



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: MONMOUTH-OCEAN EDUCATIONAL SERVICES COMMISSION

Date 09/23/2021

Date Revised

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

All students and staff will be required to wear face coverings inside the school including the bus ride to and from school unless CDC and/or NJ Department of Health guidelines change. The district will continue to adhere to CDC and NJ DOH guidance. It should be noted that students and staff have been wearing face coverings to school appropriately since September 2020. Exceptions to this policy are:

- Doing so would inhibit the individual's health.
- The individual is in extreme heat outdoors.
- The individual is in water.
- A student's documented medical condition, or disability as reflected in an IEP precludes the use of face covering.
- The student is under the age of two and could risk suffocation.

Any student or staff member who does not have a mask will be provided with one. Extra masks will be placed in Nurses' Offices and Main Offices of each school. Masks have been purchased in both adult and child sizes.

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

Schools in the district will allow for social distancing within the classroom to the maximum extent practicable. This will be achieved by ensuring students are seated at least three feet apart as per CDC guidelines. If a school in the district is not able to maintain this physical distance, additional modifications will be considered including using physical barriers between desks, turning desks to face the same direction (rather than facing each other), having students sit on only one side of the table, spaced apart, as well as adding individual air purifier units to the classroom.

The district will be following a five-day, full-day schedule to facilitate in-person learning. However, if needed, due to a change in health conditions or guidance in our area, students can be scheduled for a hybrid A/B Day schedule by the building principal based upon the first letter of the students' last name: A-L on A Day and M-Z on B Day. The hybrid schedule will reflect a one-session or half day schedule for students if needed. This schedule was developed and implemented during the 2020-2021 school year. The goal is to provide a five-day, full- day schedule in September 2021.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

Each classroom and bathroom area have hand sanitizer stations as well as soap. Hand washing/sanitizing will be encouraged periodically throughout the day including before eating, after using the bathroom, and after blowing one's nose/coughing/sneezing. Students and staff will be encouraged to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds. Hand sanitizer also will be available if hand washing is not possible using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer at least 60% alcohol. Signage will be posted around the buildings reminding students and staff about the importance of proper hand washing.

If a student or staff member is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms while in school, the individual will immediately visit the school nurse. If the school nurse is not available, the symptomatic student or staff member will be taken to the principal's office. The student or staff member will be isolated respectfully from others and referred for a COVID-19 test.

Other considerations in this process include:

- Each school will have a designated isolation space.
- If the individual is positive for COVID-19, the Superintendent must be notified immediately. Local health officials, staff, and families will be notified while maintaining confidentiality.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

The custodial staff has been trained in the proper way to use the approved cleaning and disinfecting products. All products purchased by the district are approved by the EPA for use against the virus that causes COVID-19. These products will be used to clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that are frequently touched, for example doorknobs, light switches, classroom sinks, and countertops. Other surfaces that will be cleaned and disinfected include:

- Classroom desks and chairs
- Lunchroom tables and benches
- Playground equipment
- Shared equipment
- Face shields
- Plexiglass barriers
- Walls

Bioesque disinfectant will be available in each classroom, instructional area, copy room, and office for staff to use to wipe down any items that they wish to disinfect. This product also will be used for any accidental spillage that needs to be cleaned prior to a custodian's arrival on scene. Bioesque is an EPA-approved disinfectant and requires no PPE to use.

In order to provide social distancing in the public bathrooms, the schools will limit the number of students who can enter the restrooms. There will be designated restroom signage throughout each building. The custodial staff will clean and sanitize restrooms daily.

Water fountains may be shut down. Water filling stations will be monitored and if needed, may be shut down. Students and staff are encouraged to bring their own water bottles.

Hand sanitizer will be made available at the main entrance of each building, classrooms, office areas, and throughout the hallways.

A routine schedule for cleaning and disinfecting of furniture and equipment has been developed.

The district will ensure adequate supplies are on hand to support cleaning and disinfecting practices.

To ensure proper cleaning and disinfecting procedures are followed, the district's custodial team, areas will be randomly inspected and tested for the presence of adenosine triphosphate (ATP) using a testing kit and protocol.

The district's plan follows the guidance from the ASHRAE, CDC, EPA, IAQ for Schools, and all NJ State Agencies. The plan will be modified as guidance is updated ensuring the district's cleaning protocol remains compliant.

If a person has been confirmed as COVID-19 positive:

- The areas the individual visited will be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized.
- Windows and outside doors if any will be opened to increase air circulation.
- An air purifier unit will be added to the location if one is not there already.
- The closed areas will be disinfected again prior to cleaning. After cleaning is completed, the area will be disinfected a third time.
- Windows and outside doors will be closed after the deep cleaning is completed.
- Affected areas must pass the ATP test prior to reopening.

