

Safe Reopening Plan (SRP)

November 28, 2023



Elmwood Park Public Schools

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

District Submission to the NJDOE: November 17, 2022

**Board of Education Approval Dates: June 22, 2021, December 21, 2021, June 28, 2022, November 22, 2022, June 27, 2023,
November 28, 2023**

District Website:

<http://www.elmwoodparkschools.org/>



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.

NJDOE Template: LEA Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services

LEA Name: **Elmwood Park Public Schools**

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): **06.27.2023**

Dates Revised (mm/dd/yyyy): **08/24/2021, 12/21/2021, 6/28/2022, 11/22/2022, 6/27/2023, November 27, 2023**

As of November 2022

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.

***Please see the attached document which outlines the adopted policies following the recommendations established by the CDC.**

A. Universal and correct wearing of masks:

At his final COVID-19 press briefing, Governor Phil Murphy announced the signing of Executive Order No. 292, which lifts the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency in addition to the statewide school and daycare mask mandate, effective on Monday, March 7, 2022.

The Elmwood Park School Schools (EPPS) will continue to follow the mandated orders and recommendations from the Center of Disease Control (CDC) and New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH). Should any changes or additional executive orders be reinstated mandating the wearing of face masks in the indoor premises of all public, elementary, and secondary school buildings the Elmwood Park School District will enforce these guidelines.

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

EPPS eliminated the utilization of cohorts and podding beginning in September 2021. The District facilitated the 2021-2022, and the start of the 2022-2023 school year, in a traditional manner which includes full day instruction and lunch provided daily in each building cafeteria(s). Full compliance will continue to be instituted regarding any and all mandatory guidelines provided by the CDC and NJDOH pertaining to physical distancing indoors or outdoors on district property.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

EPPS will continue to teach and reinforce good hygiene measures such as hand washing, covering coughs, and sneezing and the proper utilization of face coverings. Hand soap will be provided in every bathroom or sink area located in a classroom. Hand sanitizer dispensers were previously installed in each classroom, office, congregated areas, outside of bathrooms, and at each entrance and exits of buildings. The signage that has been placed in classrooms, hallways, and entrances communicating proper handwashing and how to stop the spread of COVID-19 will remain posted until further notice.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

Prior to returning to in-person instruction during the fall of 2020, and once again prior to the start of the 2022-2023 school year, all school buildings were thoroughly inspected to ensure that all ventilation followed the recommended filtration. EPPS also installed air units in the three elementary schools to ensure a climate that is conducive to learning in the warmer months and to provide additional filtered air. Additionally, the district intends to use CRSSA ESSER II and ARP ESSER III funding to maintain, repair and replace HVAC units located district wide over the course of the next two school years. All elementary classrooms and cafeterias within all buildings will continue to be disinfected daily. As of May 2023, each classroom has been equipped with an air purifier.

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

EPPS has abided by the NJDOH/ CDC guidelines regarding the quarantine of students and staff members. The district will continue to require parents to inform the district of any information regarding close contacts, confirmed COVID illness in the home, or traveling to a location that is outside the approved NJDOH's travel restrictions throughout the remainder of the 2023-2024 school year.

District isolation and quarantine protocols, as per previous NJDOH and CDC guidelines, will end in July 2023 for both vaccinated and non-vaccinated individuals..

F. Diagnostic and screening testing

As per the NJDOE and gubernatorial directives, non-vaccinated employees are no longer required to have weekly testing, provided on-site. Any employee who tests positive for COVID-19 will be required to provide adequate evidence to the Superintendent. As per NJDOH guidelines the positive staff member will remain quarantined for the subsequent 5-days, and will be required to mask for the following 5 (work) days. Quarantine days will not be provided for a sick member or close contact of a staff member.

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

EPPS will continue to work closely with the Bergen County Department of Education and NJDOE to provide information to the school community regarding local vaccinations. The district intends to assist with the vaccination of our constituents, in any manner necessary.

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

Students with disabilities will be provided individual and appropriate accommodations with respect to the health and safety policies during the 2023-2024 school year. Should the wearing of face masks be reinstated as per updated guidelines, those students with specific health restrictions will not be required to wear a face mask pending approval from the school Nurse, Principal, and Superintendent of Schools. Also, should the facilitation of related services require accommodations for any qualified student, the district will implement the necessary accommodations and/or modifications. This information will be communicated, if this specific directive is instituted by the Governor, NJDOE, or NJDOH.

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.

EPPS has facilitated the 2023-2024 school year in a traditional learning environment. Students will continue to attend full day, in-person instruction across all grade levels and school buildings. Through the 2022-2023 school year, and continuing through the 2023-2024 school year, the district intends to place a focus on the “unfinished learning” that may have occurred for students during the statewide health emergency. Remediation has been budgeted for all grade levels and content areas, to ensure that staff are compensated for their time in providing additional instruction and academic support to any student who may require it throughout the year. Supplemental instruction is provided for the Middle School (Title I- School Wide) and at the Sixteenth Avenue School (Title I SIA).

