



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: Clark Public Schools

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 06/24/2021

Date Revised (mm/dd/yyyy): First Version

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

- A. The District is hopeful that the State will continue to empower school officials to make the best decision for their buildings and communities regarding the wearing of masks in schools. This empowerment enabled us to adopt a masking optional approach that has been in place since June 7, 2021 in light of the end-of-school year heat.
- B. The Superintendent wrote a letter to Governor Murphy and the Board of Education passed a motion advocating for the State mask wearing mandate to be lifted for September.

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

We will create the needed three to six feet of social distancing to the extent practicable as long as that guideline remains in place. Wherever possible, one-way hallways would remain in place. Social distancing markers would remain in the hallways. Students would be socially distanced in our restrooms through colored markers and/or a limited number of students being given access to these spaces at any given time. The number of accessible restrooms, when feasible, would be limited.

- A. Students would be seated at least three feet apart within our classrooms whenever possible. When not possible, social distancing modifications would be implemented to the greatest extent practicable, including turning desks to face the same direction or having students sit on only one side of the table, spaced apart.
 - i. Other instructional and non-instructional rooms would comply with social distancing standards to the greatest extent practicable.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

- A. Our classrooms, office spaces, such common spaces as copy rooms, and the exteriors of our restrooms throughout the District will be equipped with hand sanitizer dispensers. Dispensers will also be located at our building entrances. Existing handwashing stations will be equipped with soap, water, and alcohol-based hand sanitizers. These various dispensers need to be used:
- i. by our students and staff members as they enter classrooms, office spaces, and common spaces;
 - ii. by any visitors prior to entering the buildings;
 - iii. after sneezing and wiping/blowing noses; and
 - iv. upon students' return from outdoor activity or physical education.
- B. Food service personnel will be required to wash their hands with soap after removing their gloves or directly handling used food service items.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

Our school buildings will be disinfected throughout the course of the school day & each evening. For example, our custodians, on an ongoing, daily/nightly basis, will be cleaning & disinfecting our classrooms & restrooms, filling our disinfectant dispensers, carefully disinfecting our telephones & door knobs, emptying trash cans, & replenishing supplies. They will be using products on the EPA's disinfectants list.

- A. A procedure manual has been developed re: cleaning & disinfection; targeted areas to be cleaned, including frequently touched surfaces & objects & frequent disinfecting of bathrooms; & methods and materials to be used.
- B. Indoor facilities will have adequate ventilation by the following such means: maintaining operational heating & ventilation systems where appropriate, ensuring that recirculated air has a fresh air component, opening windows if A/C is not provided, & maintaining filters for A/C units according to manufacturer recommendations.

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

The school, with the assistance of the local health department and the cooperation of parents, teachers, school nurses, administrators, and the students themselves as needed, will conduct the needed contact tracing to determine close contacts. Methods to assist with this contact tracing include records of groups/cohorts, assigned staff, and daily attendance. These close contacts, along with local health officials, will be notified immediately. The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) and New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) guidelines for positive case isolations and close contact/travel quarantines that are in place at the time will be followed.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing

Our school nurses will continue to make recommendations for diagnostic and screening testing to our students' parents and staff members based on individual situations. Suggestions for possible testing sites will also be given as needed. Testing guidelines regarding needed quarantine times will be followed.

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

We are very fortunate to have a partnership with Overlook Medical Center/Atlantic Health System through which our staff

members and eligible students were able to become vaccinated if they or their parents so desired. We are looking forward to this partnership continuing as we move forward.

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

Accommodations will be provided as appropriate for students with disabilities, e.g., the wearing of a face shield instead of a face mask if that State mandate was to remain in place.

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)

We are planning for a more typical student day inclusive of lunches come September. We are offering a grades K-8 Reaching Independence Through Superior Education (R.I.S.E.) Summer Academic Enrichment Program this summer and are planning to offer an afterschool Homework Helpers Club during the upcoming school year. Our school counselors, child study team members, and school nurses are available to our students while our school nurses serve as a key resource for our staff members. In regards to social and emotional learning (SEL) across the district, the School Counseling Department works in conjunction with teachers to address the five competencies of SEL, i.e., self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills.

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. (1000 character limit)

Public input that helped inform this initial draft of the plan was given during the Hearing of the Public section of each Public Board of Education Meeting during the course of the 2020-2021 school year. Since the plan is for this initial draft to be approved at the June 21, 2021 Public Board of Education Meeting, public input can also be given during the section of that meeting when the Floor Is Open to the Public for Agenda Items Only. In addition, received emails and phone calls helped inform this initial draft. Each version of the plan will be posted to the district website, and members of the public are being encouraged to email reopening@clarkschools.org with any additional input that they may have.

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)

Every effort was made for this plan to be written in a clear and succinct fashion. Parents can request translations into other languages as needed and those translations, either in written or verbal form, will be provided. ADA accommodations for parents will also be provided as needed.