



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: Verona Public Schools

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 06/2/21

Date Revised (mm/dd/yyyy): 6/22/21

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: Verona Public Schools (VPS) will continue to require staff and students to wear masks while on school grounds. VPS will follow the CDC and NJDOH recommendations as we have during the 2020-21 school year.

In our updated BOE approved 2021-22 Restart and Recovery Plan:

- **(page 50): Use of Face Masks and Desk Shields**
 - (1) All school staff, students and visitors will be required to wear face coverings inside school buildings unless doing so would inhibit the individual's health. (2) Desk shields and/or plexiglass will be utilized in all offices.
- **(page 55): Protocols for Face Covering:**
 - (1) All students and staff must wear face coverings unless doing so would inhibit their health..
 - (2) Visitors will wear masks at all times unless they are under 2 years old or it is a health concern for the visitor. The amount of visitors allowed entry into the building will be drastically reduced.
 - (3) Signs will be posted throughout the building requiring all its occupants to wear a face covering/mask.
- **Section of Fall 2020 Restart and Recovery Plan**
 - A.1.a.(1)(d); A.1.b.(2) & (3); A.1.c.(1) & (2); A.1.d.(2); A.1.e.(4) ;(5);(6); & (7)
- **Applicable Appendices of Fall 2020 Restart and Recovery Plan**
 - A, B, C, D, E

B. Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding): VPS will require **at least 3 feet of physical distancing between students** and **at least 6 feet of physical distancing between staff members and students**. VPS will follow the CDC and NJDOH recommendations as we have during the 2020-21 school year. VPS will have full-day, in-person daily learning for all students, pre-K to 12, for the 2021-22 school year.

In our updated BOE approved 2021-22 Restart and Recovery Plan:

- **(page 49): Physical Distancing in Instructional and Non-Instructional Rooms**
 - Guidelines
 - Class Sizes and Arrangement of Desks
 - In order to maintain social distancing, desks will be arranged in a manner whereby each student will be **at least 3 feet away** from each of their peers when sitting in their seats. Staff will maintain **at least 6 feet** of physical distancing between themselves and students.
- **(page 52): Physical Distancing on School Buses**
 - The Verona Public Schools have equipped their district busses with the appropriate recommended soft shields. The soft shield is a removable barrier used in between seats to help protect against the spread of airborne germs and diseases. The soft shield guard provides physical separation between seats.
 - The Verona Public schools, for athletic buses, will also require students to be one person per seat and for masks to be worn. Additionally the driver compartment will be shielded with a soft shield to provide a safe barrier between the driver and student-athletes.
- **Section of Fall 2020 Restart and Recovery Plan**
 - A.1.b.(1); (2); (3); & (4); A.1.d.(2) & (3); A.1.e.(2)(a) & (c)(iv); A.1.h.(1)(a) & (d); A.1.i.(1)(b) & (3); A.1.j.(1)
- **Applicable Appendices of Fall 2020 Restart and Recovery Plan**
 - B, D, E, H, I, J

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette: VPS will continue to require staff and students to sanitize hands upon entrance to its schools as well as require masking while indoors.

In our updated BOE approved 2021-22 Restart and Recovery Plan:

- **(page 50): Procedures for Hand Sanitizing/Washing**
 - Wash hands frequently (e.g., before and after meals, after coming inside, after sneezing, blowing your nose, or coughing) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
 - Avoid touching your face.
 - Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue and throw the tissue away immediately.
 - Provide easy access to soap and warm water for handwashing for all children and staff.
 - Except for when eating, preparing, or serving food, hand-sanitizing products with at least 60% alcohol may be used as an alternative method to handwashing. Hand-sanitizing products will be located:

- In each classroom
- At entrances and exits of buildings
- Near lunchrooms and bathrooms
- Children five years of age and younger will be supervised when using hand sanitizer
- For classrooms that have existing handwashing stations, stations will have soap, water, and alcohol-based sanitizers (with at least 60% alcohol).
- **Section of Fall 2020 Restart and Recovery Plan**
 - A.1.a.(1)(d); A.1.b.(7) & (8); A.1.h.(1)(e); A.1.i.(1)(d); A.1.j.(1)
- **Applicable Appendices of Fall 2020 Restart and Recovery Plan**
 - A, B, H, I, J

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation: Verona Public Schools will have new ventilation systems installed in each of its schools by the end of the summer 2021.

In our updated BOE approved 2021-22 Restart and Recovery Plan:

- **(pages 59 and 60) Facilities Cleaning Practices**

The district has developed a schedule for increased, routine cleaning and disinfection as outlined in the district's policy.

1. A schedule for routinely cleaned and disinfected surfaces and objects that are frequently touched. This may include cleaning objects/surfaces not ordinarily cleaned daily such as doorknobs, light switches, classroom sink handles, countertops has been developed.
2. Use all cleaning products according to the directions on the label. For disinfection most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective. A list of products that are EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 is available on the EPA's website. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.)

