



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: Rutherford Public Schools

Date (06/02/2021):

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

Face coverings for students are currently required at all times when in the school building. However, at teacher discretion, students will be given “mask breaks” when social distancing is possible. It is also necessary to acknowledge that enforcing the use of face coverings might be impractical for young children or individuals with disabilities. Accommodations for students who are unable to wear a face covering are addressed according to that student’s need and in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations. Exceptions to requirements for face coverings include when doing so would inhibit the person’s health, the individual is in extreme heat outdoors, the individual is in water, the student’s documented medical condition or disability as reflected in an IEP precludes the use of face covering, or the student is under the age of two and could risk suffocation. Currently, face coverings are always required for visitors and staff in the building unless it will inhibit the individual’s health or the individual is under two years of age. If a visitor refuses to wear a face covering for non-medical reasons and if such a covering cannot be provided to the individual at the point of entry, the visitor’s entry to the school/district facility may be denied. The entire Fall 2020 reopening plan is available on the district website (www.rutherfordschools.org) under ReOpening. Sections of the plan that address universal and correct wearing of masks are sections A.1.a.(1)(d), A.1.b.(2) & (3), A.1.c.(1) & (2), A.1.d.(2), and A.1.e.(4); (5); (6) & (7). Appendices of the Fall 2020 Plan that address this topic are appendices A, B, C, D and E.

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

All instructional and non-instructional rooms in school and district facilities complies with recommended social distancing standards to the maximum extent practicable. This was achieved by ensuring students are seated at least six feet apart. When a classroom or non-instructional room was not able to maintain this physical distance, additional modifications were implemented when possible, including having physical barriers between desks, turning desks to face the same direction (rather than facing each other), and/or having students sit on only one side of a table, spaced apart appropriately. Schools in the district provided physical markings (i.e., tape on floors/sidewalks, signs on walls) to help ensure that staff and students remain socially distanced in lines and at other times. When possible, a school created “one-way routes” in hallways and stairways. When possible, hall monitors were stationed near restrooms to enforce social distancing in the bathroom and in the hallway. In the event that lunch/snack had to be provided indoors, students maintained social distancing and remained seated. Times for lunch were staggered to allow for social distancing and to clean and disinfect between groups. Face coverings are put on immediately after snack/lunch is consumed. All instructional and non-instructional rooms in schools and district facilities comply with social distancing standards to the maximum extent practicable. Students remain in class groups (homerooms) during outdoor recess to avoid intermingling with other classes during the school day. If two or more groups are participating in recess at the same time, there is at least six feet of open space between the two groups. The school district designated specific areas for each class during recess to avoid cohorts mixing. The district’s plan adhered to all applicable social distancing requirements and hygiene protocols during any extra-curricular activities. Students in grades 4 – 12 in general education classrooms were divided into cohorts attending in-person instruction on alternate days to maintain social distancing. Faculty and staff adhere to social distancing guidelines when using faculty/staff common areas and lunchrooms. Faculty and staff may leave the building during their lunch hour provided they check out and back in with the building administrator. Plexiglass barriers are used in high traffic areas such as main offices, high school guidance office and high school attendance office. Students and staff with symptoms related to COVID-19 are safely and respectfully isolated from others. School officials follow current Communicable Disease Service guidance for illness reporting. Methods to assist in contact tracing include records of groups, cohorts, assigned staff and daily attendance.

Sections of the plan that address physical distancing are sections A.1.b.(1); (2); (3). & (4), A 1. D. (2) & (3), A.1.e. (2) (a) & (c) (iv), A.1.h. (1)(a) & (d), A.1.i.(1)(b) & (3), and A.1.j.(1). Appendices of the Fall 2020 Plan that address this topic are appendices B, D, E, H, I and J.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

The district promotes behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19 such as encouraging staff and students to stay home when appropriate; encouraging the practice of hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette; requiring the use of face coverings; and signs and messages in and around school buildings. Handwashing and hand sanitizing are permitted and encouraged throughout the school day. Each school prepared and maintains hand sanitizing stations with alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol). Such stations are located: in each classroom (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer); at entrances and exits of buildings; near lunchrooms and toilets; children ages five and younger are supervised when using hand sanitizer; for classrooms that have existing handwashing stations, stations are prepared with soap, water, and alcohol-based hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol). School officials developed a school-wide plan where students are required to wash hands for at least twenty seconds at regular intervals during the school day and always before eating, after using the bathroom, and after

blowing their nose, coughing, and/or sneezing (or washing with an alcohol-based sanitizer of at least 60% alcohol). People are also required to wash their hands after removing their gloves or after directly handling used food service items. There is also the requirement that all individuals always wash/sanitize hands immediately after outdoor playtime. The district's plan also adheres to all applicable social distancing requirements and hygiene protocols during any extra-curricular activities. Sections of the plan that address handwashing and respiratory etiquette are sections A.1.a.(1)(d), A.1.b.(7) & (8), A.1.h.(1)(e), A.1.i.(1)(d), and A.1.j.(1). Appendices of the Fall 2020 Plan that address this topic are appendices A, B, H, I, and J.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

