

Launching Thriving Futures

RECOVERY, ACCELERATION, AND RE-ENGAGEMENT



The PWCS plan for acceleration, recovery, and re-engagement through providing comprehensive academic, social-emotional, and mental health supports in schools

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **American Rescue Plan Act of 2021** (ARPA) provides additional funding to school systems to support unfinished learning efforts. Prince William County Public Schools (PWCS) is eligible for approximately \$88 million in ARPA funding with an additional \$4.8 million in Title 6B ARPA funding. The Division is required to submit an application to the Virginia Department of Education by September 1, 2021, to be eligible for these funds. This legislation also requires the Local Education Agency (LEA) to use 20% of their formula funds from ARPA to address learning loss/unfinished learning. PWCS has developed a comprehensive plan that will utilize approximately 78% of the PWCS formula funds to address learning loss/unfinished learning, or nearly \$72 million of the total amount available to PWCS.

The ARPA funding for addressing unfinished learning will be spent on the following overall resource, service, and support areas:

- 1. Additional human resources to support academics and mental health needs**
- 2. Additional materials and common assessments that support the rigorous, accelerated, and aligned standards-based learning in the identified academic areas as well as social-emotional learning**
- 3. Specific professional learning on research-based best practices in support of students overcoming mental wellness barriers and the acceleration of academic learning**

Given the research that highlights the disparities of COVID-19 and its impact on our most vulnerable learners and student populations, PWCS designed a resource allocation process to provide additional resources, supports, and services to meet and/or exceed the specific academic and social-emotional needs of all students including our advanced learners. The process includes a focus on student groups that were disparately impacted by the pandemic such as students with disabilities, English Learners (EL), and students who are economically disadvantaged.

Beyond these investments toward addressing unfinished learning, we have utilized ARPA funding to support the hiring of summer school teachers, thus giving our students summer school opportunities to include Extended School Year (ESY) services for students with disabilities and focused instruction for our English Learner students. The Division will also utilize approximately \$11.3 million of the ARPA funding for the virtual programming for our virtual-only students at all levels.

BACKGROUND

Since March 2020, students, families, employees, and our entire community have been profoundly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Beyond the health crisis, the pandemic brought with it unprecedented school closures, education burdens on families, human isolation, economic challenges, mental health concerns, and many other complications that undermined the well-being of families, the operation of our School Division, and student learning progress. These factors have ultimately increased gaps in both student achievement and opportunity.

In preparation for the 2021-22 school year, and in response to the pandemic's negative and often disparate academic and mental health impacts on students, (PWCS) is committed to maximizing our efforts to: Providing equitable access to rigorous high-quality curriculum resources and offer consistent Division-wide

BACKGROUND

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implementation of research-based best practices and social-emotional supports.

PWCS sought community input into the development of the plan for these funds through a survey, and two public meetings held on June 15 and June 22. Over 9,200 people responded to the survey, and the following themes were identified.

- **A focus on student social-emotional needs and mental health needs of students and staff;**
- **Support for at-risk student populations; and**
- **Providing targeted, evidence-based interventions and extended learning programs (before and, after school, etc.)**

Best practices, derived from current educational research, will be contextualized for use in our community in keeping with these priorities to meet the individual needs of students by equitably distributing additional federal resources to support acceleration in student learning as we recover, reconnect, and re-engage with in-person learning.

PURPOSE

This plan addresses unfinished learning and synthesizes our efforts to measure the impacts of COVID-19, school closures, and sustained virtual instruction on our students, with particular emphasis on our most vulnerable learners. The strategies outlined will serve as a significant component of the Division's overall approach for recovery, acceleration, and re-engagement through providing comprehensive academic, social-emotional, and mental health supports in schools.



