



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:

Date (mm/dd/yyyy):

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 students were provided with two masks upon return to school on April 26, 2021. Prior to that, parents were provided with a letter advising them that students will be expected to wear a mask throughout the entire school day if they chose the hybrid model of instruction. Although several mask mandates have been relaxed since, Perth Amboy Public Schools recently sent out an updated correspondence advising parents that students must continue to wear a mask while in the classroom at least until the end of the 2020-2021 school year. The district is prepared to provide each student with two masks upon return to school in September. Additional masks will be available for students, as needed, during the 2021-2022 school year, provided the masks mandate in schools is still in effect. The district will continue to strictly follow and enforce CDC and the New Jersey Department of Education guidelines regarding the use of masks in school.

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

Physical distance is being achieved in several ways. All buildings were affixed with signage indicating six feet of social distancing in the hallways. Each classroom has had desks removed to ensure six feet of social distancing. Although a recent mandate promoted three feet of social distancing in every classroom, Perth Amboy kept its students six feet apart. The District will continue to review the most current recommendations from the New Jersey Department of Education and the CDC and make adjustments as recommended in collaboration with stakeholders in the Safe Return Committee. Additionally, the District will have the following practices in place to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus as much as possible:

- Students and staff will keep 3 feet of distance outside, inside buildings, and on buses, as much as possible.
- Desks will face in the same direction. The sharing of supplies and materials will be discouraged.
- Large-sized indoor events will be limited to appropriate numbers.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

Handwashing and respiratory etiquette are accomplished through teaching and modeling techniques. Every classroom throughout the district has been fitted with a “pump” hand sanitizer machine. In the near future, each room will be fitted with a battery powered hand sanitizer that self-pumps. At the elementary level, allotted time is given for students and staff to wash their hands before and after a mid-morning snack is provided. Each classroom has also been provided with a tri fold plexi-shield that allows a teacher closer proximity to a student to conduct one-to-one instruction while ensuring proper respiratory etiquette. These practices will continue throughout the fall of 2021 and they will be reviewed periodically to ensure alignment with CDC guidelines and compliance with any New Jersey Department of Education guideline regarding Handwashing and respiratory etiquette.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

Throughout the time that students participated in all-remote instruction, the district took the opportunity to conduct a thorough cleaning of all ventilation duct and cooling coil systems in each classroom. The district contracted a reputable engineering company to conduct a thorough assessment of each building’s ventilation system. As a result of assessment, the District purchased air purification systems for every classroom whose ventilation system was only supported by a “window unit” air conditioning system. Additional purification systems were provided in classrooms/offices that exceeded 200 square feet of space. In addition, regular HVAC filter changes will continue to take place regularly and as needed. Where applicable, all HVAC units will be upgraded to the manufactures highest recommended MERV filters. There will be heightened monitoring of heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems for proper operation. Finally, all bathrooms are cleaned using electrostatic sprayers and logged using a 20–30-minute rotating schedule prepared by every head custodian in each building. The district will continue to assess and monitor each school building’s systems to improve ventilation and to promote a safe learning environment for all students and staff.

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

In collaboration with the Middlesex County Health Department, the District’s Human Resource Department and the Nurse Supervisor coordinated and executed proper contact tracing protocols involving students and staff. These protocols were shared with all nurses once students returned to hybrid instruction on April 26, 2021. Each building is fitted with an isolation room where students/staff who “may” demonstrate symptoms of COVID-19 can safely wait for a parent/guardian or other authorized adult to pick them up. Any person suspected of having COVID-19 cannot return to the building without a negative COVID-19 test. The District will continue to utilize isolation rooms, as needed, in each school throughout the fall of 2021 and as necessary following current CDC guidelines and NJDOE mandates. A concerted effort will be made to ensure that the isolation rooms does not overlap, if

possible, with the nurse's office. As a district, we want to ensure that the nurse's office continues to be a safe space for students and staff who need to visit it for non-covid related reasons. Families will continue to follow the procedures in place to notify the schools if they have been exposed to someone with COVID-19.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing

Each building was provided with two "thermo scanners." Every person entering the building must scan in to check their temperature. If anyone's temperature reads more than the minimum safe temperature, he/she is immediately sent to the isolation room for further evaluation. Each building is also fitted with several handheld thermometers that can perform the same function as the thermo scanners if the need arises. All visitors who enter each building must also go through the thermo scanners and complete a health self-assessment. This district will continue to utilize the thermo scanners throughout the fall of 2021 and as necessary to ensure full compliance with CDC guidelines and NJDOE mandates. Each thermoscanner will be calibrated periodically and as needed.

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

In March 2021, the Perth Amboy Public School district partnered with the city of Perth Amboy to coordinate vaccination opportunities for its staff. The District is proud to say that because of the joint effort, almost 400 staff members took advantage of the opportunity to get vaccinated at Hackensack Meridian Hospital located in Perth Amboy, New Jersey. Several other staff were also vaccinated using other vaccination centers. The district provided accommodations for all staff who chose to go to other facilities. Students who met the age requirement for vaccination have also been given the opportunity to get vaccinated at the same location without an appointment. All schools have posted this information on their website. All educators, other staff, and students are encouraged to get a COVID-19 vaccination. To further encourage vaccinations for eligible students, the district will provide parent and community educational workshops on the benefits of getting vaccinated.

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

All appropriate accommodations were made for students with disabilities. The Perth Amboy Public School district ensured that busses were prepared in a manner that promoted social distancing when transporting Special Education students to buildings either within the district, or at out-of-district facilities. All classrooms that have multiple one-to-one paraprofessionals and/or instructors were provided with additional plexiglass barriers in order to ensure appropriate respiratory etiquette. The Special Education Department will continue to work with families to conduct IEP meetings and to provide appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities in alignment with health and safety policies. Students with disabilities will continue to receive special education and related services, as required by their Individualized Education Plans (IEP) and will receive the services delineated in their IEP.

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)

The district will begin instruction in September with 100% of students engaged in in-person learning. Addressing the learning loss that inevitably took place due to the COVID-19 pandemic is a priority to the district. To this end, the district is prepared to provide additional academic support programs by extending the school day via before/after school programs and extending the school year via summer programs to address core content areas with a primary focus on mitigating learning loss. The district will be data-driven when identifying students. Programs will be developed to meet the needs of general education students, Special Education Students, and English Language Learners. These programs will be offered throughout the school year and during the summer, and they will target students in need of academic and social-emotional support. These extended school day/year opportunities will be tailored to meet the needs of specific groups of students, in small cycles that can be continued or updated as needed. The district will also continue to utilize RTI strategies during the fabric of the school day. In addition, a mental health screener will be purchased to help identify students or staff in need of services.

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)

The District sought public comment on its plan by creating a district wide committee that includes representation from diverse stakeholders from within and outside the district. The committee will meet to review the plan and gather questions, concerns, recommendations, and any other type of feedback intended to enhance the district's safe return to in-person instruction next school year.

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 plan will be translated into Spanish to meet the language needs of parents and community members. If any other parent needs additional or different accommodations to access the plan, those accommodations will be provided.