



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: Netcong School District

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 6/22/21

Date Revised (mm/dd/yyyy): TBD

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

The Netcong School District will support and impose the following expectations, until the universal wearing of face masks and coverings are no longer required through an executive order, State or Department of Education directive:

- The Board promotes behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19 by requiring the use of face coverings.
- Face coverings will be required for students, staff, and visitors while on campus unless it will inhibit the individual's health.
- If the school district is providing transportation services on a school bus, a face covering must be worn by all students who are able to do so upon entering the bus.
- Accommodations for students who are unable to wear a face covering will be addressed according to that student's particular need and in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations.
- Face coverings shall be worn while in the line to enter or exit the building.
- School staff and visitors are required to wear face coverings unless doing so would inhibit the individual's health or the individual is under two years of age.
- Cloth or disposable face coverings will be provided to staff and students on an as needed basis.

- Exceptions to requirements for face coverings shall be as follows:
 - ✓ Doing so would inhibit the individual's health.
 - ✓ The individual is in extreme heat outdoors.
 - ✓ The individual is in water.
 - ✓ The student is under the age of two and could risk suffocation.
- If a visitor refuses to wear a face covering for non-medical reasons and if such covering cannot be provided to the individual at the point of entry, the visitor's entry to the school/district facility may be denied.

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

The Netcong School District will support and impose the following expectations, until the practice of physical distancing is no longer required through an executive order, State, Department of Health, or Department of Education directive:

- The Netcong Elementary School will allow for social distancing within the classroom to the maximum extent practicable. This will be achieved by ensuring students are seated at least three feet apart. If a school in the district is not able to maintain this physical distance, additional modifications may be considered including using 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 the table, spaced apart. The district will review CDC guidelines regarding setting up classroom spaces.
- All instructional and non-instructional rooms in schools and district facilities must comply with social distancing standards to the maximum extent practicable.
- Use of shared objects will be limited when possible or cleaned between use.
- The district will provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to help ensure that staff and students remain at least six feet apart in lines and at other times (e.g. guides for creating "one-way routes" in hallways).
- The school district will designate specific areas for each class during recess.
- The Board's Plan should adhere to all applicable social distancing requirements and hygiene protocols during any extra-curricular activities.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

The Netcong School District will support and impose the following expectations, until no longer required through an Executive Order, State, Department of Health, or Department of Education directive. The practice of proper hygiene will always be enforced with students and staff.

- The Board promotes behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19 by requiring the use of face coverings.

- Students and staff will be encouraged to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water during the school day after using the bathroom, after blowing their nose and/or coughing and sneezing, and before eating.
- If washing with soap and water is not possible, students and staff will clean their hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol).
- Individuals will be required to wash their hands after removing gloves or after handling food service items.
- Students and staff will be required to clean their hands with either an alcohol-based hand sanitizer or with soap and water after outdoor recess.
- All hygiene protocols and social distance requirements will be followed during extracurricular activities to the greatest extent possible.
- Students and staff will be trained in proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
- There will also be signs around the building and in bathrooms on how to wash your hands.
- Hand sanitizers will be placed in all classrooms and at approved entrances and exits.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

The Netcong School District will support and impose the following expectations, until no longer required through an Executive Order, State, Department of Health, or Department of Education directive.

- CASPR Pro Mobile portable units were purchased for classrooms and office spaces. These units run continuously after being plugged in and sanitize the air in classrooms and office spaces. “The CASPR Pro Mobile units 99.96% effective against bacteria, viruses, molds, and even reduce VOCs and odors.” (<https://www.casprgroup.com/sectors/caspr-pro/>)
- Weather permitting, windows will be opened to maintain air flow.
- HVAC units in classrooms have a fresh air component that is utilized daily.
- Restrooms will be sanitized routinely throughout the day when staff and students are in the building.
- All classrooms, desks, chairs, light switches, barriers, door handles, handrails, the kitchen, the nurse’s suite, drinking fountains, the elevator, telephones, any shared equipment, offices, and bathrooms will be cleaned and sanitized daily.
- Handrails, door handles, and other frequently touched items will be sanitized throughout the day.
- While drinking fountains will be cleaned and sanitized daily, students and staff are encouraged to bring water bottles from home.
- EPA approved cleaners will be available in classrooms so that any commonly used surfaces and or materials can be wiped down between use.

