



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: Ridgefield Park School District

Date : 06/16/2021

Date Revised: 12/20/2023

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

At this time, we are following guidance as provided by Governor Murphy’s announcement to lift the mask mandate as of March 7, 2022, and make masking optional for students and staff.

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

At this time, we are continuing to follow guidance as directed in the New Jersey Department of Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments for K-12 Schools. As we plan to continue keeping schools open in the 2023-2024 school year, the district will follow the CDC, NJDOE, New Jersey Executive Orders, and NJ Department of Health guidance.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

The District continues to follow guidance as directed in the [New Jersey Department of Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments](#) for K-12 Schools. The district will follow the CDC, NJDOE, New Jersey Executive Orders, and NJ Department of Health guidance for handwashing and respiratory etiquette. Following best practices, for example, students and staff will utilize the CDC recommended form of washing, which is soap and hot water. Hand sanitizing stations will be maintained with alcohol based hand sanitizers (contains 60% alcohol). Hand washing stations will be maintained with soap, water, and alcohol based hand sanitizers. Students will be encouraged to wash their hands throughout the school day, including but not limited to before eating, after eating, using the bathroom, after blowing their nose/sneezing/coughing. Through ongoing general education and health education sessions, students will be reminded of the proper ways to wash and sanitize their hands.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

At this time, we are following guidance as directed in the [New Jersey Department of Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments](#) for K-12 Schools. As we plan to continue keeping schools open in the 2023-2024 school year, the district will follow the CDC, NJDOE, New Jersey Executive Orders, and NJ Department of Health guidance for cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation.

For example, the Ridgefield Park School District:

Will continue implementing schedule for routine cleaning and disinfecting of frequently touched objects including, but not limited to:

- Classroom desks and chairs
- Lunchroom tables and chairs
- Door handles, door knobs, and push plates
- Handrails
- Kitchens and bathrooms
- Light switches
- Handles on equipment (e.g. athletic equipment)
- Buttons on vending machines and elevators
- Shared computer keyboards and mice
- Drinking fountains

Additionally, the district:

- uses EPA approved cleaners and disinfectants.
- ensures that indoor facilities have adequate ventilation, including operational heating, and ventilation systems where appropriate, and continues to ensure recirculated air has a fresh air component.
- engage in the practice of opening windows if A/C is not provided.
- maintain filters for A/C units and change them according to manufacturer recommendations.
- increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors when appropriate and safe.
- is currently engaged with architects and engineers to assess new building ventilation systems to provide increased classroom ventilation, airflow, and quality.

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

At this time, we are following guidance as directed in the [New Jersey Department of Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments](#) for K-12 Schools, and our local Mid-Bergen Health Department. As we plan to continue keeping schools open in the 2023- 2024 school year, the district will follow previously established practices that do not mandate quarantining or contract tracing.

For any future events, we will defer to the Mid-Bergen Health Department for definitions and directions on contract tracing, who we have collaborated with to lift our contact tracing and quarantine mandates. At this time, Ridgely Park does not further notify contacts of their potential exposure, nor do we refer contacts for testing, or monitoring. We do inform our parents and families to watch for signs and symptoms of the flu, RSV, and COVID-19; and ask them to keep students at home whenever they exhibit signs. We will continue to follow these practices until state and/or local health guidelines change.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing

At this time, we are following guidance as directed in the [New Jersey Department of Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments](#) for K-12 Schools. The district still requires families and students to self-screen for symptoms and fever for any illnesses prior to entering school. Students showing signs of illness are sent to the nurse's office. Parents/Guardian/Emergency contacts of these students will be notified to pick up their child. The parent/guardian will be required to sign out the student, as per the school's sign out protocol.

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

At this time we are following guidance as directed in the [New Jersey Department of Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments](#) for K-12 Schools. The school district will follow best practices in notifying our community about vaccination opportunities throughout our area. Information on how to get vaccinated in New Jersey can be found at <https://covid19.nj.gov/pages/vaccine>.

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

At this time, we are following guidance as directed in the [New Jersey Department of Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments](#) for K-12 Schools. As we plan to continue keeping schools open in the 2023-2024 school year, the district will follow the CDC, NJDOE, New Jersey Executive Orders, and NJ Department of Health guidance for appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities. Parents should contact their case manager and the school nurse to further discuss. For more information and support, visit the [U.S. Department of Education's Disability Rights webpage](#).

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)

Ridgefield Park School District will continue to address students' academic needs by assessing learning loss and students performing below grade level in ELA and Math through benchmarking data. We will use this data to help drive instruction and continue after school programs for targeted populations. Academic needs will be addressed through program initiatives such as Acadience, and F&P for reading, and increased use of Envisions Math, LLI for BSI, and phonics instruction. We will also use Federal grant funds to invest in our teachers over the summer months and throughout the school year by providing additional small group professional learning opportunities to review curriculum, focus standards, discuss accelerated learning, and develop pacing guides.

To address students' social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, in our K-6 classrooms SEL will continue to be infused throughout the day. In 7-12 SEL (CASEL) and Character Strong and PBIS strategies will continue to be integrated in all content areas. The High School will hire a SAC coordinator and add a wellness room to address the needs of students in grades 9-12.

To address staff's social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, schools will provide opportunities and time for teachers to focus on their own SEL through activities such as roundtable discussions with principals to collaborate and focus on building culture and climate. Staff will be supported in additional professional learning opportunities in identifying and assessing their own, and their students' mental health needs.

Our ongoing, routine activities currently include full-day, lunch and recess activities, including extracurricular activities such as yoga, stretching and other physical activities.

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 community receives information in multiple fashions having accessibility to and comment on our district reopening plans. The plan is visible on our district website and includes administrative emails and a phone directory for comments and questions. The Superintendent communicates with the community through various modalities including school messenger and during 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 district wrote and revised this plan to provide all stakeholders with district information on our safe, in-person, full-day, prior to the 2023-2024 school year. The district followed a template that answered the questions referencing guidance put out by the NJ Department of Health to ensure clear communication of expectations. The district will provide this document in Spanish, and individuals may request this document be translated, written or orally into other languages. Anyone identified with a disability as defined by the ADA may also request this plan in an alternative format, which the district will work to accommodate.

Briefly describe any guidance professional learning and technical assistance opportunities the LEA will make available to its schools.

To ensure that all our staff were trained in appropriate COVID protocols and practices, they were (and will be) required to engage in 30 minutes of assessed professional development provided through our online provider GCN (GCNTraining.com) in order to be compliant with all COVID practices.