



## 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.

## LEA Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services

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**LEA Name: Lopatcong Township School District**

**Date (08/30/2021):**

**Date Revised (12/08/2023):**

The Lopatcong Township School District will maintain the health and safety of its students, educators, and other staff throughout the year with the knowledge that Covid-19 is still a significant risk in the event of an outbreak. The district will continue to revisit the plan as guidance is continually changing with the goal to provide the optimal learning environment as we continue full time in-person instruction.

### 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.

With the continuation of all in person learning, the Lopatcong Township School District has taken steps to ensure the safety and wellness of our school community.

- The District will continue to maintain proactive communication with staff, students, families and community members as needed
- Frequent communication will be sent home from each building regarding any necessary changes
- Social media posts will include important updates
- Lopatcong Township School District will continue to consult with the latest guidance from the CDC and Warren County Health Department
- Staff will continue to promote good hygiene practices (hand washing, proper coughing and sneezing techniques and other measures to prevent the spread of germs and disease)

- Committees will continue to meet together to create resources for students.

**A. Universal and correct wearing of masks**

The Lopatcong Township School District will allow for the optional wearing of masks for students, employees and authorized visitors. The district will follow all recommendations from the DOH or DOE in order to develop policies or procedures related to optional and situational wearing of masks.

**B. Physical distancing** (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding) Physical distancing will only be used in the event of a change in guidance from the Department of Education or the Department of Health. (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding):

**If required due to an outbreak or resurgence of covid-19, items a - d will be implemented.**

a. The Lopatcong Township School District is prepared to provide as much social distancing as possible in classrooms, buses, common areas and outdoor space. We will consult with the Warren County Department of Health and review guidance from the NJDOH and NJDOE.

b. Every effort will be made to maintain proper physical distancing at the designated entrances. Both the Elementary School and the Middle School will provide signage to maintain proper social distancing during arrival, hallway passing times, use of common areas, and dismissal times.

c. School protocols may include but are not limited to: appropriate signage on walls, one way hallways when possible, use of separate entrances for arrival and departure, limited and staggered passing times (when possible) and floor signage to remind students to remain socially distant when traveling between locations.

d. The District will allow outside organizations to use facilities, following CDC Guidelines

**C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette:** Our staff and students will work together to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 and other communicable diseases by regularly practicing specific hygiene measures and teaching and reinforcing each of those measures through class discussions, visual reminders and posters placed in handwashing areas and throughout both buildings. The following measures will be in place to reduce risk of transmission:

- Wash hands frequently--using soap and water--for at least 20 seconds or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if hand washing is not feasible.

- Hand sanitizer will be provided in all classrooms and in designated locations throughout the school building. Students and staff shall be reminded of prompt use of hand sanitizer every time entering and exiting the classroom. Each classroom will be provided with cleaning supplies. All Lopatcong Township School District faculty, staff and students should wash their hands with soap and water before and after eating, after using the restroom or exposure to germs (coughing, sneezing, blowing their nose, etc.). Water bottle filling stations and water fountains will be available and subject to CDC guidelines.

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

a. The District has developed and will maintain the schedule for cleaning and sanitizing the buildings

b. Use all cleaning products according to the directions on the label. For disinfection most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.) Examples of frequently touched areas in schools:

1. Classroom desks and chairs
2. Lunchroom tables and chairs
3. Door handles and push plates
4. Handrails
5. Kitchens and bathrooms Light switches
6. Handles on equipment (e.g. athletic equipment)
7. Buttons on vending machines and elevators
8. Shared telephones
9. Shared desktops
10. Shared computer keyboards and mice
11. Drinking fountains

c. Sanitize bathrooms daily, or between use as much as possible, using protocols outlined by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

d. The district will ensure that their indoor facilities have adequate ventilation which includes:

- i. Recirculated air will have a fresh air component
- ii. Window will be opened if A/C is not provided