Each district school and building have a centralized HVAC system. The HVAC system provides heat and air conditioning to the offices and classrooms. The HVAC system has filters and brings fresh air from the outside into the buildings. Most classrooms and instructional spaces have exterior windows as well. All indoor facilities will have adequate ventilation, including operational heating and ventilation systems where appropriate. Recirculated air must have a fresh air component, windows will be opened, if practical, if air conditioning is not provided, and filter(s) for A/C units must be

maintained and changed according to manufacturer recommendations. Merv-8 filters are being used. Ionization technology is being purchased for each HVAC unit to help reduce viruses, bacteria, dust, and other pollutants in the air.

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

The district will work closely with local and county health department officials to support contact tracing. As per guidance from the Monmouth County Health Department, school officials will support and assist in this process. All school and district administrators, school safety specialists, school nurses, and any other staff deemed appropriate by the Superintendent will be provided information regarding the rules of contact tracing in keeping school communities safe from the spread of contagious disease. The school officials listed above will review the CDC guidelines on contact tracing before school begins. Again, it should be noted, district staff conducted numerous contact tracing investigations with health department officials during the 2020-2021 school year.

Contact tracing procedures will be initiated upon confirmation of a confirmed case of COVID-19 within the school community.

The school nurse shall consult with the local and county health department in the development, review, and revision of the district contact tracing policy and procedures. The school nurse and building principal are designated staff liaisons responsible for providing notifications and carrying out other components of the district's contact tracing policy.

The school nurse in consultation with the building principal shall establish measures for a system of open communication that allows staff, students, and families to self-report symptoms and/or suspected exposures.

A staff member shall immediately notify the principal and the school nurse when he/she observes symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or becomes aware that an individual who has spent time in a district facility tests positive for COVID-19. The school nurse in consultation with the school principal shall immediately notify local health officials, staff, and families of a confirmed case while maintaining confidentiality when the COVID-19 test is positive. The Superintendent of Schools must be immediately notified as well before any public notifications are distributed or sent.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing

Students and staff will be screened daily using the STOPit SafeScreen for Self-Monitoring of COVID-19 Symptoms if required by CDC or NJ Department of Health guidelines. On each school day, parents or caregivers will need to complete the screening before students arrive to school each morning. If a survey is not completed by the parent or caregiver, the school nurse will screen the student in the morning. All school staff will be informed and trained in the symptoms of COVID-19. If a student or other individual is suspected of having COVID-19 symptoms, the staff member will discreetly ask the student or other individual to visit the school nurse for further screening.

The symptoms of COVID-19 may include:

- A fever of 100.4° F or greater
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficult breathing
- Chills
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell
- Fatigue
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

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

Vaccination opportunities for staff members are coordinated with the Monmouth County Health Department. All opportunities are posted on our website. As of September 1, 2021, 87% of MOESC staff members are fully vaccinated by one of the COVID-19 vaccines. As additional opportunities become available for students and staff, the district will coordinate with health department officials to help disseminate information to the community.

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

The district will work to support high risk students who are at a higher risk for severe illness due to COVID-19. The CDC has identified certain risk factors for students identified above under Protocol for High Risk Staff Members in addition to the following:

- Medically fragile students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)
- Student with complex disabilities with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)
- Students who require accommodations under a plan in accordance with the Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (504 Plan).

Parents or caregivers who believe their child is at high risk for one of the factors listed above should provide documentation and guidance to the school principal. The school principal and nurse will review the information and try to provide reasonable accommodations for the child.

Exceptions to requirements for face coverings shall include:

- Doing so would inhibit the individual's health.
- A student's documented medical condition, or disability as reflected in an IEP, precludes the use of face covering.
- The student is under the age of two and could risk suffocation.

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, which may include:

- Chronic lung disease or asthma (moderate to severe);
- Serious heart conditions;
- Immunocompromised;
- Severe obesity (body mass index, or BMI, of 40 or higher);
- Diabetes;
- Chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis;
- Liver disease;
- Medically fragile students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs);
- Students with complex disabilities with IEPs; or
- Students who require accommodations under a Plan in accordance with the Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (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)

In addition to taking the steps listed in the Health and Safety Guidelines section to protect students' and educators' physical health, leaders also must consider the impact of social isolation on both educators and students. The following elements are currently being utilized by the district:

1. RAA will utilize several paths to meet the staff's and student's needs. Professional development will be ongoing throughout the year embedded in staff meetings. PLC 's as well as ongoing communication between staff and administration.
2. If a student needs to be quarantined appropriate measures will be taken to ensure their instruction is uninterrupted.

Comment [1]: 2. If a student needs to be quarantined appropriate measures will be taken to ensure the their instruction is uninterrupted.

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)

Monmouth-Ocean Educational Services Commission created, adopted, and implemented many aspects of this plan during the 2020-2021 school year. However, this plan was discussed during the Superintendent's Report at the June 2, 2021 BOE meeting. The final plan is posted on the district website.

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 plan will be displayed on the school website and sent to the school community through our email system. Our website and email system provide options to view the content in various different languages and formats.