



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: Montague Twp. School District

Date (06/15/2021):

Date Revised (07/26/2021), (8/11/21)

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:

As included in the Montague Restart & Recovery Plan approved by the New Jersey Department of Education, Montague Twp. School still currently requires a face covering for all students, visitors, and staff (unless a mitigating medical issues or because of excessive heat). Signage is posted throughout the building relating to hygiene and face coverings. Our school nurse has communicated with families, teachers and students on the correct way to sanitize and mask wearing protocols. Montague Twp. School will continue to implement masking as directed by the New Jersey Department of Health. Our policies will be updated to reflect changes when they emerge.

UPDATE 2: As of September 1st, Montague will resume a traditional school day, with masks (as per Executive Order 251) and physical distancing when necessary, with enhanced sanitizing. As Orders change, this plan may reflect said changes.

Per Executive Order 251, all public, private, and parochial preschool programs and elementary and secondary schools, must maintain a policy regarding mandatory use of face masks by staff, students, and visitors in the indoor portion of the school district premises, except in the following circumstances:

- a. When doing so would inhibit the individual's health, such as when the individual is exposed to extreme heat indoors;
- b. When the individual has trouble breathing, is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face masks without assistance;
- c. When a student's documented medical condition or disability, as reflected in an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Educational Plan pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, precludes use of a face mask;

- d. When the individual is under two years of age;
- e. When the individual is engaged in activity that cannot physically be performed while wearing a mask, such as eating or drinking, or playing a musical instrument that would be obstructed by a face mask;
- f. When the individual is engaged in high-intensity aerobic or anaerobic activity; g. When a student is participating in high-intensity physical activities during a physical education class in a well-ventilated location and able to maintain a physical distance of six feet from all other individuals;
- h. When wearing a face mask creates an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task.
- i. Students will be required to wear masks on all school buses.

The most effective fabrics for cloth masks are tightly woven such as cotton and cotton blends, breathable, and in two or three fabric layers.

Masks with exhalation valves or vents, those that use loosely woven fabrics, and ones that do not fit properly are not recommended.

Masks should be washed after every day of use and/or before being used again, or if visibly soiled or damp/wet.

Disposable face masks should be changed daily or when visibly soiled, damp or damaged.

- B. Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding):
 Montague Twp. School will continue to implement physical distancing as directed by the New Jersey Department of Health. Our policies will be updated to reflect changes when they emerge. Classrooms are organized to maximize physical distancing and the use of appropriate dividers have been instituted in every classroom. Lunchrooms adhere to all directives from the Department of Health. Signage is posted throughout the building concerning physical distancing. We have relied upon a hybrid schedule for students to maximize distancing thus far. September 1, 2021 will see a return to 100% in-school instruction for all students.
UPDATE 2: As of September 1st, Physical distancing will be implemented when deemed necessary. 3-6ft as per guidance.
- C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette:
 As included in the MTS Restart & Recovery Plan to Open Schools approved by the New Jersey Department of Education, MTS works to ensure that frequent handwashing and respiratory etiquette was prioritized during all phases of our reopening plan. Frequent handwashing opportunities were provided at multiple intervals throughout the day. Students will be required to wash their hands before and after meals. Hand sanitizing stations were made available in each classroom and other locations throughout the building. Our school nurse communicated proper handwashing and appropriate respiratory etiquette. MTS will continue to implement handwashing and respiratory etiquette, as directed by the New Jersey Department of Health. Our policies will be updated to reflect all necessary changes.
- D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation:
 As included in the MTS Restart & Recovery Plan to Open Schools approved by the New Jersey Department of

Education, MTS has prioritized cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities. MTS will routinely clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that are frequently touched. MTS will use cleaning and disinfecting products that are EPA-approved. The following items will be cleaned and disinfected after use: Classroom desks and chairs, Cafeteria tables and chairs, Door handles and push plates, Handrails, Kitchens and bathrooms, Light switches, Handles on equipment, bathrooms and associated equipment, etc. MTS will ensure that indoor facilities have adequate ventilation (updated uni-ventilators) with heat and air conditioning. Windows should be opened when possible and beneficial to allow for circulation. MTS will continue to implement the same cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities as directed by the New Jersey Department of Health. Our policies will be updated to reflect changes.

