

VA's Alexandria City Public Schools Launches New Health/PE Initiatives Using ESSA Funds

Issue: In 2015, Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) became one of the first school divisions in Virginia to adopt a health and wellness goal as part of its strategic plan. The goal states: *ACPS will promote efforts to enable students to be healthy and ready to learn.*

Although ACPS includes some wealthy communities, it also has many areas with high poverty rates. Overall, 63 percent of students in this urban school district are eligible for free and reduced-price meals. Many students have parents who work two or three jobs and are not able to provide transportation or supervision for outside-of-school sports or activities.

ACPS leaders knew that in working toward their strategic health and wellness goal, it was important to ensure that students in higher-poverty areas received the same level of support as those coming from the district's wealthier communities.

The Big Idea: Mike Humphreys, SHAPE America member and ACPS instructional specialist for health, physical education and family life education, knew that under

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Alexandria City Public Schools is finding more ways to keep students active during the school day.

the recently reauthorized *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), schools and districts would be able to allocate Title IV, Part A dollars to enhance the “health and well-being” of the students they serve.

He soon made it his mission to claim those funds in the name of health and physical education initiatives.

“What this took on my end was developing positive relationships with my colleagues at the Central Office and constantly pestering the financial gatekeepers so they would know I was in search of extra funding,” says Humphreys. “I would routinely check in with our grants coordinator to see if he knew of any emerging opportunities which might allow for dollars in my direction. Once he had input into the Title IV grant and its destination, he was happy to contact me!”

In the first year of receiving their Title IV, Part A funds, ACPS chose to target its

West End community, which had not only the highest poverty rates but also the highest BMI (body mass index) rates.

Implementation: After careful consideration, ACPS decided to utilize its Title IV, Part A funds in three ways:

1. The district purchased heart rate monitors and the latest software to give students at four Title I schools extra motivation to get active and stay active. Teachers have been trained on how to use the equipment, and they can now project real-time readings for heart rate and other measurements pertaining to student activity levels, such as movement in various activities and games.
2. First-, second- and third-grade teachers at the four Title I schools were trained in the “Catch a Rainbow Every Day” nutritional



ACPS' "Catch a Rainbow Every Day" program teaches students about the importance of fruits and vegetables.

Program Team

Mike Humphreys, Instructional Specialist for Health/Physical Education & Family Life Education

Marcia Jackson, Director of K–12 School Counseling

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for the 2019-2020 school year, which will allow for continued support and expansion of the existing initiatives. At least four more physical education programs will receive heart rate monitors and at least four more schools will use the nutritional education program. In addition, ACPS plans to continue developing its PBIS program with the goal of increasing the health and wellness of ACPS students.

Takeaway: "Our students must be taught how important it is that they are physically active and committed to their own well-being," says Humphreys. "We in ACPS are confident that these initiatives will combine to move the needle related to the growth of our students' health and physical literacy. We consider ourselves lucky to have been able to secure these funds."

program, which was adopted from the Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program at the University of Rhode Island. Using this funding, the schools have been able to purchase a colorful variety of vegetables for students to sample during weekly lessons about how fruits and vegetables are part of a balanced diet that can help them grow into healthy adults.

3. Title IV, Part A funds were also used to enhance the division's Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) framework. PBIS is a proactive approach to establishing the behavioral supports and social

culture needed to achieve academic and behavioral success. The funding was used for professional development for PBIS coaches and their school teams to support the schools' nutrition and fitness efforts.

Results: Taken together, the use of the ESSA Title IV, Part A grant funds has assisted ACPS in meeting its strategic plan goal, which is to enable students to lead healthier lives and to come to school each and every day ready to learn.

The district was recently awarded increased funding under Title IV, Part A



SHAPE America's National Standards for Physical Education

The physically literate individual:

- ✓ Demonstrates competency in a variety of motor skills and movement patterns.
- ✓ Applies knowledge of concepts, principles, strategies and tactics related to movement and performance.
- ✓ Demonstrates the knowledge and skills to achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical activity and fitness.
- ✓ Exhibits responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others.
- ✓ Recognizes the value of physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression and/or social interaction.

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- ✓ Effective Instruction
- ✓ Healthy Behaviors & Physical Activity
- ✓ Advocacy

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