- iii. Filters for the A/C units will be maintained and changed according to the manufacturer recommendations.
- e. The district is prepared to utilize no touch faucets in the event of a future outbreak
- f. In the event of an outbreak the district will remove tops to all garbage cans to reduce surface contact exposure.
- g. In the event of an outbreak, the district will have all bathroom doors propped open to reduce contact surfaces.
- h. The drinking fountains will be limited to the new “bottle filling” stations. The district encourages staff and students to bring in their own water bottle and refill as needed at the designated stations. Bottled water will be available to those that are in need.
- i. Hand sanitizer will be made available at the entrance to each building and in each classroom, outside public bathrooms and office. There will also be hand sanitizers found throughout the hallways.
- j. Schedule for routine cleaning and disinfecting of furniture has been developed for each building
- k. Disposable wipes will be available to all staff to clean commonly used surfaces such as keyboards, desks, and remote controls before use.
- l. The district will ensure adequate supplies to support cleaning and disinfection practices
- m. Windows will be opened to increase air circulation, weather permitting
- n. Internal classroom doors will be open to increase air circulation
- o. Where deemed necessary, additional training will be provided to the custodial staff.

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

The district is not implementing contact tracing unless directed by the NJ Department of Education or Warren County Health Department in the event of an outbreak. In the event of an outbreak where contact tracing is required, the district will follow all Warren County Health Department and NJ DOE guidelines. Any updates and changes to standard protocol will be communicated to the entire school community via social media, district website and phone alert systems.

**F. Diagnostic and screening testing**

The Lopatcong Township School District will continue to abide by the guidance set forth by the Warren County Health Department and the NJ DOE for testing.

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

The Lopatcong Township School District administration will continue to provide educators, other staff, and students with information from the CDC and Warren County Health Department regarding updates on health and safety protocols and information regarding vaccination options and distribution locations throughout Warren County. <https://covid19.nj.gov/pages/finder>. <https://www.nj.gov/health/>. For assistance, please reach out to NJ COVID vaccine hotline at: 1-855-568-0545. You may also find more information here (<https://acl.gov/COVID-19>) for individuals with disabilities. Promoting vaccination can help schools maintain a safe environment for in-person learning as well as extracurricular activities

and sports. Boards of Education and the Superintendent shall continually work with the local Warren County Health Department to implement mitigation strategies when and where based on data.

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

- a. Reasonable accommodations will be provided for higher-risk students who have serious underlying medical conditions.
- b. Confidential medical information must be provided to the school nurse, accompanied by a medical note from a licensed healthcare provider requesting accommodations.
- c. The school physician will review such request and a determination will be made. If the request is approved, a plan will be developed to accommodate the needs of the student.
- d. If mask mandates are implemented, masks will not be required if a student's documented medical condition, or disability as reflected in an Individual Education Program (IEP), precludes the use of a face covering.

## **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.**

- The Lopatcong Township School District has returned to pre-pandemic full day schedule. The district will follow all mandates put forward by the New Jersey Department of Education, the New Jersey Department of Health, the CDC and the Warren County Department of Health.
- Virtual Learning:
  - Remote Instruction: Remote instruction is no longer an option in New Jersey.
  - The District will ONLY be providing remote instruction for excluded students throughout the year. Students will be required to use Google Classroom and email participation in language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, in synchronous and asynchronous instruction sessions Health, Physical Education, Art and Music shall be asynchronously.
  - The Remote Students Code of Conduct shall be in place to ensure appropriate school behavior and use of district –provided materials and equipment
  - If quarantining of students is necessary, the district will utilize Google Classroom as an online platform.
  - Instruction for both virtual and in-person instruction will be taken daily and is mandatory.
  - The school schedule may be adjusted according to the guidance from the local health department and DOE
  - The educational program may be adjusted at any given time due to COVID-19 infection, rise, and local/state guidance.
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs of Students:

- o Continue with the designated District Wide SEL Program
- o Periodic Counseling when needed, provided by school social workers and guidance counselors
- o Consultations may be requested with a behaviorist to develop and implement an intervention plan to support individual 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.**

- o The plan was shared on the District website
- o The district Pandemic Response Team was consulted regarding changes/edits to this 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.**

The plan will be posted on our website. The plan will be translated to Spanish and make available in any other format as requested by a parent. All translations will be done using google translate.