



## 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.

## LEA Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services

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LEA Name: **PITMAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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

Date Revised (mm/dd/yyyy): **11/17/2021**

### 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

##### **Pending any changes to NJ Department of Health guidance to schools:**

All New Jersey public schools are required to follow the face mask mandate, per Governor's Executive Order 251 and preceding orders. Pending any changes to this, the district's Safe Return plan includes mandatory face covering for all individuals (exceptions noted below).

- Enforcing the use of face coverings may be impractical for young children or individuals with disabilities.
- Masks or face coverings are not required during the school day if:
  - Doing so would inhibit the individual's health (medical documentation may be requested).
  - The individual is in extreme heat outdoors; the district has some flexibility to address this indoors as well.
  - The individual is in water.
  - A student's documented medical condition, or disability as reflected in an IEP, precludes the use of face covering (medical documentation may be requested).
  - The student is under the age of two and could risk suffocation.
  - The student is engaged in strenuous aerobic or anaerobic activities as part of physical education classes or other school-related activities.

- Accommodations for students who are unable to wear a face covering should be addressed according to that student's particular need and in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations.
- Mask breaks shall be offered to students in outdoor areas as appropriate and in conjunction with NJDOH guidelines for schools.
- If the school district is providing transportation services on a school bus and is unable to maintain social distancing, a face covering must be worn by all students who are able to do so upon entering the bus.
- If a visitor refuses to wear a face covering for non-medical reasons and if such covering cannot be provided to the individual the point of entry, the visitor's entry to the school/district facility may be denied.
- Mask requirements for outdoor activities have been lifted under most circumstances.

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

##### **Pending any changes to NJ Department of Health guidance to schools:**

It is the district's intent to host all enrolled students for in-person instruction in 2021-22.

Based on NJ Department of Health guidance for schools, schools in the district will allow for social distancing within the classroom to the maximum extent practicable. This will be achieved by ensuring students are seated at least three feet apart (as defined by the local area's position on the COVID-19 Regional Risk Index). If a school in the district is not able to maintain this physical distance, additional modifications should be considered including using physical barriers between desks, and other mitigation measures. All instructional and non-instructional rooms in schools and district facilities must comply with social distancing standards to the maximum extent practicable.

- If physical distancing (at least three feet apart) cannot be maintained for individuals in line waiting to enter or exit a building, face coverings shall be worn while in the line.
- Each school in the district will provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to help ensure that staff and students remain 3-6 feet apart as they travel through the building.
- The district will adopt procedures for symptomatic individuals (see Section E, below), including the isolation of staff and students exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms.
- During meals, students and staff members may unmask while eating/drinking. In order to mitigate potential spread of COVID-19 during meals, the district shall incorporate the following in the Safe Return plan:
  - Stagger meal times to allow for social distancing and cleaning/disinfecting between groups.
  - Space students and other individuals at least six feet apart.

- Use of physical barriers/shields.
- During recess and physical education, students may briefly unmask outdoors under certain conditions. In order to mitigate potential spread of COVID-19 during these times, the district shall incorporate the following in the Safe Return plan:
  - If two or more groups are participating in recess at the same time, there will be at least six feet of open space between the two groups.
  - The school district will designate specific areas for each class during recess to avoid cohorts mixing.

Note: NJ state guidance makes distinction between social distancing requirements for outdoor school activities and/or athletics that take place outside of the instructional day. Social distancing requirements for these outdoor activities have been lifted.

### **C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette**

#### **Pending any changes to NJ Department of Health guidance to schools:**

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.

- School districts will prepare and maintain hand sanitizing stations with alcohol-based hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol). Such stations should be:
  - In each classroom (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer).
  - At entrances and exits of buildings.
  - Near lunchrooms and toilets.
- Children ages five and younger should be supervised when using hand sanitizer.
- For classrooms that have existing handwashing stations, stations should be prepared with soap, water, and alcohol-based hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol).
- School officials should develop a school-wide plan where students are required 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. If washing with soap and water is not possible, washing with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) should be used.
- Cafeterias or group dining areas - individuals must wash their hands after removing their gloves or after directly handling used food service items.
- Recess and physical education - individuals must wash their hands immediately after outdoor playtime/activities.
- Handwashing and respiratory etiquette shall be encouraged during all extra-curricular activities and athletics.

