



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: Totowa School District

Date (06/07/2021):

Date Revised:

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 requiring the use of face coverings. All staff and building visitors will be required to wear a face covering at all times, unless it will inhibit the individual's health. Students will be required to wear a face covering when riding the bus, entering, exiting, or moving throughout the building and when seated at their desks unless doing so would inhibit the student's health. Visitors refusing to wear a face covering for non-medical reasons may be denied entry. Staff and students will be educated on the use of cloth face coverings. Info will be provided to staff, students, and students' families on proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings and signage will be posted around the building reinforcing proper wearing. Accommodations will be made for young students, students with special needs, or students with medical concerns in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

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

In all inst. and non-inst. rooms in the district, students and staff must comply with distancing standards to the max extent possible. Students will be seated six feet apart if possible. Desks and tables will be turned to face the same direction. All student desks and tables will be fitted with clear, 3-sided sneeze guards. Larger rooms and outdoor spaces may be used as inst./non-inst. rooms to allow for distancing. Classes will be kept together in the same cohorts each day. There will be minimal mixing between cohorts. Teachers will travel between classes. In the cafe, staggered group times will be used to allow for distancing and to clean and disinfect between groups. All students and staff will be entering the building in designated entrances and at staggered times per grade level. On buses, students will be assigned seats. One household is permitted per seat. Students cannot change seats on the bus. Signage and inst. staff will reinforce distancing with the students.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

Staff and families will be taught proper handwashing techniques and staff will be encouraged to monitor students' handwashing when possible. Students and staff should use a tissue to cough or sneeze into and immediately wash their hands with soap and water. Classrooms that have sinks will be equipped with soap, water, and hand sanitizer. Scheduled hand washing times will be established for all students throughout the school day. Students will wash their hands for at least twenty seconds at regular intervals, before and after eating, after using the bathroom, blowing their nose, coughing, and/or sneezing. When soap and water is not available, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) should be used. All individuals who will be handling food service items will be washing their hands before and after wearing gloves. Individuals handling food service items will be meeting all CDC/NJDOH hand washing guidelines.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

MS and WPS will be cleaned and disinfected in accordance with the guidance and protocols set forth by the NJDOE utilizing disinfecting products approved by the EPA in consultation with local health officials. Air filters have been increased to MERV 13 filters: the highest level available for our units. Filters in units are changed quarterly and rooftop units are changed monthly. All staff will be required to wear masks and gloves when cleaning/disinfecting. A detailed description of cleaning protocols can be found on pg. 60 of the District's Restart & Recovery Plan. Areas requiring cleaning/disinfecting which are deemed to have been occupied and/or touched by individuals identified as COVID-19 positive will be done so in accordance with NJDOE protocols.

1. Areas to be closed off 24 hours prior to cleaning/disinfecting.
2. Ensure maximum ventilation during cleaning by opening windows and doors.
3. Clean/disinfect all areas used/frequently touched by the ill individual(s).

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

The district's nurses and School Safety Specialists will complete a COVID-19 Contact Tracing Course. The district will have an open communication system that allows staff, students, and families to self-report symptoms and/or suspected exposure to the school nurse(s). The school nurse(s) will then contact the local health department and help with contact tracing, if necessary. Upon notification of a positive COVID-19 test, the local health department, in collaboration with the district, will call to determine close contacts to whom the virus may have spread. Trained professionals from the town will contact those close contacts to recommend next steps, such as self-quarantining, and to provide critical education and support in risk mitigation strategies. The district will communicate with families about positive cases, as necessary. The district will follow CDC and Department of Health guidelines regarding quarantine time periods. Quarantine rooms have been created in both MS and WPS.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing

Before school, parents will complete a checklist to ensure that students are not exhibiting any signs of COVID-19. Staff/personnel will screen students for any symptoms of COVID-19 that are observable according to CDC and the department of health guidelines upon arrival. Students with disabilities will be given accommodations as needed. Students will be visually screened again for symptoms attributed with COVID-19 upon entering their cohorts' classroom. If students exhibit any symptoms, they will be sent directly to the nurse who will document signs/symptoms of COVID-19. All admin., teachers, admin. Asst., support staff, and custodial staff will conduct the same pre-screening protocols prior to arriving at work. The school nurse will document when signs/symptoms of COVID-19 are observed. Parents and staff members will be educated on the signs of illness and will be informed to stay home when they are sick. Info pertaining to signs of illness will be posted on the district website.

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

The Totowa School District has partnered with our local ShopRite to give employees the opportunity to get vaccinations. The Totowa School district also makes staff aware when there is an opportunity to receive a vaccination from a local vaccination site.

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

Accommodations for students who are unable to wear a face covering will be addressed by each student's particular need and in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations.

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 Totowa School District has been open five days a week for all students that chose to be in-person during the 2020-2021 school year. The district has employed two guidance counselors to help address students' and staff's social, emotional, and mental health needs. Food services were made available to all since the emergency closure on March 13, 2020, at no cost to the students or their families. In 2021-2022, the Totowa School district will use a number of strategies to help shrink the learning gap that may exist due to virtual learning and closures at the end of the 2019-2020 school year. A few of the strategies consist of; smaller class sizes for a more individualized approach, additional professional development for staff, 1:1 tutoring, and 1:1 computer initiative K-8 with the option to use at home. The District will continue with a Social Emotional Learning Class once per week throughout the 2021 – 2022 school year.

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)

The Totowa School District has been open since September 8, 2020, for all students and families that chose to be in-person 5 days a week. The district created a Restart and Recovery document that obtained input from all stakeholders involved, parents, teachers, administrative assistants, custodians, and administrators. This document was reviewed in public and presented at a Board of Education meeting and public comments were received. The district is in constant contact with its staff, students and families whenever there is a change to the document. Monthly Pandemic Team Meetings as well as Restart Committee meeting took place during the 2020 – 2021 school year and will continue in the 2021 – 2022 school year. This document will be posted on the district’s website and discussed and reviewed, in public, at the district’s next board of education meeting on June 23, 2021. Any future revisions will be handled in the same manner.

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 Reopening Plan is written in a manner that is easily understood. The plan will be presented and discussed in public at the Board of Education meeting which will be held on June 23, 2021. All questions and/or comments will be addressed during the meeting and anyone that has a specific question or might not understand an item listed can call any administrator in the district who will go over the plan with them step by step. Staff will be emailed a copy of the plan and during the faculty meeting at the beginning of the 2021 – 2022 school year the plan will be thoroughly reviewed. Any accommodations that need to be made for limited English proficient parents or individuals that are disabled as defined by the ADA will be made.

C. Briefly describe any guidance professional learning and technical assistance opportunities the LEA will make available to its schools.

The Totowa School District offers professional development for LATIC, Learner-Active Technology-Infused Classrooms, during July. The instructors observe classroom instruction throughout the year, for participants, and give feedback on how to improve classroom instruction. The district has also designated

days for professional development learning opportunities throughout the year and incorporates Safe Schools online training to help reinforce professional development in a wide range of topics from bullying to blood born pathogens to COVID 19. In addition, professional learning communities meet on a regular basis.