



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): March 17, 2023

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) will continue to post protocols and informational signage throughout the school building, starting at the entry doors to the school. LCCS will continue to maintain a supply of masks at the student entry doors and the main office, making them available to anyone who wishes to use one. Outside masks are permitted to be worn by staff and students alike. Signage on proper mask wearing is also posted throughout the building. Announcements continue to be made at morning circle, in online meetings and in in-person events to encourage mask wearing as cases of colds, flue and COVID remain in the school and in the local community.

- B. Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding): LCCS will continue to stock dividers for desks and tables in the event of an increase in cases warranting such usage. Physical distancing is utilized less as cases have decreased substantially from prior year.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette: Expectations on handwashing and respiratory etiquette will continue to 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: The custodians continue to support regular cleaning and disinfecting. Contracted cleaning staff continue to clean nightly and disinfect weekly. Students are assigned an individual chromebook and limit sharing of materials and supplies.

E. Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments: The school nursing team will utilize their training and collaborate 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 and any directives followed. All CDC and local requirements for isolation and quarantine will be followed.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing: All CDC and local health department guidance on testing after symptoms and/or exposure will be followed. COVID tests are made available to all students, families, and staff.

G. Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible: General information about vaccination will continue to be shared through the electronic Link to Home newsletter and email/phone blasts to parents, as well as with LCCS staff through email and oral reports at staff meeting.

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, 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 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 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 such tools to support their academic growth. Likewise, any student service will be prepared to transition as needed to the virtual space. Paraprofessionals allow for increased individualized and small group learning. Students and staff's social, emotional and mental health needs will continue to be a priority in planning and decision-making. Student safety protocols for technology will continue in place. Frequent parent and student checks are in place to gather feedback on the use of technology in instruction. While isolating (if symptoms are mild or non-existing), students receive work to be completed from home to maintain skill and knowledge.

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 from 2021-22, Link is utilizing feedback to maintain strong communications, make available COVID tests and masks, and strengthen math and ELA instruction.

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 as families request. It is posted on the school's website for families to read. The plan will also be shared during large scale Parent Forums, such as Back to School Night. The school's leadership and administrative team will be available to families to answer questions or listen to concerns.