



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: Thomas Edison EnergySmart Charter School

Date: 8/25/2021

Date Revised: 9/15/2021

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

- All students and staff will be required to wear a mask/face covering inside the school building and on school buses, regardless of vaccination status. When outdoors, students and staff must wear face covering when social distancing isn't possible. There will be limited exceptions while eating, drinking and extreme heat situations where administration has determined it is a hinderance to student/staff health.
- Exceptions may be made for both students and staff for medically documented reasons.
- Masks, shields or other protective devices will be worn by staff and volunteers at all times, except during specific "mask breaks" as scheduled

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

- To provide the greatest degree of social/physical distancing and safety protocols, teachers will adhere to the following classroom guidelines:
 - To the greatest degree possible, students' desks will be separated and social distancing will be maintained in the classroom.
 - Physical plexiglass barriers have been installed in the student cafeteria, as well as classrooms where students have desks that require them to be side-by-side with no distancing.
 - Flexible seating arrangements such as groups, clusters and pods will be eliminated as much as possible.
 - Limit sharing of supplies, books, toys, that is feasible
 - Any sharing requires disinfecting prior to passing from one student to another.
- Hand sanitizer will be available in each classroom.
- There will be increased opportunities as possible for students to go outside

- In elementary school only, significant efforts will be made to keep students grouped by class and not mix or commingle students from different classes.
- Student locker usage will be monitored and controlled by classroom teachers to reduce the number of students at the same time in the hallways.
- Additionally, signage will be used to create one-way directional walk patterns in some areas of buildings.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

- Signage will be placed throughout the school to remind students of personal hygiene (hand washing, coughing into arm, etc.) and social/physical distancing from others.
- The school nurse will periodically deliver information to students on the importance of hygiene and hand washing, and safety protocols when it comes to stopping the spread of illness.

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

- Heightened cleaning practices have been put in place by all staff in order to maintain the cleanliness of surfaces and frequently touched areas throughout the building.
- Disinfectant sprayers are used in common areas, such as the school playground.
- The school has installed an open-air ventilation system, which circulates fresh air from outdoors, thus limiting the spread of airborne particles that may be infectious.

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

- Individuals within close contact to another person in their classroom or office who show COVID-19 related symptoms may also be required to self-quarantine for at least 14 calendar days or until one can produce a negative COVID-19 test. This will be a precautionary decision, and parents/guardians will be notified. We will not be able to release confidential information; only that contact was made with someone with symptoms.
- Any student or staff member who has contact with a person with a positive COVID-19 test, whether at school or at another location, will need to follow the NJ Dept.of Health guidelines for self-quarantine requirements. Contact tracing will be initiated by NJ Dept.of Health, and parents/guardians will be notified.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing

- Parents and guardians, along with faculty and staff, will be required to self-monitor to determine if they have any symptoms compatible with COVID-19. If symptoms are identified, students, faculty and staff are to follow the guidelines listed under Section E and following the guidance provided.
- Unvaccinated staff will need to be tested per protocol under the executive order.

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

- The school has provided the staff with vaccination information at local centers and worked with our county office to provide access to those still in need of a vaccination. The district will continue to provide staff with the latest health information.

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

- Students with significant health concerns receive accommodations per their individual education plan which takes into consideration the medical needs of the student. Health protocol and any devices required will be provided to the student in order for the student to remain in school while adhering to the medical needs identified.

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)

TEECS is providing 5 days of in person academic instruction for the school year 2021- 2022. There will be no synchronous remote instruction. Asynchronous instruction will be available for students who need to quarantine. TEECS does not have any student who does not have access to internet connection from home. Quarantined students in remote learning are required to follow their full daily schedule, 8 hours, Monday through Friday. TEECS has instituted the program Peekapak for students social, emotional, and mental health. It is a blended learning program designed to help students demonstrate and practice SEL skills while strengthening academic performance around literacy skills. The topics covered in Peekapak's program include self-regulation, respect, gratitude, kindness, honesty, and optimism. Read alouds feature original stories for every unit that correspond with the unit's social emotional learning concept. Communication & Inquiry-based learning activities are designed so students can collaborate with others to achieve a common goal, which helps strengthen a child's communication skills. Peekapak also supports teachers and staff with respect to their Social emotional Wellness. Peekapak provides staff with 15 mins activities once a month to address their needs. Students are encouraged to use access to free lunch and breakfast during the school day. Quarantined students will be allowed to pick up pre-packaged meals from the school building.

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)

Thomas Edison EnergySmart Charter School has requested parents and students input in developing the reopening plan. Surveys were sent out to obtain parent input. In the 2020-2021 academic year, we had to constantly change our instructional mode in accordance with the local infection rates as they increased and decreased. At times, we switched from total virtual instruction to hybrid (synchronous) instruction.

TEECs made every attempt to meet the needs of parents and the student community at all times. In the 2021-2022 academic year, as per Executive Order 175 calling for remote learning to be rescinded, TEECS transitioned to provide full-day, in-person instruction, as we were prior to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. Rather than our 4-day Hybrid model from the 2020-21 academic year, TEECS implemented a full day 5 days in-person instruction with an option of remote instruction as needed (quarantine, etc) for the 2021-22 academic year. The safe reopening plan was presented to the board, and was well attended by the board members, school personnel and is open to the public.

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)

Thomas Edison EnergySmart Charter School utilized the template provided by the NJDOE to ensure that the plan is understandable and uniform in format. To the extent practicable, the district will translate the plan into a language understood by parents or orally translate as necessary and appropriate. TEECS website has the capability of google translate which can be translated into any language. An alternative format will be provided should we receive a request by a parent who is an individual with a disability as defined by the ADA.