



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: North Star Academy (District: 7320)

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 06/07/2021

Date Revised (mm/dd/yyyy): 06/12/2024, 12/04/2023, 06/01/2023, 12/12/2022, 06/30/2022, 01/15/2022, 09/20/2021

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.

Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

A. Non-Negotiable

- All students required to sanitize/wash hands frequently throughout the day
- Display clear and prominent hygiene signage (hand wash signs, hygiene station, etc.)
- Hand sanitizer and hygiene stations are available and frequently re-stocked for all students and staff in all classrooms, offices and common spaces.

B. Flexible Implementation

- Sanitizing protocols are implemented after each time a space is used (including classrooms and common spaces)

Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

A. Non-Negotiable

- a. Facilities
 - i. Improve ventilation to the extent possible to increase circulation of outdoor air
 - ii. Ensure all HVAC systems are maintained and operating at manufacturer's specifications
 - iii. Adjust physical layouts in classrooms and other settings to maximize physical space
- b. Cleaning
 - i. Regularly clean frequently touched surfaces, such as door handles, sink handles, and toilets
 - ii. Limit the sharing of resources for staff and students, whenever possible, or provide sanitization supplies and instructions when equipment is shared

B. Flexible Implementation

- a. Prohibit use of spaces without adequate ventilation, either via HVAC or windows/doors
- b. Ensure that windows and doors are open whenever possible and use fans to circulate outside air into the building
- c. Confirm all HVAC units are properly maintained, and filters are cleaned/changed according to manufacturer's specifications
- d. Limit communal use of shared spaces

Managing Positive Cases of Covid-19 in the school community

A. Non-Negotiable

- a. Consistent and clear school-based procedures for managing staff and students who have a positive diagnosis of COVID-19, symptoms or exposure. These procedures should be based on and in line with North Star's policies outlined in the HR Library, including Stay Home, Return to Work, Travel, Exposure, Vaccination, etc.

B. Flexible Implementation

- a. Restrict all non-essential visitors to the building as per North Star policy

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

All employees are strongly encouraged to be fully vaccinated. Our schools are dedicated to supporting our communities and families by providing easy access to the vaccine. Consistently throughout the pandemic, our schools have partnered with local

health experts to host virtual town hall sessions to share information about the vaccine and answer questions from staff, students, and families. Once educators became eligible for the vaccine, we hosted events to vaccinate more than half of our teachers and staff. We also shared resources in weekly newsletters to support staff in finding and reserving vaccine appointments. Now that the vaccine is available to all individuals, we will continue vaccination efforts to support our school community with equitable access to the vaccine. Most importantly, all North Star Academy employees are required to be fully vaccinated, or in the rare case of an approved exemption to complete and submit weekly testing.

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

Students with disabilities will be required to wear face coverings; however, there may be an exception if a student's medical condition or disability precludes the use of a face covering. North Star will work compassionately and collaboratively with the child, family, and teachers to provide inclusive options in consideration of a child's disability to support in person learning with accommodations in reflection of a child's Individual Education Program (IEP), and Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) 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 should provide documentation from the child's healthcare provider to the student's case manager or school principal.

Flexible Implementation: Immunocompromised/ Medically Fragile Students

For any students that have increased risk associated with COVID-19, schools should create individualized plans to support them. Individualized plans should consider, but not be limited to the following support strategies:

- Additional preventative measures:
 - Preferential seating in classroom (close to door/window, nearest to air vent for circulation, etc.)
 - Supplemental sanitizing of desk and chair
 - Extra opportunities to wash/sanitize hands
 - Phone calls to monitor and educate family on hand hygiene, etc.
- Additional symptom monitoring:
 - Temperature monitoring throughout the day (past arrival)
 - Daily check-ins with Nurse for observation
- Alternate arrival/dismissal location(s)/time(s) to avoid crowds

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)

North Star will ensure the continuity of high-quality student learning by being responsive to students' and staff's needs including health and safety, mental health, and access to food and technology. All schools will use a social and emotional learning (SEL) curriculum. North Star has developed lessons for each grade span that explore physical, social, and emotional wellness. The objective is to provide students with safe spaces to explore their emotions during these challenging times and take care of their whole selves, including the following efforts:

1. Summer School
2. Social and Emotional Supports
3. Systems for Wellness Service Referrals

School staff have access to a variety of mental health resources. One no-cost resource is the Employee Assistance Program. The program provides staff and family members with confidential assistance to support a variety of needs and concerns, including emotional health and well-being, substance abuse, relationship problems, etc.

3. Public Comment

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

At North Star, we believe that seeking input from diverse stakeholders is essential as we develop plans that are responsive to the needs of students, families, and educators. At regularly intervals through the year, we [survey](#) school community stakeholders through a robust series of questions to solicit their input into how they believe we can enhance our schools with these funds. Once we receive input, organizational and school leaders will review the findings and determine the best way to use these funds to support our students and larger school community.

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)

Our plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services and accompanying public comment are translated into the most common non-English speaking languages of our families, namely Spanish. Copies of the plan are available in print form or with oral translation upon request.

C. Professional Plan

Our Health & Safety Team is focused on creating joyful and safe environments for students, families, and staff as we prepare to return to full in-person learning this fall. We have convened a series of trainings with all schools to communicate our existing health and safety policies and support with instructional and operational planning. We plan to conduct additional trainings this summer prior to the start of school to share any revised policies as CDC, state, and local guidance continue to evolve. We also communicated key re-opening information to families prior to the end of the 2020-21 school year via email updates. Over the summer, we plan to have additional conversations with families to ensure that they feel confident and prepared to send their child back to school this fall.

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Plan for Use of ESSER Funds

LEA Name: North Star Academy

Date: 12/22/2021

12/22/2022, 06/30/2022, 01/15/2022, 9/21/21

Date Revised (if applicable): 06/12/24, 04/10/24, 12/04/2023, 06/01/2023,

North Star Academy (NSA) plans to use ESSER funding to work in new and innovative ways to support core instructional and operational priorities, namely addressing learning loss and safely returning to in-person instruction for school years 2020-21 – 2024-25. Funds will support one-time investments in expanded summer school programming that will focus on closing COVID-related learning gaps in literacy and math, rewriting curriculum to implement evidence-based strategies for social emotional learning and academic achievement, and providing additional professional development for all staff around these initiatives. There will also be continued investment into educational technology, remaining committed to providing 1:1 Chromebooks for students with access to related online learning platforms while ensuring continuity of services to students in school or at home as required. Funds will also be used to provide PPE for all staff and students, perform surveillance testing, and test and upgrade our facilities' ventilation, as necessary.

Please see completed [ARP ESSER Application](#) and [Current Amendment](#) for additional details on the current Use of Funds plan.