



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.

Monroe Township School District:

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

LEA Name: Monroe Township School District

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 06/17/2021

Date Revised (08/25/2021):

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

All district schools will adjust all face covering requirements based on CDC, DOH and NJDOE guidance. On August 5, Governor Murphy mandated face coverings in schools pursuant to Executive Order 251. Regardless of vaccination status, students, employees, and visitors shall wear masks indoors, including buses, with limited exceptions.

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

All district schools will continue to follow DOH and NJDOE guidelines and executive orders regarding social distancing and will update as guidance changes. Physical distancing will be maintained, as feasible. In rooms where physical distancing recommended by the DOH/CDC and NJDOE would be impractical, plexiglass dividers or other barriers may be provided.

Other procedures include:

- Arranging desks in rows all forward facing maintaining the required distance between. When the guidelines for CDC and DOH distancing standards cannot be met, barriers will be used.
- Reminding students and staff of distancing protocols through daily messages and signage.
- It may not be feasible, depending on the needs of an individual child, to adhere both to distancing guidelines and the criteria outlined in a specific IEP. Attempts to meet physical distancing guidelines should meet the needs of the individual child and may require creative solutions, often on a case-by-case basis.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

Hand sanitizing stations with 60% alcohol hand sanitizers are located in each classroom, at entrances and exits of buildings, and in cafeterias. Children ages five and younger should be supervised when using hand sanitizer. Students are required to wash hands for at least twenty seconds at regular intervals during the school day and always before and after eating, before and after using the bathroom, and after blowing their nose, coughing, and/or sneezing. If washing with soap and water is not possible, hand sanitizer should be used. Signage is prominent throughout

buildings to remind students of the handwashing protocol. Teacher will reinforce the proper protocol of handwashing after coughing or sneezing. If hand washing is not immediately available, students will be instructed to use classroom hand sanitizer. Students will be instructed to sneeze or cough into their elbow. If a student or staff member is sick, they should stay home.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

All schools have adequate ventilation, including operational heating and ventilation systems, where appropriate. Recirculated air must have a fresh air component, windows will be opened, if practical, if air conditioning is not provided, and filter(s) for A/C units must be maintained and changed according to manufacturer recommendations. The district will continue to monitor and follow all DOH and DOE guidelines for facilities.

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

All schools have isolation spaces. Symptomatic students will remain in isolation with supervision until picked up by an authorized adult. All schools will follow current DOH guidance for illness reporting, contact tracing, quarantining, and readmittance. Methods to assist in contact tracing include class lists, assigned staff, schedules, and daily attendance. Upon learning of a positive case, the school nurse will relay that to district administration who communicates with the DOH. The school nurse, with the DOH and school principal will contact trace and notify close contacts. District-wide notifications will be shared when positive cases are identified. Notifications will not include identifying information and will be consistent with privacy laws. All protocols will be reviewed regularly to ensure they follow updated guidance. Students and staff will follow current DOH guidelines based on COVID-19 test results and vaccination status.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing

All schools promote 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; and signs and messages in and around the school building. Screening questions will be reviewed daily by all staff and parents. Students will sanitize their hands when entering the classroom and as appropriate throughout the day.

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

Staff has been provided information of various opportunities for vaccinations organized by district administration. The district will communicate vaccination opportunities to all eligible persons. Per Executive Order 253 signed on August 23, 2021, all public-school employees must either provide adequate proof that they have been fully vaccinated or submit to weekly COVID-19 testing at minimum one to two times weekly. This requirement shall take effect on October 18, 2021. More information will be provided on this executive order.

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

It may not be feasible, depending on the needs of an individual child, to adhere both to distancing guidelines and the criteria outlined in a specific IEP. Attempts to meet physical distancing guidelines should meet the needs of the individual child and may require creative solutions, often on a case-by-case basis. The district will provide educators of students with special needs appropriate professional development to best utilize the accessibility features and accommodation tools made available through technology-based formats. The district will continue to ensure students receive individualized supports that meet the requirements of the IEP and 504 Plans. The district will continue to educate our special education students based on each child's I.E.P. We will deliver related services in person. Student medical/health situations should go through the Health Office first and foremost for consideration to implement a health plan or 504 if there is an educational impact.

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)

For the 2021-2022 school year Monroe Township School District will engage in pre-COVID-19 academic schedule for grades PreK -12. Academic assessments including but not limited to NWEA Map, DRA, and running records will be administered in Fall 2021 to identify academic needs. The Panorama social emotional needs survey will also be administered to students in Grades 4-12. The district developed a Social Emotional Learning re-entry plan for Fall 2021. Each school will have an SEL teams consisting of staff within the school. Currently, virtual instruction for any student who is required to quarantine due to exposure, symptoms, or a positive COVID-19 test will be implemented following the home instruction policy. District will prepare to deliver tech on demand for students/classes who quarantine. All staff will establish a baseline setup of an online presence from the beginning of the year. District will follow all exclusion guidelines.

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)

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 District sought public comment on its plan:

- All School Restart Teams met during the week of June 7, 2021 – Teams consist of administration, parents, and staff
- The District Restart Team met on June 11, 2021 – Team consists of administration, parents, staff, BOE members, representatives from each bargaining group including MTEA and MTBOESS.

- Presentation at BOE Meeting June 16, 2021. Public Forum available for public comment. Presentation is available on the district website and will be shared with all school families on June 18, 2021.
- The District Restart Team met on July 15, 2021. An update was provided at the July 21 Board of Education Meeting.
- The District Restart Team met on August 12, 2021. An update was provided at the August 18, 2021 Board of Education Meeting.