



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](#), Elementary 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 Elementary 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 Elementary 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.

Berlin Township School District Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services

LEA Name: Berlin Township

Date: 6/24/21

Date Revised (mm/dd/yyyy): 8/19/2021; Review 12/16/21

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

All Staff members and students will be required to wear face masks throughout the school day as advised by the NJDOH and Camden County Department of Health whether vaccinated or not until further guidance is released. We recommend that all students vaccinated or unvaccinated wear a facial mask throughout the school day regardless of social distancing practices. Students are expected to wear facial coverings when in the hallways, switching classrooms, moving around in classrooms, or using the bathroom facilities. Masks will be removed when students or staff are eating, while maintaining as much social distance as possible. Masks will be available for all visitors, students and staff, on an as needed basis.

8/19/21 As per Executive Order 251 by Governor Murphy, all students, staff and visitors, regardless of vaccination status, will be required to wear masks in all school buildings and on the bus when we return to school in September 2021. Students are expected to wear facial coverings when in classrooms, in the hallways, switching classrooms, moving around in classrooms, or using the bathroom facilities. Masks will be removed when students or staff are eating, while maintaining as much social distance as possible. Masks will be available for all visitors, students and staff, on an as needed basis.

3/14/22 As per the lifting of the Public Health Emergency in NJ by Governor Murphy, effective 3/8/22, masks will be optional for staff, students, and visitors in all buildings and school buses. Masks will be available for all visitors, students and staff, on an as needed basis and as per CDC and NJ DOH guidance to be worn on days 6-10 when returning from a COVID infection.

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

The Berlin Township School District will follow the recommendations from the NJ Department of Health with maintaining a minimum of 3 feet of physical distancing between students in classrooms when the COVID -19 conditions are identified in the low and moderate risk levels. If conditions in the Southwest region indicate high risk, we will maintain 6ft distancing in the classrooms especially in our middle school aged students. We will set up the lunch rooms to have students 3 - 6 ft apart at all times. The Berlin Township School District will open to full day in person instruction for all of our students without the use of cohorts. However, when planning classroom populations, consideration will be given to being able to divide classes into cohorts if the need arises to move to a hybrid model of instruction.

8/19/21 Social distancing in classroom and at lunch tables will be 3 feet apart to the greatest extent possible, given the requirement to have full day classes 5 days a week. Desk shields will be added to desks and tables provide another level of mitigation in addition to individual mask wearing. Movement in the hallways will be limited to smaller groups so as to maintain 3 feet of social distance between students and staff.

3/14/22 Social distancing in classroom and at lunch tables will remain 2- 3 feet apart to the greatest extent possible. Desk shields may be added to desks and tables provide another level of mitigation in the absence of individual mask wearing. Movement in the hallways will be limited to smaller groups so as to maintain 2-3 feet of social distance between students and staff to the greatest extent possible.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

Employees, students and visitors must wash their hands or apply hand sanitizer frequently and after touching items or surfaces that may be frequently touched by other people, such as door handles, tables, desktops, shared workstations or microphones, or electronic registers/screens. Hand sanitizing dispensers are mounted on hallway walls, at each entrance to the buildings and are in each classroom, in addition to sinks within the classrooms and restrooms. Signs will be posted throughout the buildings especially above sinks and sanitizing stations to remind everyone to be aware to wash one's hands frequently. Staff will continue to encourage students to apply hand sanitizer as they enter each new room throughout the day (wash-in /wash-out). Sanitizing Stations will be refilled regularly with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that meets CDC criteria. For respiratory etiquette, students and staff will also be continuously reminded to cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when they cough or sneeze, to throw used tissues in the trash and to properly hand wash following coughing and sneezing. Additionally, many of our plumbing fixtures are touchless. Students and staff will be encouraged to bring their own waterbottles and will be able to refill at sinks; water fountains will continue to be turned off.

3/14/22 Water fountains will be opened however, students and staff will be encouraged to bring their own water bottles and will be able to refill at sinks.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

To ensure the health and safety of all students and staff: Highly touched surfaces will be sanitized throughout the day (such as: handrails, door handles, bathrooms, water fountains, and telephones etc.) Teachers and other staff will be provided with sanitizing wipes for as needed use. Teachers will be reminded to limit the use of shared objects and if items are shared, sanitization of these items will be mandatory before they can be used again. At the end of each day, custodial staff will clean and sanitize: Classrooms, Gymnasium, Bathrooms, Hallways/Foyers, Offices, Media Center, Lunchroom/Kitchen and Playgrounds.

8/19/21 Frequently touched surfaces on school busses will be wiped down in between each morning and afternoon run by each driver. Additionally, after all morning and all afternoon runs, busses will be cleaned more thoroughly by the drivers and custodial staff under the direction of the Facilities Manager using the required materials.

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

The school nurses in collaboration with the Superintendent and the Principals will work closely with the Camden County Health Department to support any efforts towards identifying students/staff necessary to facilitate contact tracing for confirmed COVID-19 cases that impact the district/school community. Contact tracing will be done as per Camden County Health Department protocols. Students and staff will be quarantined and placed in isolation based on the guidance of the CDC, NJ Dept. of Health and Camden County Dept. of Health and each individual situation.

