



LEA Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Service Pursuant to the Federal American Rescue Plan Act, Section 2001(i)

Introduction and Background

As announced in the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE)'s [April 28, 2021 broadcast](#), in March 2021 President Biden signed the Federal [American Rescue Plan \(ARP\) Act](#), Public Law 117-2, into law. The ARP Act provides an additional \$122 billion in Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) to States and school districts to help safely reopen, sustain the safe operation of schools, and address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the nation's students. As with the previous ESSER funds available under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA), the purpose of the additional funding is to support local educational agencies (LEAs) in preparing for and responding to the impacts of COVID-19 on educators, students, and families. Additional information on ARP ESSER may be found in the NJDOE's [funding comparison fact sheet](#).

Section 2001(i)(1) of the ARP Act requires each LEA that receives ARP ESSER funds to develop and make publicly available on the LEA's website, no later than 30 days after receiving ARP ESSER funds, a plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services for all schools (Safe Return Plan). A Safe Return Plan is required of all fund recipients, including those that have already returned to in-person instruction. Section 2001(i)(2) of the ARP Act further requires that the LEA seek public comment on the Safe Return Plan and take those comments into account in finalization of the Safe Return Plan. Under the interim final requirements published in [Volume 86, No. 76 of the Federal Register](#) by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE), an LEA must periodically, but no less frequently than every six months through September 30, 2023, review and, as appropriate, revise its Safe Return Plan.

Pursuant to those requirements, **LEAs must submit to the NJDOE and post on their website their Safe Return Plans by June 24, 2021.** The NJDOE intends to make LEA ARP ESSER Fund applications available in EWEG on May 24, 2021 and LEAs will submit their Safe Return Plans to the NJDOE via EWEG. To assist LEAs with the development of their Safe Return Plans, the NJDOE is providing the following template.

This template incorporates the federally-required components of the Safe Return Plan. The questions in the template below will be included in the LEA ARP ESSER Fund application in EWEG. LEAs will submit responses to the questions within the LEA ARP ESSER Fund application in EWEG by June 24, 2021. The NJDOE hopes that this template will allow LEAs to effectively plan for that submission and to easily post the information to their websites as required by the ARP Act.

Note that on May 17, 2021, Governor Murphy [announced](#) that upon the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year, portions of Executive Order 175 allowing remote learning will be rescinded, meaning that schools will be required to provide full-day, in-person instruction, as they were prior to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. The NJDOE and New Jersey Department of Health will share additional information regarding State requirements or guidance for health and safety protocols for the 2021-2022 school year as it becomes available.

Template: LEA Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services

1. Maintaining Health and Safety

For each mitigation strategy listed below (A–H), please describe how the LEA will maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other staff and the extent to which it has adopted policies, and a description of any such policies, on each of the following safety recommendations established by the CDC.

A. Universal and correct wearing of masks

The district successfully implemented mask wearing for the school community during the 20-21 school year and would continue to practice the procedures recommended by the CDC/NJDOH/NJDOE for the 2021-22 school year. Effective March 7, 2022, the Governor lifted such restrictions and our community complied, and as such, we are mask optional.

B. Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)

For the 2020-21 School year physical distancing was implemented throughout the facility with additional signage/markers to help the students maintain distance. The classroom cohorts were reduced in size to accommodate 6 feet distance. To reduce traffic and mixing of cohorts, grade levels had their own entrance and exit of the facilities. When needed, elective teachers pushed into the classrooms to reduce traffic and prevent cohort mixing. All people on the campus, whether inside or outside the building must follow the NJDOE/NJDOH social distancing guidelines. The School Nurse, Vice Principal, staff, and lunch/recess monitors enforced and oversaw social distancing and podding. The staff also continually reminded students to keep socially distanced. Effective March 7, 2022, the Governor lifted the statewide mask mandate, and we complied, To date, we have resumed typical interactions.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

The district for the 2020-21 school year implemented multiple ways for students/staff to sanitize their hands, such as, having sinks in each classroom, installing hand sanitizers in each classroom, entrance, exit, and throughout the building, placing portable hand sanitizers and wipes in all areas. The School Nurse trained all staff and classrooms on proper hand washing. The Board Safety/Wellness Committee outlined hand sanitizing procedures for entering the building and classroom as well as during snack, lunch, and gym.. For respiratory etiquette the nurse provided multiple presentations to each classroom for how to address respiratory issues while wearing a mask. All of this would remain in place for the 2021-22 school year as well as the re-education of handwashing techniques for the school community, regardless of the March 7, 2022 statewide mask lift.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

For the 2020-21 School Year, a strict cleaning schedule was created where the custodial and facility staff cleaned all interior/exterior high traffic surfaces multiple times throughout the day. Also, student/staff desks were disinfected after lunch/recess. We purchased the approved cleaners for disinfecting Covid-19 as well as foggers to utilize when there was any possible contamination of a classroom. We followed all of the recommended cleaning procedures from the CDC/NJDOH/NJDOE. We would continue this successful program for the 2021-22 school year.