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

The Netcong School District will support and impose the following expectations, until no longer required through an Executive Order, State, Department of Health, or Department of Education directive.

- The Netcong School District will work with the Mount Olive Department of Health, the school nurse, and district administration to conduct contact tracing.

- Students and staff with symptoms related to COVID-19 must be safely and respectfully isolated from others. School officials will follow current Communicable Disease Service guidance for illness reporting.
- If staff and/or students need to be isolated and/or quarantined, the district will follow the most up to date parameters set forth by the New Jersey Department of Health and will collaborate with the Mount Olive Department of Health on timelines.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing

The Netcong School District will support and impose the following expectations, until no longer required through an Executive Order, State, Department of Health, or Department of Education directive.

- The school district shall visually screen students and employees upon arrival to a school building or work location for COVID-19 symptoms and a history of exposure.
- School staff must visually check students and employees for symptoms upon arrival (which may include temperature checks) and/or confirm with families that students are 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.
- The screening protocol will take into account students and employees with disabilities and accommodations that may be needed in the screening process for those students and employees.
- Students and employees with symptoms related to COVID-19 must be safely and respectfully isolated from others.
- If the school district becomes aware that an individual who has spent time in a school district facility tests positive for COVID-19, district officials must immediately notify local health officials, staff, and families of a confirmed case while maintaining confidentiality.

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

The Netcong School District will support and impose the following expectations, until no longer required through an Executive Order, State, Department of Health, or Department of Education directive.

- The Netcong School District worked in partnership with Atlantic Health to assist staff with scheduling appointments for those that wished to get vaccinated. Information will be shared with staff and district families on the availability of vaccines.

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

The Netcong School District will support and impose the following expectations, until no longer required through an Executive Order, State, Department of Health, or Department of Education directive.

- Reasonable accommodations will be provided for individuals the CDC identifies as having a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19, including individuals with disabilities or serious underlying medical conditions.

- Enforcing the use of face coverings may be impractical for young children or individuals with disabilities.
- Accommodations for students who are unable to wear a face covering will be addressed according to that student’s individual needs and in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations.

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 Netcong School District will continue to support the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of the students and staff. The services and supports include but are not limited to the programs below:

Summer School to close achievement gaps for students in grades 6-8.

RTI support over the summer.

Enrichment program over the summer for elementary school students.

Extra help sessions after school during the school year.

Staff training on mental health and social and emotional supports for students.

Continued collaborations with the School Culture and Climate Initiative.

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)

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 Safe Return to School Plan will be presented at the Netcong Board of Education meeting on June 22, 2021, via Zoom. The public will have the opportunity to comment on the plan after it is presented. Any Board or public comment will be considered before the plan is finalized and posted to the district’s website.

The Safe Return to School Plan will be translated in Spanish for our non-English speakers. Spanish speaking staff will be available to answer questions regarding the plan as needed. To further assist those in the community who are English Language Learners our website easily translates text content from English to Spanish utilizing the “Translate” icon located in the header of each webpage.

To ensure that everyone is able to easily navigate the district website we utilize ADA-compliant features. For those who lack fine motor skills our website functions with keyboard navigation by allowing users to easily maneuver a website using the tab key. For viewers who have visual impairments, our website has clear navigation menus and image descriptions that work with screen readers.

Our website provides readable content with a design and layout where individuals with low vision or color blindness can read the text. A responsive website displays large text on any device.

District and building administrators will be available to answer any questions students, parents, staff members, or community members may have regarding the Safe Return to School Plan.