



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.

Blairstown Elementary School intends to open five full days for the 2021-2022 school year. Also, the district will follow all protocols to ensure the safety of students, staff, and all stakeholders.

As of 2022-2023, the district has no mandates or recommendations. We have returned to normal operations.

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that upon the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year, portions of Executive Order 175 allowing remote learning will be rescinded, meaning that schools will be required to provide full-day, in-person instruction, as they were before the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency.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.

LEA Name: Blairstown School District

Date): 05/27/2021

Date Revised (9/21/2023):

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:

- As per Governor Murphy's [Executive Order 251](#), all students, staff, and visitors must wear a mask while in the building and on the school bus unless they have medical documentation excusing a mask. Masks will be optional when staff and students are outside, during gym, lunch, and in extreme heat. Also, teachers will provide mask breaks throughout the duration of the school day. (**Executive Order 251 is no longer in place. Students, Staff, and visitors no longer have to wear masks**).
- **Virtual Learning:**
 - Governor Murphy has rescinded portions of Executive Order 175, which allowed for a remote learning option for families. Therefore, virtual learning will only occur if a student needs to quarantine due to COVID-19 or exposure to a positive individual. This is only for quarantining purposes and does not include individual sick days or vacations.
 - **Virtual learning is no longer an option for students.**

B. Physical distancing (e.g., including cohorts/podding): (We are no longer required to be socially distant).

- Per current CDC and NJDOH recommendations, all students will be socially distant.
- In elementary schools, CDC recommends all students remain at least 3 feet apart in classrooms where mask use is universal — regardless of whether community transmission is low, moderate, substantial, or high.
- BES can maintain more than the minimum recommended three ft. for social distancing in all classrooms and will return to five full-day instruction.
- Lunch will be at the normal time. One grade will have lunch, the other will go to recess, and then they will switch.
- Halls will be divided for more productive traffic flow, with signage reminding students to remain socially distant.
- When social distancing is not feasible in the classroom, a clear barrier between staff and students will be provided.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette: We remind students to wash their hands regardless of a pandemic.

- Signage and instruction for appropriate handwashing protocols will be provided and reviewed with all students.
- All signs will be placed throughout the school, classrooms, and bathrooms.

- Visual alerts regarding respiratory etiquette will be:
 - Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
 - Use the nearest waste receptacle to dispose of the tissue after use.
 - Reminders to wash your hands throughout the day.
- Hand Sanitizer will be available in all classrooms, at the front entrance of the building, recess exit/entrance, Schaare Wing entrance, front side entrance, cafeteria, gym, bathrooms, and designated spots throughout the hallways.
- Wipes will be available for students in every classroom.
- Clear and visible signs indicating social distancing, hygiene practices, and traffic flow will be visible throughout the school building in various areas at a height appropriate to the students in that grade level. **(No Longer Needed)**

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

- The district has developed a schedule to ensure extra cleaning and disinfecting throughout the school.
- The extra custodial staff has been hired to help clean the building throughout the school day.
- All cleaning products are used according to the directions on the label.

Classrooms:

- Classrooms will be cleaned and disinfected daily utilizing electrostatic sprayers.
- Classrooms will be supplied with disinfecting wipes (EPA-approved) for intermittent cleaning by the staff of commonly touched areas.
- Custodians will utilize electrostatic sprayers to clean all student and teacher desks, door handles, handrails, light switches, computers, keyboards, tables, and seating areas.

Restrooms:

- Bathrooms will be cleaned regularly, consistent with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guidelines.
- Bathrooms will be disinfected at a minimum daily using the electrostatic sprayer. This frequency will be adjusted with the use of a given bathroom facility.
- BES will have all student hallway bathroom doors propped open to limit personal contact.
- Water bottles will be used instead of water fountains. Students are encouraged to bring their daily water supply, but the district will maintain a small reserve of water bottles on hand for any student who may forget their own.

Ventilation:

- All units are checked once a month and serviced when needed.
- Air filters are changed every three months using the recommended MERV.
- The units are equipped with exhaust fans with a fresh air intake.
- Windows are open throughout the building when the weather allows.

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

- Regarding quarantine during an outbreak or exposure to COVID-19, the contact tracing team at BES will notify all individuals deemed close contacts of a positive or presumptive positive individual of the need to quarantine, following current timeframes set forth by local and state health departments.
- A list of close contacts will be submitted to the local health department for follow-up with county contact tracing as needed.
- The nurse will work closely with local contact tracers and the health department to ascertain when readmittance to the school of affected individuals is appropriate.
- A positive individual in school will be taken to a designated isolation room to await pick up. Universal precautions will be utilized.
- Rooms and areas affected by the positive individual or individuals will be cleaned and disinfected following current guidelines by NJDOH in Public Health Recommendations for the Local Health Department for K-12 Schools.
- The weekly report is submitted to CDRSS by the nurse regarding positive cases of staff and students at BES.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing

- Diagnostic testing for Covid-19 will not be done in the district.
- The school nurse will make symptom screening and recommendations for testing.
- The most current New Jersey Department of Health guidelines will be followed.

