



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.

Eagleswood Township Elementary School District for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services

LEA Name: Eagleswood Township Elementary School

Date: 06/24/2021

Date Revised: 08/30/2021

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 Board promotes behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19 such as encouraging staff and students to stay home when appropriate; encouraging the practice of hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette; requiring the use of face coverings as per Governor Murphy’s Executive Order 251; and posting signs and messages in and around the school building. Even if social distancing is possible and being practiced, face coverings are required for staff and students during times of high disease spread, and upon recommendation by local health officials.

As of August 9, 2021, and as per Governor Murphy’s Executive Order 251, face coverings are required for all individuals while in the school building. As per Order of the CDC, passengers and drivers must wear masks on school buses. Masks are not required while students are outside the school building (e.g. during recess, during outdoor physical education class, while participating in sports activities, etc.)

During periods where masks are required of staff and/or students, accommodations for students who are unable to wear a face covering will be addressed according to that individual’s particular need and in accordance with all applicable law and regulations.

Exceptions to requirements for face coverings shall be as follows:

- Doing so would inhibit the individual’s health

- The individual is outdoors
- The individual is in water
- A student's documented medical condition, or disability as reflected in an IEP, precludes the use of face covering
- The student is under the age of two, due to the risk of suffocation
- During the period that a student is eating or drinking
- Face coverings should not be placed on anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, or anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the face covering without assistance (e.g. face coverings should not be worn by Pre-K students during nap time).
- The student is engaged in high intensity aerobic or anaerobic activities
- When wearing a face covering creates an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task

As per Executive Order 253, requests for exemptions from mask wearing must be accompanied by written documentation from a medical professional to support the exemption. Self-attestations and parental attestations are not sufficient for this purpose. Exemptions must be approved by the school physician.

If a visitor refuses to wear a face covering for non-medical reasons and if such covering cannot be provided to the individual at the point of entry, the visitor's entry to the school/district facility may be denied.

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

All instructional and non-instructional rooms in school will implement social distancing standards to the maximum extent practicable.

Students and staff with symptoms related to COVID-19 must be safely and respectfully isolated from others. School officials will follow current Communicable Disease Service guidance for illness reporting. The procedures the district uses when someone tests positive for COVID-19 include written procedures detailing the district's COVID-19 related response for symptomatic students and staff. The procedures will be consistent with the district's contact tracing procedures.

For dining purposes, the school district will stagger student groups' use of the cafeteria to allow for social distancing and clean and disinfect between groups. Students will be required to adhere to social distancing guidance during lunch.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette:

The Board promotes behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19 such as encouraging staff and students to stay home when appropriate; encouraging the practice of hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette; requiring the use of face coverings; and signs and messages in and around the school. The

district maintains hand sanitizing stations with alcohol-based hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol) in each classroom (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer), at entrances and exits of the building and near lunchrooms and toilets. Children ages five and younger will be supervised when using hand sanitizer. For classrooms that have existing handwashing stations, stations are prepared with soap, waters, and alcohol-based hand sanitizers.

Students are educated to wash hands for at least twenty seconds at regular intervals during the school day and always before eating, after using the bathroom, and after blowing their nose, coughing, and/or sneezing. Individuals should wash hands immediately after outdoor playtime.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation:

Classroom doors and office areas will encourage active air circulation through mechanical ventilation, open windows and doors and heating and cooling devices, as applicable and appropriate. Air filters throughout the school replaced several times annually on an established schedule.

The district's cleaning protocols include cleaning/disinfecting schedules, targeted areas to be cleaned, and methods and materials to be used including:

- A schedule for increased routing cleaning and disinfection
- Routinely cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and objects that are frequently touched. This may include cleaning objects/surfaces not ordinarily cleaned daily (e.g. door knobs, light switches, classroom sink handles, countertops)
- Examples of frequently touched areas in schools are:
 - Classroom desks and chairs;
 - Lunchroom tables and chairs;
 - Door handles and push plates;
 - Handrails;
 - Kitchen and bathrooms;
 - Light switches;
 - Handles on equipment (e.g. athletic equipment);
 - Shared computer keyboards and mice;

Bathrooms are sanitized daily, or between use as much as possible.

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

Contact tracing, isolation, and quarantine will be done in compliance with current CDC and NJDOE guidelines.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing:

Staff and students will be required to self-screen prior to their arrival at school. School nurse will communicate frequently with staff and families about COVID symptoms. Health checks must be conducted safely and respectfully, and in accordance with any applicable privacy laws and regulations. Results must be documented when signs/symptoms of COVID-19 are observed.

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

The district will make information available on a continuing basis regarding how a vaccination for students and community members can be received.

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

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for individuals that the CDC identifies as having a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19, including older adults (aged 65 years and older) and individuals with disabilities or serious underlying medical conditions, which may include:

- Chronic lung disease or asthma (moderate to severe);
- Serious heart conditions;
- Immunocompromised;
- Severe obesity (body mass index, or BMI, of 40 or higher);
- Diabetes;
- Chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis;
- Liver disease;
- Medically fragile students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs);
- Students with complex disabilities with IEPs; or
- Students who require accommodations under a plan in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (504 Plan).

Enforcing the use of face coverings may be impractical for young children or individuals with disabilities. Accommodations for students who are unable to wear a face covering should be addressed according to that student's particular need and in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations.

Food Service and Distribution. School meals are critical to student health and well-being, especially for low-income students. School meals free for all students.

2. Ensuring Continuity of Services

A. Academic, Social, and Behavioral Supports

- Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and School Culture and Climate. SEL will be critical in re-engaging students, supporting adults, rebuilding relationships, and creating a foundation for academic learning. An expansion of existing social emotional learning supports is being developed by school officials.
- Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). MTSS is a systematic approach to prevention, intervention, and enrichment in grades Pre-K through six for academics and behavior that offers educators and families a mechanism to identify individual students who need extra support. A system of supports that builds upon existing I&RS practices is being utilized.

3. Public Comment

A. The district initially sought public comment during the development of the 2020 Restart and Recovery Plan. Developed collaboratively with the Pandemic Response Team and later shared at a public meeting of the Board of Education, the base plan received extensive public comment in August 2020 prior to the September 2020 return to school. The district was in session using in-person instruction throughout the 2020-2021 school year. During the June 2021 development of the first phase of this plan, parental comments from recent public meetings regarding masking, vaccination, and school operations were considered. A survey was also issued in June of 2021 to solicit feedback from families on several topics required for this plan. Additional feedback gathered from community members during public meetings has been factored into modifications made to the initial plan. Following Governor Murphy's announcement of Executive Order 251, further modifications to the plan were made with respect to mask requirements for all students and staff while inside the district/school building. This current plan was received and discussed publicly at the August 30, 2021 Board of Education meeting.

B. The plan is a condensed and straightforward document that conveys the important facts in each category. The plan also contains references for additional information contained in another document, the 2021-2022 A Road Forward Plan, so interested families can find more comprehensive information for school operations during periods of disease outbreak and/or high transmission. Both documents are carefully and clearly organized and presented in categorical form.