## D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

### Pending any changes to NJ Department of Health guidance to schools:

The district is committed to cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities through adherence to existing, required facilities cleaning practices and procedures, and any new specific requirements of the local health department as they arise. The Safe Return plan will establish cleaning/disinfecting schedules, targeted areas to be cleaned, and methods and materials to be used including:

- A schedule for increased routine cleaning and disinfection.
- Routinely cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and objects that are frequently touched. This may include cleaning objects/surfaces not ordinarily cleaned daily (e.g. doorknobs, light switches, classroom sink handles, countertops).
- Use of all cleaning products according to the directions on the label. For disinfection, most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective. A list of products that are EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 is available on the EPA's website.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g. concentration, application method, and contact time, etc.).

Examples of frequently touched areas in schools are:

- Classroom desks and chairs;
  - Lunchroom tables and chairs;
  - Door handles and push plates;
  - Handrails;
  - Kitchens and bathrooms;
  - Light switches;
  - Handles on equipment (e.g. athletic equipment);
  - Buttons on vending machines and elevators;
  - Shared telephones;
  - Shared desktops;
  - Shared computer keyboards and mice;
  - Drinking fountains; and
  - School bus seats and windows.
- Sanitize bathrooms daily, or between use as much as possible, using protocols outlined by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Every school bus, either district-owned or contracted, should be cleaned and disinfected before and after each bus route.
  - In order to mitigate potential spread of COVID-19 during school meals, the district shall incorporate the following in the Safe Return plan:
    - Stagger meal times to allow for social distancing and cleaning/disinfecting between groups.
    - Clean and sanitize tables/surfaces between each meal service, pursuant to the protocols outlined by the EPA.

- Use of physical barriers/shields.
- Recess and physical education
  - Stagger the use of playground equipment and establish a frequent disinfecting protocol for all playground equipment used by students.
  - Locker rooms may be closed to mitigate risk and prohibit students and staff from confined spaces with limited ventilation and/or areas with large amounts of high contact surfaces. If it is not feasible to close locker rooms, the district will stagger their use, and clean and disinfect between use.
  - The district will mitigate risk, limit and/or eliminate direct contact with equipment (lessons with no equipment), and will not allow sharing of equipment. If equipment must be shared, the equipment will be cleaned and disinfected between each use.
  - The district will designate specific areas for each class during recess to avoid cohorts mixing.
- Airflow
  - Safely maximize airflow and exchange of fresh air; open building/room dampers beyond legal minimums to maximize airflow.
  - Encourage the opening of interior doors and windows when this can be safely done to enhance airflow.
  - Use of outdoor spaces as appropriate.
  - Continued maintenance of ventilation systems and equipment – scheduled cleaning/replacement of filters

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

**Pending any changes to NJ Department of Health guidance to schools:**

The district has adopted procedures for identification of symptomatic staff and students, which shall include the following:

- Students and staff with symptoms related to COVID-19 must be safely and respectfully isolated from others. School officials will follow current Communicable Disease Service guidance for illness reporting.
- If the school district becomes aware that an individual who has spent time in a district facility tests positive for COVID-19, officials must immediately notify local health officials, staff, and families of a confirmed case while maintaining confidentiality.
- The procedures the district will use when someone tests positive for COVID-19 will include written procedures detailing the district's COVID-19 related response for symptomatic students and staff. The procedures must be consistent with the district's contact tracing procedures to the maximum extent practicable. The procedure includes:
  - Establishment of an isolation space. Students and staff with symptoms related to COVID-19 must be safely and respectfully isolated from others. Students should remain in isolation with continued supervision and care until picked up by an authorized adult.
  - Following current Communicable Disease Service guidance for illness reporting.
  - An adequate amount of PPE shall be available, accessible, and provided for use.
  - Methods to assist in contact tracing including records of groups/cohorts, assigned staff, and daily attendance.
  - Continuous monitoring of symptoms.

- Re-admittance policies consistent with Department of Health guidance and information for schools and Department of Health/Communicable Disease Service's Quick Reference Guidance on Discontinuation of Transmission-Based Precautions and Home Isolation for Persons Diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Written protocols to address a positive case.
- School officials will encourage parents to be on alert for signs of the illness in their children and to keep their child home when they are sick.

The district shall support contact tracing of symptomatic individuals:

- Appropriate staff designated by the Superintendent shall be provided information regarding the role of contact tracing conducted by State, county, and local officials, and/or district nurses and trained administrators.
- Identified close contacts of symptomatic individuals shall be contacted as soon as possible after their potential exposure to the symptomatic person, and will be provided with information about quarantine and/or other appropriate next steps.
  - Revised CDC guidance on masked students adopted; properly masked students are exempt from close contact definition (does not apply to unvaccinated adult staff).
- Nurses shall follow school exclusion criteria as outlined by the NJ Department of Health.

