



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: Michael E. Ettore

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 05/30/2021

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: Until the mask restriction is lifted, all staff and students are expected to wear a mask at all times while in school. The masks are expected to cover the nose and mouth for each individual. The only exceptions to this protocol are brief periods of time when individuals are eating or drinking at their seats. The staff was made aware of this protocol starting in September 2020 and everyone has been updated on any/all updates and revisions to this expectation throughout the year. The district used ESSR grant funds to purchase tri-layer, cloth masks for each staff member. Additionally, funds were used to purchase additional masks to be stored in the nurse's office in both schools to be used as needed. Those same cloth masks were made available to students for those families that wished to obtain them as well. To date, the mask restriction has been lifted for all outdoor activities. Our district goal is to remove the mask requirement completely for the 21-22 school year provided that the guidance from the State allows for that step to be taken.

B. Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding): Starting in September 2020, students attended school in 50% cohorts in order to maximize social distancing in each classroom. By the end of October 2020, all students were invited to return to school four days per week for live

instruction. As of February 2021, all students were invited to attend school five mornings per week. As of May 2021, all students have been invited to attend school for five full days per week. All classroom desks have individual Plexiglas barriers in place to promote more distancing between students. Additionally, students at the elementary school had limited hallway travel as related arts teachers moved to homerooms for instruction. Students at the elementary and middle school levels were expected to maintain 3-6 feet of social distancing during their hallway travels as well. Looking ahead, the district goal is to remove the desk barriers from all regular classroom settings for the start of the 21-22 school year.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette: All classrooms were equipped with handwashing stations that included a dispenser with appropriate hand sanitizer. All students are expected to clean their hands when entering any room and before and after snack/lunch time. Additionally, all students are expected to wash their hands when returning from any outdoor activity. The custodial staff in both schools routinely checks and refills the sanitizer stations on a daily basis and upon request if needed.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation: In order to maintain the safest and cleanest possible setting in both schools, additional custodial services were secured and utilized throughout the school day all year. The focus of these additional services was cleaning and disinfecting the bathrooms and major touch points in the schools. During the summer of 2020, the air filters in both schools were all replaced with hospital grade filters to significantly improve the quality of air circulation and cleanliness. The additional custodial services will continue to the greatest extent possible and the new air filters will be maintained according to the specified expectations.

E. Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments: Each time a staff member or student tested positive for COVID-19, the school nurse and administration conducted a consistent contact tracing process to identify those individuals that were deemed to be close contacts. As a result of this process, those individuals identified as close contacts were excluded from school and expected to quarantine for the period of time subscribed by the CDC guidance. Additionally, each positive case of COVID-19 that was confirmed was reported to the local health officials for data collection purposes. The local health officials were also consulted about the steps to be taken each time a positive case was confirmed. Subsequent actions ranged from isolation and quarantine periods for positive individuals and close contacts. On occasion, an entire class, grade level or school was placed on remote instruction as a precaution due to the circumstances surrounding new cases of COVID-19 that were confirmed in the district. The district's quarantine procedures and expectations have been and will continue to be based on the most recent guidance issued by the State Department of Health. Certain protocols were revised in recent months (i.e. domestic travel) and other changes will be made based on the guidance provided by State agencies.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing: Prior to the start of the 2020-2021 school year, four temperature scanning machines were purchased and placed in the schools. Two devices were placed at strategic entrance points in both schools and have been used all year for all staff, students and visitors as they entered the building. These scanners are able to digitally check individual body temperatures using a forehead or wrist scanner. Given that these devices resemble security devices found in airports, they have used with ease and have become a regular part of the daily routine for everyone who enters the schools each morning. The continued use of these devices for the 21-22 school year is to be determined.

G. Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible: Our district was able to partner with our neighboring districts and the local VNA, which provided the opportunity to have our staff vaccinated starting in February 2021. The process initially focused on individuals that fell into a high risk category, and then the process expanded to include all staff members given the opportunity to receive the vaccination. To date, over 80% of all district staff have been fully vaccinated. Many of our middle school families have made the decision to have their children (ages 12 and up) vaccinated as well.

H. Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies: Knowing that our most involved special needs students would likely have the greatest negative impact by not being in school, the decision was made to invite those students (multi-disabled) to attend school four full days per week since day 1 in September. These students have been receiving their academic programs during the morning portion of the day, remaining on campus for lunch and recess, and then receiving their related services (speech, OT, PT) on site in the afternoon. All forms of PPE, including masks and desk barriers have been used to the greatest extent possible all year to maintain staff and student safety. Once the district schedule was expanded from four to five days per week, the MD students were invited to attend school five full days. Additionally, both sessions of our PK program have also been in session five days a week since the start of the school year.

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): In collaboration with the district administration and staff, the decision was made to utilize available funds to provide summer support services as well as a variety of enrichment opportunities for all students in grades K-8. The academic support programs will be by invitation only and will include those students who have been identified using district assessment data as being in need of tier 2 and tier 3 intervention services in both ELA and math. Appropriate staff has been secured to deliver instruction to students that participate in this program for a six-week period during the summer of 2021. Additional staff was secured using the same funds to provide enrichment to any/all interested students in areas that include reading, technology and STEM. In the area of social and emotional learning, teachers at each grade level have been expected to integrate SEL practices and components on a daily basis to help provide students with the support they need to regain comfort and confidence as needed from the circumstances associated with the pandemic. The guidance counselors in both schools collaborated to create and deliver SEL workshops to parents in the community as well. Along those same lines, members of the Child Study Team provided a variety of SEL resources to the staff during the course of the year as well. Our food service provider was able to provide grab-and-go lunch options for students all year while the early dismissal schedule was in place. The food service provider even delivered lunches to families during fully remote days when possible. Now that the schools are open five full days per week, the food service provider is delivering pre-ordered lunches to a central location to reduce social gatherings and eliminate wait periods of students in a line.

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): Dating back to the summer of 2020, time was dedicated at each monthly Board meeting to allow for public commentary and questions related to the district's reopening plans. Additionally, the Superintendent sent bi-weekly update letters to all staff and community members to notify and inform the public about events and decisions related to the pandemic. The community has been encouraged to share updates, questions and concerns with the district's Covid Team using a special email account that was created specifically for this purpose. The LSCOVID email address has been actively utilized since the fall of 2020 by staff and families in the district. Members of the administration and/or school nurses have responded to all correspondence from this email account seven days a week when needed. The information taken from these messages has been part of the agenda for discussion during the weekly Covid Team meetings. This plan has been posted on the district's website for public review. Additionally, the public will have the opportunity to provide feedback regarding this plan during the June 15 Board of Education meeting. The public has been made aware that the goal of our district is to resume our regular, full-day schedule in both schools from day one of the new school year. Additionally, the public is also aware that the district's goal of resuming normal operating procedures in the fall include the removal of desk barriers and the mask requirement provided that these steps are in line with the latest guidance from the State.

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 district's Reopening Plan as well as every update letter sent to the community has been posted on the district's website all year. A special tab was created and placed on the homepage of the website that allowed for easy access and navigation by the public to access all information related to the district's reopening efforts and decisions being made. The Superintendent and Covid Team have remained responsive to any/all comments and questions from the public throughout the year.

