



## 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

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LEA Name: Ridgefield Park Public School District

Original Filing Date: 06/16/21

Date Revised: 07/22/22

### Ridgefield Park Public School District Use This Form For Public Comment on This Plan

#### 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

At this time, we are following guidance as provided by Governor Murphy’s announcement to lift the mask mandate as of March 7, 2022, and make masking optional for students and staff.

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

At this time, we are continuing to follow guidance as directed in the [New Jersey Department of Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments for K-12 Schools](#). As we prepare to open schools for the 2022-2023 school year, the district will follow the CDC, NJDOE, New Jersey Executive Orders, and NJ Department of Health guidance for physical distancing to the greatest extent possible. If instructional and non-instructional rooms cannot comply with distancing standards, PPE modifications will be taken into consideration.

##### C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

At this time we are following guidance as directed in the [New Jersey Department of Health Recommendations for Local Health](#)

[Departments for K-12 Schools](#). As we prepare to open schools for the 2022-2023 school year, the district will follow the CDC, NJDOE, New Jersey Executive Orders, and NJ Department of Health guidance for handwashing and respiratory etiquette. For example, students and staff in classrooms with sinks will utilize the CDC recommended form of washing, which is soap and hot water. Hand sanitizing stations will be maintained with alcohol-based hand sanitizers (contains 60% alcohol). Hand washing stations will be maintained with soap, water, and alcohol based hand sanitizers. Students will be encouraged to wash their hands throughout the school day, including but not limited to before eating, after eating, using the bathroom, after blowing their nose/sneezing/coughing. Signage will be displayed throughout buildings to encourage hand washing and sanitizing. Through ongoing general education and health education sessions, students will be reminded of the proper ways to wash and sanitize their hands.

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

At this time, we are following guidance as directed in the [New Jersey Department of Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments for K-12 Schools](#). As we prepare to open schools for the 2022-2023 school year, the district will follow the CDC, NJDOE, New Jersey Executive Orders, and NJ Department of Health guidance for cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation. For example, the Ridgefield Park School District:

- Has implemented a schedule for increased, routine cleaning and disinfecting of frequently touched objects including, but not limited to:
  - Classroom desks and chairs
  - Lunchroom tables and chairs
  - Door handles, door knobs, and push plates
  - Handrails
  - Kitchens and bathrooms
  - Light switches
  - Handles on equipment (e.g. athletic equipment)
  - Buttons on vending machines and elevators
  - Shared computer keyboards and mice
  - Drinking fountains

Additionally, the district:

- uses EPA approved cleaners and disinfectants.
- ensures that indoor facilities have adequate ventilation, including operational heating, and ventilation systems where appropriate, and continues to
  - ensure recirculated air has a fresh air component.
  - engage in the practice of opening windows if A/C is not provided.
  - maintain filters for A/C units and changes them according to manufacturer recommendations.
  - increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors when appropriate and safe.
  - is currently engaged with architects and engineers to assess new building ventilation systems to

provide increased classroom ventilation, airflow, and quality.

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

At this time, we are following guidance as directed in the [New Jersey Department of Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments for K-12 Schools, and our local Mid-Bergen Health Department](#). As we prepare to open schools for the 2022-2023 school year, the district will follow our practices from the end of the 2021-2022 school year in that we will not mandate quarantining or contract tracing. Yet, to the greatest extent possible, we will still follow best practices and guidelines by the CDC, NJDOE, New Jersey Executive Orders, and NJ Department of Health guidance for contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine.

We defer to the Mid-Bergen Health Department for definitions and directions on contract tracing, who we have collaborated with to lift our contact tracing and quarantine mandates. Still, for example, we still follow the current definition of a close contact is someone who was within 6 feet of a person diagnosed with COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period. The definition of a close contact applies regardless of whether either person was wearing a mask. For contract tracing, district and school administrators, nurses, counselors, and any other staff deemed appropriate by the Superintendent are provided information regarding the role of contact tracing conducted by State, county, and local officials. Ridgefield Park does not currently engage in processes including interviewing and identifying people with COVID-19 to identify everyone with whom they had close contact during the time they may have been infectious. At this time, Ridgefield Park does not further notify contacts of their potential exposure, nor do we refer contacts for testing, or monitoring. We do inform our parents and families to watch for signs and symptoms of COVID-19; and ask them to keep students at home whenever they exhibit signs of COVID-19. We will continue to follow these practices until state and/or local health guidelines change.

