



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: Watchung Hills Regional HS District

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 6/1/21

Date Revised (mm/dd/yyyy): 1/1/2022

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

Students, staff, and visitors to schools and school sponsored functions will be required to wear masks pursuant to current requirements/recommendations from the CDC, NJDOE, NJDOH, as well as any relevant legislation or executive orders signed by the Governor of New Jersey.

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

Students, staff, and visitors to schools and school sponsored functions will be required to maintain social distance pursuant to current requirements/recommendations from the CDC, NJDOE, NJDOH, as well as any relevant legislation or executive orders signed by the Governor of New Jersey.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette.

We purchased and posted 350 Posters (written with pictures) to show social distancing, handwashing, face coverings, and other prevention methods. We also have placed additional signage encouraging hand hygiene, social distancing and COVID-19 prevention materials.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation.

Cleaners are required to follow bid specifications on file in the business office that requires them to perform detailed daily cleaning of all classrooms, hallways, bathrooms, common areas, and all touch points. The touch points will now be emphasized as a higher priority. We will be shifting staff from nights to day time shifts to allow for greater daily cleaning. Additionally, the district has invested in no-touch items (towels, soap, flushometers) in the

bathrooms to reduce touch points. The district has invested funds into all of the hallway and stairwell doors to further reduce touch points throughout the building. The district also ordered touch free sanitizers for each classroom. Electrostatic sprayers are also ordered to deep clean when needed. Additional cleaning is to be performed by staff and students (desk area only) after each class. The school will supply wipe buckets for each classroom - (to be used by students and staff individually after each class).

The district has 168 active rooftop fan units. These exhaust fans are on full capacity during school times so that there is a constant flow of inside/outside air throughout the day. The rooftop HVAC (heating and ventilating) units primarily in the North building and parts of the West Wing (2005 section) have their outside air dampers open to 25% to allow higher percentage of fresh air in occupied spaces, which includes classrooms. BCU (Blower Cooled Units), Fan Coil Units and Unit ventilators (all in South Building and parts of the West Wing), are all open to medium setting and outside air dampers are open to 25% to allow for more fresh air. Additional testing will be taking place by District Engineers to ensure air flow meets or exceeds indoor air quality standards.

The district invested over \$300K in an HVAC technology called Needlepoint Bipolar Ionization. The Needlepoint Bipolar Ionization units are installed by a trained technician on the various HVAC units throughout the school (Rooftop Units, BCU Units, FCU Units, and Classroom Unit Ventilators). These units work to safely remove harmful particles in the air including SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19) by leveraging an electric charge to create a high concentration of positive and negative ions. These ions travel through the air continuously seeking out and attaching to particles. This sets in motion a continuous pattern of particle combination. As these particles become larger, they are eliminated from air more rapidly. Additionally, this product is Ozone free.

E. Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments
Contact tracing, isolation and quarantine practices will be developed in collaboration with state, local and district health officials based on current requirements/recommendations from the CDC, NJDOE, NJDOH, as well as any relevant legislation or executive orders signed by the Governor of New Jersey. Every effort will be made to minimize the need to quarantine individual students/staff from the school setting.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing.

Students, staff, and visitors to schools and school sponsored functions will be required to perform health screenings and diagnostic testing pursuant to applicable requirements/recommendations from the CDC, NJDOE, NJDOH, as well as any relevant legislation or executive orders signed by the Governor of New Jersey.

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

We have distributed information on available vaccination sites to our employees. We have also partnered with the Somerset County DOH to utilize our school as a vaccination site for any of our students who wish to get the vaccine in June.

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

Accommodations for students who are unable to follow any of our policies and procedures related to health and safety are addressed according to that student's particular need and in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations.

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)

- The Guidance/School Counseling and Special Services Departments provide academic, social-emotional, and behavioral support to all students as needed to foster educational development, college and career readiness, and wellness.
- District staff deliver services aligned with Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS): assessing students' needs, collaborative problem-solving with staff, outreach for family engagement and providing comprehensive and wraparound support.
- Students with academic, social-emotional, or behavioral concerns impacting their academic potential and/or wellness may be referred to the district's Intervention and Referral Team (I&RT). The I&RT members work with students and parents to assess need for and provide tiered individual intervention strategies and action plans for ongoing instructional, social-emotional support.
- Students with Section 504 plans will continue to receive accommodations to meet academic, social-emotional, behavioral and medical needs.
- The Child Study Team will continue to monitor progress of students with an IEP in relation to goals/objectives and social-emotional well being. Increased support may be added for students on an individual basis.
- District staff engage in and deliver programming related to social-emotional learning and wellness, substance abuse prevention, and college and career readiness to support the well-being and learning needs of students. Programming in these areas are delivered individually, in groups, and during school hour and evening presentations for students, parents and staff.
- WHRHS provides students with access to a mental health provider (fully licensed and certified as LSW, LCSW, or LPC). In addition to individual, family and group counseling services, the clinician provides crisis intervention services and assessment for students grade nine through twelve including on-site school clearance assessments.

3. Public Comment

A. Describe how the LEA sought public comment on its plan, and how it took those public comments 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).

The district posted the plan on our website and advertised a Board hearing on the Plan which was held during our June 15, 2021 Board of Education meeting. No comments have been received regarding the 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. (1000 character limit)

The Watchung Hills Regional High School website is hosted using the Finalsite content management system, which meets or exceeds ADA requirements and guidelines. This includes providing text alternatives, time-based media, adaptable layout, keyboard accessibility, readable and navigable components to our school website.