

# **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.

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

LEA Name: Delaware Township School District

Revision Dates: 6/5/21, 12/22/21, 1/11/22, 4/6/22, 11/28/22, 5/23/23

## **December 22, 2021 Update**

DTS will be mask-optional unless mandated by Governor's Executive order and the board does not consider remote instruction equivalent.

## **April 6, 2022 Update**

As of March 7, 2022, the state mandate requiring in-school universal masking expired. At the expiration of the mandate, masks became optional for all students, staff and visitors and will remain so unless mandated by executive order. Any individual who chooses to do so may still wear masks throughout the day. The information detailed below was written in response to the mandates imposed at the time. In the event the Governor issues additional mandates related to COVID-19, and/or if local data shows an outbreak at Delaware Township School, the guidelines below may be recommended. Only legal mandates will be required.

At the time of this document revision, the state mandate still in effect is:

[Executive Order 253](#)-Instituting Vaccination or Testing Requirement for All Preschool to Grade 12 Personnel and for All State Workers

Section F-6 will be removed and Section E will be removed and replaced with the statement below:

*DTS will report cases of Covid 19 to the Hunterdon County Department of Health, as required by N.J.A.C. 8.57-1.10 and act in accordance with board health and illness policies 5141 and 5141.2.*

The following statement will be added to Section G:

*Unless mandated, DTS will not require vaccination or testing for participation in any extracurricular/athletic activity.*

## **November 28, 2022 Update**

[Executive Order 302](#)- Effective Sept 1, 2022, this EO lifts the requirement that school districts, child care settings, and state contractors maintain a policy requiring their unvaccinated workers undergo routine testing. In addition, this EO lifts the testing requirements put into place for school districts, child care settings, and state contractors via previous executive order numbers 253, 264, and 271, respectively.

Per Executive Order 302, as of 9/1/22, the information detailed below (#1-#3) is no longer applicable. It should be referenced and updated in the event a new state mandate is issued.

## **May 22, 2023 Update**

No changes from the previous update.

updated 11/15/23

**November 15, 2023**

**No changes from the previous update.**

## **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- Our building has been opened to in-school instruction since September 1st, 2020. Students and faculty/staff have been following the CDC guidelines on wearing masks both in the building and outside on the school campus. Faculty/staff have been provided training on health and safety protocols as it relates to face coverings. Students have also been educated on the proper use of face coverings. Communication with parents is regular and frequent.

Safety measures have been taught to students and reinforced during the school day (appropriate hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and wearing a face covering). The district has and will maintain a supply of PPE, including face masks, face shields, desk barriers, protective gowns, and gloves. They have been distributed to students and faculty/staff as needed.

Delaware Township School became mask-optional beginning in March, 2022. In the event that an executive order is mandated, students may remove face coverings while performing aerobic and anaerobic exercises in gym class as long as they can maintain 6 feet of distance from others. Faculty/staff and students will be required to wear face coverings when social distancing of 6 feet cannot be maintained, including in classrooms. All parents and community members will be made aware of the requirements. DTS will continue to follow the guidelines from NJDOH, NJDOE, and the CDC for face coverings in schools.

B. Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)-Classroom: Classrooms have been designed to accommodate the maximum number of students while maintaining three to six foot spacing between assigned student seating. All desks are and will continue to face the same direction. Excess furniture and classroom supplies have been removed to accommodate additional spacing needs.

In the event of a new county or executive order, and a county DOH recommendation, Plexiglas dividers that were erected in September, 2020 can be again replaced as needed between double desks, lab tables, Applied Tech workstations, and computer stations in the computer lab. Teachers will have Plexiglas dividers available for small group tables and teacher desks. The district will continue to monitor the guidance for distancing and adapt as needed.

Outdoor spaces are being used for teaching, lunch, and recess as the weather permits. Students will continue to bring their own classroom supplies, there are no shared classroom materials, until the district receives new guidance.

