



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: Mullica Township School District

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 06/23/2021

Date Revised (mm/dd/yyyy): ADD DATE

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

We will continue to follow and implement current guidelines from the NJDOE, NJDOH, and Executive Orders from the Governor. Those current guidelines may supersede any item listed below. Items listed below are contained in the district approved Restart and Recovery Plan in Critical Area of Operation A, B, C, D, E. Students, staff, and visitors that attend and/or work in the Mullica Township School District will be required to wear masks in accordance with universal and correct mask wearing guidance by the CDC and/or New Jersey Department of Health. In addition to signage around the building, email and social media reminders will be distributed to students, parents, and guardians regarding universal and correct wearing of masks.

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

We will continue to follow and implement current guidelines from the NJDOE, NJDOH, and Executive Orders from the Governor. Those current guidelines may supersede any item listed below. Items listed below are contained in the district approved Restart and Recovery Plan in Critical Area of Operation B, D, E, H, I, J. Hallways are marked with signage and designated one-way traffic where possible. Face masks will continue to be worn when moving throughout the building. When outside, students are permitted to remove face coverings when physical distancing is maintained. Bathroom breaks are structured and supervised. Outdoor spaces have been inventoried and have been designated for use by classes at specific times. Email and social media reminders will be distributed to students, parents, and guardians regarding physical distancing expectations.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

We will continue to follow and implement current guidelines from the NJDOE, NJDOH, and Executive Orders from the Governor. Those current guidelines may supersede any item listed below. Items listed below are contained in the district approved Restart and Recovery Plan in Critical Area of Operation A, B, H, I, J. All members of the district are expected to wash their hands at regular intervals, including before eating, after using the restroom, and after blowing their nose/coughing/sneezing. Teachers will continue to schedule designated hand washing with soap and water (preferred) or provide hand sanitizer when hand washing is not feasible. Signage regarding hand washing and respiratory etiquette will be posted as necessary. Email and social media reminders will be distributed to students, parents, and guardians regarding the District’s handwashing and respiratory etiquette expectations.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

We will continue to follow and implement current guidelines from the NJDOE, NJDOH, and Executive Orders from the Governor. Those current guidelines may supersede any item listed below. Items listed below are contained in the district approved Restart and Recovery Plan in Critical Area of Operation C, G, H, I. Continue to follow all CDC guidance for cleaning PPE and protocols. Continue to complete all disinfecting/sanitizing tasks with EPA registered and approved supplies. The District will provide staff with appropriate sanitizing materials for “spot cleanings.” In all other cases, cleaning/sanitizing will continue to be performed by the appropriately trained custodial/maintenance staff. We will continue to run HVAC systems in all occupied spaces per ASHRAE, EPA, and CDC guidance. We will continue to increase outside air when air quality allows.

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

We will continue to follow and implement current guidelines from the NJDOE, NJDOH, and Executive Orders from the Governor. Those current guidelines may supersede any item listed below. Items listed below are contained in the district approved Restart and Recovery Plan in Critical Area of Operation E, F, M. School nurses will be immediately contacted to evaluate students exhibiting any COVID-19 symptoms. Nursing staff will determine the need for and supervise the isolation of students. Parents will be contacted for immediate pick up to avoid any possible spread of infection. Upon notification of a positive result, a parent or employee will notify their principal or supervisor, respectively. The principal or supervisor will notify the nurse and superintendent. Upon receipt, the superintendent or designee will notify the Atlantic County Department of Health. The district will follow CDC and Atlantic County Health Department’s recommendations and any applicable school policies to determine readmittance to school/work.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing

We will continue to follow and implement current guidelines from the NJDOE, NJDOH, and Executive Orders from the Governor. Those current guidelines may supersede any item listed below. Items listed below are contained in the district approved Restart and Recovery Plan in Critical Area of Operation D, E. Students and staff will be screened before entering the building using the self-screening tool

provided by the NJDOH. Face coverings will continue to be required during this process. Students or staff who exhibit COVID symptoms will be isolated with the school nurse. Recommended procedures from the Atlantic County Health Department will be followed. Frequent reminders will be shared with the school community to reinforce the District's self-screening expectations.

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

We will continue to follow and implement current guidelines from the NJDOE, NJDOH, and Executive Orders from the Governor. Since vaccinations were made available to educators and school staff, the District has and continues to provide coverage and/or accommodations for faculty and staff for their vaccination appointments. To date, over 70% of staff have been fully vaccinated. Staff were provided opportunities for vaccines both in-district and at outside agencies on the following dates:

- March 31, 2021- Rite Aid clinic
- April 12, 2021- AtlantiCare clinic
- April 28, 2021- Offered vaccines in district

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

We will continue to follow and implement current guidelines from the NJDOE, NJDOH, and Executive Orders from the Governor. Those current guidelines may supersede any item listed below. Items listed below are contained in the district approved Restart and Recovery Plan in Critical Area of Operation A, B, C, E, K, L. The district will continue to provide reasonable accommodations for staff and students at higher risk for severe illness and will continue to promote behaviors that reduce spread, such as social distancing, frequent hand washing, and the use of face coverings. General education and special education teachers will continue to provide accommodations in order to allow students to access their education program as outlined in their Section 504 Plans or IEPs. Additional accommodations for students will continue to be handled on a case-by-case basis.

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)

The school district will continue to consider access and equity for all staff and students to ensure continuity of learning. The first weeks of school will be dedicated to assessing students and staff mental health. On staff we have two nurses, two guidance counselors, a Child Study Team and two resource officers. Additionally, we have partnered with Atlantic Care for a school based wellness counselor and the New Jersey Youth Advocacy Program for mental health support. The District is providing learning acceleration programs during the summer of 2021 to help prepare students for the 2021-2022 school year. The District Wellness Team provided weekly wellness activities for students and families throughout the 2020-21 school year. This will continue for the 2021-2022 school year. Professional development was provided to staff to support SEL and wellness curriculum and activities for students. This will continue for 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 comments 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)

Stakeholder input was solicited through a survey distributed using the District messaging system. Survey highlights indicate nearly 80% of stakeholders support no masks or making masks optional, with an equal amount against mandatory vaccination. Stakeholders are also concerned about academic growth, social interactions, returning to a normal school routine, and mental health.

The plan was also reviewed and discussed with administration, Board of Education committees, and presented for public comment at the June 23, 2021 Board of Education meeting. The plan will be 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 BOE approved plan was placed on the district website. It is available in English and Spanish language. Our website is ADA compliant. Individuals will also be able to phone conference with district staff.