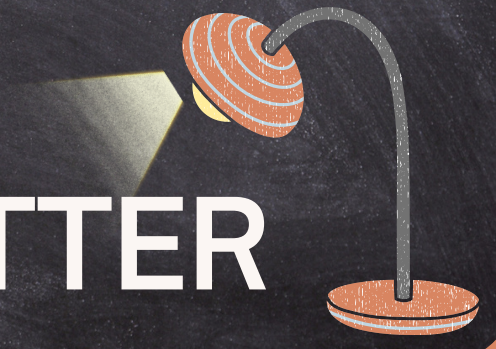


ACPS FAMILY NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 31, 2022



The school year is well under way and we have completed the first nine weeks. We are one quarter of the way through the school year and overall things are trending in a positive direction. I want to thank our staff and students for all they have done thus far this year. I also want to thank our families and community members for all the support they have shown our students and schools. However, we continue to need to your assistance and I encourage you to #ShowUp for our students and schools. As we move into the second nine weeks of the school year I want to cover a few highlights from the first nine weeks, our school accreditation status, and school safety.

School safety remains a high priority for our schools, central office staff, as well as local and state law enforcement. In alignment with the safety focus, ACPS conducted lockdown safety drills at all of our schools during October. ACPS also participated in the Great Southeast Shakeout (Earthquake Drill) on October 20, 2022. Members of the Amherst County Sheriff's Office, Amherst Town Police, and the Virginia State Police assisted school personnel conduct and evaluate the drills. We are using the information from the drills to assist school safety teams in fine tuning their crisis response plans. We will continue to conduct safety drills throughout the year to ensure we are doing everything within our power to keep our students and staff safe in the event we have a crisis situation.

We encourage our students and families to do their part to assist us in keeping our students and staff safe at our schools. It is imperative that students and families notify school personnel and/or law enforcement if they are aware of a threat situation. We strongly encourage our stakeholders to remember the premise of "See Something, Say Something" and report activities that may pose a threat to our schools.

Student attendance continues to be an area of concern. Students are considered chronically absent if they miss two or more days of school per month. I am encouraging our families to do everything within your power to have your students attend school. It is disheartening to hear that students are absent because their parents have scheduled a vacation during times in which our schools are open. I urge you to try to plan your trips around times when school is not in session. Part of our school accreditation is based on student attendance. For accreditation purposes, the state does not differentiate between excused or unexcused absences. Therefore, it is essential that students are in attendance as much as possible. Student attendance at school is vital to their academic success.

Amherst County Schools met all accreditation standards last year based on the three-year average for our schools. Due to the pandemic, the state waived the attendance portion of the accreditation standards. If attendance had been factored into the accreditation standards ACPS would not have met the attendance requirements. Additionally, although our schools met the SOL testing requirements in our three-year average, we realize that many of our students may have gaps in their knowledge due to school closures and absences from school as a result of the pandemic. To help overcome the effects of the pandemic, ACPS is focusing on providing quality instruction to all of our students on a daily basis. We are identifying areas in need of growth and working to address the individual needs of our students.

However, we need our students and our families to assist us in this process. You can do this by following up with your students at home and contacting your student's teachers if you need additional resources or if you have any concerns regarding your student's progress. Overcoming the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic is not just a school issue and we cannot get our students where they need to be without the support of our families and community. We need our students and our families to be engaged in the education process and that you #ShowUp both physically and mentally. By working together as one team (Team Amherst) we can continue the work of overcoming the effects of the pandemic in our schools and community.

On September 30, 2022 Amherst County Schools conducted the first #ShowUp Day for the school year. Schools from across the division held events to encourage students to attend school as well as recognize students and staff who had "Shown Up" to school on a regular basis. This was truly a community event as we had community members at our schools interacting with our students. Amherst Middle School held a Hometown Heroes Day and had members from the Amherst County Sheriff's Office, Amherst Town Police, Virginia Conservation Police (Game Warden), Virginia State Police Bomb Technicians, Amherst Fire Department, and Amherst County EMS at the school. Students were able to speak with all of the "heroes" and ask them questions about the equipment they had on display as well as career questions. ACPS also had members of the high school football team, cheerleaders, and volleyball team go to some of our elementary schools and interact with our elementary students.

I continue to be impressed by the work of our students and our staff. Although there is work that needs to be done, I am encouraged by what I am observing. I am confident that if we all continue to work together there is nothing that we cannot overcome. I hope everyone has an enjoyable fall season and can spend time with family and friends during the Thanksgiving Holiday. Please feel free to contact your student's school or my office if you have any questions or concerns.

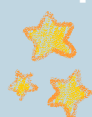
Sincerely,

William

BECOME A VOLUNTEER!



The Amherst County Public Schools Volunteer Program is a community based volunteer program that allows community members the opportunity to give back to their school community. ACPS values and promotes the active engagement of the community in our schools. All volunteers will be required to complete a background check (if a current background check is not already on file) and attend a brief training session prior to being approved and placed on the Volunteer Program Roster. If you have questions, please contact Brittany McNerney at 434-943-9387 or by email at bmcnerney@amherst.k12.va.us. We appreciate your willingness to support the schools in our community!



