



STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**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.

### **Hillsdale Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services**

**LEA Name: Hillsdale Public Schools**

**Date: 06/15/2021**

**Date Revised: 12/13/2021**

## **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:**

Masks must be worn by students and staff while indoors covering the mouth and nose. Masks may be removed during designated eating times; during these times students must be as physically distant as possible. During times of extreme heat inside a school building the mask requirement will be relaxed. Masks may be removed while outdoors, when engaged in high intensity physical activity and during times of extreme heat. Reasonable accommodations will be provided for individuals that the CDC identifies as having a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19, including individuals with disabilities or serious underlying medical conditions, which may include: chronic lung disease or asthma (mod-sev); serious heart conditions; immunocompromised; severe obesity; diabetes; kidney disease undergoing dialysis; liver disease; medically fragile students with IEPs; students with complex disabilities with IEPs; or students who require accommodations under a 504 plan. Mask guidance will be monitored.

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

All district rooms and facilities will comply with physical distancing guidance to the maximum extent practicable. Student desks will be approximately three feet apart when possible. The District will not employ cohorts or podding. It is the District's intention to operate at full capacity for the remainder of the 2021-2022 academic school year.

### **C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette:**

Each grade level will have a designated schedule for hand-washing or hand sanitizing. Students and staff will have the opportunity to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer: upon entering any room; prior to and after eating lunch/snacks, after recess when applicable, after physical education, after using the bathroom, after sneezing, wiping, or blowing noses, prior to and after using any shared equipment/supplies. Sinks for handwashing are present in many of our elementary school classrooms and student lavatory facilities. These areas will be cleaned frequently and have an adequate supply of soap and paper towels for daily use. Middle school classrooms are not equipped with sinks. Hand sanitizer will be available in each classroom to allow for use as individuals enter and exit a

classroom. Proper handwashing hygiene will be monitored by staff to the maximum extent possible. Students and staff will be taught best practices for respiratory etiquette.

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

All indoor facilities will have adequate ventilation, including operational heating and ventilation systems where appropriate. Recirculated air will have a fresh air component, windows will be opened, when temperature permits. Air conditioning is provided in all classrooms and filter(s) for A/C units will be maintained and changed according to manufacturer recommendations. Bi-polar ionization systems have been installed in classrooms, office spaces and multi-use rooms across the district. Indoor doors (classrooms, stairwells) will be left open for ventilation. The district will routinely clean high surface touch areas including door knobs, light switches, sink handles, etc. All classrooms will be equipped with disinfectant and disposable wipes to allow teachers to sanitize keyboards, desks, remotes, and any shared materials. All lunch tables will be sanitized in between lunch periods. All cleaning products must be approved according to the EPA's website.

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

The Hillsdale Public Schools adopted a policy regarding contact tracing in schools that was developed in consultation with the local health department and school nurses. Our policy outlines the procedures in notifying the local health department, families, and staff of positive COVID-19 cases, while adhering to all applicable federal and state requirements regarding privacy of educational records. The Hillsdale Public Health Nurse with our school nurses contact those identified as close contacts to recommend next steps and self-quarantining. Contact tracers have completed three hours of training provided through John Hopkins University's Contact Tracing Course. When we become aware of a positive case, district officials will immediately notify local health officials, staff, and families of the confirmed case, while maintaining confidentiality.

**F. Diagnostic and screening testing:**

Based on recommended New Jersey Department of Health guidance, students and staff will be required to complete a health attestation form at the beginning of each academic trimester to ensure self-monitoring of fever, symptoms, and/or COVID-19 exposure. If an individual with symptoms related to COVID-19 presents at school, he/she will be isolated in a specified area of the

school. Students will remain in this location until a guardian can pick them up. Individuals fully vaccinated may be exempt from diagnostic and screening testing. Additionally, staff members that remain unvaccinated will be required to be tested for COVID-19 weekly.

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

Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, staff and students will continue to progress in a similar fashion to the experience during the 2020-2021 school year. Vaccine opportunities as shared by the Bergen County Superintendent, local public health official or other public health entity will be swiftly communicated to all stakeholders. The District will provide time for staff members and students to receive the initial vaccine doses with no financial or fringe benefit penalty.

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

Any District used screening policy/protocol will take into account students with disabilities and the accommodations that may be needed in the screening process for those students. It is also necessary to acknowledge that enforcing the use of face coverings may be impractical for young children or individuals with disabilities. Accommodations for students who are unable to wear a face covering will be addressed according to that student's need, medical documentation and/or input from the District's Child Study Team 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.**

The Hillsdale Public Schools will support students' social, emotional and mental health wellness through the incorporation of mindfulness activities and daily social-emotional activities in an age appropriate fashion. We will also continue to utilize a multi-tiered system of support for students to offer educators and families a mechanism to identify individuals who need extra support. The District has partnered with a psychologist from Columbia University for the upcoming school year to address the social, emotional, and mental health needs of our students and staff. In addition, the District may implement a screening tool to assist the counselors in monitoring students' social emotional needs. To help meet the needs of students, an additional school psychologist is on staff to help support the

social emotional needs of children. We will also provide additional small group instruction services to students to support their learning acceleration based on a multi-tiered system approach.

### **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.**

The Hillsdale Public Schools values transparency and input from the community. The Hillsdale Public Schools sought comment at its December 13, 2021 Board of Education meeting. The Hillsdale Public Schools received no comments regarding the Safe Return 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 Hillsdale Public Schools will publish the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Service Plan to the District website. The plan will be written in English. Parents that have limited English proficiency can contact the District's administrative office for an oral translation in English or a translation in an alternate language. Upon request, a parent who is an individual with a disability as defined by the ADA, will be provided an alternative format of the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan based upon the individual's specific circumstance.