An HVAC monthly maintenance program was purchased to maintain high indoor air quality for the 2020-21 school year and we would continue this contract for 2021-22. The HVAC units were installed in 2015 and have Merv 8 filters and provide fresh air to the classrooms. We will also be

exploring UV lighting to supplement additional ways to disinfect and improve the air quality. We will continue this maintenance program for 2022-23.

E. Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments
The District followed the contract tracing guidelines and worked side by side with the local DOH regarding contract tracing for the 2020-21 school year. We would continue to perform the same level of due diligence in the 2021-22 school year. We created a separate isolation room for students and staff displaying possible Covid-19 symptoms and would keep that available for the 2021-22 school year. The School District implemented the originally recommended 14 day quarantine throughout the 2020-21 school year but would be willing to amend that for the 2021-22 school year depending upon the CDC/NJDOH/NJDOE updated recommendations. Effective March 7, 2022, the Governor lifted the statewide mask mandate, and we complied, yet in particular cases, we investigated potential contact tracking as needed.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing

This 2020-21 school year, Daily health checklists for staff/students were required and health assessments were made by the School Nurse. All members of the community were educated on the symptoms of Covid-19 and the policies of the school district. Any member of the community was aware that they should not come to school if they had any possible symptoms and should be screened by a health professional prior to returning to school. The nurse had a letter for any families regarding the testing and screening for Covid-19. All of these policies and procedures would stay in place for the 2021-21 school year. Effective March 7, 2022, the Governor lifted the statewide mask mandate, and we complied, yet we still continue to monitor student/staff health each morning with temperature checks and a daily health checklist for parents to use at home. For 2022-23, we will resume having parents monitor their children's health at home only.

G. Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible

As per the county and state announcements on available vaccination programs were shared with all staff/parents/community as directed.

H. Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies

Since we were on site starting in September 2020 with hybrid half days, and then on September 29, 2020 our district started full-time on site instruction with lunch/recess. Therefore, all students with disabilities continued their IEPs while aligning to health/safety guidelines. Throughout this school year the students with disabilities were successful in following the health and safety guidelines and we would continue to assess if any accommodations were needed for the 2021-22 school year. For 2022-23 we continue to make the necessary accommodations for children with disabilities.

2. Ensuring Continuity of Services

A. Describe how the LEA will ensure continuity of services, including but not limited to services to address students' academic needs and students' and staff's social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services. (1000 character limit)

Since we were teaching full time onsite beginning September 29, 2020, our district provided RTI, Gifted and Talented, SEL, character education, gym, art, music, steam, computers and lunch without any interruption. We plan to continue this extensive programming for the 2021-22 school year. The new SEL program implemented this year was very successful and will continue as well as our new lunch program. Food services are available to all of our students and those who have financial needs are still able to get lunch.. All students will eat in the classrooms at their desk with desk barriers; however, we have since removed the barriers since April 2022. We will resume eating in the cafeteria as we did pre-pandemic for the 2022-23.

3. Public Comment

A. Describe how the LEA sought public comment on its plan, and how it took those public comments into account in the development of its plan. Note, the ARP requires that LEAs seek public comment for each 60-day revision to the plan. (1000 character limit)

Throughout the year, our Board Safety/Wellness Committee consistently met with a variety of stakeholders, both formally and informally. We continued to gather feedback on our original Restart Plan, and sought input from all stakeholders. Additionally, surveys were distributed as needed as well. All of the data/feedback gathered during the 2020-21 school year, helped shape the 2021-22 Safe Return Plan. Saddle River School District has been full-time, in-person with lunch/recess since September 29, 2020. Revisions to the original Restart Plan for 2020-21 was posted on our website as well as disseminated to our larger school community. Additionally, the 2021-22 Safe Return Plan was presented at our public Board Meeting, on December 15, 2021, June 8, 2022, and December 14, 2022 where public comment was available.

B. Describe how the LEA ensured that the plan is in an understandable and uniform format; is to the extent practicable written in a language that parents can understand or, if not practicable to provide written translations to a parent with limited English proficiency, will be orally translated for such a parent; and upon request by a parent who is an individual with a disability as defined by the ADA, will be provided in an alternative format accessible to that parent. (1000 character limit)

Our school district does not currently have any non-English speaking students or parents, therefore, the English version of the plan would suffice. Should the need arise for an additional format, the District would make the appropriate arrangements.

Briefly describe any guidance professional learning and technical assistance opportunities the LEA will make available to its schools. (225 of 1000 maximum characters used)

All staff attended webcam training and professional development sessions for digital resources. When needed chromebooks were loaned to any student who needed one. Connectivity was never an issue for our district or families.