## **F. Diagnostic and screening testing**

### **Pending any changes to NJ Department of Health guidance to schools:**

The school district has adopted Board Policy 1648 regarding the screening procedures for students and employees upon arrival at school or work location for symptoms and history of exposure. These screening procedures must include the following:

- Staff must visually check students for symptoms upon arrival and/or confirm with families that students are free of COVID-19 symptoms (e.g. use of daily symptom check survey).
- Health checks must be conducted safely and respectfully, and in accordance with any applicable privacy laws and regulations.
- Results must be documented when signs/symptoms of COVID-19 are observed.
- Any screening policy/protocol must take into account students with disabilities and accommodations that may be needed in the screening process for those students.

The Board has adopted protocols for the use of masks/face coverings (see Section A, above) and procedures for symptomatic staff and students (see Section E, above).

Per Executive Order 253, the district is offering onsite, weekly COVID-19 screening tests (as of 11/2/21) to all school personnel who have not submitted proof of full COVID-19 vaccination status. The district is poised to expand availability to the student population as needed and appropriate.

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

The district had partnered with county officials to facilitate vaccination of district staff members when Tier 1B individuals became eligible for vaccination in early March 2021; at that time, approximately 90 of 212 respondents indicated their intention to get vaccinated independently or their prior vaccination, and another 90 indicated interest in an appointment through the county effort at the RCSJ mega-site. As of September 2021, we estimate that at least 90% of district staff members have been fully vaccinated for COVID-19. Per Executive Order 253, all NJ school personnel must provide proof of COVID-19 vaccination by 10/18/2021 or be subject to regular weekly COVID testing; the weekly onsite testing program has been in place since 11/2/2021.

In late May 2021, the district partnered with a local provider (Rite Aid) for an onsite clinic for individuals 12 and older. The clinic successfully vaccinated about 60 individuals - mostly students, plus a few staff members. In November 2021, the district partnered with the county health department to host onsite vaccination clinics for children ages 5-11.

In regular weekly email updates, the district would offer information about vaccination opportunities for students with local providers, and suggest the benefits of vaccination to those who wished to pursue it. These efforts will continue as expanded vaccination for younger students is now authorized.

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

#### **Pending any changes to NJ Department of Health guidance to schools:**

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).

The Board has adopted protocols for the use of masks/face coverings (see Section A, above) and Screening (Section F, above) that are sensitive to the special needs of individuals with disabilities, and shall make appropriate modifications to support these individuals within the context of maximizing health and safety and in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations.

The district has also adopted a series of additional measures designed to address students' social, emotional, and behavioral health needs in the wake of the trauma brought on by the pandemic.

- Social Emotional Learning and Trauma-Informed Practices - Over the course of 2020-21, the district has developed measures based on the five SEL competencies (NJDOE); these include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills. District staff also received training on trauma-informed practices and developing strategies for co-regulation in the classroom.
  - Focus on establishing strong relationships with students in need and their families, sharing SEL resources and providing guidance , including direction to outside providers as needed.
  - Direct services through school counselors for individual students or small groups (continuation of this work through summer 2021 and into 2021-22).
  - Revamped practices for 2021-22, including implementation of the Zones of Regulation curriculum with students in grades preK through 5.
- Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) - The district continues to follow a Response to Intervention framework including a three tiered system of enhanced intervention based on progress monitoring of the effectiveness of tiered interventions. Improvement of the district's Intervention and Referral for Services (I&RS) process and a recommitment to tiered response through MTSS are the centerpiece of the district's professional development plan for 2021-22, and additional resources have been identified and disseminated to district staff. The district is also evaluating the use of ARP ESSER funds to support this work in the coming school year.
- Wraparound Supports - Supplementary services to support student academic success were developed and implemented during the 2020-21 school year, and the district is looking to build upon this work. With a focus on relationships, building administrators and school counselors engaged in expansive communications with struggling families and students, with expanded availability of counselors for students (virtual and in-person). The district's wellness group also developed an online repository of resources for families on the school district website.
- Food Service and Distribution - School meals are critical to student health and well-being, especially for low-income students. As such, the district has shifted from the bi-weekly, free food distribution to families that had been in place during 2020-21 in favor of a full return to in-school dining beginning in September 2021; with extended SSO programming in place for the 2021-22 year, all district students are eligible for free school breakfast and lunch. The district is following all applicable health/safety guidelines that are required, based on state guidance and the COVID-19 Regional Risk Matrix (social distancing, hand hygiene, cleaning protocols, etc.); this may require adjustments in location of school meals and/or scheduling adjustments (to be determined) to accommodate these measures.

