



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:

Date (06/23/21):

Date Revised (12/23/21):

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
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 - b. All Students, Staff, and Visitors must wear a mask indoors as per Executive Order 251 (August 6, 2021) with the various exceptions listed as documented medical condition, religious, while eating/drinking, engaged in high-intensity aerobic or anaerobic activity, during intense physical education class, and when mask-wearing is unsafe to operate or execute a task.
- B. Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)
 - a. Sterling will return to normal student body capacity while maintaining physical distancing as per CDC, NJDOE, NJDOH, CCDOE, and CCDOH.
- C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette
 - a. Handwashing will be normal practice, routine, but with increased opportunity with strategic placed hand-washing/hand sanitizing stations. Staff will be encouraged to open windows, doors, or sign out for outdoor space. Additionally, 1/3 of the building have new classroom unit vents installed with special ionization to improve air quality. Students or staff experiencing respiratory distress will be sent to the nurses office for evaluation.
- D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

- a. Sterling will continue full cleaning schedule of all classrooms. High-touch areas will receive special attention during and after the school day. Classroom unit vents will be upgraded over the course of the next three year funded through ESSER II and ARP grants. The 300 wing, phase I, was completed in August of 2021.
- E. Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments
 - a. Sterling High School will continue to collaborate with state and local health departments, to confidentially provide information about individuals diagnosed with or exposed to COVID-19. Our school nurse and pandemic response team will serve as point person(s) when determining close contacts, exposure, quarantine, isolation protocols, and exclusion.
- F. Diagnostic and screening testing
 - a. Our school nurse will provide screening test in accordance with state guidelines. Pandemic related social distancing and sanitation will be added between students. Parents will assume the responsibility of monitoring student health for signs of illness every day. Students and staff who are not feeling well should not attend school and should follow up with medical expert if they are experiencing symptoms familiar to COVID-19.
- G. Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible
 - a. Sterling hosted a vaccination clinic in July and will continue to provide our community with updates on local vaccination centers.
 - b. Public service announcements encouraging vaccinations will be run as part of our morning news program.
 - c. Execute Order 253 requires staff to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 or to undergo testing once or twice per week. The district must be in compliance by October 18, 2021
- H. Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies
 - a. Students will be provided with mask breaks as needed
 - b. Students will be provided relief will eating or drinking

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) Sterling High School will assess student learning loss using pre-course assessment and benchmark testing, in addition to State standardized testing via Start Strong Assessments. Summer Credit Recover Program was offered to allow students the opportunity to stay on track with regards to graduation requirements. Staff Mental Health Awareness and Wellness Days have been scheduled. Staff Development training as required via ESSER II Grant. Further continuation to district commitment to Equity through training, Equity Council, student equity club, and our developing relationship with Rowan University and the Anti-Defamation League. Food Services will return beginning with pre-packaged options for breakfast and lunch. Multiple cafeteria locations have been created to allow for social distancing and outdoor options for the students.

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): School Administration in collaboration with the SEA and Board of Education will develop a survey, will review data, and make appropriate connections with community concerns. Information will be posted on the school's website for community review.

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)

Sterling High School's Safe Return Plan will be posted on the school's website at www.sterling.k12.nj.us, sent home via School Messenger email and phone system with the necessary language translations to accommodate our school community.