



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: Wanaque Public School District

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 06/24/2021

Date Revised (mm/dd/yyyy): 02/16/2022

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

- All students and staff are **REQUIRED** (*per CDC federal order*) to wear face coverings on all district and contracted transportation services.
- All students, staff and visitors are **REQUIRED** (*per New Jersey Executive Order #251*) to wear face coverings in the indoor portion of the school district premises, except in the following circumstances:
 - When doing so would inhibit the individual's health, such as when the individual is exposed to extreme heat indoors;
 - When the individual has trouble breathing, is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face mask without assistance;
 - 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;
 - When the individual is under two (2) years of age;
 - 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;
 - When the individual is engaged in high-intensity aerobic or anaerobic activity;
 - 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; or
 - When wearing a face mask creates an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task.
- Guidelines for wearing face coverings:
 - Parents must provide a face covering for their child, daily
 - Face coverings must cover the nose and mouth
 - Face shields do not replace a face covering; they cannot be used interchangeably.
 - Students can wear a face shield in addition to a face covering.

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

- Students' desks will be spaced 3 ft. apart to the maximum extent possible
- Individual desk shields will be available in each classroom and in lunch room.
- Desk shields or plexiglass barriers will be utilized for tables at which students sit directly across from one another.

- Every hallway will be split into two lanes, indicating one-way travel.
- Social Distancing on the bus as much as possible.
- Students and adults will be required to wear face coverings while on the bus and waiting at bus stops.
- Windows will be open on the bus when appropriate to provide additional ventilation.
- Students will be assigned to a specific seat and required to sit there to and from school.
- The bus will be sanitized daily after students have exited the bus.
- In the event of COVID activity levels or an outbreak of the virus in the Wanaque Public Schools, the district will pivot to either a 4 hour day (without lunch periods) with students attending on an A/B hybrid instructional schedule or 100% remote instruction on our regular daily schedules depending upon NJDOH guidance or state directives.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

- Students will wash their hands for at least 20 seconds at regular intervals, including at the start of the day when children enter the classroom, before eating, after using the bathroom, before entering a new space, and after blowing their nose/coughing/sneezing.
- Students will use alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) if washing with soap and water is not possible.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

- All surfaces including classroom desks and chairs, doorknobs, handrails, water fountains (only the bottle filler will be used), as well as the bathrooms will be disinfected before, during the day, after school, and in the evening.
- All indoor facilities have adequate ventilation, including operational heating and ventilation systems. The recirculated air will have a fresh air component, windows will be opened, when practical, and filter (s) for A/C units will be maintained and changed monthly. All classrooms have A/C units and will be maintained to the highest degree.
- Recirculated air can be adjusted by an automated system as our needs change.
- GPS (Global Plasma Solutions) ionization systems (air scrubbers) will be installed in all classrooms.
- All classroom filters are replaced once per month and the rooftop units are replaced quarterly. Once GPS systems are installed in the classrooms (this summer) the units will be “equivalent” to MERV 13 filtered units.

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

- In the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19, the district will follow contact tracing protocols to determine who that person/student came in contact with.
- The school nurse will notify the local health department to determine close contacts to whom they may have spread the virus.
- The Superintendent of Schools, in consultation with the Wanaque Boro Health Department and School Nurses, will determine the need for student/staff exclusions from school and class or building closures based on NJDOH K-12 Guidance.
- All school and district administrators, as well as staff deemed appropriate, should be provided information regarding their role in the contact tracing protocol.
- Seating charts will be maintained for all classrooms, groups and lunch periods to determine close contacts. Per the CDC, close contact is defined as being within 6 feet of someone with suspected or known COVID-19 for 15 or more minutes during a 24-hour period. In certain

situations, it may be difficult to determine whether individuals have met this criterion and an entire cohort, classroom, or other group may need to be considered exposed.

- Exception: In the **K–12 indoor classroom** setting, the close contact definition **excludes students** who were **within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student** (laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness) where both the infected student and the exposed student(s) correctly and consistently wore well-fitting masks the entire time. This exception does not apply to teachers, staff, or other adults in the indoor classroom setting.
- Close contacts will be directed to quarantine as per NJDOH recommendations.
- Efforts will be made to minimize staff close contacts with students through classroom planning and layout of classroom furniture.
- Fully vaccinated individuals will not be considered close contacts of identified positive COVID-19 cases for the purposes of required quarantines unless the fully vaccinated individual exhibits COVID-19 related symptoms.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing

