



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: West Essex Regional School District

Date (06/14/2021):

Date Revised (06/14/2021):

For the 2021-2022 school year, West Essex will provide full-day, in-person instruction, as prior to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. At this time, there will be no cohorts and no remote learning day. The plan includes 5 days of in-person learning, full days, with daily lunch. As per the Governor, remote learning will be rescinded. West Essex will continue to follow the guidance from the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE).

The NJDOE and NJDOH will share additional information regarding State requirements or guidance for health and safety protocols for the 2021-2022 school year as it becomes available.

The West Regional School District has addressed all the components for safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services through the [Fall 2020 Restart and Recovery Plan](#). To review full descriptions on mitigation strategies, you may access the [Safe Return Reference Document](#). The categories below include the major points of emphasis for each of the required sections.

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

- As per the NJDOH guidelines, [face coverings](#) will be required while inside school buildings for students, visitors, and staff unless it will inhibit the individual's health. On days with extreme heat, students and staff may remove their masks during outdoor activities.
- Students may request a mask break outside of the classroom.

- Face coverings must be worn by all students while riding the school buses.

Exceptions to requirements for face coverings shall be as follows:

- Doing so would inhibit the individual's health.
- ***The individual is in extreme heat 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 and could risk suffocation.
- If anyone in a district facility refuses to wear a face covering for non-medical reasons and if such a covering cannot be provided to the individual at the point of entry, the individual's entry to the school/district facility may be denied.

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

For the 2021-2022 school year, there will be no cohorts. The plan includes 5 days of in-person learning, full days, with daily lunch. As per the Governor, remote learning will be rescinded.

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.

Since the community transmission ([NJDOH](#)) for the Northeast region is at the [moderate level](#), 3 feet social distancing will be maintained in classrooms, however, 6 feet will be maintained during the following:

- Between adults (teachers and staff), and between adults and students, at all times in the school building.
- When masks cannot be worn, such as when eating.
- During activities when increased exhalation occurs, such as singing, shouting, band, or sports and exercise.
- In common areas such as school lobbies and auditoriums

Our district will provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to help ensure that staff and students remain at least six feet apart in lines and at other times.

Students and staff with symptoms related to COVID-19 must be safely and respectfully isolated from others (isolation areas are located in the health offices).

All applicable social distancing requirements and hygiene protocols will continue during any extra-curricular activities.

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 school buildings.

- Our district will prepare and maintain hand sanitizing stations with alcohol-based hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol).
- Students are encouraged 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.

D. Cleaning and Maintaining Healthy Facilities, Including Improving Ventilation

- Every school bus, either district-owned or contracted, will be cleaned and disinfected before and after each bus route.
- School officials must continue to adhere to existing required facilities cleaning practices and procedures, and any new specific requirements of the local health department as they arise.
- Our district has established cleaning/disinfecting schedules, targeted areas to be cleaned, and methods and materials to be used.
- Our district will ensure indoor facilities have adequate ventilation.

E. Contact Tracing in Combination with Isolation and Quarantine

Our school district has adopted screening procedures for students and employees upon arrival at school for symptoms and history of exposure. These screening procedures include the following (in line with NJDOH guidance):

- Use of a monthly COVID-19 screening form for employees and students
- Daily temperature checks
- Protocols for symptomatic students and staff
- Readmission to school procedures

The school nurses, in conjunction with our local health officials, conduct contact tracing. Additional school officials will assist as needed.

F. Diagnostic and Screening Testing

- Screening stations (temperature checks) are located at entry points to each building
- Isolation areas are located in the health offices of each building
- Monthly screening forms are generated through our student database system: Genesis

G. Efforts to Provide Vaccinations to Educators, Other Staff, and Students

Essex County conducted vaccination clinics exclusively for employees and teachers of Essex County, in addition to residents: essexcovid.org

This information was disseminated to all employees within our school district.

H. Appropriate Accommodations for Children with Disabilities

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 the 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 and accommodations for students who are unable to wear a face covering and will be addressed according to that student's particular need and in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations.

The following academic, social, and behavioral supports are currently being utilized:

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.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)

MTSS is a systematic approach to prevention, intervention, and enrichment in grades Pre-K through twelve for academics and behavior that offers educators and families a mechanism to identify individual students who need extra support.

Wraparound Supports

Wraparound services differ from traditional school-based services in their comprehensive approach to addressing the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of students with interventions both inside and outside of the school environment.

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)

Ensuring the continuity of learning is critically important during this time of great stress for families, educators, and students. The move to a fully virtual learning environment happened quickly and created significant challenges for staff and students, particularly students already considered at-risk prior to the pandemic. The following items will be addressed to ensure continuity of learning:

- Delivery of Special Education and Related Services to Students with Disabilities
- Technology and Connectivity
- Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
- Food Service

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 the LEAs seek public comment for each 60-day revision to the plan. (1000 character limit)

The Safe Return Plan was presented to the Board of Education at a public meeting on Monday, June 14. In addition, our [Fall 2020 Reopening Plan](#) was developed by a 65 member committee of school community stakeholders. The committee was divided into 5 subcommittees and met periodically throughout the school year. Surveys were continually administered and modifications were made throughout the school year. The plan was also discussed at several public meetings.

A Google Form was created which allowed for public comment on the Safe Return Plan. The form was published to the public on Tuesday, June 15.

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 published to the public on Tuesday, June 15 on our district website. The district website meets ADA requirements and can translate web content into several languages.