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

- BES will not provide on-site vaccination for COVID-19.
- Resources regarding the vaccination have been forwarded to the staff.

H. Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities concerning the health and safety policies:

- Routines and support are in place to assist students with hand washing and using hand sanitizers.
- Direct instruction in social distancing and personal cleanliness and wellness is provided daily.
- Social Stories regarding health and safety policies are presented to the children.
- Adult and peer modeling of mask-wearing, social distancing sanitization methods.
- Positive reinforcers (i.e., praise, behavior charts, parent contact).
- If NJDOH recommends, Students will receive individual materials, resources, and toys/manipulatives during school.
- Any common-use areas will be sanitized between student usage.
- A plexiglass barrier or face shield will be utilized when adults are closer than 3 feet in distance when working with a student.

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 Blairstown School District will continue to implement interventions that will ensure continuity of service, including services that address students' academic needs and students' and staff's social, emotional, mental health, and other needs. Students will return to five full days starting September 7th, 2021.

The district will be utilizing our Linkit! benchmarks, and Acadience reading levels to determine starting points for students at the start of the school year. Beginning in September, the district will incorporate an RtI intervention period in our daily schedule for all students. This will assist in building students' skills on an individual basis.

Staff will be provided professional development in diagnosing writing and reading data and developing strategies to support student learning. Professional development will also be provided in Tier I RtI strategies and social-emotional learning, including the Character Strong curriculum. Our students will have access to counseling with our guidance counselor throughout the year. The district will create a student and teacher culture and climate team to enhance our SEL program.

Through the SSO program, students will have access to free lunch until June 30, 2022.

3. Public Comment

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

The Blairstown Elementary School will post this plan on our website once approved by the Blairstown BOE.

B. Describe how the LEA ensured that the plan is in an understandable and uniform format; is to the extent practicable to write 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)

This plan is designed to be user-friendly and accurately describe, in plain language, the measures that will be taken for a safe reopening in September 2021. Many of these practices have been in place since September 2020, when the district re-opened for in-person learning. Translations can be made available in any language using Google Translate, and an individual with a disability can be provided with appropriate accommodations such as read-aloud technology, etc.

We have returned to normal as these mandates and recommendations are no longer in place.

ESSER III Funds:

On March 16, 2020, school districts across the state were closed due to COVID-19. Many believed that school districts would only be shut down for two weeks until they returned safely. Unfortunately, schools did not open for the remainder of the school year. The 2020-2021 school year was a challenge as well. Students were offered a rotating hybrid schedule or a virtual option. At most, students were in school for two half-days. In December, the district shut down, going virtual until January 19th, 2021. Upon their return, students returned to a hybrid schedule. In March, students could return for four

half-days a week; in April, students returned for five half-days until the remainder of the school year. In the 2021-2022 school year, students have returned to school for five full days but with restrictions regarding physical distancing and wearing a mask.

The educational process has been disrupted for three consecutive years. Students have not had a normal school year since the 2018-2019 school year. The pandemic has caused learning loss and social and emotional effects on our students. The school lockdowns that started in the spring of 2020 reduced instructional and learning time, which is known to impede student performance, with disparate impacts on different groups of students. Students struggled with online learning, not fully receiving the appropriate education. Also, the pandemic has caused social isolation as students were limited with whom they had contact. Students missed essential social time with their peers in school. This has had an effect on the behaviors and the emotional state of our students. In short, the pandemic has caused havoc in all educational areas.

The district will be utilizing the ESSER III funds for the following:

Learning Loss:

The district has worked IDE regarding Tier 1 interventions in the classroom and differentiated instruction.

All grades will work with Teach 2 Teach to enhance Tier 1 interventions and differentiation within the classroom.

- The trainer will work with the RtI team and teachers.
- The trainer will provide the necessary interventions and methods of utilizing data to provide essential instruction.
- Teachers will work with the trainer for the school year.

The district will continue to work with Jennifer Seravallo and her reading strategies. The program utilizes readers/writers workshop focusing on improving and enhancing reading comprehension.

- The trainer will work with teachers throughout the school year.
- The trainer will visit on-site, observe teacher classrooms, and provide meaningful feedback to enhance teacher pedagogy.
- Grade-level meetings to review the curriculum unit to be taught and then to review assessment data.

Mental Health:

The district will work with motivational speaker Steve Bollar, Stand Tall Steve. Steve will work with staff and students to improve the climate and culture. Also, the district incorporated Characterstrong.

- Continuation of our student and climate and culture team.
- We are working with the Character Strong curriculum within morning meetings.

- Staff will work with trainers throughout the year with a focus on SEL for students and staff.