Examples of frequently touched areas in schools:

- Classroom desks and chairs
- Lunchroom tables and chairs
- Door handles and push plates
- Handrails
- Kitchens and bathrooms
- Light switches
- Handles on equipment (e.g. athletic equipment)
- Buttons on vending machines and elevators
- Shared telephones
- Shared desktops

- Shared computer keyboards and mice
 - Drinking fountains
 - Sanitize bathrooms daily, or between use as much as possible, using protocols outlined by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
3. To limit crowds in the bathroom the district will limit the number of students who can enter the bathrooms to no more than three students.
 4. The district will have all bathroom doors propped open to limit contact
 5. The drinking fountains will be turned off and the schools will encourage staff and students to bring in their own bottled water.
 6. Hand sanitizer will be made available at the entrance to each building as in each classroom, bathroom and office. There will also be hand sanitizers found throughout the hallways.
 7. Schedule for routine cleaning and disinfecting of furniture will continue on a daily basis.
 8. EPA approved disposable wipes will be available to all staff to clean commonly used surfaces such as keyboards, desks, and remote controls before use.
 9. The district will ensure adequate supplies to support cleaning and disinfection practices.
 10. After a person has been confirmed as COVID-19 positive:
 - a. The building will be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized
 - b. The areas where the affected person was will be closed and 24 hours later cleaned and sanitized
 - c. Windows and outside doors will be opened to increase air circulation
 11. Where deemed necessary, additional training will be provided to the custodial staff.
- **Section of Fall 2020 Restart and Recovery Plan**
 - A.1.c.(3), A.1.g.A.1.h.(1)(a) & ©, A.1.i.(1)(e) & (g)(i), A.1.i.(2) , A.1.i.(3)
 - **Applicable Appendices of Fall 2020 Restart and Recovery Plan**
 - C, G, H, I

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

In our updated BOE approved 2021-22 Restart and Recovery Plan:

(pages 56 and 57):

- **Investigation:** The Montclair Public Health Department is contracted to provide public health services for Verona Township. Upon confirmation of a COVID diagnosis, the district nurses will work in conjunction with the Montclair Public Health Department to work with a patient (student or staff) to help them recall everyone with whom they have had close contact during the time when they may have been infectious. Verona will continue to follow CDC and NJDOH guidelines to determine what a close contact is defined as at the time the COVID-19 case is presented.

- **Notification:** The district will first notify the Montclair Public Health Department and the Essex County Education Department about the confirmation of a COVID case. The Montclair Public Health Department and Verona school nurses will then begin contact tracing by notifying exposed individuals (contacts) of their potential exposure as rapidly and sensitively as possible, not revealing the infected patient's identity.
- **Support:** Parents will be provided with education, information, and support to help them understand their risk, what they should do to separate themselves from others who are not exposed, and how to monitor themselves for illness. In addition, they are informed of the possibility that they could spread the infection to others even if they themselves do not feel ill.
- **Quarantine & Isolation:** Isolation refers to those who are already sick while quarantine is for people who are not sick, but may have been exposed.
 - During quarantine, students will become remote-only learning students.
 - During quarantine, staff will teach their students from their residence, if they are able.
 - Students or staff presenting may return to school when written medical clearance is presented.
 - Acceptable clearance includes a negative COVID-19 test or a note from their physician stating that they are not contagious.
- The district will maintain logs in each building of contacts, dates of exposure, isolation and quarantine.
- Verona will follow the latest CDC and NJDOH recommendations regarding quarantine and/or isolation period for staff/students, including close contacts and COVID-19 positive persons.
- **Section of Fall 2020 Restart and Recovery Plan**
 - A.1.e., A.1.f., B.2.g.
- **Applicable Appendices of Fall 2020 Restart and Recovery Plan**
 - E, F, M

F. Diagnostic and screening testing:

In our updated BOE approved 2021-22 Restart and Recovery Plan (**pages 54 and 55**):

- **Screening Procedures for Students and Staff**
 - The Verona School District has adopted a daily screening process policy for students and staff that will be recorded each month. The policy does include accommodations for students with disabilities.
 - The parents/guardians of students and staff will be responsible for completing a monthly form in Genesis that outlines COVID-19 symptoms according to CDC and NJDOH guidance.

Protocols for Symptomatic Students and Staff

Safely and respectfully isolated from others.

