



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: [Ocean Academy Charter School \(herein also known as OACS\)](#)

Date ([09/23/2021](#)):

Date Revised (mm/dd/yyyy):

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

[Ocean Academy Charter School follows the Governor’s Executive Orders and the subsequent guidelines as distributed by the NJ Departments of Health and Education. Ocean Academy Charter School is one of only 68 NJ schools that opened full time in-person in September 2020. We have found that students have been most compliant with proper mask wearing \(covering both mouth & nose\). Out of our over 300 in-house students during our nine months, we did not have one problem with correct mask wearing. In addition, only one student was reported to have contacted Covid.](#)

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

When students arrive by bus, the buses will be dropping the students off at three different points to avoid crowds and to help assure social distancing. The Ocean Academy Charter School will allow for social distancing to the maximum extent practicable. This will be achieved by ensuring students are seated at least 6 feet apart. If classes are not able to maintain this physical distance, additional modifications will be considered. These include using physical barriers between desks and turning desks to face the same direction (rather than facing each other) or having students sit on only one side of the table, spaced apart – we have found that our individual plexi-glass mounted screens on each child’s desk to be very effective.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

The Ocean Academy Charter School has hand sanitizing stations with alcohol-based hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol): located in each classroom (for staff & older children who can safely use hand sanitizer), at entrances & exits of the building, and near the cafeteria. Student ages 5 and younger will be supervised when using hand sanitizer. All Kindergarten rooms have 2 sinks for handwashing and our Fifth grade classrooms also have sinks for hand washing. We have purchased portable sinks that we have in the hallways for additional hand washing purposes. Students wash hands for at least 20 seconds at regular intervals, including as soon as the students arrive to school, before eating, after bathroom use, and after blowing their nose/coughing/sneezing.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

OACS's Elementary School building is newly build – we just moved here in September 2020. The HVAC system draws in fresh air from the roof top. We have contracted with a HVAC service for filter changes & regular maintenance. In addition, Ocean Academy has hard-wired installed industrial HEPA filters in all classrooms and common rooms.

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

Ocean Academy Charter School has adopted procedures for symptomatic staff & students which include the following: Students and staff with symptoms related to COVID-19 must be safely and respectfully isolated from others. Follow current Communicable Disease Service guidance for illness reporting. If the school becomes aware that an individual who has spent time in a school facility tests positive for COVID-19, district officials must immediately notify local health officials, staff, and families of a confirmed case while maintaining confidentiality. OACS follows all the directives of isolation & quarantine by the Governor's Executive Orders and guidelines issued by the Departments of Ed & Health.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing

Ocean Academy uses the examples of screening methods in the CDC's supplemental Guidance for Child Care Programs & follows all guidance given from the Ocean County Health Department. Based on CDC guidance, we screen as follows: Ask students and employees to leave or not come into school if they test positive for COVID-19 or exhibit one or more of the symptoms of COVID-19, based on CDC guidance, that is not otherwise explained: A fever of 100° F or greater, Cough, Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, Chills, Repeated shaking with chills, Muscle pain, Headache, Sore throat, New loss of taste or smell, Fatigue, Congestion or runny nose, Nausea or vomiting, Diarrhea. This is done by the School Nurse.

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

Ocean Academy Charter School followed all the guidelines submitted by the Governor's office to schedule vaccinations for all staff thru the state website. All staffers who wanted to be vaccinated found vaccinations on their own before being notified by the state web site. Not all staff wanted to be vaccinated. Our school does not mandate vaccinations in keeping with the Governor's executive orders and guidelines as administered by the Departments of Health and Education. Information was sent to all parents regarding opportunities for free vaccinations. Our school has been very proactive in parent outreach for vaccinations and information on Covid. All of our students are under the age of 12 and are not eligible.

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

Consistent with guidance from the U.S. DOE, OACS continues to meet their obligations to students with disabilities to the greatest extent possible. The NJDOE continues to update schools with any additional guidance from the USDE on implementation of IDEA. Specific strategies and considerations for students with disabilities are ongoing critical points of discussion & implementation. Most of our students with special considerations are/have been in school on a full time basis so all academic/appropriate accommodations have been provided. All health and safety policies have been universally applied for all students. Students have been most cooperative with all of the school's health and safety policies.

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 a 504 Plan. Ocean Academy communicates frequently with the families of students with significant medical risk factors to determine if additional precautions or unique measures are necessary prior to a student's return to school.

- IEP teams review student data/student progress to determine whether critical skills were lost during the period in which remote instruction was being provided to students and determine the need for additional services to address learning loss.
- IEP teams consider the impact of missed services on student progress towards meeting IEP goals and objectives, and determine if additional or compensatory services are needed to address regression and recoupment of skills within a reasonable length of time.
- IEP teams develop procedures to complete overdue and/or incomplete evaluations to determine eligibility for special education services.

