

Beechwood Independent Schools ARP ESSER LEA PLAN

The 2020-2021 school year was one of if not the most challenging years that public education has had to face. The problems decidedly did not stop at the doors of the school; instead, every aspect of our society found itself having to struggle to make ends meet, keep up with the almost daily changes in recommendations and closures, and deal with a world that increasingly seemed like it would never go back to 'normal'. Beechwood Independent Schools did its best to be a bastion of normalcy as much as possible and, through hybrid, remote, and in-person teaching and learning last year, we believe we did the best we could given the circumstances.

Now, it is 2021 and our theme, our mantra, is to 'Get back to Work'.

We know that there are some students who thrived during the chaos of last year. They enjoyed the time out of the normal schedule and could work at their own pace and learn the way they were most comfortable. There were others who struggled a bit with their executive functioning, study, and other organizational skills. They were able to do most of the work, but the process was not easy, and they missed the guidance of the teachers and the comradery of their friends at school. Then, there were those who struggled from the first to the last day of remote instruction and who were only moderately more comfortable with hybrid instruction. There were so few days of face-to-face instruction, some of them 'checked out' and, despite calls home, home visits, and follow ups from teachers and administrators, were not as much a part of the school as they had been in past years.

We know that we have a lot of work to do this year and each stakeholder experienced the pandemic of last year and will continue to be effected by the pandemic of the coming school year and each student, teacher, parent, and community member needs to be helped in a unique way, but, at the same time, if we spend the entire year only focusing on what happened last year, we will be the same position next and the year after that and so on. We must now take on the lift of not only getting back to work, but also making up work that we were not able to last year.

Focusing Funds to Implement Mitigation Strategies and Reopen our Schools

We know that in person instruction is what is best for students. Both the Center for Disease Control [CDC](#) and the American Academy of Pediatrics [AAP](#) agree on the topic and the guidelines for mitigating the risks for students in that face to face setting. In order to comply with the guidance of those two bodies, we have implemented the following:

1. **Promoted vaccination-** At every stakeholder meeting including Board of Education meetings, Reopening committee meetings, Superintendent Advisory meetings and SBDM meetings which are all open to the public and have many of our stakeholders in attendance, it is a standing item to remind people that the best way to get to and stay in school is to get vaccinated
2. **Followed all mandates and Recommendations-** We are continuously in contact with our Board of Education attorney, our insurance providers, and other stakeholders to ensure we are following mandates. This can be difficult at times when changes occur so rapidly. This is why we have so many stakeholder meetings to keep people informed and to allow them to ask questions. We also have a strong social media presence where our other stakeholders can also provide feedback and obtain information.
3. **Maintained social distancing-** Through the creative use of space and scheduling, we have managed to provide at least 3 feet of social distancing for all students. We have trained our staff to recognize symptomatic individuals and to monitor mask use. We provide on and off-site testing with results in less than 24 hours. We do this for all students, extracurricular students, and athletes. At \$5 per test, the cost is very high when we can test up to 100 per day, but it is worth the extra layer of security.
4. **Ventilation-** Our largest cost through the pandemic and into the near future will be the maintenance and upgrading of our ventilation system. A stroke of luck for us is that four years ago, we replaced the HVAC system in the high school to single room HVAC units. Air does not circulate through the whole building or from class to class. Each class is its own self-contained circulatory system. Our filters are updated and changed regularly. At our elementary, we have an HVAC system that is about 10 years old through most of the building and we have spent a great deal of money hiring HVAC consultants to ensure that our filtration is up to the recommendations of the CDC and that we have enough air pushing the system to recycle itself as recommended. In the oldest part of the building, we have also spent a lot of money ensuring that the

filtration system meets guidelines. Buying HEPA filtration for a building is very expensive, but, like testing, it is worth the price to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Additional air handling equipment was installed in our cafeteria, an area with a great deal of traffic and one that is busy for most of the day. All together these costs were nearly \$400,000

- 5. Hiring additional Health Care Workers-** Our district health coordinator was quickly overwhelmed by the volume of symptomatic and asymptomatic teachers and students and community members who wanted to be tested to know if they had COVID. The paperwork alone was more than one person could do in a day, so we hired on an additional certified nurse to help split the load of work and manage the large number of visits, calls, and follow ups that needed to be handled daily.
- 6. Creation of websites to inform stakeholders of processes, data, and resources-** Because the pandemic was so widespread and the impact on the economy was so intense, there were a lot of community members who needed help. We built [websites](#) and contacts for people in the community to ask for food deliveries, to ask for other specific areas of need, and for those in the community who were not as impacted, a place to give to others who were not in the same position. The sites were also created for those who needed help with NTI and teachers who could reach out to community members. This was an ongoing process and at the height of the pandemic, we were producing 4 to 500 meals for the community a day.

