



Avon Grove School District



2020-2021

Annual Report

TO THE COMMUNITY

A Message from the Superintendent



M. Christopher Marchese, Ed.D. Superintendent of Schools

Dear Community Members,

I am pleased to share our 2020-2021 Annual Report with the Avon Grove School District (AGSD) community. Our District continues to make its mark as an educational leader in Chester County. Each day, our focus is to create and foster a learning environment in which all students are exceptionally well prepared to succeed and lead full and meaningful lives. This is the cornerstone of our educational philosophy in preparing students to become “future ready.”

I am grateful for your partnership in helping our students succeed and for your unwavering support of our District.

Respectfully,

Chris Marchese

“Our vision is that all Avon Grove students are well prepared to create their futures.”

A Successful School Year



The 2020-2021 school year began with remote, online learning for all students. Within the first month, the District provided its low-incidence population of students with the option to attend school in person.

To safely transition all students back to school, the District needed to reduce the number of students in the building at any given time to allow for proper social distancing requirements. To accomplish this, the District implemented its Hybrid Educational Model.

After continuously monitoring the Chester County COVID-19 metrics, K-6 learners returned to schools in person on November 16, 2020. Students who selected the hybrid option attended school five days a week, either in the morning or the afternoon. Students who were not comfortable returning to schools continued to learn online.

At the secondary level, middle school students who selected the hybrid option returned to school on January 19, 2021, and high school students returned on January 27. Students attended school on Monday and Tuesday or Thursday and Friday, with groups alternating on Wednesdays. Students who chose to continue with online learning were integrated into in-person classrooms via Zoom for synchronous learning.

Due to revised social distancing guidelines, AGSD returned to full, in-person instruction at the end of March.

Facilities Strategic Initiative



Response in Times of Crisis

With the return to schools, AGSD developed a COVID-19 prevention campaign to promote best practices: Be SMART, Do Your Part. The campaign consisted of posters, lawn signs, vinyl floor decals, instructional videos and a postcard mailing for the greater community.

As COVID-19 vaccines were authorized for emergency use, AGSD partnered with a local pharmacy to host a two-part vaccine clinic at AGHS for students age 16 and older, and AGSD provided other Chester County school districts with an opportunity to participate.

The 2020-2021 school year was one of significant progress for construction of the new Avon Grove High School (AGHS). In the fall, the District received its final building permits from Penn Township and contractors began to build the school's foundation. By December, steel beams were delivered to the construction site and, shortly after, the new AGHS began to take shape.

In June, the District hosted a Final Beam Signing event, with over 500 community members in attendance. To date, the construction project remains under budget and on schedule to open for the start of the 2022-2023 school year.

During the first quarter of 2021, AGSD finalized plans for the conversion of the current high school to a middle school. Renovations are scheduled to begin in the summer of 2022.

Teaching and Learning

Professional Learning Course

With the shift to remote learning, educators faced a variety of new challenges. To better prepare teachers for this new method of instruction, AGSD partnered with the Chester County Intermediate Unit to develop a professional learning course: "Online Instructional Strategies."

The course covered topics such as the foundations and mindsets for online learning, synchronous and asynchronous instructional strategies and more. Upon completion, AGSD teachers were prepared to deliver high-quality instruction through online learning platforms.



Technology

To begin the school year online, AGSD's Technology department quickly expanded its 1:1 student Chromebook initiative to include students in all grade levels. In addition to the devices that students already had, AGSD distributed more than 3,000 Chromebooks and managed over 400 mobile hotspots to connect students who did not have access to the internet.

The technology team's commitment to supporting all learners, staff members and families was evident in its completion of 3,175 web help desk tickets. In addition, technology coaches provided ongoing training to staff members across multiple learning platforms, including Schoology.

Master Course Series

During remote learning, AGSD wanted to ensure that students received the same educational experience at home and in school, and provide consistent instruction across classrooms. To accomplish this, AGSD created a series of "master courses" for all courses of instruction taught by multiple teachers in the District. A master course is a guide for teachers that includes pre-produced course materials and core curriculum.

With the help of many faculty members, AGSD developed 137 master courses. The District implemented trainings on how to use the courses and empowered teachers to customize the courses to address individual student needs. The District's new master course series will be a foundation for teaching and learning in AGSD for many years to come.

Financial Performance



The AGSD General Fund Budget supports the educational, administrative and facilities operations of the District. The 2020-2021 budget totaled \$99,331,571 and had three primary objectives: to install the second year of debt service millage for the new AGHS construction project; to contain operational expenditure increases while maintaining existing programs and services; and to provide resources for the District to respond to the pandemic.

The total budget was 1.2% higher than the prior year due to an increase in personnel and debt service costs. In addition, the budgetary reserve was doubled to account for operational changes and uncertainties due to the pandemic.

Actual expenditures for the District totaled \$94,262,672, with staff salaries and benefits accounting for \$55,440,318, more than half of the total, and pandemic response costs totaling \$3,353,285.

AGSD's pandemic response used multiple strategies, including: special assignments for staff; adaptations to curriculum; additional custodial contracts; and the purchasing of personal protective equipment. To offset the cost of the pandemic response, AGSD recognized \$2,081,551 of grant revenue provided by the federal government. The District will recognize additional revenues during the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years.



