



## 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

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LEA Name: School District of the Chathams

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 07/12/2022

Date Revised (mm/dd/yyyy): 07/12/2022

### 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 School District of the Chathams continues to encourage all staff and students who would like to wear masks to do so, particularly in times of high transmission.

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

The School District of the Chathams no longer attempts to maintain physical distance between students.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

During the summer of 2021, the school district purchased hand sanitizer for every classroom in the district and encouraged students to use hand sanitizer as they wished. The school district also encourages students to wash their hands whenever necessary. The school district reinforces both proper hand etiquette and respiratory etiquette through its own [health website](#) and videos created by the district nursing staff.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

The School District of the Chathams implements an array of practices focused on maintaining healthy school environments. These practices include daily sanitization of all classrooms, frequent sanitization of high-touch surfaces, and disinfection of special equipment in between student use. With respect to ventilation, all mechanical ventilation units in the district are confirmed to be operational throughout the year and all are confirmed to have the manufacturer-specified air filters in place. All teachers are encouraged to open the windows in their classrooms to maximize fresh air exchange to the extent they feel comfortable. Finally, all HVAC units are programmed to deliver maximum fresh air into classrooms.

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

The School District upholds isolation and quarantine standards for staff and students symptomatic of illness.

- F. Diagnostic and screening testing

All unvaccinated staff undergo weekly testing. All students for the start of the 2022/2023 school year will have access to at-home tests provided by the district.

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

The School District partnered with Atlantic Health System to secure vaccination appointments for all staff members in the district in March 2021. In November 2021, the district hosted the local health department on two occasions to provide access to pediatric vaccinations to all families. The School District will continue to work with the local departments of health to provide access to vaccination to staff and students.

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

The School District evaluates the needs of all children on case-by-case basis, and makes all relevant accommodations and modification to health plans and policies in accordance with an individual's IEP or 504 plan.

## **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 created and implemented an array of summer programming to help meet the needs of students. This includes extended school year programming for students with disabilities, learning acceleration for students not yet performing at grade level, teletherapy for mental health support for students who have been referred by counselors or parents as struggling, and social reintegration programs for students identified as suffering from social anxiety or a lack of social interaction.

Beyond this, the school district has provided Chromebook devices to all students and has enabled Covid-positive students to receive and participate in coursework on a virtual basis.

## **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)

The school district discussed its draft plan at the July 11, 2022 Board of Education meeting and remains receptive to public comment at all Board meetings.

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 school district has striven to be concise, clear, and straightforward in its plan articulation. It ensures that all documents and files posted to the district website are compatible with standard digital readers that enable access to the visually impaired. The school district will translate the plan into any language upon request.