There are countless other examples of the Herculean lift the district had to make to open the doors for the school year. There was not a single administrator at the district or building level that did not feel a tremendous pressure to open the doors and get kids in their seats. And while we moved heaven and earth to open the doors, we were promised a great deal of aid from the federal government, FEMA, who said we could recoup a significant portion of the costs to open the buildings. Unfortunately, that money never came and, since the funding for ESSER monies was based on the number of free and reduced students in our district, we did not get most of what we spent back in ESSER grants. We know that more than just students who receive free and reduced meals are struggling and we acknowledge that ALL students need additional help in one form or another to heal with this crisis so despite the inadequate funding, getting students back to school is a priority.

Addressing the Academic Impact of Lost Instructional Time

We are confident in the idea that Beechwood outperformed many other school districts across the state and the nation regarding how we maintained the high standards the district is known for and is expected of in our community. Even with that statement, we know there were many students who may have done well academically but did not grow. Our current embargoed assessment data shows that our proficiency rates fell at the highest level since we started recording data. Some of this is due to the testing environment and the panic at the end of the year. Some of it is due to an assessment that was not vetted and therefore untenable in its efficacy, yet that does not excuse us from needing to 'get back to work'.

Our academic plan for the 2021 school year includes:

- 1. Implementing our EDGE program-** we have been working on this plan for the past few years and were planning to implement it during the last school year, but that could not happen. This year will be the year we begin to implement the EDGE Program from K-12. The Beechwood EDGE is designed around key proficiencies: critical and creative thinking, communication, and collaboration, sustaining inquiry, reflecting, and growing, valuing excellence in outcomes and planning and being strategic. These are Beechwood specific and tailored 21st century skills that we have identified as being deficient in our students. We have met with over 150 businesses and post-secondary institutions who have also helped us shape these proficiencies and they agree that they represent the skills that most of their students and younger workers lack. Through intentional experiences, we provide students opportunities to gain the proficiencies through multiple experiences across grade levels.
This is so important because these skills correspond with [social emotional learning](#) and provide a more relevant and realistic setting than a computer program like many SEL programs across the state. We frame [instruction around big ideas](#) in a realistic setting with multiple solutions to problems. For many of our students, this is a time to shine because they are used to solving problems in the real world. Our students who do not often fare as well in school because they are taking on the role of an adult because of any number of situations at home do very well in these situations because they have had to solve problems their entire lives. Our students who typically do well in school and most especially our gifted and talented students who, in all this getting back to school and dealing with the impact of lost instructional time, are the least

worried about because people think that they will 'just catch up on their own'. We could not disagree more. Gifted Students have just as many needs as any other student. Too many people forget that RtI was not just written for the lower half of the curve, it was written for the top half as well. Our EDGE program is what all students need right now: an opportunity to fail in a safe environment. An opportunity to try things out, to experiment, and to learn from their mistakes.

2. **Interventions-** Our approach to interventions will be different this year from last. Based on surveys, conversations, and the input of committees, we have learned that many of our students are hurting in different ways. Some, especially at the younger grades, have been with their parents for quite a while and have been very afraid of the events of the past 18 months. Middle school kids are very much the same but react to their fears in different ways than the younger students. High School kids are reacting even differently. So, while the reactions are different, the bottom line is the same, there are some very significant social emotional needs of many of our students. Therefore, our initial interventions are working on the whole child and letting them know it is good to talk to an adult which we do through our [Second Steps](#) program and through monthly meetings with the counselors in the district. This is one of the reasons why we have hired a Lead Counselor position as a person who can help to manage the amount of needs our students have. Academic interventions will also happen utilizing [Read180](#), [Orton Gillingham](#), [Lexia](#), [DreamBox](#), [Achieve 3000](#), [Learning A to Z](#) which we assess and monitor through a centralized data system incorporating the multiple assessments used throughout the district including: [MAP](#), Reading A to Z, School developed common assessments, ACT, SAT, AP, EOC, progress monitoring using [easyCBM](#), and a host of in class formative assessments.