Total Budget:

\$99,331,571

Total Expenditures:

\$94,262,672

Citadel Heart of Learning

AGHS business education technology teacher, Stephanie Shrake, was the grand prize winner of the 2021 Citadel Heart of Learning Award! This award of excellence recognizes Chester County teachers who show dedication both in and out of the classroom.

Citadel representatives selected Mrs. Shrake as the finalist for AGSD based on her nominations and, as a finalist, she was awarded \$500 for classroom supplies. In addition, Mrs. Shrake was invited to attend a Citadel Heart of Learning livestream event where she was named the high school grand prize winner for Chester County. As a grand prize winner, Mrs. Shrake received an additional \$1,500 for classroom supplies and a unique, glass-blown plaque in the shape of a heart.



Building Relationships within the Community



Latinx Outreach

AGSD held 10 Padres Latinos meetings over the course of the school year, with up to 120 Latinx parents in attendance.

To protect the health and safety of our community, all meetings were conducted online via Zoom. During most of the meetings, AGSD provided information and clarification of school communications pertaining to reopening information, learning model options, and health and safety protocols. In addition, AGSD conducted two Special Education information sessions that focused on the Individualized Education Plan process and the rights of students who are identified as having learning disabilities.



Red Devil Logo

One goal in the District's Co-Curricular and Extracurricular Strategic Plan was to increase and unify school spirit and pride in the community.

To accomplish this, a team of administrators and community stakeholders worked to develop a new red devil logo to represent all of the District's athletics and activities. In the spring, the District introduced two versions of a new athletics and activities logo. One version uses only text and the other incorporates an image of a devil's head. The logos are reflective of the culture and spirit of the Avon Grove community and are currently being used across the District on spirit wear, uniforms, signage and other printed materials.

Special Education Series

The AGSD administration held multiple, online information sessions for parents of students in special education. Topics included verbal behavior family training, setting expectations for students transitioning to the next school, and future estate and family planning guidance. In addition, the Special Education department developed an Empower program for students to obtain practical work experience at local businesses.

Student Meals Program

As a result of the pandemic, the United States Department of Agriculture extended a waiver allowing the District to provide free breakfast and lunch meals to all local children for the entire school year. When learning was fully remote, families could receive free meals through Avon Grove To Go, the District's student meal pick-up program. As AGSD transitioned to its Hybrid Educational Model, students could receive free meals while in school and take meals home for times of remote learning. Over the course of the year, AGSD's food services department provided 335,317 meals to local children.

157,736
To Go
Meals

158,159
In School
Meals

19,422
Take-Home
Meals

335,317
Total
Meals

AGSD Pride



Penn London **Elementary School (PLES)**

In celebration of Black History Month, PLES invited local black community members to speak with students about their work and community involvement.

PLES celebrated Read Across America by choosing books to read schoolwide, facilitating spirit days and inviting guest readers into classrooms via Zoom.

The Penn London High Notes, a second-grade choir, ended the school year with an in-person, outdoor concert.



Avon Grove **Intermediate School (AGIS)**

Former AGIS teacher and local author Dianne K. Salerni visited fifth-grade classrooms to share her experiences as a writer.

Third-grade students participated in a Wax Museum project where they researched a historical figure, dressed as the person and presented their findings to peers.

Fourth-grade teacher Kelley Crist and a team of student gardeners tended to 12 raised-bed gardens and donated the harvests to the Chester County Food Bank.



Fred S. Engle **Middle School (FSEMS)**

Seventh-grade student LeeAnn Baker won a Scholastic Scope writing contest with her essay, "Our Voices Have Power."

Seventh-grade student Lydia Ramsey won the 2021 Patriots Challenge research contest with her poem, "A Literary Soldier."

Eighth-grade physics students made containers that would keep an egg intact when dropped from the roof of the school before safely testing the experiment.

Avon Grove **High School (AGHS)**

U.S. News and World Report ranked AGHS as #46 in the best Philadelphia, PA metro area high schools.

Five AGHS students received the distinction of Commended Students in the 2021 National Merit Scholarship program.

Class of 2021 graduates went on to attend Brown University, Johns Hopkins University, the University of Notre Dame and the University of Pennsylvania, among other postsecondary institutions.



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AGSD Profiles



Class of 2021: 409 Graduates



Students

AGSD serves more than 5,000 students from five townships and two boroughs: Franklin, London Britain, London Grove, New London and Penn Townships, and Avondale and West Grove Boroughs.

School	Enrolled
PLES (K-2)	953
AGIS (3-6)	1,445
FSEMS (7-8)	861
AGHS (9-12)	1,700
Total	4,959

Data as of October 1, 2020.

Student Ethnicity	% of Students
American Indian	0.06%
Asian	1.86%
Black	1.31%
Hispanic	26.44%
Multi-Racial	2.70%
Pacific Islander	0.02%
White	67.61%

Board of School Directors

The following individuals served on AGSD's Board of School Directors during the 2020-2021 academic year: John T. Auerbach, Jeffrey Billig, Richard Dumont, Herman Engel, Dorothy Linn, Ed.D. (President), Tracy Lisi (Vice President), Lynn Weber, Bonnie Wolff and William Wood.

Faculty



In 2020-2021, AGSD employed 326 teachers and 34 guidance counselors, school psychologists and nurses, totaling 360 faculty members.

Level of Education: 26% of the faculty have earned a bachelor's degree; 72% have earned a master's degree; and 2% have earned a doctoral degree.

Tenure: 42% of the faculty have been employed by AGSD for over 15 years.