Through ESSER funding, a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) will be offered at every level, in every school building during the upcoming school year. Intervention is offered for ELA and Mathematics at the middle school. An additional 45-minutes of instruction for identified middle school students will continue to be provided. In a traditional school day setting, this would take place at the end of the school day in designated classrooms. Students are placed based on previous NJSLA scores, marking period grades, mid-year grades, benchmark grades, and teacher recommendations. Remediation is offered at the elementary levels to assist students who are struggling academically.

As we transition back to traditional in-person learning, EPPS will place a focus on supporting our students through this difficult transition through SEL learning and mental health supports. The district will continue to utilize Move This World, as a district-wide Social, Emotional, Learning (SEL) program. Returning back to a traditional schedule, the district will provide in-person SEL instruction and will utilize various resources, as appropriate by grade level. Additional staff members have been added to assist with student health, including a SAC Coordinator, Psychologist, and a CST member. The District will continue to collaborate with town stakeholders to hold Stigma-Free events. The counseling team provides students opportunities to connect with other students and create peer groups where students can talk to other students about topics outside of school.

Additionally, EPPS will continue to provide a multi-tiered system of support for mental health by first implementing Tier 1 prevention and universal support for all students and families. The District will provide access to resources to self-care, self-help, parent supports, and psychoeducational information. Tier I interventions also utilize a trauma-sensitive and culturally responsive approach to student engagement and support, and conduct planned check-ins with teachers and parents to assist in identifying at-risk students. The District will continue to disseminate information with parents and educators regarding how to identify when a student may be struggling with a mental health issue. For students requiring more intensive support, Tier 2 interventions will be provided to students who are identified as at-risk for mental health and/or substance abuse. The staff (School Psychologists, Social Workers, CST members, and/or school counselors) will provide support for students who are identified as needing assistance. They will also continue to proactively reach out to the care management organization in Bergen County to establish connections to better support families. Finally, for individualized and intensive Tier 3 support will be provided for students who are identified as needing mental health and/or substance abuse interventions. The District will provide students with individualized counseling, monitoring of progress, and therapeutic support through existing programs and current staff. Additionally, the staff will connect students and parents to individual counseling, family therapy, out-patient programs, or addiction services as needed.

Professional development was provided to all staff regarding the implementation of data-driven instruction that is provided with differentiation, appropriate modifications, and aligned assessments. Additionally, staff will be trained in all areas deemed mandated by the NJDOE, physical restraint, and in any other areas pertaining to district initiatives.

In regard to food services, the district will collaborate with our food service program to provide opportunities for the free and reduced students to obtain their meals throughout the remainder of the school year.

A traditional schedule will include the serving of lunches in all school buildings. Although standard operating procedures will resume, preventative safety will continue to be included, as per CDC and NJDOH guidelines.

Activities and training pertaining to staff SEL will be provided throughout the school during PLC sessions, in-service days, or planning days.

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 district sought public comment on the SRP plan by providing a community survey in June 2021. The SRP was also presented to the public at the June 22, 2022 September 28, 2022 October 19, 2022 November 22, 2022, June 27, 2023, November 27, 2023 Board of Education meetings. All feedback was noted and reviewed at district administration meetings and BOE Committee meetings; specific agreed upon information was then added to the plan. The district will re-approve the SRP, with the addition of public feedback at the August 2022, September 2022, October 2022, December 2022, June 2022, November 2022, June 27, 2023, November 27, 2023 BOE Meetings.

The district will re-approve the SRP, with the addition of public feedback at the November 27, 2023 Board of Education Meeting.

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 EPPS SRP has been provided in English, Spanish and Polish. Copies were made available at the June 22, September 28, October 19, November 22, 2022, June 27, 2023, November 28, 2023 Board of Education meetings, and have been placed on the district website. If requests are made for an alternative access to the document, or the information within the document, the district will provide the specific accommodations in any means necessary.

Policies

Listed in the Table below are the mitigation strategies required by Section 1 of the Template and the applicable sections and Appendices of the Fall 2020 Plan where the required mitigation strategies are addressed. A school district may need to update the locally-developed protocols that were included in their Fall 2020 Plan Appendices to adequately respond to the questions in the Template.

Mitigation Strategy	Section of Fall 2020 Plan	Applicable Appendices of Fall 2020 Plan
A. Universal and Correct Wearing of Masks	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)	A B C D E
B. Physical Distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)	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)	B D E H I J
C. Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette	A.1.a.(1)(d) A.1.b.(7) & (8) A.1.h.(1)(e) A.1.i.(1)(d) A.1.j.(1)	A B H I J
D. Cleaning and Maintaining Healthy Facilities, Including Improving Ventilation	A.1.c.(3) A.1.g. A.1.h.(1)(a) & (c) A.1.i.(1)(e) & (g)(i) A.1.i.(2) A.1.i.(3)	C G H I I I
E. Contact Tracing in Combination with Isolation and Quarantine	A.1.e. A.1.f. B.2. g.	E F M
F. Diagnostic and Screening Testing	A.1.d.(1) A.1. e.	D E
G. Efforts to Provide Vaccinations to Educators, Other Staff, and Students	N/A	NEW
H. Appropriate Accommodations for Children with Disabilities	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.	A B C E E E K L