- Wanaque School District understands that implementing social distancing practices in all instructional and non-instructional spaces is critical to ensuring the health and safety of students and staff. As noted with specificity below, student desks and seating in the District will be separated by three feet to the maximum extent practicable, and in instances where physical distancing is not feasible or is difficult to maintain, additional protective measures will be employed.
- Students and families will be required to acknowledge receipt of information regarding the screening for COVID-related symptoms, procedures for reporting student health information to school nurses, and exclusion and quarantine information four (4) times during the school year. The school district will utilize our student information system, Realtime, to allow students and families to complete this acknowledgement online. Failure to acknowledge receipt of this important information will result in the student and family having online access to schedules and grade reports restricted until the acknowledgement is completed.
- Staff will be required to acknowledge receipt of information regarding the screening for COVID-related symptoms, procedures for reporting student health information to school nurses, and exclusion and quarantine information in school opening packets. This information will also be shared and discussed, as necessary, at school meetings such as faculty meetings, grade level meetings and PLC meetings.
- Families will be asked to monitor their child’s daily temperature and any COVID-related symptoms. Should their child have a temperature 100.4° or higher and/or exhibit the symptoms listed below, parents should keep their child(ren) home, contact their child(ren)’s school nurse and follow all health and safety protocols.
 - At least **TWO** of the following symptoms: fever (measure or subjective), chills, rigors (shivers), myalgia (muscle aches), headache, sore throat, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, congestion or runny nose; OR
 - At least **ONE** of the following symptoms: cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, new olfactory disorder, new taste disorder.
- Staff will be asked to monitor their own daily temperature and any COVID-related symptoms. Should staff have a temperature 100.4° or higher and/or exhibits the symptoms listed below, staff members should remain home, contact their school nurse and follow all health and safety protocols.

- At least **TWO** of the following symptoms: fever (measure or subjective), chills, rigors (shivers), myalgia (muscle aches), headache, sore throat, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, congestion or runny nose; OR
- At least **ONE** of the following symptoms: cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, new olfactory disorder, new taste disorder.

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

- The classroom will be cleaned and sanitized daily at the end of the day.
- OT, PT, Speech will all be available in-person in accordance with IEP's.
- Parents of medically fragile students or those with health impairments will be contacted by their case managers to ascertain if there are any concerns for re-entry to in-person learning.
- Students have been continually monitored by their program teachers and all accommodations and medical supports as outlined in their IEP's will be in place for the re-opening.
- School nurses are continually updated as to changes in treatment or medical plans.
- Transportation companies have been notified as to protocols for bus safety in conjunction with CDC recommendations.
- Case managers have been collaborating with teachers, therapists, and parents to maintain students' current levels of functioning.
- Progress reporting of goals and objectives delineated in IEP's will be utilized to focus on current levels of functioning
- Related services will be available in-person by all therapists as outlined in IEP's.
- Service providers will provide progress reports based on individual goals and objectives to assess current levels of functioning.
- IEP teams will continue to complete in-person student evaluations taking the necessary precautions, maintain timelines, determine eligibility, and provide programming.
- Procedures for student referrals following N.J.A.C. and federal guidelines are communicated through student handbooks, staff, and I&RS teams at the building levels.

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.

Students' academic needs will be identified through analysis of assessment data such as end-of-year standard-based assessments, diagnostic assessments, as well as informal assessments, and teacher observations from the year prior. Once academic needs are identified, students will receive strong, evidence-based core instruction, as well as Tier 2 or Tier 3 support based on needs. Evidence-based interventions will be put in place for students based on needs and monitored throughout to address learning gaps. With the additional interventionists hired by the district, more students will be able to receive support based on their individual needs. To address students' and staff's social, emotional, and mental health needs, staff will continue to receive training on topics specific to post-pandemic trauma, mental health, and inclusivity. Training will be provided by mental health professionals and educators will be able to use skills taught in their classrooms. Additionally, students and staff will be provided services and

support based on needs identified through surveys and observations. The Wanaque Public Schools will continue to participate in the various school nutrition programs from the NJ Department of Agriculture to ensure the food security of our students and families. Breakfast and lunch are available free of charge and accommodations will be made to provide food services for those students and families that are pick up meals at our school buildings.

The Wanaque Public Schools are committed to supporting our students and families that are unable to participate in any virtual instruction because of student quarantine or school closure. The district will provide a Chromebook or internet access (via district funded hotspots) to any student or family in need of those supports.

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.

The District sought public comment on the initial Safe Return Plan on several occasions. At each of these meetings, the Interim Superintendent shared the details of the template for the District plan for the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Service through a slide presentation on the following dates:

- Board of Education Committee Meetings on May 25, 2021
- Faculty meetings on June 2, 2021
- Digital Parent forum on June 3, 2021
- In-person Board of Education Meeting on June 15, 2021

Additional health and safety guidance for preK-12 school districts was provided by the NJDOE and the NJDOH in June 2021. Modifications and revisions were made to the initial Wanaque Public Schools Safe Return Plan distributed on June 24, 2021. Public comment regarding the revised Wanaque Public Schools Safe Return Plan were held on the following dates:

- Board of Education Committee Meetings on July 20, 2021
- Virtual District Restart Committee
- In-Person Board of Education Meeting on July 27, 2021

The District conducted a review of guidance from the NJDOE and NJDOH in January of 2022. No additional revisions were made to the plan that was revised as of 8/9/2021. Public comment regarding the plan for reapproval was held on the following dates

- Board of Education Committee Meetings on February 8, 2022 and February 9, 2022

- Building Based Pandemic Response Team Committee Meetings
- In-Person Board of Education Meeting on February 16, 2022

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.

Currently, the District communicates to the families in both English and Spanish. These communication documents include important reminders of virtual attendance guidelines and daily schedule information. The parents understand our simple format and are seemingly comfortable with our communication.

Similarly, the Safe Return Plan will follow the Template: District Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Service. This revised plan will be posted on the District Website in both languages and the district notification system will be used to communicate the revised Safe Return Plan being posted on the District Website.

Through this communication, we will inquire about the need for large print, braille, audio versions, or translations into languages other than Spanish. Upon request, these options will be available to parents.