

# Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan Template

## CSDE ARP ESSER



May 27, 2021

### Introduction

Our Connecticut school communities — with students at the center — continue to be bold and innovative as they respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The United States Department of Education (USED) has recognized the importance of supporting these efforts, particularly with the infusion of resources to support education in Connecticut. The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ARP ESSER) has granted the State of Connecticut an additional \$1,105,919,874, providing the opportunity to develop bold, high-impact plans to address the substantial disruptions to student learning, interpersonal interactions, and social-emotional well-being. While earlier sources of federal relief funding during the pandemic supported our ability to first survive, and then thrive, ARP ESSER is Connecticut's opportunity to transform our schools.

The federal government requires that each Local Education Agency (LEA) create a *Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan* (the Plan). This plan must be publicly available online by June 23, 2021 and submitted to the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) as a part of the ARP ESSER application due mid-August 2021. To aid in the planning process, CSDE is providing this template to guide LEAs planning as well as serve as an opportunity to share the Plan with the public.

Due to the expansive efforts of the CSDE and the educational community, as of the week of May 3–7, no district in the state of Connecticut was fully remote. This was achieved through extensive planning by each LEA; therefore, this template should be seen as a means to support LEAs' efforts to date and can be used to expand upon or revisit previous Reopening School Plans.

There are five areas that LEAs must consider when developing the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan:

- I. Health and Safety Strategies
- II. Continuity of Services
- III. Public Comment
- IV. Periodic Review Process
- V. Understandable and Uniform Format

The CSDE has maintained consistently that in-person learning is the preferred opportunity for students and that schools should work to safely open their buildings for the 2020–21 school year. We are proud to have led the nation in safe return to in-person instruction — as of April 30 nearly 82.7% of Connecticut school districts were offering a predominately fully in-person learning. Thank you for your work and helping us continue to be an example of how we can best serve our children safely in school buildings.

### I. Health and Safety Strategies

Describe how the LEA plan includes (or will be modified to include) the extent to which the LEA has adopted policies and a description of any such policies on each of the strategies listed in the table on page 2:

**Fairfield Public Schools continues to follow the most current Connecticut DPH and CSDE guidance.**

As we approached the start of the 2020 - 2021 school year, Fairfield Public Schools committed to a Reopening Plan that was practical and responsive to the needs of students, staff, and the community, while adhering to the parameters laid out in Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together. Following our plan allowed us to bring PK-12 students back for full-time, in-person learning in March 2021.

Given our extensive work during the pandemic, we were well positioned for a safe return for the 2021-2022 school year. We reopened with a full in-person return while adhering to all local, state and federal requirements. As our focus is on keeping students in school safely, we have added strategies such as "Screen & Stay" to limit the number of students having to quarantine. Recent changes in community health data, as well as concerns around new variants support our ongoing strategies.

Please complete the table below with the LEA's mitigation strategy for each category. In developing the LEA's response, please review and consider the [CDC guidance](#) and the [Connecticut DPH and CSDE guidance](#) for each category.

	Mitigation strategy	LEA response
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Universal and correct wearing of masks	<p>Currently, Executive Order 13A is in place through February 15, 2022. This Order covers DPH Universal Masking Order for all individuals in all PK-12 school buildings and on school buses, regardless of vaccination status.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Masks are required for all individuals in the school building. Masks are not required outside.</li> <li>• Mask break opportunities for PK-8 students will be part of the school schedule.</li> <li>• Anyone using district transportation is required to wear a mask.</li> </ul>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)	<p>Students maintain a minimum of 3 feet distance from each other in the classroom and at lunch. Staff maintains 6 feet from students. If teachers need to work with students at shorter distances, they may do so for less than 15 cumulative minutes.</p> <p>In elementary schools, cohorting at lunch will continue. In grades 6-12, we track where students sit and with whom. Cohorting at recess is no longer required.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Handwashing and respiratory etiquette	<p>Staff reviews guidance and training on proper handwashing techniques and respiratory etiquette with students. Frequent hand washing or hand sanitizing is expected and is supported by signage and hand sanitizer stations at all entry points and classrooms</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation	<p>Schools are cleaned and sanitized according to adopted procedures. Ventilation is continuously monitored to ensure necessary air flow.</p>

	Mitigation strategy	LEA response
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments	Contact tracing continues to be conducted in cooperation with the Fairfield Health Department.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Diagnostic screening and testing	The school system uses COVID diagnostic testing in cooperation with the Fairfield Health Department to determine positive cases and allow individuals to "test out" of quarantine. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our "Screen and Stay" program allows for monitoring of individuals who would otherwise need to quarantine.</li> <li>• We determined that the available opt-in screening testing program does not meet the needs of our district.</li> </ul>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible	Vaccination clinics are publicized through school communication channels. The Fairfield Health Department has offered and continues to offer clinics for students and staff to encourage vaccination and boosters.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies	The district will continue to maintain health and safety protocols and policies to support the individual needs of students and staff.

LEA must implement, to the greatest extent practicable, each element of the most up-to-date guidance listed in the table.

Updated 12/23/21

## II. Continuity of Services

Describe how the LEA plan will ensure continuity of services including but not limited to services to address the students' academic needs, and students' and staff social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services:

Beginning in September 2021, Fairfield Public Schools implemented an in-person learning model.

Student learning is being supported with:

- Social emotional screening and counseling support
- Staff training in equity and anti-bias measures
- Identification of student needs for grade level skills and acceleration of instruction, with additional tutoring support as needed
- Collaborative grade and department work to align instruction in support of student learning needs

## III. Public Comment

Public comment is a key element of stakeholder engagement, and at times a stand-alone element which may include dedicating time to open forums at board of education meetings, conducting surveys, or soliciting written input from external residents not involved in the decision-making process. Describe how the LEA plans to provide the public the opportunity to provide input and for public comment in the development of the plan, a summary of the input (including any letters of support), and how the LEA took such input into account:

The public has had continual opportunities to provide input and comment to the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan and subsequent updates through live comment at board of education meetings, email, and/or online comments on the district website. The plan was made publicly available on the district website along with a link for feedback and input. Initial public comment centered on the need for updated guidance to reflect the high vaccination rate and low infection rate in our community at the time.

Subsequent updates of the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan, including this December 23, 2021 update, will be posted on the FPS website along with a link for feedback and input.

## IV. Periodic Review Process

LEAs are required to periodically review and, as appropriate, revise their Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan at least every six months through September 30, 2023. Each review must include seeking public comment on the plan and developing the plan after taking into account the public comment.

Below are the dates that LEAs must submit a refreshed or updated plan to CSDE via eGMS.

Review/revisit Dates:

- June 23, 2021
- December 23, 2021
- June 23, 2022
- December 23, 2022
- June 23, 2023

## V. Understandable and Uniform Format

Federal regulations require that this plan be in an understandable and uniform format, to the extent practicable; is written in a language that parents can understand or, if not practicable, orally translated; and upon request by a parent who is an individual with a disability, provided in an alternative format accessible to that parent. Describe the unique needs of the LEA's audience and confirm the LEA's approach to ensuring the document is accessible:

The district website supports all accessibility standards and translations using Google Translate. Posted PDFs are checked for accessibility using the Adobe Acrobat Accessibility Checker.