GLOBAL AND NATIONAL IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON STUDENTS

While the COVID-19 school closures were unprecedented in the United States, there are multiple bodies of research on which PWCS has drawn to anticipate the impacts of extended closures on student learning. While educators and others are still determining all the K-12 and postsecondary educational impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic, multiple national and international studies have demonstrated significant negative impacts on student learning and achievement as well as the social and emotional well-being of students.

One recent study by McKinsey and Company (2021) found that students have on average five to nine months of unfinished learning that must be addressed. The study also found that students of color have been impacted to a greater degree by the pandemic and unfinished learning. Additionally, national and state data

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show that English Learners, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic and closure of schools. Based on this information and historical learning trends on how out-of-school-time affects learning, we have considered these data trends and the relationship to the learning gains students should have experienced in reading relative to a typical school year.

Information on national trends related to mathematics explain how students are predicted to show even smaller learning gains from the previous year, returning with less than 50% of typical gains. When the pandemic subsides, students will return to school with lower achievement that must be addressed. There are also concerns that the gap between high- and low-achieving students will become larger (Soland, 2020). Taking these concerns into account, PWCS has examined available formal and informal Division data to inform our efforts and needed supports for students. Teaching tools such as MasteryConnect, and Lexia, as well as administrative data from online learning platforms, will equip teachers and support staff with learning data that can help identify students who have disengaged from instruction and/or who are at risk of dropping out entirely (Hill & Loeb, 2020).

America's Promise Alliance conducted a survey during the pandemic, finding that more than one in four young people reported lost sleep due to worry, unhappiness, depression, and loss of confidence in self. Survey participants stated feeling less connected to their teachers and other school staff during online learning. This information supports the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) findings in the increase in the proportion of emergency department visits for mental health reasons. Compared with 2019, this data presents how the proportion of mental health-related visits for children ages 5-11 and 12-17 years increased approximately 24% and 31%, respectively. PWCS has strongly considered the information available in relationship to the growing consensus that school closures in spring 2020 and the ongoing pandemic likely had negative effects on student learning (Kuhfeld et. Al, 2020).



RESPONDING TO THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 IN PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY

Based on available student data, the Division has developed a plan to address unfinished learning utilizing the latest identified research-based strategies such, as high-quality high-dosage tutoring (Kraft & Goldstein, 2020), extended learning time, accelerated learning, layered curriculum, and updated unit guides, which include necessary prerequisite knowledge and skills that have been identified as priority unfinished learning.

PWCS has identified core values that will guide our plan:

- **Best instructional practices that will result in academic achievement for all students in PWCS;**
- **Integrity of services, learning process, targeted support, and monitoring of plan effectiveness;**
- **Equitable distribution of funding, supports, and human resources provided to schools**

The Division is recommending that the primary and best instructional model for the 2021-22 school year

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is five days per week of in-person instruction. The Division is also offering a virtual-only model and continues to offer nontraditional programs to meet individual student needs.

PWCS has identified priority academic areas based on key findings of impacts on learning since March 2020:

- **Mathematics;**
- **Early literacy;**
- **English language arts;**
- **Science;**
- **Academic, social, and communication development for students with disabilities;**
- **Academic and social language development for English Learners;**
- **Academic achievement and grades in all subject areas;**
- **Social, emotional, and mental health.**

The Division has also examined available social-emotional and mental health data to assess the impacts on mental wellness and determine the needed supports and services for students and staff to ensure a successful year.

In summary, PWCS findings demonstrate pandemic-related significant negative impacts on student achievement, engagement, and mental well-being. These significant negative impacts include increased learning and opportunity gaps among student groups with more disparate impacts for student priority groups which include economically disadvantaged, English learners, and students with disabilities.

1 FOCUS ON THE INSTRUCTIONAL CORE

PWCS is committed to increasing the capacity of knowledge and skills of educators needed to support students; increasing their engagement as it relates to their own learning. By focusing on the instructional core, students in PWCS will have access and be exposed to challenging content.

