



*Plan for Safe Return to In-Person  
Instruction and Continuity of Service*

Paramus Public Schools

2024-2025



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## 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.



## **I. 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**

As outlined in Board Policies 1250, 3541.33, and 5141.3, the district will implement mandates in legislation/Executive Orders and consider guidance from the CDC/NJDOH relative to masking. Exemptions will be handled on a case-by-case basis, including for individuals with certain medical conditions that prevent them from safely wearing face masks, and in line with all applicable legislative mandates in effect at the time. In the event the Governor's Order mandating the wearing of masks in schools is lifted, the district will consult with the Paramus BOH in measuring local health data/needs, in conjunction with CDC/NJDOH guidelines, in determining its masking policies moving forward. As these data/needs/guidelines change, the district will adjust its policies and protocols accordingly by balancing the benefits of mitigating risk of virus transmission relative to masking with the benefits of providing a quality in-person learning experience.

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

Per existing CDC/NJDOH guidance, the district will maintain physical distancing between individuals to the maximum extent practicable by monitoring student placement and flow, appropriately scheduling lunch/recess and, if needed, continuing to utilize signage and one-way direction hallways. Based on local health data trends and the exhibited success of district protocols during the 2021-2022 school year, current plans for the 2024-2025 school year do not include separate student cohorts. If necessary, the district will consult with the Paramus BOH in measuring local health data/needs, in conjunction with CDC/NJDOH guidelines, in determining its distancing policies. As these data/needs/guidelines change, the district will adjust its policies and protocols accordingly by balancing the benefits of mitigating risk of virus transmission relative to distancing with the benefits of providing a quality in-person learning experience.



### **C. Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette**

The district will continue to consider CDC/NJDOH guidance in promoting behaviors, such as frequent handwashing and respiratory etiquette, that reduce the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses. Handwashing/respiratory etiquette signs will remain posted at each school, and sanitizing stations/dispensers will remain in all classrooms, offices, and high traffic areas. Individuals will continue to be expected to wash their hands for at least twenty seconds at regular intervals during the day, before/during eating, after using the bathroom, and after coughing, sneezing, or blowing their noses. Faculty/staff will review these practices with students and incorporate them into their daily classroom routines.

### **D. Cleaning and Maintaining Healthy Facilities, Including Improving Ventilation**

The district will consider relevant guidance from the CDC/NJDOH regarding cleaning and ventilation standards. The district will continue to utilize its leveled program to determine the type of cleaning/disinfection needed based on the "threat level" of infectious events. High-touch surfaces will be cleaned at regular intervals throughout each day. To supplement existing mechanical ventilation systems, HEPA air purifier systems will be installed within each classroom/office. The efficiency/proper operation of ventilation systems will be monitored daily and units/filters maintained according to manufacturer recommendations. As needed, the district will continue to utilize contracted HVAC technicians to supplement its in-house staff in expeditiously addressing any identified issues. The use of open doors/windows to maximize ventilation and fresh air will be encouraged as will the increased use of outdoor space, as appropriate, for eating/physical activity/instructional activities.

### **E. Contact Tracing in Combination with Isolation and Quarantine, in Collaboration with the State, Local, Territorial, or Tribal Health Departments**

School nurses/officials will collaborate with local health officials during the contact tracing process, and continue to utilize its COVID-19 Quarantine Dashboard to notify the school community of any cases that result in potential in-school exposure. The district will continue to consider guidance from the CDC/NJDOH relative to quarantine timeframes and other protocols. Faculty/staff will maintain accurate rosters, attendance records, and seating charts to facilitate the contract tracing process. A separate isolation space in which symptomatic individuals will be placed safely and respectfully will be maintained within proximity of the health office in each school. If local health data/needs and/or CDC/NJDOH guidelines change throughout the year, the district may adjust its contact tracing and quarantine policies and protocols accordingly.



## **F. Diagnostic and Screening Testing**

The district will continue to consider guidance regarding diagnostic and screening testing from the CDC and the NJDOH. Absenteeism and records of school health office visits will be monitored to identify trends in student/staff absences in an effort to contain transmission of COVID-19 or other illness. Information regarding diagnostic testing will be provided to students/staff who exhibit symptoms of, or are considered exposed to, COVID-19. Depending on local health data and COVID-19 transmission rates at the time, temperature checks and the submission of wellness screening forms may be required prior to each school day or ahead of admission to school events with a high level of community member participation.

## **G. Efforts to Provide Vaccinations to Educators, Other Staff, and Students, if Eligible**

During the 2020-2021 school year, the district worked with local health agencies to coordinate vaccination clinics and opportunities for interested staff members. In addition, per the County Department of Education, the district provided information on additional vaccination opportunities to the larger school community. During the 2024-2025 school year, the district will continue to provide information regarding vaccination opportunities, as appropriate, to the school community.

## **H. Appropriate Accommodations for Children with Disabilities with Respect to the Health and Safety Policies**

Individual student needs will continue to be addressed through IEPs, 504 Plans, individual medical plans, and other existing mechanisms as needed to ensure access to educational services for all eligible students. Plans and programs will continue to be designed to meet IEP obligations to students with disabilities to the greatest extent possible. Individualized emergency healthcare plans will be developed for students with chronic medical conditions, including diabetes, asthma, and life-threatening allergies, requiring special health services. Continual monitoring of the health status and well-being of the students will continue to be done in coordination with the school nurses, the school physician, parents/guardians, private providers, and school counselors. Counselors, CST members, and school nurses will continue to communicate frequently with families of students with significant medical risk factors to determine if additional precautions or unique measures are necessary.



## II. Ensuring Continuity of Services

*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)*

A half-day summer learning program will be offered to eligible students who will benefit from targeted academic support in language arts and/or mathematics. The district has a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) in place to address academic, social, and behavioral concerns, and mental health clinicians will be available to students/staff at all levels (PK-12). Family workshops on mental and social/emotional health and supporting academic growth will continue to be offered. The physical layouts/locations of student eating areas are planned according to existing health/safety guidelines and will be modified as appropriate. In addition, before and after school care will be available for eligible students through the Champions program.



### III. 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.*

The district reviewed the plan's requirements during its May 24, 2021 Board of Education meeting and subsequently in a May 29 written communication to the school community. On June 17, a draft of the plan was posted on the district's website for review by the community and a survey made available for the public to provide comments on the plan. These comments were, as appropriate, incorporated into an updated version of the plan which was then shared with the community at the June 21 Board of Education meeting, where community members had the opportunity to provide additional comments/ask questions during the public comment portion of the meeting. The finalized draft of the plan was posted on the district's website on June 24, where it will remain for the duration of its implementation. As CDC/NJDOH guidelines and local health data/needs change, the district will revise the plan accordingly and will incorporate, as appropriate, public comment into each revision of 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.*

The plan has been posted on the district's website, which incorporates translation tools that allow viewers to translate posted information into more than 100 different languages. Additional accommodations for community members will be provided upon request.