best educational setting is provided to its students through an in-person learning environment, with a variety of opportunities provided, including those to improve students’ physical health. In order to ensure that proper social distancing
protocols are implemented for student participation in running, walking, and other track and field activities, funds will be used to expand the track at Essex High School from 6 lanes to 8 lanes, at a cost of $500,000.

For the benefit of all school and community stakeholders who use the Essex High School sports facilities, ESSER III funds will also be used to expand the stadium seating capacity to accommodate social distancing guidelines, at a cost of approximately $500,000.

To provide increased social distancing on buses, the delivery of meals and transportation for after school activities to address unfinished learning, two additional buses will be purchased, at a cost of approximately $200,000. (Grant funds from other sources will be used for the total cost of the purchase.) These will be electric buses, which will have the added benefit of helping to reduce the county’s overall emissions and improve local air quality.

To ensure that all students have access to personal computing devices and hotspots, $200,000 will be devoted to the purchase of technology equipment.

Another use of the funds will be $179,471 to support Essex County’s initiative to bring broadband services to residents and improve internet connectivity for students so that they have reliable virtual instruction while working at home.

Approximately $250,000 will be used to support the salary and benefits of various employees, including a Finance Specialist, who will assist in the management of payments using federal grant funds. The salaries and benefits of nurses and transportation staff will also be supported with these funds. The school nurses aid in COVID mitigation. Transportation staff will transport students for afternoon and weekend activities to address unfinished learning.

Section 6: Addressing Students’ Academic, Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Needs

The Essex County Public Schools will ensure that the interventions it implements will respond to the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of all students, and particularly those students disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, including students from low-income families, students of color, English learners, children with disabilities, students experiencing homelessness, children in foster care, and migratory students. The Essex County Public Schools will use ARP Act ESSER III funds in accordance with Section 2001(e) of the ARP Act as described below:

The position of a division social worker, funded with $200,000 of ESSER III funds, will support students and families, including those referenced above, by working with school counselors and the ECPS school psychologist. The social worker will convey parents’ questions and concerns to appropriate school/district staff for the purpose of supporting student success and further facilitating communications with parents. The individual will conduct home visits, collect information from parents in an effort to meet the educational objectives of students, and collaborate with other personnel to identify issues and concerns and work toward solutions.
An additional $100,000 will be allotted to support students in the ECPS with mental health services. This will include developing social/emotional supports beyond school hours and in coordination with the Department of Social Services.

**Section 7: Consultation with Stakeholders and Opportunity for Public Comment**

In developing the ARP ESSER Plan, the Essex County Public Schools sought public input and took such input into account. Stakeholder input was collected through an online survey, Division School Improvement Committee member comments, Division Leadership Team meetings, and individual communications received at the school and division planning levels. Stakeholder representation for the interests of children with disabilities, English learners, children experiencing homelessness, children in foster care, migratory students, children who are incarcerated, and other underserved students were included in the development of the ARP ESSER III plan for the Essex County Public Schools.

**Section 8: Making the Plan Available to the Public**

The Essex County Public Schools Division has taken the following steps to make this plan available to the public:

- The plan is posted at: [http://www.essex.k12.va.us/](http://www.essex.k12.va.us/).
- The plan was sent to families via the School Messenger system.
- The plan is available in multiple languages through use of our translation service, Language Line. For translation of this plan, please contact Dr. Kimberley Chandler at [kchandler@essex.k12.va.us](mailto:kchandler@essex.k12.va.us), or at 804-238-4250.
- Upon request, a parent/guardian who is an individual with a disability as defined by the ADA may be provided with the plan in an alternative format accessible by contacting Dr. Tara Temple, Assistant Superintendent, at [troane@essex.k12.va.us](mailto:troane@essex.k12.va.us), or at 804-443-3959.