



## 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: Great Meadows Regional School District**

**Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 05/25/2021**

**Date Revised (08/16/2021):**

### **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
  - a. Students and staff must wear masks while in school buildings and on school transportation, as per NJ Executive Order 251 and federal transportation regulations, respectively.
  - b. Should the state's mask mandate be lifted, Great Meadows schools will continue to require masks in times of Very High (Red) or High (Orange) levels of Covid-19 transmission.
  - c. Should transmission levels return to Moderate (Yellow) or Low (Green), masking will be considered optional.
- B. Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)
  - a. Students will be seated three feet apart in all classroom settings while masked.
  - b. Six feet of distance is required when masks are removed (i.e.- during meals, select physical education activities)
  - c. Shared workspaces and materials will be sanitized/cleaned at the conclusion of each classroom session.
  - d. Outdoor learning will be encouraged, if appropriate.
- C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette
  - a. Students and staff will use CDC/DOH-approved hand sanitizer before entering classroom (provided by district).

- b. Students and staff will sanitize hands BEFORE using restroom and wash hands after.
- c. Students must wash hands upon returning to classroom from elsewhere in the building.
- d. When meals are permitted, all hands must be washed before and after meals

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

- a. All products used for cleaning/sanitizing will be on the CDC/DOH-approved list.
- b. Restrooms will be cleaned and disinfected hourly.
- c. Only one student will be permitted in the restroom at a time.
- d. Paraprofessionals will be utilized to monitor bathroom trips and communicate to custodial staff to clean after each use.
- e. Custodians will use disinfectant to clean and sanitize all “high-touch” areas throughout the day (doorknobs, handrails, office copiers, etc.)
- f. Custodians will thoroughly clean/sanitize all classrooms at the end of each day.
- g. Hand sanitizer dispensers are accessible throughout all buildings.
- h. Paraprofessionals will assist custodial staff with wiping down outdoor recess equipment, when necessary.
- i. Water fountains will continue to be shut down. Students will be encouraged to bring their own water bottles. Bottle refilling stations will be available in each building.
- j. HVAC systems will be renovated to improve ventilation and air quality.

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

- a. Great Meadows Regional School District will continue to follow the contact tracing and quarantine recommendations of the Warren County Department of Health, the New Jersey Department of Health, and the CDC.
- b. Updates and changes to said protocols will be communicated to the GMRSD community regularly.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing

- a. GMRSD provides twice-weekly Covid-19 testing using LabQ Diagnostics.
- b. LabQ offers rapid and PCR testing options and communicates positive results to the Warren County Health Department.

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

- a. GMRSD coordinates with the Warren County Department of Health to inform stakeholders of vaccination opportunities
- b. A survey of the school community found that many did not wish to have a vaccination clinic offered on school property.

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

- a. Students with disabilities will be afforded accommodations in accordance with their IEP or 504 plan to the greatest extent possible
- b. Students with verified health conditions may be granted exceptions to the District's mask-wearing protocols.

## **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):

District-level committees have been formed to address the academic needs of students and the social/emotional/mental health of students and staff. Using ESSER funding, GMRSD plans to provide a summer "bootcamp" for learning in Summer 2022, increase after-school offerings in 2022 and beyond, and retain educators lost due to state aid reductions. GMRSD is implementing a Social-Emotional program from the bottom up that changes the culture within the District. Free breakfast and lunch are offered to all students daily.

## **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)

GMRSD placed a Google Form survey on the District website to allow for public comment and input on the Safe Reopening Plan. Additional surveys will be utilized in the event revisions are necessary.

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 survey is listed in both English and Spanish for community members. Bilingual staff members are available to translate, if necessary. Should an individual with a disability require the plan to be communicated in an alternate format, the District will accommodate to the greatest extent possible.