**F. Diagnostic and screening testing**

At this time, we are following guidance as directed in the [New Jersey Department of Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments for K-12 Schools](#). As we prepare to open schools for the 2022-2023 school year, the district will follow the CDC, NJDOE, New Jersey Executive Orders, and NJ Department of Health guidance for diagnostic and screening testing. The district still requires families and students to self-screen for symptoms and fever prior to entering school. All staff and students receive weekly routine reminders to complete a pre-entry screening. Students showing signs of illness are sent to the nurse's office. Parents/Guardian/Emergency contacts of these students will be notified to pick up their child immediately. The parent/guardian will be required to sign out the student, as per the school's sign out protocol.

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

At this time we are following guidance as directed in the [New Jersey Department of Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments for K-12 Schools](#). As we prepare to open schools for the 2022-2023 school year, the school district has been vigilant in sending out notices to inform the students, staff, and community about vaccination opportunities throughout our area.

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

At this time, we are following guidance as directed in the [New Jersey Department of Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments for K-12 Schools](#). As we prepare to open schools for the 2022-2023 school year, the district will follow the CDC, NJDOE, New Jersey Executive Orders, and NJ Department of Health guidance for appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities. Parents should contact their case manager and the school nurse to further discuss.

## **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)

At this time, we are following guidance as directed in the [New Jersey Department of Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments for K-12 Schools](#). As we prepare to open schools for the 2022-2023 school year, our District will continue to address students' academic needs by assessing learning loss and students performing below grade level in ELA and Math through benchmarking such as Start Strong, LinkIt, Envisions Math and AimsWeb Diagnostics. We will use this data to help drive instruction and continue after school programs for targeted populations funded through Title I, Title III, Title IV, ESSER II, ESSER (CRRSA), and ARP funds. During the day, academic needs will be addressed through new program initiatives such as Fountas and Pinnell for reading, and increased use of Envisions Math, AimsWeb, LLI (Leveled Literacy Intervention) for BSI, and Sondays (for phonics). Additionally, we have used Federal grant funds to invest in our teachers over the summer 2022 and throughout the school year by providing additional small group professional learning opportunities to review model curriculum, focus standards, discuss accelerated learning, and develop pacing guides.

To address students' social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, in our K-6 classrooms SEL will continue to be infused throughout the day. In 7-12 SEL (CASEL) and *Character Strong* and PBIS strategies such as 3 Signature Practices will continue to be integrated in all content areas as well as Thrive Group activities. Throughout the summer and the 2021-2022 school year we will increase our partnerships with CBH Care including group and family therapy services.

To address staff's social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, schools will provide opportunities and time for teachers to focus on their own SEL through activities such as roundtable discussions with principals to collaborate and focus on building culture and climate. Staff will be supported in additional professional learning opportunities in identifying and assessing their own, and their students' mental health needs.

Our ongoing, routine activities currently include full-day, lunch and recess activities, including extracurricular activities such as yoga, stretching and other physical activities.

### 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 district shared the "Safe Return to In-Person Instruction Plan" by posting the plan on our website and inviting public comment through a Google Form. Within the district meetings with the RP Education Association, along with the Principals were ongoing. This plan will also be presented to the Board of Education for comment prior to the January 2022 approval. The district will follow similar processes for each of the plan's revision cycles. <https://sites.google.com/rpschools.net/boe-qaq/home>

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 district wrote and revised this plan to provide all stakeholders with district information on our safe, in-person, full-day, return to school in September 2022. The district followed a template that answered the questions in plain language that the public would understand. The district will provide this document in Spanish, and individuals may request this document be translated, written or orally into other languages. Anyone identified with a disability as defined by the ADA may also request this plan in an alternative format, which the district will work to accommodate.

Briefly describe any guidance professional learning and technical assistance opportunities the LEA will make available to its schools.

To ensure that all of our staff were trained in appropriate COVID protocols and practices, they were (and will be) required to engage in 30 minutes of assessed professional development provided through our online provider GCN (GCNTraining.com) in order to be compliant with all COVID practices.