



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

LEA Name: Montague Township School district

Date: 09/1/2022

Date Revised: 06/23/2023

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:

The district is following guidance provided by Governor Murphy to lift the universal mask mandate as of March 7, 2022, and has implemented a mask-optional policy.

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

The district is in alignment with guidance provided by the New Jersey Department of Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments for K-12 Schools. The district is committed to maintaining in-person instruction and is following the CDC, NJDOE, New Jersey Executive Orders, and NJ Department of Health guidance for physical distancing to the maximum extent practical. Building administrators, teachers, staff, and the district's Maintenance Department collaborate on the configurations of classrooms, lunchrooms and instructional spaces, and other areas to maintain appropriate social distancing to the maximum extent practical. If instructional and non-instructional rooms cannot comply with distancing standards, modifications will be taken into consideration when feasible.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

The district is in alignment with guidance provided by the New Jersey Department of Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments for K-12 Schools. The district is committed to maintaining in-person instruction and is following the CDC, NJDOE, New Jersey Executive Orders, and NJ Department of Health guidance for handwashing and respiratory etiquette. District administrators in conjunction with the Facilities Department will continue to support healthy hygiene behaviors by providing adequate supplies at the district's expense, including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60 % alcohol (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer), paper towels, tissues, disinfectant wipes, and cloth face coverings (as feasible). Hand washing stations will be maintained with soap, water, and alcohol-based hand sanitizers. Signage will be displayed throughout buildings to encourage hand washing and sanitizing.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

The district is in alignment with guidance provided by the New Jersey Department of Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments for K-12 Schools. The district is committed to maintaining in-person instruction and is following the CDC, NJDOE, New Jersey Executive Orders, and NJ Department of Health guidance for cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation. The district will continue to clean and disinfect all rooms in all schools on a regular basis. Custodians have been trained in the use of cleaning products utilized by the district and proper cleaning methods. The district will continue to purchase appropriate cleaning supplies & equipment and conduct periodic audits of custodial cleaning practices. The district participates in the NJDOH K-12 HEPA Unit and Filter Program and received units for the classrooms.

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

The district is in alignment with guidance provided by the New Jersey Department of Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments for K-12 Schools. The district is committed to maintaining in-person instruction and is following the CDC, NJDOE, New Jersey Executive Orders, and NJ Department of Health guidance for contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine. Per the October 7, 2022, New Jersey Department of Health COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations for K-12 Schools, Childcare, and Youth Camps, the District transitioned away from a case-investigation response model to a routine disease control model in schools. This model focuses more on response to clusters of cases, outbreaks, and evidence of ongoing transmission in a particular setting, and less on individual case investigation and contact tracing. The district has implemented a formal process for reporting student and staff COVID-positive cases.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing

The district is in alignment with guidance provided by the New Jersey Department of Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments for K-12 Schools. The district is committed to maintaining in-person instruction and following the CDC, NJDOE, New Jersey Executive Orders, NJ Department of Health guidance for diagnostic and screening testing, and participates in the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) K-12 COVID at-home test kit program offered at no cost to school districts. Families and staff are encouraged to refrain from attending school or work when sick or exhibiting COVID-like symptoms. Families and staff are encouraged to monitor for symptoms and test following the onset of symptoms or after a potential exposure. The district website provides information regarding quarantine and isolation protocols, screening and handling of symptomatic students and staff, travel protocols, masking, and testing resources.

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

The district is committed to maintaining in-person instruction and provides information regarding access to vaccinations on the District website. Additionally, ongoing communications are developed to inform the students, staff, and community about vaccination opportunities throughout the area.

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

The district is in alignment with guidance provided by the New Jersey Department of Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments for K-12 Schools. The district is committed to maintaining in-person instruction and is following the CDC, NJDOE, New Jersey Executive Orders, and NJ Department of Health guidance for children with disabilities, in regard to their health and safety. The district, in accordance with guidance from the NJ Department of Health, NJ Department of Education, and the local health agency, provides appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities that include but are not limited to the availability of clear facemasks, face shields, plexiglass dividers, mask tolerance behavioral programming, telehealth related services while permitted via the state, social distancing, individual material sets, and in-home behavioral supports when appropriate. Student needs are assessed individually, and accommodation and modifications are provided.

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.

The district is in alignment with guidance provided by the New Jersey Department of Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments for K-12 Schools. The district is committed to maintaining in-person instruction and is following the CDC, NJDOE, New Jersey Executive Orders, and NJ Department of Health guidance for ensuring the continuity of services. Students on an ongoing basis are provided individual and small group intervention opportunities. Student academic progress will be continually monitored through both state and local assessments. Data will be analyzed at regular intervals to determine when individual or curricular interventions are necessary. The district will continue to focus resources on the planning for, preparation of, and support of student mental health initiatives. Breakfast and lunch are available to all students.

3. Public Comment

A. Describe how the LEA sought public comment on its plan, and how it took those public comments 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.

The district values transparency and input from the community and will seek public comment and participation at its June 28, 2023, BOE meeting.

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.

The district plan is located on the district website. The plan is written in English. Parents that have limited English proficiency can contact the district's administrative office for an oral translation in English or a translation in an alternate language. Upon request, a parent who is an individual with a disability as defined by the ADA, will be provided an alternative format of the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan based upon the individual's specific circumstance.