



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: Link Community Charter School

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): June 14, 2021

Date Revised (mm/dd/yyyy): September 17, 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: Link Community Charter School (LCCS) has developed protocols, created signage, and posted such signage throughout the building, explicitly stating the requirement to wear masks inside the school building. LCCS provides a mask to each student and adult entering the building not wearing one upon entering the school. Signage has been created and posted to instruct on proper mask wearing and such instructions will be shared in morning circle and community periods so that every member of the school community has an accurate understanding of the expectations. Mask breaks will also be provided to support students. Adults will model proper mask wearing and provide ongoing reminders and respectful correction of inappropriate wearing.

B. Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding): LCCS will provide shields on desks and tables as well as space each student a minimum of 3 feet apart in classrooms whenever possible. LCCS will also instruct students and teachers on the expectation to physically distance while traveling/transitioning through the building. Entry and Dismissal will take into account physical distancing so that appropriate time and space is provided.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette: Expectations on handwashing and respiratory etiquette will be provided in morning circle and community periods with signs capturing such being posted throughout the building, including the bathrooms. Time will also be set aside for periodic washing, particularly with younger children.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation: All windows have been inspected and repaired to allow for proper functioning and maximizing ventilation. No HVAC system exists in the school building. Every classroom and office has been provided with one to two (depending on room size) air filtration units. The custodians have been trained in proper cleaning and disinfection. Contracted cleaning staff are expected to clean and disinfect each night. Purchases are being made to reduce any student and staff sharing of supplies and equipment. Students are assigned an individual chromebook, which will also be cleaned and disinfected regularly.

E. Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments: The school nursing team has received training in contact tracing and will conduct such in collaboration with the Newark Department of Health and NJ Department of Health. All appropriate notifications to the county education office and local health department will be made, including student and staff information for city or county led contact tracing. All state, county and city health directives (after consultation) will be considered in making school level decisions. CDC and local requirements for isolation and quarantine will be followed. All instances of positive test results, COVID like symptoms, and potential exposure are first shared with the school's nursing team who consult with health officials and then advise the school leadership on isolation, quarantine, and related communications.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing: All who enter the building will complete a daily health check. All CDC and local health department guidance on testing after symptoms and/or exposure will be followed. LCCS has “opted in” to state sponsored COVID screening and awaits instructions/details on participation.

G. Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible: General information about vaccination to support strong participation and specific details on vaccination sites and times are both included in the school’s weekly electronic Link to Home newsletter and email/phone blasts to parents. Regular information sharing occurs with LCCS staff through email and oral reports at staff meeting. The school believes it has a strong role to play in sharing information about and in supporting vaccination program. LCCS will also work with the county and city health officials to host a vaccination clinic for the school community.

H. Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies: While adhering to all CDC guidelines, LCCS will work closely with families to provide appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities, including alternative masks and mask breaks. Frequent hand washing, placement in larger rooms where physical distancing can be better incorporated (if possible given the space constraints of the school building) and helping students meet expectations. Services will continue in full with appropriate health and safety protocols in place.

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) LCCS will provide every student, in 5th through 8th grade, two chromebooks-one for school and one to be kept at home for home use. With this 2:1 program, any necessary transition to virtual learning either on a case by case basis due to significant health issues, for isolation or quarantine purposes, or while in a state of emergency will be seamless. Additionally, all LCCS teachers will continue to incorporate blended learning in the classroom so students continue to practice using digital tools to support their academic growth. Likewise, any student service will be prepared to transition as needed to the virtual space. The planned hiring of additional teachers and contracting of additional paraprofessionals will allow for increased individualized and small group learning. All programs have provided a virtual component over the past 15 months and any new programs being introduced must meet that requirement before being implemented. Students and staff's social, emotional and mental health needs will likewise be delivered in a structure that can easily transition to remote as needed. Student safety protocols for technology will continue in place so as to limit any privacy concerns and parent releases will continue to include remote options in case they are needed. Frequent parent and student checks in would again be put in place during any remote learning timeframe to best support students. SEL programs will be provided during morning circle and advisory periods, as well as virtually for off-site access. Kindergarten and 5th grade classes will receive particular attention as they will be new to the school in September and their experience during the pandemic will be unknown. Food services will continue to be made available for pick or delivery as the school has done since March, 2020, as permitted under the federal lunch program. Wireless hotspots are activated and ready to provide to families in need during remote learning.

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). After reviewing parent and staff input

throughout the year and examining student data, LCCS conducted a parent survey to gather feedback on the elements of its plan being presented on June 24, 2021 to the NJ Department of Education. The feedback includes: having options for students and staff with skin reactions to the mask provided by the school, providing chromebooks that can stay home, providing support with internet connectivity, creating safe options for field trips whenever possible; providing masks for those who don't have access to a regular supply. The plan in whole has been developed with input and feedback from all stakeholders.

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 has been developed in English and will be translated to Spanish, Portuguese and Creole and posted on the school's website for families to read. The plan will also be shared during Parent Town Hall Meetings (with virtual options) and Back to School Night, as well as with the Weekly Message. The school's leadership and administrative team will be available to families to answer questions or listen to concerns. Subsequent revisions will be shared via email blast directing families to visit the website.