



## 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: Readington Township Public Schools

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 06/15/2021

Date Revised (mm/dd/yyyy):

### 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 Readington Township School District is hoping the improved nature of the COVID-19 pandemic will allow us to lift the mask requirement for the fall. However, if needed, our district will adhere to local and state Department of Health guidelines as it pertains to the universal and correct wearing of masks. The wearing of masks may be mandated in certain circumstances over the course of the 2021-2022 school year, but may also be optional in other circumstances. If no mask mandates exist in the 2021-2022 school year the Readington Township School District will allow for the optional wearing of masks for students and employees. The district will await specific guidance from the Department of Health or Department of Education in order to develop policies or procedures related to the wearing of masks.
- B. Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding):
  - a. The Readington Township School District envisions a full opening for the 2021-2022 school year where all students will attend in-person for full days. However, the district will also adhere to local and state Department of Health guidelines as it pertains to classroom arrangements to ensure appropriate distancing. This may mean placing desks in rows as opposed to groups.
  - b. The district is exploring options for more distancing during lunch periods. These options include: staggering lunch schedules differently, adding seating to cafeterias, and potentially having some students eat in classrooms. As our plans develop over the summer we will review the feasibility of each option.

- C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette:
  - a. According to the CDC, covering coughs and sneezes and keeping hands clean can help prevent the spread of serious respiratory illness.
  - b. Students will be taught and reminded to:
    - i. Cover their nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing;
    - ii. Throw used tissues in the trash;
    - iii. If a tissue is not available, cough sneeze into one's elbow, not hands.
  - c. Handwashing shall be encouraged and may happen when entering classrooms. Students will be permitted to wash hands and use hand sanitizer at their own discretion but also at the instruction of staff members.
  - d. Hand sanitizer will be made available for student and staff use in each classroom and on the bus in a similar fashion to the 2020-2021 school year.
- D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation:
  - a. Airflow and HVAC Settings: Like last year, the district recognizes the needs to create additional passive air circulation and introduction of increased outdoor air into the building to promote safety. The district shall remove all classroom fans and hand blow dryers in bathrooms as non-passive in nature. HVAC units shall be adjusted to increase outside air flow into the building and windows shall be opened when feasible. Vent angles shall be adjusted as necessary to prevent direct, active air flow across surfaces, as airflow is preferred to be indirect to prevent the direct spread of water droplets in the air between students and staff. Passive air circulation from adjacent rooms and hallways shall occur, unless safety or privacy prohibits.
  - b. Accommodations can be made for classrooms that fit a certain criterion regarding air flow. Like the 2020-2021 school year, staff will be able to request a HEPA filter should their classroom or office space meet the criteria.
  - c. Facilities and Cleaning: As we did not see much evidence that COVID-19 was transmitted through contact with shared surfaces, we will be prepared to employ enhanced cleaning protocols, as needed. The district will ensure the safety and health of all students and staff by implementing the following practices on an as needed basis throughout the year:
    - i. Facilities staff will review and receive retraining on cleaning and enhanced sanitation practices and safety protocols.
    - ii. Maintenance staff will be assigned a specific school building as their primary work space to limit travel between buildings to lessen contact with district staff.
    - iii. Conducting daily cleaning and sanitizing of classrooms, restrooms, cafeterias, kitchens, and hallways.
    - iv. Conducting periodic and/or necessitated deep cleaning using enhanced protocols.
    - v. Implementing improved sanitation and personal hygiene practices for both students and staff.
    - vi. Supplying hand soap, disinfecting wipes, and hand sanitizing gel in classrooms, main entrances, and high use areas. In areas where hand washing may not be available, sanitizing gel will be available.
    - vii. Supplying masks, gloves, face shields, plexiglass barriers, and additional PPE as needed.

- viii. Restrooms and high touch areas will be cleaned/sanitized on a rotational basis during the school day. Daily logs will be kept to certify that the areas are being checked and cleaned.
    - ix. Cafeteria tables/seats/chairs will be cleaned and sanitized between lunch periods.
    - x. Playground equipment will be cleaned with electrostatic sprayers as part of the evening cleaning rotation.
  - d. Certain safety protocols will remain in place in our Transportation Department. Students will have additional masks (if needed) available on the bus along with hand sanitizer. Students will be grouped and sat in assigned seats by family to the extent possible. Social distancing will not be available on school buses.
- E. Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments: We remain hopeful that the status of the pandemic will be such that contact tracing, isolation, and quarantine will not be needed to the extent it was this past year. However, the Readington Township School District will participate in contact tracing according to the protocols set forth by the New Jersey Department of Health and the local Hunterdon County Health Department. The district will follow all quarantine protocols set forth by the local and state Department of Health to slow or stop the transmission of infection. Should the Department of Health continue the COVID Activity Reporting to local districts, our district will use this metric for decision making when it comes to matters of public health.
- F. Diagnostic and screening testing:

