



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.

All of the components of this plan are contingent upon the expected updated guidance from the New Jersey Department of Education and are subject to revision prior to the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year.

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: Howell Township Public Schools

Date:6/01/2021

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

Should the State or Department of Education mandate face coverings within the school setting”

- Staff members, students, and visitors will be required to wear face coverings in accordance with applicable guidance from the district physician, CDC, and Monmouth County Department of Health.
- Face coverings will be provided to those in need.
- “Mask breaks” based upon established procedures will routinely occur and be granted upon request.

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- Mask exemptions may apply based on district review of medical documentation provided by the individual needing the exemption.
- Signage in and around schools will depict the positive behaviors known to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

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

- To the extent possible, all schools will ensure the maximum possible social distancing practicable.
- Remote learning, Virtual Learning Environments, and the cohort structure may allow for students to be physically distanced while in the classroom.
- The various phases & cohort models may provide the maximum amount of social distancing practicable.
- When social distancing of furniture is not possible, desks / tables / chairs will all face the same direction.
- To the extent possible, desks will be assigned to students within a cohort rather than used by multiple students.
- To the extent possible, students will stay in their assigned class areas and teachers, as necessary, will rotate to the students or students will video conference with their teachers.
- Markings on floors, walls, etc... will be used in common areas as appropriate to direct/remind/encourage social distancing.
- Hallways will have one-way travel patterns.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

- Approved hand sanitizer will be provided and available throughout schools under proper supervision.
- Sanitizer will be available under supervision in each classroom in locations deemed developmentally safe and appropriate for the age group within the classroom.
- All children will be supervised when using hand sanitizer.
- Classroom routines and expectations will exemplify and promote proper use of hand sanitizer.
- In classrooms that have existing hand washing stations, stations will be prepared with soap, water.

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Hand Washing Protocols

Students will learn, and regularly perform hand washing for at least 20 seconds at regular intervals during the school day, always before eating, after using the bathroom, after blowing their nose, coughing, and/or sneezing;

- that will specify a mechanism for introducing and enforcing the hand washing protocols including, through supervision, signage, and reminders;
- that include alternatives when soap and water are not available such as using hand sanitizer.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

Supplies

Identification, procurement, and/or purchase of the necessary cleaning supplies for the 2020-2021 school year will continue and is inclusive of but not limited to: industrial sanitizing wipes, soap, and hand sanitizer.

Cleaning / Disinfecting Schedules

- Routines include cleaning & disinfecting surfaces & objects frequently touched & or shared such as cleaning objects/surfaces not ordinarily cleaned daily.
- Appropriate disinfecting supplies will be available in each classroom as needed.
- Manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products will be followed.
- Custodians will sanitize bathrooms daily, or between use as much as possible, using protocols outlined by the Environmental Protection Agency.
- Staff will be encouraged to wipe down shared use areas or surfaces after he or she uses one.

Ventilation

All schools, inclusive of classrooms, are equipped with bipolar ionization air purifying systems with mechanically and or manually ventilated systems.

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

- Should the State mandate contact tracing, the following procedures will be consistent with the District's procedures as to the maximum extent practicable.
- All applicable federal and state requirements regarding privacy of educational records (e.g. FERPA) will be followed.
- The District will follow recommendations of the local health department.
- The Superintendent, in consultation with the Health Department, will notify the district community of confirmed cases, when applicable.
- The school nurse in each building will be the contact for students, their families, and staff when reporting COVID-19 cases. School nurses will then report COVID-19 cases to the Director of Pupil Services & share the completed COVID-19 contact tracing spreadsheet.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing

Screening Procedures for Students and Staff

The district will develop a mechanism that confirms with staff & families each person is free of COVID-19 symptoms before arrival. Procedures will include screening for potential symptoms & close contact or potential exposure to an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19. Staff will visually screen students for symptoms upon arrival in accordance with any applicable privacy laws and regulations.

Students and staff that complain of symptoms will be sent to the nursing triage area to be assessed for symptoms and fever. If the nurse determines that the individual has potential symptoms of COVID-19, and the individual is not well enough to transport themselves home, he/she will be escorted to the isolation area and await an authorized adult to transport the individual home or to an appropriate medical facility if necessary.

Appropriate accommodations will be made within the screening process for those students with disabilities and/or special needs.

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

The district successfully established a community partnership with CentraState Medical Center and Central Jersey Visiting Nurse Association. Through this partnership over 500 vaccinations were scheduled for our staff. Additionally, we provided information regarding vaccination clinics for school aged children through our school community email distribution list, district and school based websites.

As additional vaccinations become available, access information will be shared with eligible populations. Information related to COVID-19 vaccines can be found [here](#).

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

It is acknowledged that enforcing the use of face coverings may be impractical for young children or individuals with disabilities. Such needs will be considered on an individual basis. Any accommodations will be made according to each student's need & in accordance with all applicable laws & regulations.

Exceptions to requirements for face coverings are as follows:

- Doing so would inhibit the individual's health (district physician approval required)
- The individual is in extreme heat, though every effort will be made to avoid prolonged exposure to extreme heat by processing entry into the building efficiently & limiting recess during extreme heat.
- The individual is in water.
- A student's documented medical condition, or disability as reflected in an IEP, precludes the use of face covering.
- Other exemptions as per state guidelines.

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Ensuring Continuity of Services

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)

HTPS will continue to monitor student progress through our RTI framework, inclusive of multiple points of data. Summer programs have expanded from ESY & ELL programming to include Title 1 & at risk students as well as peer mentoring. All summer programming will focus on SEL and integration of social skills.

Staff and student wellness is critical to a healthy return to school and the establishment of a new normal. The district is leveraging a Sabbatical to establish a staff wellness program for the 2021-2022 school year. HTPS has established a Committee for Equity and Culturally Proficient Practices. These efforts have established a baseline for common language, goal consensus, and laid the foundations for professional learning and implementation in the fall of 2021. HTPS is also working to establish restorative practices with a particular focus for restorative discipline in the middle schools and restorative circles in the elementary schools.

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Public Comment

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 with the Education Committee of the BOE, which is inclusive of citizen members. The PTO Presidents Council will also have an opportunity to provide input. Lastly, the two bargaining units, HTEA & HTAC, will have the opportunity to provide input. After those stakeholders were involved, the plan will be shared with the full Board of Education and opened for discussion.

Comments and input were considered by the senior administration and applicable recommendations will continue to be added to the plan for integrative inclusion.

Availability & Accessibility

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 will be available in English and Spanish. Translations in other languages will be available upon request. ESL Staff will be available to work with families who need assistance and advocacy. Additionally, the document can be available in a text-to-speech format upon request.

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Professional Learning

Briefly describe any guidance professional learning and technical assistance opportunities the LEA will make available to its schools.

The District maintains a robust professional learning design, which supports staff members across twelve schools, spanning Preschool through Grade 8. Critical to the success of the professional learning design are the structures in place to allow for articulation of needs, analysis of outcomes, as well as delivery of opportunities for professional learning. A districtwide Learning Design Team, is complemented by a School Improvement Panel at each school, which is further complemented by Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) within grade bands and departments. More information regarding our districtwide and school-based professional learning plans can be found at:

<https://4.files.edl.io/1f2f/09/01/20/133830-3f817734-ea40-4b63-9ee1-f07e5fc17fd6.pdf>. This plan will continue to be updated to meet the evolving needs of our staff members, to ensure optimal experiences for our students.

Provide a current link to the district's website where the plan is posted:

http://howell.edltest.com/News/ARP%20ESSER%20III%20Input%20Document%20_1_.pdf

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