Drivers and bus aides wear face coverings and use hand sanitizer when entering the bus for the first time. Drivers and aides continue to use hand sanitizer as warranted. Buses are each equipped with a UV-C air purifier. Hand sanitizer is provided to students at the entrance to the bus. Students maintain social distance and wear face coverings while waiting for the bus (unless a documented disability or medical condition prohibits face covering usage). Signs are posted on the bus reminding students that face coverings must be worn. When possible, students are seated individually in every other row. When boarding the bus, students load from back to front. When exiting the bus, students exit from front to back. When weather conditions permit, bus windows are opened to allow for fresh air. Each bus is cleaned daily. Individual bus seats are sanitized between each use. The district consults *Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting* from the CDC for the recommended list of acceptable sanitizing solutions and procedures. The district uses Hillyard products from the EPA's list of acceptable products. The Rutherford Transportation Department informs parents/guardians of required social distancing requirements, face covering requirements, and other health and safety protocols as related to busing. The district eliminated field trips requiring transportation except for the Bulldog Academy, who may take trips for vocational training. Transportation for NJSIAA events follows the guidelines outlined by that governing body. The district adheres to Rutherford maintenance Department cleaning procedures. In addition, the department follows the cleaning schedule developed by the district's custodial and maintenance consultant, Edvocate-School Support Solutions. A manual for cleaning and disinfecting is placed on the district's reopening website. The district maintains an adequate supply of cleaning supplies, including hand sanitizers, gloves, and face coverings to allow for a two-month supply. The staff disinfects during the school day for touchpoints, including but not limited to, phones, door handles, light switches, physical education equipment, classroom entrances/transom hallway/stairwell banisters and handrails, restroom flushing handles and sink handles, and desk surfaces. Staff disinfect classrooms, isolation areas, and nurses' offices frequently during the day. Staff wipe down any items that may be shared among students with appropriate sanitizing wipes or disinfecting spray. Proper dwell times as per product guidelines are maintained. When possible and needed, an additional custodian can be scheduled. Each classroom is provided with appropriate disinfecting materials so that desks can be sanitized between classes (when one group of students is leaving and another one is entering). Appropriate disinfecting materials are provided for each classroom so that desks can be sanitized after eating. All surfaces are cleaned when the school day has concluded using soap or cleaning solution followed by sanitizer. A spray or sanitizing disinfectant is used throughout the building when the school day has concluded. It is administered using an atomizer and given the proper dwell time as recommended by the manufacturer. Outdoor playground equipment is also sanitized. Custodial and maintenance staff are trained on the proper cleaning and sanitizing procedures, and faculty and staff are notified about cleaning and sanitizing procedures. Classroom windows are opened as often as possible when weather

permits in order to allow for fresh air. All outside damper units regularly circulate in outside air at a minimum of 10%. They are adjusted depending on outside conditions. All HVAC systems are controlled remotely to ensure proper ventilation and air exchange. The district has a preventative maintenance plan in place for all equipment. It is updated to include additional tasks for more frequent cleaning of the interior of HVAC materials. The district follows the manufacturer's recommendations for the replacement of unit air filters. High touch areas of HVAC and other building service systems are disinfected regularly. The interior of refrigerated devices (where the virus can potentially survive for longer periods of time) are disinfected regularly. Desks are cleaned after each lunch use with disinfecting materials appropriate for sanitization for any food allergies. Disinfecting materials are stored in the classroom and staff on lunch duty are notified about the cleaning procedures. All water fountains are currently closed for the health and safety of students. Parents/guardians are encouraged to send their child with bottled water. Locker rooms might be closed to mitigate risk and prohibit students and staff from confined spaces with limited ventilation and/or areas with large amounts of high contact surfaces. The school district mitigates risk, limits and/or eliminates direct contact with equipment (lessons with no equipment) and does not allow sharing of equipment. If equipment must be shared, the equipment is cleaned and disinfected between each use.

Sections of the plan that address cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation, are sections A.1.c.(3), A.1.g, A.1.h.(1)(a) & (c), A.1.i.(1)(c) & (g)(i), A.1.i.(2), and A.1.i.(3). Appendices of the Fall 2020 Plan that address this topic are appendices C, G, H, and I.

- E. Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments
Procedures for symptomatic staff and students include students and staff with symptoms related to COVID-19 are safely and respectfully isolated from others. School officials follow Communicable Disease Service guidelines for illness reporting. If the school district becomes aware that an individual who has spent time in a district facility tests positive for COVID-19, officials immediately notify the local health officials, staff and families of a confirmed case while maintaining confidentiality. The procedure the district uses when someone tests positive includes the establishment of an isolation space. Students remain in isolation with continued supervision and care until picked up by an authorized adult. The district follows current Communicable Disease Service guidelines for illness reporting. An adequate amount of PPE is available, accessible and provided for use. Methods to assist in contact tracing include records of group/cohorts, assigned staff, and daily attendance. Re-admittance policies are consistent with Department of Health guidance and information for schools and Department of Health/Communicable Disease Services Quick Reference Guidance on Discontinuation of Transmission-Based Precautions and Home Isolation for Persons Diagnosed with COVID-19. The district also engages the expertise of the school nurses on the importance of contact tracing. Each school has a Pandemic Response Team which is responsible for each school's implementation of the plan, particularly health and safety measures.