The Readington Township School District will provide resources to parents, students and staff regarding testing for COVID-19. Assurance forms will not be used in the 2021-2022 school year. Rather, a list of COVID-19 symptoms will be provided to staff and parents at the beginning of the school year. Included in this list will also be instructions to keep ill children home until they are 24 hours fever free without the use of fever-reducing medication and/or if they experience COVID-like symptoms. Staff will also be instructed to remain home for the same reasons. Parents and staff will sign-off acknowledging receipt of the list of symptoms. This will look very similar to the June 2, 2021 Final Assurance Form provided to parents and staff in the 2020-2021 school year.
- G. Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible:

The State of New Jersey already has procedures for requiring and tracking certain vaccinations, and the COVID-19 vaccine is not currently required or tracked. Our district does not foresee taking steps to require or track vaccine status of staff or students. The district had previously been engaged with the local health department to provide vaccinations to staff only in the 2020-2021 school year. The Readington Township School District will continue to advertise opportunities for staff and eligible students to receive the vaccine. The district will use letters and Genesis blasts to notify staff and families of opportunities for vaccine when those vaccine opportunities become available. The district maintains contact with our School Physician who may be able to provide vaccinations to eligible students once the vaccine is available to local physicians.
- H. Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies:

The Readington Township School District will develop plans to ensure students with disabilities receive appropriate accommodations with respect to health and safety needs. The following are a sample of universal precautions that will occur throughout the year:

  - Enhanced cleaning of classrooms, cafeterias, and other spaces;
  - Airflow settings on HVAC units;
  - Use of hand sanitizer and enhanced hand washing protocols in school;
  - Mandatory or optional use of face coverings, as directed by the local or state health department.

If the list of universal precautions listed above does not meet the medical needs of an individual student, parents should contact district personnel. Specifically, students/parents should contact their case manager or school counselor. Reasonable accommodations will be discussed and considered on a case by case basis with case managers or school counselors.

## 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 following programs will be implemented to ensure students academic, social and emotional needs are met as well as providing for staff mental health needs:

**Accelerate Learning Programs:** The Readington Township School District has designed summer tutoring programs for eligible students to receive skill building with direct instruction from a teacher. The district also has plans to provide similar tutoring programs in an after-school, in-person program during the school year. These programs are designed to target the specific needs of students who are struggling academically in the areas of Math and English/Language Arts. This program will be paid for through ESSER 3/ARP.

**Additional mental health services for students:** The Readington Township School District is engaging with Hunterdon Behavioral Health to increase our mental health services. This program will add a 3<sup>rd</sup> tier of mental health counseling with a school-based youth counselor from our local medical center. Students identified as having a mental health need will have this additional layer of service as those students are identified. This program will be paid for through ESSER 3/ARP.

**Recovery ESY Services:** Students with disabilities will receive an additional hour of ESY services to work on skill gaps that may exist. The focus on these skills will be Math and English/Language Arts

**Staff mental health:** The Readington Township School District has purchased services to provide staff with an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). This EAP is free and available to all Readington staff and families for a designated number of sessions. This program will be paid for through ESSER 3/ARP.

**Home Instruction:** Home Instruction as defined by N.J.A.C. 6A:16-10.1-2 will be available for students who have a documented chronic medical condition. This could include medical conditions that make the child unable to attend school in-person for portions of the 2021-2022 school year. This program may be paid for through ESSER 3/ARP.

**Child Assault and Prevention Program:** The Readington Township School District will engage in the Child Assault and Prevention (CAP) program that teaches student advocacy against assault and bullying.

### 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)

This plan was shared in the following manners:

Readington Township Leadership Team including principals, supervisors, and non-certificated administrators.

Committees of the Board of Education.

Members of the Readington Township Education Association (RTEA) leadership.

The June 8, 2021 Public Board of Education meeting.

Posted on the district website for comments between the June 8, 2021 Board of Education meeting through June 14, 2021.

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 Readington Township School District intends to have this plan reviewed by the groups described above (Part 3.A.) for feedback, post this plan on our website, translate the plan into Spanish, and make available the plan in any other format as requested by a parent.