When planning for the 2020-2021 school year, whether instruction be remote or inperson, Ocean Academy built its reopening plans for September 2020 around the following critical tenants:

- All students deserve equitable access to a high-quality education. The type of learning experiences that are appropriate will vary based on grade band and content area.
 - This unique time provides opportunities for innovation: new approaches to customized learning and new types of partnerships with family members, caregivers, and community stakeholders.
 - Strong instruction, student engagement, and effective assessment are interdependent and benefit from a strong feedback loop between administration, educators, students, and families.
 - Anxiety may be reduced by developing a shared sense of purpose, providing clear expectations and comprehensive support systems, building strong relationships, and allowing for flexibility/adaptability.
 - Thoughtful planning is necessary to provide necessary support for instructional shifts. Approach digital technologies with the flexibility necessary to maximize student learning and enhance communication pathways, and foster an effective partnership approach with family members and caregivers.
 - School districts should encourage early collaboration between educators to ensure consistency across grades and content areas and provide sufficient time to prepare for necessary incorporation of new instructional techniques..
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- Professional Learning
 - Professional Learning Prior to the Beginning of the School Year
 - Districts should identify the consistent technology that will be used throughout the district in a remote instruction model and provide training in the use of all platforms. Additional considerations include:
 - Providing accessible, and user-friendly resources or training for parents/caregivers and community members for safe use of the technology (see Remote Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic).
 - Ensuring that novice provisional teachers, teachers new to the district and other new staff have sufficient training in the technologies that will be used.
 - Collaborate with educator preparation programs to plan for clinical practice and other teacher candidate support during remote instruction and hybrid instruction.
 - Professional Learning Throughout the School Year:
 - Districts should develop training schedules and staff collaboration time in accordance with the needs of the district.
 - Districts should develop professional learning experiences that ensure high quality instruction for all students.

- Professional learning must grow each educators' professional capacity to deliver developmentally appropriate, standards-based instruction remotely.
- Career and Technical Education (CTE)
 - The Office of Career Readiness has established guiding principles to help administrators and educators make informed decisions about how, when, and to what extent career and technical education can be safely offered.
- Districts should plan how professional learning will be differentiated to accommodate the needs of the following students:
 - Students with Disabilities
 - English Language Learners
 - Students without devices and/or internet
 - Undocumented students
- Professional learning planning should include the input and collaboration of stakeholders, including all staff, parents/caregivers and community members.
- Consider a survey of needs to gain input from various stakeholders
- Frequently and consistently communicate with all stakeholders prior to and during the school year
- Professional development plans (PDPs) for teaching staff and administrators, as always, should remain flexible and adaptable to the changing needs of the district, school and individual educator.
- NJDOE regulations support the inclusion of a broad range of activities in a teacher's annual professional development requirements, potentially including a variety of qualifying experiences related to alternative methods of instruction that have been necessitated by the transition to remote learning.
- PDPs are considered living documents subject to change as circumstances require.
- Teachers, supervisors and administrators may want to consider the learning of new technologies, virtual instructional methods, peer supports and other collaborative efforts as professional development that count towards the 20 hours.

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)

To ensure continuity, one focus is a 4-week summer program. It will have a robust reading & writing component center around a science theme. Students will experience science exploration, writing a book about their experiences, and expand their math & language skills. 250 students out of 330 signed up to participate. Utilizing a nationwide standardized assessment, students will have their academic needs evaluated 3 times during the year. Within 24 hours, the teacher can see a printout of individual data which informs her/him exactly where the students are in Language, Reading & Math. Using this information, the teacher can tailor instruction, divide into smaller groups, & target the academic needs of each student. To fill larger gaps in learning, students will receive additional tutoring & supplemental help from a basic skills teacher, paraprofessional, or reading interventionist as appropriate. This instruction is data driven & will be evaluated carefully.

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)

Ocean Academy has made communications with parents/guardians a priority throughout the in-person 2020-21 school year. Most recently, May 2021, we solicited parents regarding Covid Concerns and issues. Out of approximately 330 surveys sent out 236 were returned. An overwhelming majority 234 – 2 responded that they were very pleased with our preventative measures & protocols with health & safety. 231 said they were satisfied with communications with the school and only 5 thought communications should have been better. 104 parents responded that masks should be optional with 49 wanting masks to be mandatory and 55 were not sure if students needed to wear masks. Overall, the development of our plan is based on the Governor’s Executive Orders and guidelines from the NJ Departments of Education and Health. To date, we have no had one inhouse transfer of the disease and only one student has reported to have had Covid.

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)

All written communications are done in both English and Spanish. In addition, Ocean Academy has two text messaging systems: OneCall and Class DoJo. These text messaging methods allows for immediate translation between users. Before school started in September 2020, comprehensive packets of information were mailed to every family who has a student at the school. Information on the school's health and safety plans were clearly outlined as defined in our "Restart and Recovery" program as mandated by the NJ Department of Education. Subsequent updated information was sent home on a regular basis and bilingual administrative assistants assisted parents who called in with questions. Our "Restart and Recovery" document is found on the school's website.