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Join Team Amherst and make a positive impact in the lives of our students!

- Greet students during arrival/dismissal
- Assist front office staff
- Monitor hallways
- Lunch duty coverage

These are just a few examples of volunteer opportunities in our schools. For more information on how to become a volunteer, please contact our offices or visit our website!

www.amherst.k12.va.us

Questions? Contact 434-946-9387 or bmcnerney@amherst.k12.va.us



[Click here for more information!](#)

Upcoming Events

November 7: Professional Development Day
(No School for Students)

November 8: Teacher Planning Day
(No School for Students)

November 23-25: Thanksgiving Break
(No School for Staff & Students)



Families are invited to join us for our virtual Title I Back to School event on Tuesday, November 15th beginning at 7pm. During our time, we will have a story time by our guest reader and invite you to join us for a hands-on science investigation using materials found in your kitchen. More information about the event will be sent home with students and shared via social media and School Messenger. We can't wait to see you as we combine Literacy and Science and investigate together!



We Want to Hear From You!

Amherst County Public Schools (ACPS) wants to understand the perception of staff, parents' and community members,' regarding the division's strengths and areas for improvement.

As such, ACPS has partnered with an education market research firm, Hanover Research, to conduct a Stakeholder Survey from October 26 to November 2. The survey is intended to collect opinions and perceptions of staff, parents' and community members,' to help ACPS understand your needs so they can best serve you.

The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete. ACPS will receive survey results from Hanover Research in aggregate form only (i.e., no personally identifiable information will be collected or reported). Your participation is important to informing future decisions and improvements.

We look forward to hearing from you to help us best serve our school communities! Please contact (434) 946-9387 if you have any questions about the survey.



[Click here to take the survey.](https://www.amherst.k12.va.us)



ACPS SCHOOL COUNSELING ADVISORY COUNCIL



We are developing an ACPS School Counseling Advisory Council. School counselors work to improve student outcomes through the facilitation of school-family-community partnerships. School-family-community partnerships have increased students' successful academic, career and social/emotional development. A School Counseling Advisory Council is a diverse group of stakeholders (school counselors, administrators, teachers, support staff, family members, community members, and students) who review school counseling related data and information, as well as provide input on existing and future school counseling programs. If you are interested in serving on the ACPS School Counseling Advisory Council, please contact Stephanie Moehlenkamp at smoehlenkamp@amherst.k12.va.us or (434)946-9386 ext. 9554.

Extended Learning Academies

Amherst County Public Schools is conducting a survey of interest about programs to help maintain learning growth in the content areas of reading and math.

The programs are called Learning Academies and will operate during the 2022-2023 school year.

The survey is polling your interest of Learning Academy program. This survey is just for information and doesn't imply the implementation of either at this point. Your voice matters. The survey will run from October 26, 2022 - November 4th, 2022.

A graphic featuring the words "Parent Survey" in a gold, cursive font. Below it, in a smaller, gold, sans-serif font, are the words "Extended Learning Academies". The background is dark brown with horizontal wood-grain lines and is framed by warm, glowing string lights at the top and bottom.

Parent Survey

Extended Learning
Academies

[Click here to take the survey.](#)

Attendance Tips for Parents

Did you know?



- If your student misses 2 or more days a month, they are considered chronically absent.
- By the end of the school year, a chronically absent student will have missed 16 days or more.
- That's more than 112 hours of instruction!

What happens if my student is chronically absent?

- Students who are chronically absent are more likely to have lower reading levels and lower grades.
- High school students who are chronically absent are more likely to drop out.
- Data shows that adults who were chronically absent as students make less money in their careers.



What can parents do?



- Talk to your student about the importance of education.
- Keep your student on a good sleep schedule with a regular bedtime.
- Take away electronic devices 30 minutes before bedtime to encourage sound sleep.

What if my student needs to be absent?

- Talk with teachers about your student's progress and how you can help keep them on track. Emails are great! You can also ask for a parent-teacher conference.
- Make sure your student completes any missing work.
- Turn in notes so absences can be excused.



Unity Day

Orange was seen all across the division in celebration of Unity Day! Students and staff united against bullying by wearing orange and pledging to spread kindness and inclusion. Let's all #ShowUp and be kind!



Let's make every day
UNITY DAY!



BULLYING

Tips for Parents

What is Bullying?

Bullying is repeated hurtful behaviors that occur over time and are one-sided, creating a power imbalance. Peer conflict means both parties are engaging in hurtful behaviors. Peer conflict is not bullying.

What can parents do to prevent bullying?

- Have a good relationship with your child so they feel comfortable talking with you about difficult subjects.
- Talk with your child about whether it is bullying or peer conflict, then support them through the situation.
- Check out www.pacer.org/bullying for more information.

WHAT IF MY CHILD IS BULLIED?

- Try not to panic. Hearing that your child is being bullied can cause an emotional response.
- Report it! Tell the school what is going on so they can address it. You can report bullying on the school's website or division website www.amherst.k12.va.us
- If the bullying is online, take screenshots and share them with the principal and School Resource Officer.