- E. Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments: Contact tracing will be coordinated by the school nurse and the local board(s) of health. The school nurse will immediately contact the local board(s) of health when presented with information from students, faculty and staff on positive COVID-19 screening results. Recommendations regarding re-entry guidelines and medical care will be coordinated with the school nurse and the local board of health. The district will implement recommendations and guidelines by the CDC, NJDOE and local board of health on notifications and support documentation regarding students, faculty and staff that may exhibit signs/symptoms of COVID-19. As updated in May 2021, fully vaccinated (14 days post 2nd shot) and laboratory confirmed positive Covid cases (within 90 days) will not need to quarantine if exposed. Proof needs to be provided to our school nurse in both cases. MTS will continue to implement contact tracing as directed by the New Jersey Department of Health.
- F. Diagnostic and screening testing:
MTS has a health screening station that includes a digital scanner temperature device, extra face coverings available if needed, friendly masking and Covid reminders and hand sanitizer as required. Parents have been asked to complete our health screening tool online which asks a series of questions about student health. MTS will continue to implement screening as directed by the New Jersey Department of Health. Our policies will be updated to reflect changes when they emerge.
- G. Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible:
Once the vaccine became available, the district made every effort to advertise the availability to staff, students, parents and the community. The school nurse communicated the availability and location of vaccination sites. The district recognizes the role the vaccine plays in contact tracing and has aligned its procedures with local and state boards of health guidelines. **Update 2: As of Sept. 1st, Montague will follow all new Executive orders. As per Executive Order 253: All covered workers must be fully vaccinated by Oct. 18 or submit to once to twice weekly screening testing- "covered workers" shall include all individuals employed by the covered setting, both full and part-time, including, but not limited to, administrators, teachers, educational support professionals, individuals providing, food, custodial, and administrative support services, substitute teachers, whether employed directly by a covered setting or otherwise contracted, contractors, providers, and any other individuals performing work in covered settings whose job duties require them to make regular visits to such covered settings, including volunteers. Covered workers do not include individuals who visit the covered setting only to provide one-time or limited duration repairs, services, or construction.**
- H. Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies:

We will continue to monitor and evaluate the process for the 2021-2022 school year. The Director of the CST and case managers will communicate frequently with the families of students identified with significant medical risk factors to determine if additional precautions or unique measures are necessary prior to a student's return to school. Families will be informed of the district's intent to provide a safe and secure learning environment for all. Medically fragile students will be offered whatever options are legally available in September 2021.

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 district will provide access to counseling referrals and community resources throughout the summer. The district is implementing a summer program for remedial skill review to support the students' academic needs. Our ESY program and new Summer Learning Acceleration Program is being offered to all students that need remediation on present grade level standards. The district has plans to offer summer meals through a pick-up schedule for parents and families. Funding for mental health has been provided and therapeutic services and mental health programs will be available for staff and students and families. Additional faculty is being hired in key areas: Special education, Interventionist and a possible licensed clinician. At-will in-home after school instruction will be provided to all students in need. **Update 2: As of September 1st, we will follow all new Executive orders regarding virtual/remote instruction.**

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. (1000 character limit): The district created a Google form for public input that was emailed to all families and placed on the front page of the school website on all of the relevant points of the Safe Return to School plan. Data was collected and organized and included in this plan. At the June 14 BOE meeting, a discussion session was held on the Safe Return to Schools plan and information was shared during the CSA report. Also, school staff were allowed to offer their feedback concerning our safe return to school and the School Leadership Team coordinated the development of the plan. **Update 2: As of Sept. 1, a new Survey has been created and shared with the community soliciting feedback especially in response to Executive Order 251.**

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): MTS offered both the NJDOE's format of the reopening and recovery plan as well as a Q&A format with straightforward language for ease of understanding. The district's notifications will be available in both English and Spanish formats. If an alternative format is requested by a parent/student, the district will accommodate the request in a timely manner.