Sections of the plan that address contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine are sections A.1.c., A.1. f, and B.2. g. Appendices of the Fall 2020 Plan that address this topic are appendices E, F, and M.

- F. Diagnostic and screening testing
The school district adopted Board policy 1648 regarding the screening procedures for students and employees upon arrival at school or work location for symptoms and history of exposure. Screening procedures include the following: staff must visually check students for symptoms upon arrival (which may include temperature checks) and/or confirm with families that students were free of COVID-19 symptoms; health

checks must be conducted safely and respectfully, and in accordance with any applicable privacy laws and regulations; results must be documented when signs/symptoms of COVID-19 are observed; any screening policy/protocol must take into account students with disabilities and accommodations that may be needed in the screening process for those students. School officials have encouraged parents to be alert for signs of the illness in their children and to keep their child home when they are sick. Parents/guardians are to use the Daily Home Screening Checklist, which is posted on the district website, to assess their child's health before the child comes to school. Sections of the plan that address diagnostic and screening testing are A.1.d. (1) and A.1.e. Appendices of the Fall 2020 Plan that address this topic are appendices D and E.

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

Most educators and staff members voluntarily made vaccination appointments and were vaccinated. In conjunction with the Bergen County Board of Health, staff members who were not yet vaccinated participated in a random drawing to receive the Johnson & Johnson vaccine in Paramus. Each time a random computerized selection was held, people were given the appointments to be vaccinated. Eventually there were no more volunteers for the drawing since all who requested to participate were vaccinated. The district also distributed all health notices, including notices of locations offering vaccinations. Students who are eligible for vaccines are already making their own appointments and getting vaccinated.

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

Reasonable accommodations were provided for individuals that the CDC identified as having a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 such as medically fragile students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), students with complex disabilities with IEPs or students who require accommodations under a Plan in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (504 Plan). Accommodations were also made for those younger students or individuals with disabilities who could not wear a face covering and addressed according to a student's particular need and in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations. An exception to the requirement for a face covering was also made if a student had a documented medical condition or disability as reflected in an IEP that precluded the use of a face covering. Any screening process/protocol took into account students with disabilities and accommodations that were needed in the screening process for those students. Social and emotional supports were also provided as needed. Likewise, the restart committee reflected the diversity of the school community, including those representing students with disabilities. Sections of the plan that address appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies are sections A.1.a.(1)(e), A.1.b.(2)(a), A.1.c.(1) & (2), A.1.e.(1)(d), A.1.e.(5), A.1.e.(6)(d), A.2 and B.1.d. Appendices of the Fall 2020 Plan that addresses this topic are appendices A, B, C, E, K, and L.

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 district has identified certain needs that will be funded by the CRRSA-ESSER II grant that will provide a continuation of services for students impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The district is planning to increase its use of interactive technology, particularly for students with disabilities and for students entering kindergarten and grade 1. The district is planning to provide therapeutic care for identified students who have experienced isolation, trauma, depression and anxiety. This therapeutic care will include individual and family counseling to support students' academic success and mental health needs. The district is also planning to improve elementary science and STEM in grades K- 5 and 4-6. Summer programs are planned in English Language Arts and math during summer 2021 and during zero period/after school programs. A variety of programs are being planned for the high school, the middle school, and the upper elementary school. For the lower elementary schools, a revision of the English Language Arts and mathematics curricula will increase student success, with the goals of increased fidelity to the standards and the inclusion of performance-based learning and thematic structures that accelerate, rather than remediate, learning. The district is also budgeting to purchase two online support programs that reinforce most content areas districtwide. This support will increase student success in a variety of content areas after the disruption of learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Social-emotional learning will also be a key factor in student success. The district is budgeting for SEL training for professional staff to strengthen SEL, promote SEL for students, and to develop a plan for addressing the emotional fallout of the trauma of COVID-19. Finally, the district will continue to support any PPE and building supplies needed to continue to offer the level of care needed to support the health and safety of students and staff.

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 Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services template will be approved by the Rutherford Board of Education at the June 7, 2021 Board meeting. This is a public meeting of this governing body. In addition to opportunities for public discussion at this and at subsequent Board of Education meetings, the ReOpening Committee will review this template and the ARP Mandatory Subgrant Award for revisions as required by the ARP Mandatory Subgrant Award. Public comment will be solicited as required by the subgrant award.

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 School ReOpening Plan is published on the district website at www.rutherfordschools.org, and the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services will be posted there as well, once it is Board approved. For those members of the public whose first language is not English, the website has the ability to translate text into eleven different languages. The text of the ReOpening Plan is understandable and follows a clear format, making it easy for people to access the area they wish. Upon request and if necessary, an individual with a disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act will be provided information in an alternative format that is accessible for that parent or guardian.