8/19/21 Quarantine and isolation time frames will be determined based on the guidance information disseminated by the NJ Dept. of Health and Camden County Dept. of Health. Time frames change based on community and regional risk level, as well as vaccination status. Time frames range between 7-14 days dependent upon the current risk level, vaccination status, and need for proof of a negative COVID-19 test.

3/14/22 Quarantine and isolation time frames will be determined based on the guidance information disseminated by the NJ Dept. of Health and Camden County Dept. of Health which is based on CDC guidelines. Isolation for those diagnosed with COVID -19 is 5 days being able to return to school/work wearing a mask on days 6-10. Close contacts may return to school/work and or remain in school/work based on appearance of COVID-like symptoms and risk levels for the area at that time.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing

Students and staff will be provided with an online checklist screening tool that they should review each morning before entering the school building. Students and Staff members will be encouraged to stay home from school if they are exhibiting any COVID related symptoms and should follow up with their primary physician before returning to school. Students who present with COVID-19 compatible symptoms throughout the school day, will be directed to our school health office for evaluation. If the student meets the criteria put forth by the NJDOH, the parent will be directed to follow up with their child's pediatrician for evaluation and COVID testing before returning to the school building. If the parents choose not to have their child tested for COVID, they will follow the proper quarantine guidelines from the NJDOH.

8/19/21 Students and staff returning from an absence due to COVID-like symptoms will need clearance from a physician and or negative COVID -19 test result based on NJ and Camden County Depts. of Health guidance.

3/14/22 Unvaccinated staff are required to be tested weekly. Students and staff who want to participate in Screening testing may do so using the State provided company onsite at BTWP weekly. Prior registration is necessary.

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

The Berlin Township School District worked closely with the CCDOH and Camden County Dept. of Education in efforts to provide our staff members with access to the Covid-19 vaccination. Employees were allotted time during the school day to receive the vaccination and we will continue to encourage non vaccinated staff members with local opportunities to receive a vaccination. Families of students 12 and older will continue to receive current information and local access to walk-in clinics and pharmacies. Resources are available from the School Nurse.

3/14/22 The district hosted 2 vaccination clinics for staff, students and the community on January 21 and February 11. A total of 50-60 residents participated in this event. The school nurses and the district website continue to list resources for vaccination opportunities throughout Camden County.

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

Facial masks are recommended for all of our students. However, there may be an exception if a student's medical condition or disability precludes the use of a face covering in a school building. In that case, if a parent/guardian of a student with a disability believes the use of a face covering would not be possible for the child because of the child's disability, the parent/guardian will be asked to provide documentation from the child's healthcare provider to the nurse and school principal.

3/14/22 Facial masks are optional all of our students; however, for anyone requiring a mask, there will be extras in the nurse's office. Bullying for individual choices to wear or not wear a mask will not be tolerated by the Administration and Board of Education.

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 Berlin Township School District is dedicated to Pandemic Recovery and invites input from a diverse group of stakeholders. The Administrative team meets every 2 weeks and discusses the impact on instruction and how to address identified needs. We continue to collect and analyze benchmark data and end of the year grades. This fall (2021) Start Strong data as well as a variety of other assessments will be used to drive our instruction and programming decisions. Our staff will continue to hold vertical articulation meetings in order to discuss with colleagues the unique needs of our students. We will continue our wellness checks with students, parents and staff as well and continue to work on the culture and climate of both buildings. The middle school will continue to implement the Advisory period to build stronger relationships among students and staff. The Elementary School will implement the PASS survey to determine school, grade level, classroom and individual needs. The district has updated the Health and Physical education and Guidance curricula to include more SEL material and related activities to promote individual wellness.

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 Berlin Township School District Safe Reopening Plan was presented at a Board of Education meeting, uploaded to our school website, and will be shared with parents/guardians in a message to the community. A survey was sent to parents and staff in order to gather information relative to the areas listed above to assist the planning for September 2021. As the situation develops and additional guidance is given to school districts by the New Jersey Dept. of Education, revisions will be made to the plan based on additional stakeholder input.

8/19/21 Revisions made to this plan based on newly released guidance and Executive Order was reviewed at the August 19, 2021 Board of Education Meeting and will be placed on the District's website after that time.

3/14/22 Revisions made to this plan based on newly released guidance and the lifting of the Public Health Emergency in NJ was reviewed at the February 24, 2022 and March 17, 2022 Board of Education Meeting and will be placed on the District's website for additional public review.

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 Berlin Township School District Safe Reopening plan was presented in an understandable format at the Board of Education meeting. The plan was then uploaded to the school's website in English. The plan will be shared in an email to parents and guardians. Our website has ADA compliant features and can be translated as needed.

8/19/21 Revisions made to this plan based on newly released guidance and Executive Order was reviewed at the August 19, 2021 Board of Education Meeting and will be placed on the District's website after that time.

3/14/22 Revisions made to this plan based on newly released guidance and the lifting of the Public Health Emergency in NJ was reviewed at the February 24, 2022 and March 17, 2022 Board of Education Meeting and will be placed on the District's website for additional public review.