Funding Commitments:

- English Language Arts (ELA) textbooks and core materials provided to all schools
- Hands-on science, experiment, resources, and materials provided to all schools to support inquiry-based science instruction
- Professional learning to implement Instruction Rounds across all schools
- One Teaching Assistant for every 500 students for focus and priority schools
- One math specialist support staff, per school for schools identified as prioritized

2 EQUITABLE ACCESS TO RIGOROUS, HIGH-QUALITY, CULTURALLY RELEVANT CURRICULUM

PWCS is committed to providing educators with high-quality curriculum frameworks, resources, and planning opportunities centered on best practices and collaboration. Schools will focus on planning that includes instructional materials that are aligned to state standards.

Funding Commitments:

- Curriculum units in Canvas aligned to student learning needs, background, and interest (includes technology) provided to all schools

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- Lexia Core 5 for individualized adaptive acceleration for all students at all reading levels including advanced learners, struggling readers, students with disabilities, and English Learners (Pre-K-5)
- Lexia Power Up for individualized adaptive literacy acceleration for all students at all reading levels including advanced learners, struggling readers, students with disabilities, and English Learners (grades 6-12)
- Fifteen instructional coaching positions shared amongst identified priority schools
- Per-pupil funding for high-dosage tutoring provided to all schools based on student need

3 ACCELERATION OF LEARNING THROUGH HIGH-DOSAGE TUTORING, NEEDED INTERVENTIONS, AND EXTENDED/EXPANDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

PWCS is committed to providing opportunities and support for educators as they identify essential and prerequisite knowledge, skills, and attributes needed for students to access new grade level content through three strategies:

- **High-Dosage Tutoring:** Provide additional opportunities for students to access grade appropriate content through dedicated tutors in one-on-one and small group settings to focus on building knowledge in core subject areas. High-dosage tutoring is defined as tutoring that occurs more than three days per week or at a rate of at least 50 hours over 36 weeks. This form of tutoring is embedded within the school day.
- **Needed Interventions:** As a part of multi-tiered systems of support, students will receive tier 2 and tier 3 remediation and interventions such as small group instruction with reading or math specialists.
- **Expanded and Extended Learning Opportunities:** Increase instructional time through before and after-school cocurricular and extra-curricular programming.

Funding Commitments:

- Per-pupil funding for extended/expanded learning at identified schools receiving focused or prioritized supports, to include before school, after school, cocurricular and/or extra-curricular activities/opportunities
- One full-time Teaching Assistant position per focused or priority schools (one per every 500 students)
- Per-pupil funding for high-dosage tutoring available to all schools (based on individual student need)

4 HIGH-QUALITY, JUST-IN-TIME PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

PWCS is committed to providing high-quality training for educators and school leaders, focused on the plan's Priority Indicators and PWCS Strategic Plan goals. This will be accomplished by progress monitoring student performance and strengthening both instructional and leadership practices.

Funding Commitments:

All schools will receive professional learning in the following focus areas:

- Instructional Core best practices
- Instructional Rounds protocol
- Culturally responsive instruction
- School culture and student and family re-engagement
- Best practices for ELs, Special Education, and advanced learners
- Quarterly trainings for administrators to support use of at-risk index to identify the students who are most in need of services
- Additional professional learning for focus and priority schools based on ongoing student academic assessment data throughout the school year

5 SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

PWCS is committed to ensuring the emotional well-being of our students and staff to ensure our communities thrive. Social-emotional support can be particularly important for students with disabilities as it emphasizes relationships and social interactions, helping students to develop a sense of safety and belonging. Virtual learning has taken a heavy toll on students with disabilities and their families, so it is important to continue building relationships and support individual student needs upon the continued return to in-person instruction. Schools will receive supports to assess student and staff emotional needs and lay the foundation for focused engagement and healing.

