



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: Mercer County Special Services School District

Date (06/07/2021):

Date Revised (06/14/2021):

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

Currently, no one will be permitted in facilities without a mask unless due to a known health condition or under the age of 2 years. Signs requiring face masks and describing the proper wearing are displayed throughout the buildings. Emergency face masks will be provided to visitors, students and staff as needed. No visitors are permitted in the buildings without a proper face mask.

MCSSSD has made the wearing of masks while outdoors optional for students participating in recess, Physical Education classes and sporting events.

The district will look to ongoing updates by the CDC, NJDOH and Executive Orders(EOs) regarding the wearing of face coverings in NJ schools and make adjustments as deemed necessary.

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

Administration will work with the school staff to rearrange workspaces in the building in order to accommodate social distancing guidelines. Each space was reviewed by administration to ensure the workspaces are in compliance with guidelines. The school schedule will be designed to limit the amount of student movement throughout the building and to utilize space to ensure the highest level of safety. Instructional staff were informed regarding safe practices to maintain social distancing guidelines. Signage promoting behaviors to reduce

the spread are visible. One-way foot signs direct traffic. Max. Occupancy posted on each space. Barriers are placed in various spaces. Student foldable barriers have also been placed in instructional areas. Shared objects are disinfected between uses. Instructional staff are notified on procedures for students storing their belongings. Instructors will be encouraged to use outdoor space as much as possible. The district will follow CDC/DOH/EOs.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

Students/staff are encouraged to practice proper handwashing and respiratory etiquette. Signs with proper handwashing techniques are displayed near sinks. Signs reminding students/staff to cover coughs/sneezes are displayed throughout the campus.

B&G has placed Hand Sanitizing Stations at all exits and entrances. Each classroom has a bathroom and kitchen sink equipped for handwashing. Hand sanitizer has been placed in all rooms to ensure students/staff have access to handwashing. School nursing staff will be asked for assistance reminding staff and students about frequent handwashing/sanitizer use.

Teachers will allow for extra time for hand washing for students. Classroom one-to-one assistants and nurses are provided with protective gear (i.e., gloves, gowns, or face shield) when working with or toileting or ill students.

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

B&G monitors the functionality of HVAC equipment and repair needs. B&G has verified window functionality. Staff to consult with nurses about student health concerns. Filters will be changed quarterly and in the event of a positive case.

Cleaning of key touch points and bathrooms will be done periodically during the day. Normal cleaning and disinfection cleaning will occur each evening. Deep cleaning will be conducted on Wednesdays.

After surfaces and objects are cleaned and sanitized with an EPA Approved H2O2 solution, all surfaces and objects are sprayed using an EPA registered disinfectant Brutabs.

Spaces will be closed for 12-24 hours after notification of presumptive positive, HVAC will be shut off/isolated. Custodial staff with appropriate PPE, and cleaning/disinfecting equipment will clean with H2O2 hard surfaces followed by disinfection.

All areas occupied by ill persons will have filtered air scrubbers placed in them for 24-48 hrs. Spaces will have hydroxyl generator installed to clean the air/surfaces.

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

District requires that all staff, students, and visitors complete a COVID Health Screening Questionnaire on a daily basis prior to arrival at the school building. The screening form will be available at all entrances to the district buildings for easy access to all staff and visitors. Daily logs will be maintained from the data collected and is available for contact tracing by nursing staff and administration.

Building principal and school nurse will inform DOH immediately: (names addresses, phone #'s) time/date of notification, exposure potential, individual attendance pattern, class lists, staff lists, bus seating of students. Buildings to complete google doc to keep track of cases. Contact Superintendent office.

MCSSSD has designated holding areas for students presenting with symptoms, prior to being sent home, all students or staff will have a Temperature Check and be evaluated by a school nurse.

Staff with symptoms related to COVID-19 will be sent home.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing

MCSSSD will require that all staff, students and visitors complete a Health Screening Questionnaire daily prior to arrival at the school. The screening app is shared with staff and a scanning icon is available at all entrances to the district. A separate icon is available for students. Any student who does not complete a questionnaire before arriving will be taken to the nurse's office for a temperature check; parents will be called to review the remainder of the questionnaire before the student will be permitted to enter their classroom. District maintains a COVID protocol document to be utilized by administration to advise staff and students of their ability to enter our buildings should they answer unfavorably to any of the questions on the screening. Screenings will be conducted by school nurses for those who feel ill. Daily logs will be maintained from the data collected from the application and is available for contact tracing and review by administration to ensure compliance.

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

The district coordinated with various health organizations to ensure that staff that were eligible for vaccines were provided with an opportunity. Beginning in June 2021, the district will coordinate with Hamilton Health Department to be available on-site to offer vaccines to students.

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

The MCSSSD will follow CDC, state and local guidelines in providing reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities or underlying medical conditions. The unique needs of each individual will be considered.

Instructors are expected to consult with school nursing staff to monitor any students who may have special medical needs. Once identified, follow up with Buildings and Grounds and Custodial staff if additional sanitizing or other modifications need to be put in place for those students.

Mask mandate will be excused for students that have provided a note from a physician that they cannot wear a mask for health and safety reasons.

Remote learning options are currently available for those students that require such special accommodations for health and safety reasons.

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)

Mercer County Special Services School district will ensure continuity of services through the use of digital content (multimedia, animations, videos, video conferencing) The district will work with students and their families to ascertain which households have the speed of internet access required to support the digital learning that is expected. School personnel will assist families lacking the minimum level of access required to support the digital learning. School personnel will contact local internet service providers to help determine what solution(s) would work best for students in need and secure such services. School leaders and instructional staff will provide guidelines for parents and guardians that will help them create and maintain a distraction-free home learning environment and regular routines that nurture student success. School leaders will continue to provide assistance to families in need of food and health-related services. A plan is in place to continue to provide such services. School leaders will work with staff and students to develop fundamental skills for life's effectiveness. These skills include recognizing and managing emotions, developing care and concern for others, making responsible decisions, establishing positive relationships, and handling challenging situations effectively. For those students who need additional support, the skills being taught in the classroom can be incorporated and reinforced within mental health interventions provided by school mental health professionals.

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)

MCSSSD set up a universal email address to receive public comment (publiccomments@mcsssd.us). A draft of the plan was posted on the district website for accessibility to the public for review for comment. The district sent out a robo-call to all staff and families notifying them of

the comment period (June 8th to June 11th). Mention of the upcoming process was also noted at the June 1st Board meeting. Comments received were reviewed and appropriate changes to the plan document were made.

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 plan was presented in plain language on our district website. The document is also available in Spanish on our website. If a parent requires an alternate written or other translation, one will be provided to the greatest extent practicable.