



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: Washington Township Public Schools

Date: 06/17/2021

Date Revised: 11/15/2021

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 – All individuals are required to wear a mask while inside any of the Washington Township School District Facilities, regardless of vaccination status until further notice per Executive Order 251. (There are exceptions that are listed in the FAQ document on our webpage)

B. Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding) – All schools will make efforts to maintain physical distance of 3 feet in classroom settings, where possible. Additionally, we will provide plexiglass in therapy areas and office settings and post signage throughout our buildings as visual reminders. Our elementary schools will also have plexiglass affixed to teacher and student desks, until the new year as vaccinations become more readily available for Elementary aged students. We will social distance as much as possible during lunch, utilize stations on the playground, limit the use of shared materials (when possible), and have departmentalized teachers travel from class to class.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette – We will continue to build time in our day for hand washing and continue to provide direction on appropriate respiratory etiquette and sanitizing. Signage and reminders will be posted throughout the buildings.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation. Staff will follow standard procedures for routine cleaning and disinfection using approved District cleaning protocols and EPA approved cleaning products. Staff will regularly disinfect high touch areas and follow specific protocols for areas that may be closed after being occupied by a symptomatic individual. Hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes will be present in all classrooms, office spaces, etc. in every District building. HVAC systems are carefully monitored for proper air flow, proper percentage outside air and filters are changed regularly. MERV-13 filters are being used if possible.

E. Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments. Cooperative contact tracing in conjunction with the Gloucester County Department of Health will be maintained.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing. – The District has a process in place for screening testing in accordance with Executive Order 253. Our unvaccinated staff have the option of free testing through two different vendors at a nearby site and on the High School Campus. Weekly testing is required. The District will continue to provide the community with information regarding testing as it becomes available and as necessary.

G. Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible. - The District has worked closely with INSPIRA Hospital to provide onsite vaccinations for staff and students, as well as making information and links to register at multiple other vaccination sites. This will continue as needed. A vaccination clinic is now being planned by the Gloucester County Department of Health to be held on our campus to include pediatric vaccines, first doses, second doses and boosters.

H. Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies. - The District will continue to provide appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities as per individualized student plans.

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.

We will provide academic, behavioral, emotional services to identify students and address needs through the New Jersey tiered systems of support. By utilizing NJTSS, we will continue to address needs (i.e., childhood trauma and mental health) through school counselors and transitional coaches/mental health therapists. Curriculum teams will refine units, modify assessments, and adjust pacing guides to address key skills and focus on priority standards for ELA, math, science, etc. for the fall. Professional development for staff is planned, including PLCs, consultations, and turnkey training by district leaders. We continue to foster SEL via School Climate/Building Better People Team and Panorama Education universal screener. Enhanced NJTSS for ELA/math will be sustained. A diagnostic screener for math/ELA and Start Strong results will identify students who need further supports. At-promise students will be assigned to professionals who will provide support in-person during and beyond the day.

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.

The District will provide this document to the community for public comment via the District website, as required. To collect the public comments, a dedicated email address will be provided for responses. Administration will review all comments and revise the plan as appropriate and in accordance with all policies and executive orders.

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.

The District's plan was reviewed through the lens of multiple departments including Curriculum & Instruction, Special Education & Student Services, School Community Outreach, Technology, and District administration among other stakeholders. Translations or other accommodations will be provided, by request.