Funding Commitments:

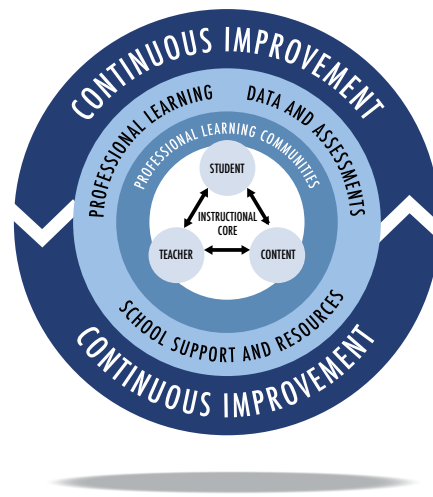
- Prepared resources for school administrators to support positive staff culture and well-being
- Prepared teacher lesson plans, and online social and emotional learning library for students in grades K-12
- Social Emotional Learning Curriculum
- Part time social/emotional learning coach for focus schools
- Full time social/emotional learning coaches for priority schools
- Staff training for identification of mental health concerns and implementation of supportive strategies
- Grief and Loss Groups/Short-term and Long-term Individual Counseling
- Direct staff access to counseling and referral to long-term emotional support resources
- Division-wide student support teams to identify and case manage students with emotional needs that are impacting learning

6 RE-ENGAGEMENT OF FAMILIES

PWCS is committed to motivating and partnering with families and increasing family engagement opportunities that support educational excellence for all students. Re-engagement for students with impacted attendance rates, English Learners, and economically disadvantaged students and families who have been disparately impacted by the pandemic are a focus. A co-designed model for family re-engagement will be placed in schools, providing opportunities for families to work together with educators and school leaders, gathering feedback, and establishing shared commitments for student success.

Funding Commitments:

- Monthly parent engagement series designed for English Learner families to inform parents of Division opportunities, school program offerings, academic, and social and emotional supports to supplement the student experience
- Family engagement support through home visits on weekends and evenings by trained staff
- Individual post-secondary planning support outside of school hours
- Office of Student Services in-person events and on demand Parent Support Series
- Provide Special Education Resource Center events for parents
- Parent liaisons for schools with impacted attendance rates and lower enrollment rates because of the pandemic
- Community-based case management through collaboration with local agencies for mental health and basic needs (food, shelter, clothing)



Source: City, E.A., Elmore, R.F., Fiarman, S.E., Teitel, L. & Lachman, A. (2018). *Instructional rounds in education: a network approach to improving teaching and learning*. Harvard Education Press.

EQUITABLE RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Given the research that highlights the disparities of COVID-19 and its impact on our most vulnerable learners, PWCS designed a prioritized resource allocation process to allocate additional resources, supports, and services to meet and/or exceed the specific academic and social-emotional needs of all students.

Priority Indicators include student membership demographics (e.g., diverse learner needs and percent of students with disabilities, English Learners, and economically disadvantaged students), the rate at which students enter and leave school, student academic performance (two or more failing grades in middle and high school courses), early literacy achievement, chronic absenteeism, and COVID-19 rates by student zip code.

Additionally, separate indicators for social-emotional and mental wellness (e.g., counseling contacts for personal concerns, as well as survey results on student safety and wellbeing) were established and data analyzed to determine student and school needs for services and support.

The resources, support, and funding follow systemic models for both academic and social-emotional supports that align to the Priority Indicators. The following are three types of school supports.

Universal – resources, support, and funding to support **ALL** schools

Focused – additional assets, support, and funding for some schools where Priority Indicator data signifies the need for further resources

Prioritized – additional assets, support, funding for a few schools where the Priority Indicator data signifies the need for more intensive services and resources

Overall, the Division’s recovery plan is aligned to the core values of equity, integrity, and academic success for all students. Student needs and factors impacting academic and opportunity gaps, student performance and engagement, social-emotional well-being, and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on students within a school’s community are all factors the School Division is using to determine the distribution and implementation of additional resources, supports, and services to schools and students.

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