



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: Commercial Township School District

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 06/23/2021 Date Revised (mm/dd/yyyy): 12/23/2021

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

Policy #1648: Restart and Recovery outlines mask protocols for both students and staff.

Specific information can be found in policy under *Conditions for Learning: Screening, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and Response to Students and Staff Presenting Symptoms*.

Based on Fall 2020 anticipated minimum standards from the NJDOE, when social distancing was difficult or impossible, face coverings were required for students, and face coverings were always required for visitors and staff except for special circumstances per CDC guidance. To meet the anticipated minimum standards during the 2020-21 school year, CTSD supplied face coverings as needed, but staff and students could provide their own. Coverings could not include words, symbols/logos, or any offensive reference as indicated in the District's dress code. CTSD enforced mask wearing as a mitigation measure per CDC guidance.

For the Fall 2021 *Safe Return to In-Person Instruction*, CTSD will follow recommendations and guidance from proper authoritative sources, the NJDOE and the CDC. Considering the current status of vaccinations, executive orders, and COVID activity, CTSD anticipates that masks will not be required for vaccinated individuals. Since it is not anticipated that our PK-5 population will have access a vaccine, the status of masks for unvaccinated students remains undetermined. The District respects and supports any individual who chooses to wear a mask.

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

Based on Fall 2020 anticipated minimum standards from the NJDOE, all instructional and non-instructional rooms in the school and district facilities were in compliance with social distancing standards to the maximum extent practicable. To meet the anticipated minimum standards during the 2020-21 school year, rooms were measured and mapped to determine maximum capacity given with the following parameters: 6' between work stations for staff/students and unencumbered access to restrooms in classrooms, hallway doors, and fire exits. Since all students could not be accommodated to attend in-person with the 6' distancing measure in place, the District divided students into two cohorts. Students attended by cohorts on a hybrid schedule. The gold cohort attended in-person on Mondays and Tuesdays; the blue cohort attended in-person on Wednesdays and Thursdays. All students attended virtually on Fridays.

For the Fall 2021 *Safe Return to In-Person Instruction*, CTSD will follow recommendations and guidance from proper authoritative sources, the NJDOE and the CDC. Based on Gov. Murphy's

orders and DOE guidance, CTSD anticipates that all students will attend full time in-person and that there will be no need for social distancing and/or cohorts. In terms of transportation, CTSD buses will be at full capacity with households seated together as much as practicable. Seating charts will be in place, but there is no anticipation of partial capacity on buses in order to achieve distancing. Mask wearing on buses, if recommended and required, would be in accordance with guidance from the CDC and the NJDOE.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

Based on Fall 2020 anticipated minimum standards from the NJDOE, hand sanitizing stations were prepared and maintained with alcohol-based (at least 60% alcohol) hand sanitizers. Hand sanitizing stations were installed and continue to be located as follows: in each classroom (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer); at entrances and exits of buildings; and near lunchrooms and toilets. Children ages 5 and younger were and will continue to be supervised when using hand sanitizer. For classrooms that had existing handwashing stations, stations were prepared with soap, water, and alcohol-based hand sanitizers. To meet the anticipated minimum standards during the 2020-21 school year, the school nurse provided training for staff and students on proper handwashing technique. Staff and students were likewise trained for proper respiratory etiquette including covering one's cough and washing hands protocol. Students were to wash hands for at least 20 seconds at regular intervals, including before eating, after using the bathroom, and for respiratory etiquette (after blowing nose/coughing/sneezing). Directions included using alcohol-based hand sanitizer when washing with soap and water was not possible. Signage regarding hand washing was posted in indicated areas, and the signage will remain in place. Handwashing was incorporated into the classroom routine and will continue to be a class routine.

For the Fall 2021 *Safe Return to In-Person Instruction*, CTSD will follow recommendations and guidance from proper authoritative sources, the NJDOE and the CDC. CTSD anticipates continuing to promote, educate, and train staff and students on handwashing and respiratory etiquette as a universal mitigation measure for communicable illnesses in general.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

Policy #1648: Restart and Recovery outlines cleaning requirements. Specific information can be found under *Conditions for Learning: Facilities Cleaning Practices*.