- Students/staff who are exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms will be escorted to the designated area of isolation.
- The school nurse will use a hand-held non-contact digital temperature scanner and record the student's temperature. The nurse will also check and record for other symptoms of COVID-19 or other illness ([see form](#)).
- If the school nurse confirms the symptoms to be COVID-19 or another illness, the school nurse will contact the student's parents/guardians to pick up their child.
 - If, after a reasonable amount of time and attempts are made to reach a child's parent/guardian, the school will call an ambulance to bring the student to the hospital.
 - **Parents/guardians: Please update your child's emergency contact information in Genesis prior to the start of school (including a local emergency contact, if possible).**
- If the school nurse confirms that a staff member has symptoms of COVID-19 or another illness, the school nurse will contact the building principal and a substitute or teacher coverage will be provided to cover the teacher's remaining classes for the day.
- Students or staff presenting significant symptoms will be sent home immediately from the building and may not return to school until a written medical clearance is presented.
 - Acceptable clearance includes a negative COVID-19 test or a note from their physician stating that they are not contagious.
- If the district becomes aware that an individual has spent time in the building and tests positive for COVID-19, the district will immediately notify the Montclair Public Health Department and County Department of Education and the family of the confirmed case while maintaining confidentiality.
- Contact Tracing procedures will begin (see appendix F).

Protocols for Immunized Staff/Students

- Immunized/Vaccinated Staff/Students will follow all COVID-19 guidelines provided by the CDC, NJDOH, and Montclair Board of Health.

- **Section of Fall 2020 Restart and Recovery Plan**
 - A.1.d.(1), A.1.e.
- **Applicable Appendices of Fall 2020 Restart and Recovery Plan**
 - D, E

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

- **Educator/Staff Vaccinations**
 - The Verona Public Schools partnered with Vanguard Medical Group in Verona for an employee vaccination program to vaccinate our faculty and staff.
- **Student Vaccinations**

- The Verona Public Schools District has once again partnered with Vanguard Medical Group in the collective effort of providing vaccination opportunities for our students. Please click the following [link](#) to learn more and sign up for your child's vaccination if they are at least 12 years old.

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

In our updated BOE approved 2021-22 Restart and Recovery Plan:

- In addition to Section D:1:C(1-6) (page 39) students with disabilities will meet the same requirements as the LRE. Students with disabilities that can not meet these requirements based upon their disability will have plans created by the IEP team to best meet the students needs in their educational environment. In addition, staff will be trained by the school nurse, on appropriate PPE equipment to be used depending on students' profile.
- Maintain Special Education and ESL Services as per Restart and Recovery Plan pages 66 and 67.
 - **Special Education and ESL Services**
 - The Verona School District will continue to meet our obligations to students with disabilities and or ESL students to the greatest extent possible. The district will have:
 - Procedures to address the return to school of medically fragile students and students with physical or health impairments who may require accommodations and modifications as part of an IEP or 504.
 - IEP teams review student data/progress to determine whether critical skills were lost during the 19-20 school closure.
 - IEP teams consider the impact of missing services on student progress and determine if additional services are needed.
 - IEP teams develop a procedure to complete overdue and/or incomplete evaluations to determine eligibility for special education services
 - Clear communication to parents/guardians for the procedures for student referrals and evaluations to determine eligibility for special education and related services or a 504 plan.
 - ESL screening will occur for all incoming identified students
 - ESL services will be provided as dictated by the students program.
 - **Section of Fall 2020 Restart and Recovery Plan**
 - A.1.a.(1)(e), A.1.b.(2)(a), A.1.c.(1) & (2), A.1.e.(1)(d), A.1.e.(5), A.1.e.(6)(d), A.2., B.1.d.
 - **Applicable Appendices of Fall 2020 Restart and Recovery Plan**
 - A, B, C, E, K, L

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)

In our updated BOE approved 2021-22 Restart and Recovery Plan

- In addition to Appendix K -Academic, Social, and Behavioral Supports (page 66), the district will continue to support our staff's and students' social-emotional needs while also making sure they receive mental health support in order to be successful in their learning environment. These services consist of third party service providers and district specialists who will give direct and indirect services for students and staff, in addition to the already existing partnerships with outside mental health specialists to support student referrals. This will also include staff/community professional development and specialized certification programs for school based mental health specialists.

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 Verona Public Schools created three committees that consisted of staff, parents, supervisors, building administrators, central office directors, superintendent of schools for the elementary, middle, and high school.
- Meetings were held in the fall 2020 and winter 2021. The feedback learned during those meetings allowed building principals and supervisors to make adjustments with instruction, technology, and the structure of teacher and student scheduling.
- During the winter and spring of 2021, the staff, supervisors, building administrators, central office directors, and superintendent of schools met many times to continue working on making adjustments to the building schedules and protocols for all three levels of schooling.
- The district created a [letter](#) in June seeking any additional feedback for the upcoming 2021-22 school year from the public.
- The district gleaned the feedback from above to present a plan for the “Safe Reopening Plan” for the 2021-22 school year.

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 Verona Public School district will provide parents the “Safe Reopening Plan” in a written language that is understandable, especially if they are limited English proficient using Google Translator. In addition, the district will provide an alternative format accessible to a parent or guardian who is an individual with disabilities as defined by ADA.