- Quality Child Care - The district offers before and after school care to students/families in grades Pre-K4 through 5th (in-house program) onsite at our elementary school buildings. Additionally, an extended day program for half day preschool students (4 year olds) is also offered. This program will continue to be provided so long as the district can adequately and safely staff the program.

## 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)

Addressing Student Academic Needs - In order to promptly address the need for learning acceleration in the aftermath of the recent school year and the pandemic-related impact on student learning opportunities, the district will provide supplemental programs to students.

### Summer Programs 2021

- STEAM Camp (grades 4-5 and 6-8) - interdisciplinary summer camp programs for students.
- Learning Acceleration/Support Sessions - multi-week programming in ELA (grades 1-8; focus on early literacy acquisition/remediation) and math (grades 3-8).
- 8th grade credit Recovery (ELA and Math) to keep students on track for promotion to HS and progress toward HS graduation with grade-level peers.
- HS credit recovery in Math, ELA, Social Studies, and Science to keep students on track towards graduation with grade-level peers.
- ELL Support Sessions - extended school year services for English language learners; some ELL students may also participate in aforementioned academic programs, and would receive ELL support.

### 2021-2022 school year

- Visual and Performing Arts after school academies: supplemental 4th/5th grade instrumental music instruction and K-12 VPA visual art projects
- STEM after school academies: grades 4-5, 6-8, and 9-12.

Additionally, the district is using a portion of ARP ESSER funds to support learning acceleration, enhancing multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) (including instructional coaches/interventionists and professional development), expanded SEL programming and school counseling support, and extension of academy programs beyond 2021-22.

Addressing Other Student/Staff Needs - In order to promptly address other student/staff needs, the district will provide supplemental programs as follows:

- Social/emotional and mental health  
**Summer Programs 2021**

- Small group counseling - Direct services through school counselors for individual students or small groups (continuation from 2020-21 school year through summer 2021 and into 2021-22).
- SEL Workshops - school counselors will offer a series of workshops based on building resiliency; based on SEL core competencies; grade level groups include K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12.

**2021-2022 school year**

- Implementation of Career Exploration Platform to replenish field experience loss during COVID shutdown and shift to hybrid/remote instruction.
  - Resiliency Team - a team of district staff members have been trained in trauma-informed practices, and will develop student programming and services.
  - Revamped practices for 2021-22, including implementation of the Zones of Regulation curriculum with students in grades preK through 5.
  - Professional development offerings for staff members - personal wellness.
- Student health - see Sections A through H, above; supporting the continuity of services for student health will mirror these efforts; pending revised guidance from the NJ Department of Health, school nurses and building administrators will continue to follow established protocols for exclusion from school for contagious disease, and act based on the NJDOH's COVID-19 Regional Risk Matrix and local case rates and transmission levels.
  - Food service - see Section H, above, for description of continuity of services for 2021-22.

**Beyond the 2021-2022 school year**

- The district expects to invest a sizable portion of ARP ESSER grant funds into infrastructure improvements designed to address issues of health and safety of students and staff. These projects may include improvements to ventilation, replacement of windows, asbestos abatement projects, and other improvements to air quality.
- Additional ARP ESSER funds that are earmarked to address learning loss and acceleration will support the continuation of some or all of the programming implemented in Summer 2021 and the 2021-22 school year as student needs assessments might dictate (e.g. continuation of early elementary ELA programming to support competency in early literacy by the end of grade 3).

### 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)

A draft of the district's Safe Return Plan was distributed via email and promoted online to all district families, and notice to review the plan and solicitation of public comment was made in June 2021. Additionally, a public hearing re: Safe Return Plan was conducted at the June 23, 2021 BOE meeting.

Similarly, a draft of the revisions to the Plan were distributed via email and promoted online to all district families, and notice to review the plan and solicitation of public comment was made in June 2021. Additionally, a public hearing was conducted at the November 17, 2021 BOE meeting. Public comment will be gathered and addressed within the plan as appropriate. Specific effort to share the information and solicit feedback from key, diverse constituent stakeholder groups will be put forth.

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 plan document follows the NJDOE-provided template (universal format).
- The plan will be posted on the district website, which has accessibility functions available to support those with special needs.
- Availability of translation/explanation for second language and/or disabled individuals will be provided upon request.