Each of our students takes a universal screener which, as of today, is MAP. Using the results of that assessment and the requisite skills analysis, students are then put into one of three categories: needing further assessment to determine specific areas of need; on watch for those students who generally score in the 35th to 70th percentile; and performing for those who are above 70th percentile. We use the traditional 25th and below measure for students who need intervention.

For our gifted students we use a battery of assessments including the Torrance, OLSAT, performance tasks, Stanford 10, SIGS, and others to measure the ability levels with different areas of giftedness. For those that do not perform as expected, we provide further testing and retesting to determine the reason for the drop in performance. This year, we will treat the gifted students like the rest of the school in that at the start of the year, we are most concerned with their social emotional wellbeing and will work on that as well as the academics for the remainder of the year.

Our main method of intervention is the push in method and our teachers meet at the minimum of once per week with the intervention teachers to plan the week's lessons. They examine data and work together to manage student classwork and assessments. There is a rare need for pull out intervention, but when it is needed, we always strive to supplement, not supplant the core instruction of a child. We know for example that even if a student cannot read at grade level, having instruction at grade level is better than pulling them out of their class.

We also believe that focusing on last year's missed instruction is not necessarily a pathway to success. Jay McTighe explained this best in his work [published](#) this spring. If we spend the entire year trying to make up the loss of learning from last year, we will find ourselves in the same position next year. Instead, we are looking at the events of last year as an opportunity to think differently about what we do. We are working on the big picture of what we teach and how we teach to search for opportunities to reteach lost content from last school year. Most of the content throughout standards is aligned and gives instructions who think of the big ideas within their content the freedom to search for misconceptions either common or uncommon and search for ways to make up for that learning. For most of our students, this method will have them caught up by the end of the year, but for our other students, we will focus on a more traditional model of intervention.

3. **Spending the Remainder of the Funds-** As you have read, we are approaching schooling a little differently this year than we have in the past. While we have prepared our staff as much as possible for this shift, we know that there is a great deal of growth needed from our teachers. They need professional development and support throughout the year to be as successful with our students as possible.
 - a. **Cohorts-** we have developed professional development cohorts based on the 5 core principles of our district 3-year plan: Leadership, Community Engagement, Personalized Learning, Culture and Wellness. Each cohort is facilitated by a district leader and a counselor with a group of teachers. Each cohort will first learn what each of the pillars means, define it in terms of our district and then learn from education leaders what their thoughts are on the topic. From there, they will work to develop a plan to implement and monitor the principal. During year two, they will enact their plan

and lead the other cohorts through an understanding of the topic. During the third year, they will continue their monitoring and develop a new topic for research and development. This whole process allows us to personalize learning for teachers and make topics much more relevant to the individual teacher. A significant portion of the spending plan is pay for the consultation, in some cases multiple times throughout the year, of education authors and experts from across the country. Our cohorts will also travel to other schools and spend time getting to know how they do business. For example, we are planning to send our Culture committee to St. Louis to visit the Maplewood Richmond Heights school district where they will spend time at an elementary, middle, and high school to see how they have promoted a culture of learning and success. This is a district that was once set to be closed by the city of St. Louis, but with a visionary superintendent and other district and building leaders, have turned the district into a model of culture, learning, and cohesiveness in a community that is 95% free and reduced lunch, a homeless shelter on campus and students who typically do not perform well on any assessment. Our Personalized Learning group will head to Austin, Texas to visit a gifted and talented magnet school who have a unique way to look at course design and student leadership. Other groups will head to other districts across the country with the twofold purpose of gaining information, but to also develop partnerships that will hopefully last far into the future.