Based on Fall 2020 anticipated minimum standards from the NJDOE, CTSD developed a schedule for increased, routine cleaning and disinfection. Bathrooms were sanitized daily or between use as much as possible, using protocols outlined by the EPA. Surfaces and objects that are frequently touched were routinely cleaned and disinfected. This included cleaning objects/surfaces not ordinarily cleaned daily. All cleaning products were used according to the directions on the label. For disinfection, most common EPA-registered household disinfectants were considered effective. Examples of frequently touched areas in schools included: classroom desks and chairs; lunchroom tables and chairs; door handles and push plates; handrails; kitchens and bathrooms; light switches; handles on equipment (athletic); buttons on vending machines and elevators; shared telephones; shared desktops; shared computer keyboards and mice; drinking fountains; and school bus seats and windows.

Based on Fall 2020 anticipated minimum standards from the NJDOE, all indoor facilities were ensured to have adequate ventilation including operational heating and ventilation systems where appropriate. Recirculated air had a fresh air component, windows were opened, if practical and if air conditioning

was not provided, and filter(s) for A/C units were maintained and changed according to manufacturer recommendations. Bipolar ionization was added to the uninvent systems as an additional layer of filtration. Areas that did not have windows and the nurse's office were provided HEPA filtered air purifiers. Filters were upgraded to maximum specifications per the manufacturer guidance. Electrostatic sprayers were used daily to disinfect instructional and operation spaces.

For the Fall 2021 *Safe Return to In-Person Instruction*, CTSD will follow recommendations and guidance from proper authoritative sources, the NJDOE and the CDC. CTSD anticipates a continuation of the thorough daily disinfection of instructional and operational spaces as a mitigation measure to prevent spread of communicable illnesses in general. CTSD anticipates continuing to maintain its HVAC system in order to ensure proper ventilation which includes upgrades and repairs on the system and to facilitate high-efficiency performance. CTSD anticipates installation of HVAC in additional spaces that lack proper ventilation.

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

Policy #1648: Restart and Recovery outlines contact tracing requirements. Specific information can be found under *Conditions for Learning: Contact Tracing*.

The Fall 2020 NJDOE school re-opening guidance did not include any anticipated minimum standards for contact tracing; however, all administrators, school safety specialists, counselors, and any other staff deemed appropriate by the Superintendent was provided information regarding the role of contact tracing conducted by State, county, and local officials. School officials engaged the expertise of the school nurse on the importance of contact tracing. CTSD fully cooperated in sharing information with the Cumberland County Department of Health (DOH) to fulfill all mandated Contact Tracing Requirements. The District staff through attendance records, bus seating charts, and other internal contact documents assisted the DOH to determine levels of potential exposure. Any notification indicated was at the direction of the DOH. Direct contacts of infected persons were directed to follow any quarantine/isolation guidelines per the CDC as indicated.

For the Fall 2021 *Safe Return to In-Person Instruction*, CTSD will follow recommendations and guidance from proper authoritative sources, the NJDOE and the CDC. CTSD anticipates continuing to consult with the DOH regarding the contact tracing process and any relevant quarantine/isolation recommendations.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing

Policy #1648: Restart and Recovery outlines screening protocols for both students and staff. Specific information can be found under *Conditions for Learning: Screening, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and Response to Students and Staff Presenting Symptoms*.

Based on Fall 2020 anticipated minimum standards from the NJDOE, students were screened via temperature check and a visual check for presenting symptoms upon arrival to school prior to entering the school building. The school engaged parents to monitor daily for the identified possible symptoms of COVID-19. Parents/guardians were encouraged to monitor for signs of illness in their students and to keep them home when indicated. The District referred parents/guardians to the CDC's *Symptoms of COVID-19* guidance document which includes the following symptoms: fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, fatigue, diarrhea or vomiting, runny nose, and body/muscle aches. This information was included in communications to parents/guardians via the District's Website, Facebook, and e-mail. Staff completed a daily self-assessment prior to reporting on site. In the classroom, teachers made a deliberate effort to monitor health without running through the list of symptoms and then referred children with concerns to the office or nurse for further monitoring. Signs/symptoms accompanied by a

temperature greater than 100.4 was documented on student's/staff's health record in nurse's office. The school adopted procedures for symptomatic staff and students. The procedures included the following: students/staff went to an isolation "waiting" room until they could be picked up/sent home; school physician provided standing orders; CDC provided guidance for signs/symptoms of COVID; and instructional aides or other assigned school staff visually monitored students in isolation and contacted the school nurse if a student shows signs of respiratory distress per the school physician's standing orders.

For the Fall 2021 *Safe Return to In-Person Instruction*, CTSD will follow recommendations and guidance from proper authoritative sources, the NJDOE and the CDC. CTSD anticipates continuing to advise staff and students to self-assess and to stay home when sick as a universal mitigation measure for all communicable illnesses; however, there will not be a temperature screening process in place for students.