- Hallways: Hallways will continue to be divided down the middle and appropriate passage on one side of the hallway will be reinforced. Stairwells: Currently, stairwells are designated as one-way only as follows: 1st/2nd grade to 4th grade stairwell – DOWN only, 3rd grade to 5th grade (across

updated 11/15/23

from the elementary art room) – UP only, 3rd grade to 5th grade (end of hallway) – CLOSED to students. Markings and signage have been posted to promote social distancing. As restrictions ease, this may be changed.

- Offices: All administrative assistant desks are equipped with Plexiglas shields. A Plexiglas shield has been placed on the main office counter. Every teacher has the option of keeping a Plexiglas shield on one of their main desks. Every office space will have a hand sanitizer dispenser located near the door to the office.
- Cohorts: Grade levels (of no more than 45) are designated as cohorts for activities and schedules. Grade levels are cohorted together as much as possible, until restrictions are eased by the county DOH or governor's office.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette- Handwashing is encouraged frequently and before eating. Hand sanitizer dispensers are located in hallways and restocked as needed. All classrooms have tissues for student use and restocked as needed. Teachers are encouraged to let their students go to the bathroom to wash their hands after using a tissue to blow their nose. The Health Office suggests everyone wash their hands before they leave the office.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving Ventilation-Facility Cleaning Practices: The district has been and will continue to do its best to ensure the safety and health of all students and faculty/staff by implementing the following practices.

- Maintenance staff will review and receive retraining, as needed, on cleaning and enhanced sanitation practices and safety protocols. Administration, faculty/staff and substitute teachers will receive retraining on cleaning practices and safety protocols, as necessary. Maintenance staff conducts scheduled cleaning of all restrooms (students, staff, and Health Office) daily, with deeper cleaning at the end of the day. High touch areas in the hallways, such as handrails and door knobs are also sanitized on a routine basis throughout the day. Daily logs are kept to certify that these areas have been checked and cleaned. They sanitize classrooms, restrooms, cafeteria and kitchen at the end of the day. Deep cleaning, using enhanced protocols, is conducted periodically or as necessary.
- Implementation of improved sanitation and personal hygiene practices for both students and faculty/staff with the addition of hand sanitizing dispensers in every classroom, office and throughout the building. In areas where hand washing may not be available, sanitizing gel and disinfecting wipes are available, such as but not limited to, all entrances, cafeteria, gym, and all outdoor areas that are used during the school day. DTS has and will continue to maintain a supply of hand sanitizers, soap, and disinfecting wipes as needed. Cafeteria tables/seats will be cleaned and sanitized between lunch periods and cohorts. Implementing safe/social distancing practices through classroom arrangement, cafeteria seating and hallways. Exterior sidewalk areas may be already marked to encourage safe distancing during arrival/dismissal and parent pick up and drop off. If a student or faculty/staff member tests positive and is present in the building, they will be isolated, sent home as quickly as possible without exposure to others, and followed up appropriately by the school nurse. The classroom/area will be closed and sanitized per NJDOE, NJDOH and CDC guidelines.

Due to a recent major upgrade in facilities, we have the ability to bring in outside air throughout the building, up to 100%, through our air handlers and univentilators. The air is filtered through our hospital grade MERV 13 air filters and above hospital grade MERV 15 air filters and then distributed into the rooms. This occurs throughout the building.

E. DTS will report cases of Covid 19 to the Hunterdon County Department of Health, as required by N.J.A.C. 8.57-1.10 and act in accordance with board health and illness policies 5141 and 5141.2.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing- 1) All students, faculty/staff, and substitutes were required to complete a COVID-19 Questionnaire at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year. This questionnaire was updated for the 2021-2022 school year and will only be a requirement for all students, faculty/staff, and substitutes if mandated by the DOH in September. The entire DTS community was educated on the signs and symptoms of the Covid-19 illness. All parents completed a Covid pledge weekly on our electronic documentation system and will continue to do so next year if required by the NJDOH guidelines.