- b. **Software** - Since we have so many initiatives, students needing intervention at all levels and a broad Diagnostic Assessment System, we need to upgrade our data warehousing software. We will be purchasing Qualtrics which will serve the double duty of warehousing our data and allowing us unique ways of collecting additional data. For example, we have developed internal rubrics for our EDGE program focusing on the Core Skills and Proficiencies. These rubrics will be incorporated in the Qualtrics system to create electronic versions that will allow the system to collect data not only on individual students, but classrooms, grade levels, and ultimately, trends in scores over the course of years. Other software includes easyCBM which is a product that will replace our Benchmark tests we give 6 times per year in elementary and middle school. The research-based program has banks of questions that we can customize for grade levels and will track student, classroom, and grade level growth across the year and provide valuable information for teachers, parents, and students. Another of our purchases will be subscriptions to online professional development programs related to our 3-year goals and our cohorts. This will allow 24-7 asynchronous access to learning for our teachers when they are ready to learn. Finally, our district will purchase district Adobe Suite licenses for grades 5-12 to enhance our already existing EDGE curriculum that requires more professional presentations and products from students as they work with members of the community, business, and post-secondary institutions.
- c. **Equipment**- Our EDGE program will ask students to demonstrate their learning in a much more hands on way that they have in the past. For much of these demonstrations, we will need to have supplies and equipment ready for them when they need it. For example, we plan to buy some video equipment to have at grades 5 and 6. Our curriculum introduces them to the basics of video creation in 5th grade and then requires them to do more editing, addition of effects, lighting, etc. by the time they get to 6th grade. We are asking students to solve real problems for real clients beginning in 5th grade so we will be purchasing some 3D printers and a laser cutter for use in the earlier grades. There are several other equipment purchases we need to make as well, but we have not completed the research necessary to fully commit to anything yet.
- d. **Student Leadership**- Because our EDGE program is designed to grow students' abilities to lead, we want to create a Beechwood leadership group beginning in 4th grade and going up to 12th grade. This group will learn what leadership means, how to utilize it and how to help others become leaders themselves. The cost for this will be the time out of class or paying stipends to teachers. We also want to create a group of students who can share what our school and district mean to other schools and anyone who comes to visit. We want student ambassadors who represent the best of what we have to offer at Beechwood and can explain what we are doing to members of the community and the business partners we have coming to the building on a regular basis.
- e. **Lead Counselor**- Our largest expense is the addition of a lead counselor who will oversee the counseling work in both the elementary and the high school. We want this lead counselor to organize our existing counselors to become more district wide than as typically bonded to a

building. Our unique geography calls for this type of solution with the additional SEL and Wellness needs of our staff and students we need to coordinate our efforts. This counselor will also head up the Wellness Professional Development Cohort to give their expertise to the teacher leaders in the group. With a lead counselor, we can create a comprehensive and coordinated suite of counseling services to all our students and staff.

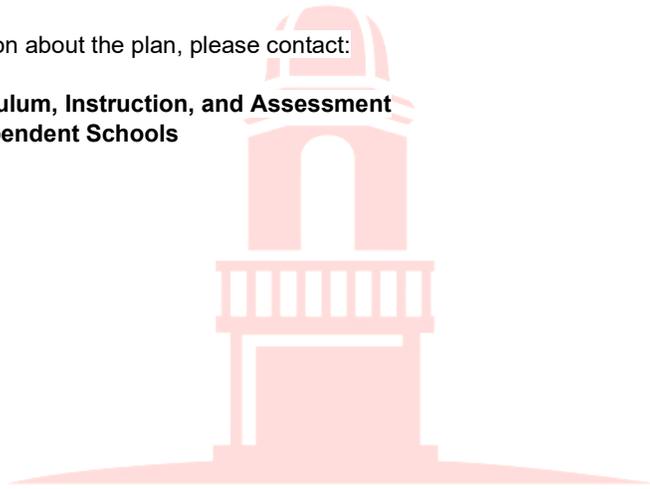
- 4. Ensuring Interventions, social emotional, mental health and Responding to Academic Needs-** As mentioned with our programming notes above, we are in the process of building a comprehensive data system that looks at all our programming, initiatives, and long-term plans. Not only do we have data streams built into each these items, but we also have a plan to do something with the data. Unfortunately, this was learned through the decades of gathering great quantities of data and admiring it without acting on it. We have a year long calendar with specific topics to discuss each week at a minimum. We began this process at retreat this past summer and have finished a 'map' of assessment discussions. Each of our administrators has access to the database of data and it is regular to see that data pulled up on a screen throughout any meeting that we have. Each administrator is in charge of different initiatives, that administrator is charged with compiling and communicating that data at our weekly cabinet meetings, weekly Director meetings, and weekly meetings with the superintendent. As the data is shared, questions are asked, and decisions made. We share the data with our teachers for their input as well and they bring their own data to the table so that everyone can contribute and get feedback on their data. We believe data to be very much like a scrapbook: there are pictures from different angles (formative, summative, performance) and different sizes (classroom, grade level, school, and district) and when we look at our data as a continuum of information, we are better able to make decisions than if we only looked at what we were doing on a single day.