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

The Fall 2020 NJDOE school re-opening guidance did not address vaccinations; however, CTSD has highly encouraged its staff and school community to consult their health care provider regarding vaccination. The school facilitated scheduling of vaccines for its staff in the Spring of 2020 as vaccines become readily available to school personnel. Staff who wanted to receive the vaccine had multiple opportunities to do so via the school's partnering with various vaccination providers.

For the Fall 2021 *Safe Return to In-Person Instruction*, CTSD will follow recommendations and guidance from proper authoritative sources, the NJDOE and the CDC. CTSD anticipates that as vaccinations become available for students by age groups the school will consult the school physician and highly encourage its parents/guardians to consult their healthcare provider and to get students vaccinated. The school will likewise partner with vaccination providers to encourage vaccinations among its student population. Any students vaccinated on site through a vaccination clinic would be contingent upon parent/guardian consent.

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

Policy #1648: Restart and Recovery outlines accommodations for students with disabilities. Specific information can be found under *Leadership and Planning: Scheduling and Staffing* and under *Continuity of Learning: Ensuring the Delivery of Special Education and Related Services to Students with Disabilities*.

Based on Fall 2020 anticipated minimum standards from the NJDOE, the school met the needs of its special populations in alignment with the New Jersey Specific Guidance for Schools and Districts regarding student accommodations. For special education students, the Board provided educators with professional development to best utilize the accessibility features and accommodations tools made available through technology-based formats. The school continued to ensure students received individualized supports that met the requirements of the IEP and 504 Plans. The Board's plan identified roles and responsibilities of school staff to ensure continuity of learning and to leverage existing resources and personnel to maximize student success. Consistent with guidance from the USDOE, the school continued to meet the obligations under IDEA and NJ special education regulations for students with disabilities to the greatest extent possible. In accordance with the ESY guidance issued by the NJDOE, student IEP's that included ESY services were implemented to the greatest extent possible. In addition, CTSD considered all of the following: planning for the return of medically fragile students; reviewing student data for needs assessment; determining whether additional or compensatory services are indicated; developing procedures for evaluations and determining eligibility; and communicating procedures to parents/guardians. Under the cohort schedule during the 2020-21 school year, students

in the self-contained special education program attended in-person four days a week while their peers attended two days in-person. When cohorts were eliminated, students in the self-contained special education program resumed a normal, full day schedule five days a week while their peers attended for four hours five days a week.

For the Fall 2021 *Safe Return to In-Person Instruction*, CTSD will follow recommendations and guidance from proper authoritative sources, the NJDOE and the CDC. CTSD anticipates that students will attend full time in-person unless their medically fragile status indicates a home instruction accommodation.

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.

Policy #1648: Restart and Recovery outlines general related needs for staff and students. Specific information can be found under *Conditions for Learning: Wraparound Supports* and under *Continuity of Learning: Professional Learning*.

Based on Fall 2020 anticipated minimum standards from the NJDOE, CTSD provided the following: Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and programs that promote a positive, supportive, and connected school culture and climate; a framework for selecting, delivering, and evaluating the success of student supports and interventions; wraparound supports; food service and distribution; and access to quality child care.

For the Fall 2021 *Safe Return to In-Person Instruction*, CTSD will follow recommendations and guidance from proper authoritative sources, the NJDOE and the CDC. CTSD anticipates a continuation of all efforts related to SEL, wellness, academic supports, and other related aspects of addressing the needs of the whole child.

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.

The District solicited input from community stakeholders and from representatives of special interest groups. The Superintendent provided a brief presentation on the various components that were required to be in the plan at the June 8, 2021 BOE meeting. Board members and stakeholders had the opportunity to provide input during the public comment portion of the meeting. The solicitation for the meeting and community input was promoted through multiple and varied (i.e. e-mail, Facebook) communications. The District also sent a follow-up, electronic survey for any stakeholder who could not attend the meeting but had input. The District's administrative team met to review the recommendations, feedback, and survey data. The District's administrative team had a follow-up meeting with its union regarding their collective input. Stakeholders' input was considered and incorporated accordingly into the components of the District's plan.

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.

The District shares its Safe Return Plan with the school community through a variety of communication channels in order to reach a diverse group of stakeholders. The plan in its entirety in standard District format is posted on the District's Website. A one-pager will be e-mailed to applicable constituents and posted on the District's Facebook page. Alternate formats (i.e. – meeting, audio, alternate language) will be provided as indicated. Questions, concerns, and additional information about alternate formats should be directed to the Superintendent's office.