2) Parents are required to closely monitor their children every morning before sending them into the school building. They are required to assure DTS that their child(ren) do not have any of the below signs or symptoms of any illness –

- a) Fever of 100 degrees or greater b) Cough c) Shortness of breath d) Chills e) Repeated shaking with chills f) Muscle pain g) Headache h) Sore throat i) New loss of taste or smell j) Fatigue k) Congestion or runny nose l) Nausea or vomiting m) Diarrhea.
- Parents will be required to notify the school nurse of any travel outside of New Jersey as based on any new NJDOH guidelines in place.

3) Faculty/staff are required daily to assure DTS that they do not have any of the above signs or symptoms upon signing in in the morning.

4) Wellness checks at school: Faculty/staff will visually check students for any symptoms upon arrival at school. Faculty/staff is trained in recognizing the signs and symptoms of COVID-19.

5) Education on signs and symptoms: The district shall post signage throughout the building including, but not limited to, entrances and exits, hallways, cafeteria, gymnasium, classrooms, bathrooms, playgrounds, etc. Communication with parents will be regular and frequent.

G. Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible: The administration, the school nurse, and the Pandemic Response Team will continue to encourage all students and staff to get vaccinated. The school nurse will continue to provide all necessary information in a timely manner regarding local vaccination clinics and other resources for students and staff. The DTS administration will provide staff time off as needed for vaccinations.

Unless mandated, DTS will not require vaccination or testing for participation in any extracurricular/athletic activity.

H. Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies. All students that are medically not able to wear a mask have a documented doctor's note on file at the Health Office. Every effort is made to maintain social distance for unmasked and/or multiple disabled students. Faculty/staff and substitutes are educated on the specific protocols for the multiple disabled classroom.

## **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 fact that we have been in school, in-person, since September 1, 2020 attests to the fact that our adherence to safety protocol has allowed us to deliver instruction in the best form possible to the greatest number of students. We started with a half day/early dismissal schedule for the first two semesters of our trimester school year. In April 2021, we moved to a full day schedule with students eating lunch in school. Therefore, additional data collection and analysis is ongoing to determine that all students' academic needs are being addressed in the classroom, and for any students needing virtual instruction.

New and already established SEL programs are in place, including an expansion of the mental health specialists within the building to meet the mental health needs of the students. SEL curriculum continues to expand into the classrooms to be used and practiced every day with the students. Teachers and staff receive personal wellbeing checks with their administrators and colleagues and professional development to offer ways to de-stress, and stay mentally safe. Lunches and breakfasts will continue to be provided as allowed by state and federal guidelines.

Families will be monitored through the guidance department for families in crisis needing additional outside services or support.

### **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)-

Throughout the school year, the district has surveyed parents, faculty and staff regarding safety protocols, virtual, hybrid and in person instruction preferences, and to obtain data reflecting the community's beliefs and safety comfort levels as instructional opportunities for our students were increased incrementally. In addition, the June 15, 2021 Board meeting specifically designated time to seek public input for the 21-22 Safe Return Plan for any recommendations for amendments needed to our current successful in person practices. Once approved, it will be published on the website with easy access for public comment. A listserv notification will be sent to all Delaware Township School families notifying them of the accessibility on the website. Comments will be directed to the administrators, who will be responsible for replying and any changes that need to be made. Those changes will be made in the public document on the website. As a school district, faculty and school community, we continue to be proud of our well thought out plans to expand classroom instruction and ongoing safe successes this school year as we plan to enhance our successful practices for September 2021.

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)-

This plan is a revision of the original plan submitted in the same fashion in September of 2020, when the school reopened for in person instruction September 1, 2020. It continues to be understandable and

uniform in format. All requests for translation or disability accommodations will be honored and supplied on a timely, case by case basis, one on one as needed.