



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

LEA Name: Newark Board of Education

Date 6/14/2021

Date Revised (mm/dd/yyyy):

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

All employees, students, visitors entering school or district buildings will be required to wear a face mask covering the mouth and nose. Students and staff must arrive to school and work with a mask. Acceptable masks include disposable surgical masks or cloth masks. Face masks may be removed when using the restroom or during meal times as long as physical distancing is maintained. Face masks may be removed if alone and the room is closed. Students and staff are also required to wear face masks while on school vehicles.

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

Physical distancing guidelines will continue to be followed. This may include limiting group sizes, staggering events or group meetings, restricting non-essential visitors, and limiting communal spaces. Sneeze guards will remain on counters and desks. Transitions in the hallways will be guided, monitored, and maintain physical distance. All of our schools and district buildings will be contactless sites. Scheduling will return to using multiple rooms for instruction throughout the day.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

The district is implementing the following procedures:

Handwashing/sanitizing during ingress and throughout the day.

Use of foaming hand sanitizer throughout the district and in every classroom.

A hand-washing schedule will be adopted with school-wide reminders for staff and students throughout the day.

Lessons and practice sessions for students on when and how to wash hands will be conducted.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

Every location has schedules for intense cleaning and sanitizing protocol. Custodial staff will provide on-going disinfecting to high contact surfaces using hospital grade disinfectant and electrostatic sprayers. All schools have received electrostatic disinfecting machines and backpack misting machines. All floor finishes are infused with an antiviral solution and this may take the place of the shoe sanitizing station. Air processors are in operation and air filters are changed on a frequent basis.

E. Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments

The district will follow CDC and Newark Health Department guidelines as it pertains to quarantine and isolation. Each school has a room or location designated for isolation. In the event of a positive case, employees or students will notify the Office of Health Services.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing

Prior to entering any of our facilities or district grounds everyone must wear a mask and undergo a four step screening process. The first step of the district's ingress procedures is a health symptoms screening. The district purchased a health symptoms screening application for employees and students to answer a series of questions regarding their health. All students and staff entering the district buildings must complete the form upon entering. The second step of ingress procedures is a temperature check where each employee and student will have their temperature checked using a noncontact thermometer. Anyone with a temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher will not be permitted into the building. The third step is footwear sanitizing; employees and students will stand on a rubber mat with disinfectant solution to sanitize their shoes. The fourth step is Hand Washing/Sanitizing. Employees and students will sanitize hands before entering the building. The district requires all employees to submit documentation of negative results of a COVID-19 diagnostic test taken no earlier than 14 days prior to their start date or return to work. COVID-19 testing locations are shared with students, staff, and their families.

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

The Newark Board of Education has partnered with city, county, and state health departments to make vaccinations available to all district stakeholders. Verification of the COVID-19 vaccination can be uploaded on the district's employee platform. Many of the district schools have been used as vaccination sites for staff and community members.

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

In collaboration with families, the district will make appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies. This may include alternative methods for wearing masks and using face shields.

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)

Every student is assessed for academic learning and social and emotional wellbeing. School-based tutoring is offered at all school sites. Additionally, district-supports include Homework Hotline and an online tutoring portal where further resources are found. School counselors and social workers have received training to provide individual, small group, and classroom guidance related to the five social emotional core competencies and grief and loss. Voluntary support groups are available to staff experiencing challenges during the pandemic. The District is also partnering with our Benefits brokers, Employee Assistance Program, and Health Insurer to develop and implement a comprehensive employee Wellness program that addresses both the specific health needs of our population and the physical, emotional and social challenges posed by "returning to normal" after the pandemic.

3. Public Comment

A. Describe how the LEA sought public comment on its plan, and how it took those public comment 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)

In an effort to encourage widespread comments and participative decision making, during the month of April, the Superintendent hosted a stakeholder series. Various groups of stakeholders were provided the opportunity to contribute to the district's application for Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds (ESSER).

Additionally, parents, district employees, and students in grades 6-12 were provided the NBOE Safe Return Plan Survey the first week in June. The survey asked the stakeholders the degree in which the following areas were a priority: wearing masks, physical distancing, handwashing and respiratory etiquette, maintaining healthy facilities, contact tracing, diagnostic and screening testing; efforts to provide vaccinations to staff and students, appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies, and social-emotional well-being of students and staff.

The Superintendent of schools reviewed the Safe Return Plan with school principals and staff, as well as, the Superintendent's Councils of Students, Parents, Teachers, and Union Presidents.

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)

The Safe Return Plan was created in collaboration with the NBOE Reopening of Schools Task Force. The Task Force includes district staff, parents and community members. It has been reviewed to ensure it is in a parent-friendly language. The plan will be available and posted on the district's website in multiple languages, including English, Spanish, Portuguese and Haitian Creole. Upon request, it will be made available in an alternate format accessible to parents with disabilities as defined by the ADA.