



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: Township of Franklin (Gloucester County)

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 06/21/2021

Date Revised (mm/dd/yyyy): 06/21/2021

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:

Due to the state's vaccination rate, the availability of vaccines throughout the state, the number of staff members who have been vaccinated, the availability of vaccines to students in the District's grade configuration, the status of the executive order, and overall health in our region, the district does not plan on requiring masks for students, staff, or visitors. Masks have been purchased over the past year and an ample supply is available if students or staff prefer to wear a mask. The district will assess the current health environment with the Department of Health and may consider suggesting that high-risk individuals and others who are exhibiting the typical flu or allergy-like symptoms to wear a mask. The Franklin Township School District will follow NJDOH/NJDOE mandates for mask wearing in schools and adapt those protocols as mandates from state agencies change.

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

Due to the state's vaccination rate, the availability of vaccines throughout the state, the number of staff members who have been vaccinated, the status of the executive order, and overall health in our region, the district will not be using cohorts or requiring social distancing to start the school year. The District will continue to the best of its ability to implement turning desks/tables to face the same direction rather than facing each other. Based upon the region's current health status in September, the district will not be utilizing the plastic barriers/desk dividers. The Franklin Township School District will follow NJDOH/NJDOE mandates for physical distancing in schools and adapt those protocols as mandates from state agencies change.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette:

The district 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; and will maintain signs and messages in and around school buildings. The schools will 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, and for classrooms that have existing handwashing stations-each will have soap, water, and alcohol-based hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol). 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. All protocols will be applicable during any extracurricular activities.

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

The district will continue to adhere to existing required facilities cleaning practices and procedures, and any new specific requirements of the local health department as they arise. All designated entrance door handles will be cleaned, then hand/electrostatically sprayed. Bathrooms will be shut down periodically during the day, all fixtures and surfaces will be cleaned, and will be hand/electrostatically sprayed. Drinking fountains will be cleaned/sanitized throughout the day. Classrooms will be spot-cleaned: desks, chairs, door handles, light switches, telephones and all other high touch surfaces; all surfaces will be cleaned and wiped dry; all surfaces will be hand/electrostatically sprayed. Offices: spot cleaning all high touch surfaces; all surfaces will be cleaned and wiped dry; all carpets will be vacuumed (HEPA filtered); all surfaces will be hand/electrostatically sprayed.

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

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 tests positive for COVID-19, officials must immediately notify local health officials, staff, and families of a confirmed case while maintaining confidentiality. The certified school nurses have been identified as the contact tracer for the district in conjunction with the School Safety Specialist. They have completed the Johns Hopkins University's COVID-19 Contact Tracing course to provide background and knowledge on the process, procedures, and expectation prior to the start of the school year. The NJDOH procedures established for contact tracing will be followed.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing :

The parents will still determine if their child is exhibiting any symptoms before coming to school each morning. The parents will be advised to keep their student at home and the parent should notify the school that their child will be absent. The District will continue to provide flexibility in regards to student attendance requirements. Any staff member exhibiting symptoms prior to the start of the school day will be advised to stay home. Staff members exhibiting symptoms during the school day will report to the nurse's office for further guidance.

- G. Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible :
The district employed an aggressive approach in the pursuit of getting staff members vaccinated. The district worked in concert with the county mega-site to get the staff vaccinated. Currently the district has 72% of all staff members vaccinated. In addition, the district included testing and vaccinations information in the periodic community updates.
- H. Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies:
Reasonable accommodations will be provided for individuals that the CDC identifies as having a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19, including individuals with disabilities or serious underlying medical conditions. Each situation will be reviewed on an individual basis.

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 school district's plan to support academic, social, and behavioral supports includes a comprehensive plan to support the SEL of students and staff, including: self-care, ongoing professional development for staff, administrators, and parents as well as daily check-ins during the school year, and ongoing school counseling services and behavioral supports services through counselors, partner agencies, and administrators. The district plans on participating in the recent expansion of free-reduced meal regulations that will substantially expand access of free meals to all students.

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).
During the past few months the highly publicized modifications to the Governor's executive orders and the various news stories throughout the region substantially highlighted the ongoing changes in schools for both the 2020-21 and the 2021-22 school years. The district consistently communicated its plans for a full-time five days per week schedule for the upcoming school year in writing through the district mass communication system. The district received feedback from parents in the form of emails, phone calls and surveys. We also communicated our plans with the staff. The 'Safe Return Plan' will be posted to the district's website prior to the June 24, 2021 deadline.
- 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).
This plan is communicated in the normal section (*District News*) of the district's website page. It is in standard format, with the same level of language that is utilized in all district communication throughout the year. All questions and concerns will be addressed either orally (calls or face to face meetings) or in writing (email) if there are any questions. If necessary, we will utilize the district's resources (504 Coordinator, Interpreters, etc.) to address questions.