



## 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**

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LEA Name: Hackensack Board of Education

Date: 06/14/2021

Date Revised: November 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**

Hackensack Public Schools is currently mask optional. The mask optional status is subject to change based on NJDOE, NJDOH, and/or gubernatorial executive orders. Masking will continue to be required in certain circumstances.

##### **Transportation**

Currently, mask wearing is optional on school buses. The mask optional status is subject to change based on NJDOE, NJDOH, and/or gubernatorial executive orders.

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

The District will follow the guidelines of the NJDOE, NJDOH, and/or gubernatorial executive orders as required.

##### **Meals**

The schools will implement layered prevention strategies to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19 as required by the NJDOE, NJDOH, and/or gubernatorial executive orders.

#### **C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette**

Students and staff are reminded to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and/or sanitize their hands frequently after utilizing the restroom, blowing their nose, coughing or sneezing. Hand sanitizing stations have been placed strategically throughout the buildings.

**D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation**

All classrooms, and other areas occupied by students or staff, shall be routinely cleaned and disinfected with an EPA-registered product for use against SARS-CoV-2 by properly trained custodial/maintenance staff.

The district is actively installing new classroom unit ventilators and plans to upgrade HVAC systems throughout the district to increase the circulation and delivery of clean air. The district is accomplishing this via the current Energy Savings Improvement Program (ESIP) project and by utilizing ESSER and district funds. These improvements should be completed within the next three years. The aforementioned improvements continue to be approved on Board meeting agendas throughout the year. Furthermore, 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.

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

**Communication**

Hackensack Public Schools and the Local Health Department (LHD) will maintain close communication with each other to provide information and share resources on COVID-19 transmission, prevention, and control measures and to establish procedures for LHD notification and response to COVID-19 illness in school settings.

**Contact Tracing**

To support and prioritize uninterrupted, full-time, in-person learning, schools may transition away from a case investigation response model to a routine disease control model, according to the NJDOH. This model focuses more on responding to clusters of cases, outbreaks, and evidence of ongoing transmission, and less on individual case investigation and contact tracing. In lieu of individual contact tracing, the district will provide cohort notifications (classroom, cohort, team) when exposures occur. Individuals and families can then take additional precautions based on individual needs.

**F. Diagnostic and screening testing**

Parents/caregivers will be strongly encouraged to monitor their children for signs of illness on a daily basis as they are the front line for assessing illness in their children. Students who are sick should not attend school. Schools will continually educate parents about the importance of monitoring symptoms and keeping children home while ill.

COVID-19 Testing will be made available as required by NJDOH recommendations.

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

Hackensack Public Schools will continue to share where vaccines are administered and seek out opportunities for students and staff to be vaccinated 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 continue to remain open following a regular full day, full time, in-person instruction schedule with no remote option. All of our schools have after school tutoring for targeted students to address learning loss. Food services including free breakfast continue throughout the school year. The district hired three instructional coaches for the elementary schools to support teachers in addressing learning loss and two additional social workers to support student social emotional wellness. The district continues to offer training for educators to support student and staff mental health. The district has expanded enrichment, intramural sports and extracurricular activities at all schools.

## **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 reviewed the plan at the June 21 Board of Education meeting for public comment. The District Reopening Committee met on August 4, 2021 to review the plan for the 2021/2022 school-year. Subsequently, a Google Form that included a link to the plan was shared with all stakeholders to obtain public comment on any and all sections of the plan. Said comments and feedback were taken into account on the final development of the plan. The Superintendent presented the plan at the August 23 Board of Education Meeting for further public comment.

In November 2021, the District sought public comment on the proposed revisions to the Safe Return Plan. The Superintendent took said public comments into account and presented the revised plan at the December 13, 2021 Board of Education Meeting.

In June 2022, the District sought public comment on the proposed revisions to the Safe Return Plan. The Superintendent took said public comments into account and presented the revised plan at the June 20, 2022 Board of Education Meeting.

In December 2022, the District sought public comment on the proposed revisions to the Safe Return Plan. The Superintendent will take said public comments into account and present the revised plan at the December 19, 2022 Board of Education Meeting.

In May 2023, the District sought public comment on the Safe Return Plan and took said public comments into account when finalizing the plan.

**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 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.