



## 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**

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**LEA Name:** Totowa School District

**Date:** June 7, 2021

**Date Revised:** February 15, 2023

### **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. Communication**

The Totowa School district will maintain close communication with the local health department to provide information and share resources on COVID-19 transmission, prevention, and control measure and to establish procedures for notification and response to COVID-19 illness in school settings. The district will work closely with the local board of health as decisions are made regarding which mitigation strategies will be implemented. Each week, the COVID-19 Activity Report for Passaic County will be posted on our website. We will continue to work closely with our local health department as we make future decisions.

#### **B. Universal and correct wearing of masks:**

The Board promotes behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19. Masks will be optional for all students and staff. This includes indoors, outdoors, physical education classes, prior to riding the school bus, while on the bus and until students are completing off the bus unless doing so would inhibit the student's health or when the student has a documented medical condition or disability, as reflected in and Individualized Education Program (IEP). Masks must be worn by students and staff days 6-10 after completing a five-day isolation or quarantine. Staff and students who are exposed to COVID-19 should follow recommendations to wear a well-fitted mask and get tested. Accommodations will be made for young students, students with special needs, or students with medical concerns in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

- C. Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)  
In all instructional and non-instructional rooms in the district, students and staff must comply with distancing standards to the max extent possible. Within the classrooms, students will maintain three (3) feet of physical distancing to the greatest extent possible. Outside of the classrooms including hallways, locker rooms, indoor and outdoor physical education settings, and buses, physical distancing will be maintained to the greatest extent practical. In the cafeteria, staggered group times will be used to allow for physical distancing and to clean and disinfect between groups.. Signage and instructional staff will reinforce distancing with the students.
- D. 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. When soap and water is not available, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) should be used. Young students will be assisted/observed to ensure proper handwashing. 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.
- E. Meals  
For meals offered in the cafeteria, physical distance will be maximized to the greatest extent possible. Lunches will be staggered to provide for greater physical distancing. Students are discouraged from sharing and self-serve food options are no longer available. Frequently touched surfaces will be cleaned between groups and surfaces that come in contact with food will be cleaned and sanitized before and after meals.
- F. Transportation  
Masks will remain optional on the busses. If occupancy on the buses allows physical distancing between the students will be maximized. High touch surfaces on the school bus will be cleaned daily.
- G. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation  
Memorial School and Washington Park School will be cleaned and disinfected in accordance with the guidance and protocols set forth by the New Jersey Department of Education (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 uninvants are changed quarterly and rooftop units are changed monthly. If safe to do so, doors and windows will be open to increase outdoor airflow. At Washington Park School, lunches will take place outdoors when circumstances allow.

#### H. Parental Screening

Parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to monitor their children for signs of illness every day. Students who are sick should not attend school. The Totowa School District will educate parents about the importance of monitoring symptoms and keeping children home while ill. 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 classrooms. If students exhibit any symptoms, they will be sent directly to the nurse who will document signs/symptoms of COVID-19. Parents and staff members will be educated on the signs of illness and will be informed to stay home when they are sick. Information pertaining to signs of illness will be posted on the district website.

#### I. Response to Symptomatic Students and Staff

Students and staff with symptoms related to COVID-19 will be asked to wear a well-fitting mask while in the building and safely and respectfully isolated from others in a designated isolation space until they leave school grounds. If an individual who has spent time in a district facility tests positive for COVID-19, the school nurse or designee will immediately notify local health officials, staff, and families of a confirmed case while maintaining confidentiality. The district will follow current Communicable Disease Service guidance for illness reporting. When a staff or student test positive for COVID-19, the Totowa School District will follow the board approved Policy 8451, Control of Communicable Diseases. Washington Park School and Memorial School have established an isolation space where students and staff with symptoms related to COVID-19 will be safely and respectfully isolated from others. Students will remain in isolation until he/she is picked up by an authorized adult. The local board of health and all necessary agencies will be notified. The Totowa School District has purchased ample masks, gloves, smocks, and sanitizing stations which will be available and accessible for use.

#### J. Exclusion

Parents should not send students to school when sick. In accordance with NJDOH guidelines, students with the following symptoms should be isolated from others and excluded from school:

- At least two of the following symptoms: fever, chills, rigors, myalgia, headache, sore throat, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, congestion, or runny nose; OR
- At least one of the following symptoms: cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, new olfactory disorder, or new taste disorder.

Students who have tested positive for COVID-19 can stop quarantining after five (5) days and must wear a mask on days six (6) through ten (10). Staff members, regardless of vaccination status, who test positive or individuals with COVID-19 symptoms who have not been tested and do not have an alternative diagnosis from their healthcare provider will:

- Stay home for at least five (5) full days after the onset of symptoms or if asymptomatic after the positive test (day of symptoms is day 0); if asymptomatic, date the test was performed is day 0).
- If they have no symptoms or symptoms are resolving after five (5) days and are fever-free for 24 hours, they can leave their home and will.
  - Wear a mask when around others (indoors and outdoors) for an additional five (5) days.

**K. 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 classrooms. If students exhibit any symptoms, they will be sent directly to the nurse who will document signs/symptoms of COVID-19. All administrators, teachers, administrative assistants, 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. Information pertaining to signs of illness will be posted on the district website.

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

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

Accommodations for students 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)

In 2023-2024, 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. School district teachers will use a variety of tests and

assessments to determine if a pupil should be categorized as at risk of not meeting the proficiencies of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. Students who are at risk will be placed in a supplemental and enrichment instructional classes which offers small group instruction and individualized learning to address each student's needs. Supplemental instruction and related activities and services responsive to identified deficiencies and are designed to meet the academic, social, economic, and environmental needs of pupils. Evaluation of the progress towards proficiency will occur throughout the year and student's placement will be addressed accordingly. Parents will be notified of the student's need for supplemental and/or enrichment instruction and parents will be apprised of their child(ren)'s progress. Guidance counselors will create programs based on students' social and emotional needs. The district will consider the impact of social isolation on both students and staff. Students and staff who are at-risk will receive additional supports in the school setting as well as outside.

### **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 district created a Safe Reopening Plan 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. Meetings will continue to take place during the 2023 – 2024 school year to address concerns and revise this document. 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 February 15, 2023. 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 Safe Reopening Plan is written in a manner that is easily understood. The revised plan will be presented and discussed in public at the Board of Education meeting which will be held on February 15, 2023. 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 notified of all revisions and are able to read the full document on the district's website. 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 borne pathogens to COVID-19. In addition, professional learning communities meet on a regular basis.

