



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.

Hackensack Public Schools Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services

LEA Name: Hackensack Board of Education

Date: 06/14/2021

Date Revised (mm/dd/yyyy):

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

Hackensack Public Schools currently follows the recommendations of the New Jersey Department of Health. At this time, we require all students and all staff to wear masks that adequately cover both their nose and mouth at all times in a school building. Staff may remove their respective face coverings when in their own classroom/office with no other occupants. Additionally, masking protocols include an exception to masking requirements outdoors during periods of extreme heat or in situations where wearing a mask would inhibit an individual's health. Further, in accordance with the Governor, an indoor masking exception could reasonably be applied to situations in which the district determines, at its discretion and based on its assessment of the individual circumstances, that a period of extreme heat warrants students and staff to remove their masks while indoors to protect individual health. If the New Jersey Department of Health changes their recommendation, we will revisit the policy at that time.

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

All classrooms, testing and therapy rooms at Hackensack Public schools currently have students seated according to NJDOH regulations between three and six feet apart. In instructional and non-instructional rooms, we have social distancing modifications to the greatest extent practicable, we currently utilize physical barriers between desks and turning desks to face the same direction or having students sit on only one side of the table in order to create physical distancing. We anticipate eliminating cohorts and anticipate a full day return of all students in September of

2021. We will strive to create as much physical distancing as possible in classrooms, hallways, and other spaces. This will be reinforced by providing physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to help ensure that staff and students follow social distancing protocols. If the New Jersey Department of Health changes their recommendation, we will revisit the policy at that time.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

When we reopened for in person instruction in January of 2021, staff and students were trained on proper hand washing techniques. Students and staff wash their hands and/or sanitize their hands frequently: upon entering the building, after they utilize the restroom, blow their nose, cough or sneeze, before and after eating, prior to dismissal, and every time they enter a different classroom/workspace. If handwashing cannot be accomplished, all staff and students shall utilize the district provided hand sanitizing stations that contain at least 60% ethyl alcohol that have been placed strategically in all classrooms, high population areas such as, offices, entrances/exits, restrooms, and cafeteria. Signage on proper handwashing technique is posted in all bathrooms and above all hand washing stations.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

All classrooms, and other areas occupied by students or staff, shall be cleaned according to the most recent CDC guidelines prior to any new individuals entering that space, whenever possible. Frequently touched areas such as doorknobs, lockers, water fountains, sinks, light switches, railings, elevators, lab equipment, etc. shall be cleaned multiple times per day. All cleanings shall be performed by properly trained custodial/maintenance staff, and documentation of the cleanings performed shall be maintained by the district and made readily available for review by the staff, the local education association, and parents should they inquire. A procedure manual was developed and includes custodial cleaning and sanitizing daily schedule as well as schedules for increased cleaning and disinfection along with targeted areas to be cleaned and can be viewed on the Hackensack Public Schools Website or by clicking here: [HPS 2020-2021 COVID-19 Cleaning & Sanitizing Procedure Manual](#) In regards to HVAC, the district has contracts with two companies that oversee the proper controls of the air environment. One focuses on the HVAC system and the other monitors temperature controls. Both companies annually inspect all systems and then are available on an as needed basis. Ventilation equipment will be checked and replaced, as required, monthly, or more frequently, as necessary based on regular inspections. The higher rating relates to efficiency of collecting particles of various sizes.

The custodial and maintenance staff, including the ECDC staff as well as our two partnering Pre-K providers, have been trained by an independent contractor, in enhanced cleaning and disinfecting practices. Formerly this process was conducted in a systematic, but less frequent manner.

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

In summer of 2020, all nurses completed a contact tracing certification course to be able to work in support of the local health department with communication and contact information. All procedures adhere to applicable federal and state law and regulations regarding privacy and the confidentiality of records. The Director of Special Services is the designated staff liaison responsible for providing notifications and carrying out other components of the board'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 exposure. If a staff member shall observe symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or becomes aware that an individual who has spent time in a district facility tests positive for COVID-19, communication will be from the staff member to a member of the Pandemic Response team who will then notify the Director of Special Services who will then notify the Central Office and the Local Health Department. The district will assist the local health department with contract tracing by identifying who the individuals were in close contact with.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing

Hackensack Public Schools screens staff and students on a daily basis as per the recommendations by the New Jersey Department of Education and the New Jersey Department of Health. Testing is currently available onsite as well. This will be continued unless recommendations change.

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

Hackensack Public Schools put together an effort to assist all staff in obtaining vaccinations. All of our staff who wanted a vaccine were able to receive it from the Mega-Site at the Meadowlands at designated times. At this time, the district continues to share where vaccines are administered and will continue to seek out opportunities for students and staff should the need warrant it.

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

Accommodations for children with disabilities are and will continue to be made according to their Individualized Educational Plans.

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)

Hackensack Public Schools plans to reopen in September with a regular full time schedule. For all of our schools, we will have after school tutoring from October through May three days a week. Food services including free breakfast will continue throughout the 2021-22 school year. The district will be hiring intervention teachers for the elementary schools to focus on learning loss, specifically in grades 2 and 3. Additionally, training for educators to support student and staff mental health, as well as various student social emotional after school opportunities and intramural sports will be offered in the 2021-2022 school year.

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)

Prior to reopening in January 2021, Hackensack Public Schools had the plan reviewed by the District Reopening Committee which was comprised of all stakeholders including but not limited to students, parents, administrators, and Board of Education members. Meetings for each school took place via Zoom, and the district held a separate forum at that time for the public. The Superintendent will present the plan at the June 21 Board of Education meeting. At this time, the plan will be open for public comment and the submission of the plan will be up for board approval. Based on comments and feedback, the plan may need to be adjusted.

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)

Hackensack Public Schools has followed the suggested template provided by the New Jersey Department of Education for this plan. The District Reopening plan is accessible in Spanish and English on our website. Parents with disabilities will be provided with an alternative format accessible to that parent upon request.