



## 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: Link Community Charter School**

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

**Date Revised (mm/dd/yyyy): September 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) has continued to post protocols based on updated guidance from the CDC, NJ Department of Health, and U.S. Department of Health. Additionally, Link continues to provide access to masks for both adults and children and signage throughout the building. This information is also posted and available on the school’s website. Communications are sent to families and staff as public or school-based concerns rise about number of positive cases.
  
- B. Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding): LCCS has retained shields for use should public or school-based numbers rise. LCCS will reinstate instructions provided to 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 should need arise.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette: Expectations on handwashing and respiratory etiquette continue to be in effect to curtail all illness. Lower grades provide whole class bathroom time that allows for regular hand-washing. Older grades are encouraged regularly to wash hands. Hand sanitizer is available throughout the building in stationary dispensers in the hallway as well as classroom and office pump bottles.

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 that continue to operate. The custodians have been trained in proper cleaning and disinfection and regularly do so. Contracted cleaning staff are expected to clean each night and disinfect regularly. Students are assigned an individual chromebook, which will also be cleaned and disinfected regularly. Classrooms and the cafeteria are also stocked with disinfecting wipes.

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: While daily screenings are no longer in effect, the school is ready to transition to such should the need arise.

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.

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 5<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> 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. All teachers will continue to utilize Google Classroom as the main portal for instructional

tools. Likewise, any student service will be prepared to transition as needed to the virtual space. The Child Study Team continues to meet virtually to support families, while all testing continues to be done in person in the school with social distancing in place.

### **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). Link uses parent feedback in its bi-annual updates to the ARP Dafe Return Plan, gathered at meetings of the Link Parent Association and the School Board, as well as staff feedback at bi-monthly staff meetings.

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 requested. It is posted on the school's website for families to read. The website access is shared with families in the fall at the Back to School Night. The school's leadership and administrative team will be available to families to answer questions or listen to concerns.