- 5. Meaningful Consultation-** In addition to the committees mentioned in the information above, in order to plan for the spending of this grant money, we formed an Opening Committee who reviewed all of the recommendations, regulations, and resources available to make a recommendation for spending and policy. This committee consisted of teachers, administrators from both buildings, district administration, parents, community members, and students. We also have a Building Committee who is charged with leading the construction we are currently in the middle of adding classrooms to the back of the elementary and creating district lab space to coordinate all of our needs for those areas. This committee consists of administrators, the superintendent, community and business leaders. We also have a superintendent advisory committee that is open to any resident of the city of Fort Mitchell that is held on a monthly basis. Those who attended were also allowed to give voice to the needs of the district from their unique lenses. Finally our Board of Education and our two SBDM councils meet on a regular basis in a joint format. This is another opportunity to give feedback on the need of the district and how to spend the money from the grant. We do not have a teachers union and we do not have a civil rights organization, we reached out to the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce in Cincinnati and the NAACP, but received no response. We made meaningful contact with our ELL population (28 students) which represents the largest of our minority populations by conducting a total of 2 forums conducted in the community where the majority of our ELL students live. Our consultation with each of the stakeholder groups included, above and throughout this document, specific questions about where they thought the money should be spent and where the district's areas of greatest need were. We do not have an official summary, but rather the plan developed from the input which takes in the vast majority of the suggestions made by the public including: mitigations strategies which were first and foremost amongst the feedback we received throughout the many stakeholder meetings. Everyone was in agreement that we needed to take every measure to mitigate the risk to students and teachers through the use of cleaning, HVAC ventilation, and, most importantly, the hiring on of an additional health care worker. 100% of our stakeholders felt that the additional health care worker would help with our mitigation strategies. As for academics, the majority of our stakeholders said they wanted to see more data on their students' progress especially given the events of the last 18 months. They wanted to know if and when their students were progressing and meaningful data and feedback that would help them work with their students at home. Stakeholders were happy with the majority of our intervention strategies but told us that we should continue to work to define and clarify the intervention process. They were also clear with us that they did not want their students to 'repeat the last grade' this year. They wanted their students to keep moving forward and for teachers and administration to find ways to 'fill in the gaps' as the year went on. That was a very clear message from our stakeholders: they did not want their children to think that the reason they were behind was their fault or something that they did which also dovetailed into conversation about social emotional and

mental health. Our stakeholders, like most people in the country, are concerned about the mental health of their children. They wanted mental health to be a focus for us not only this year, but from this year forward. We had two psychologists on our re-opening committee who spoke at length about the kids they were seeing in their practices and the impact of the previous 18 months. Many of the parents and a few of the students spoke about their struggles and the teachers echoed them from the lens of their classrooms. Finally, one resounding agreement from all stakeholders at all of our meetings was to continue with the work of our EDGE program. We had been rolling out parts of it before the pandemic and had our parents excited for what else was to come. Parents, teachers, students, community and business partners spoke about the need to continue and expand the EDGE program because the skills students were getting in that program were essential to success in high school, college, and beyond. We actually were able to get a few more business partners as a result of our public meetings because we elaborated on our plan for the future and the stakeholders wanted to be a part of it. Taking that all into consideration, we chose to follow the plan outlined above. There are more details in you should need them, but we decided to keep the narrative brief considering the scope of your work.

For more information about the plan, please contact:

Ben Lusk
Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
Beechwood Independent Schools
859.630.3311



Beechwood

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS