



STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**BEDMINSTER TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**SOMERSET COUNTY 35-0240**

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 the 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.

**BEDMINSTER TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Date: June 24, 2021

Date Revised/Reapproved **(03/16/2023)**, (09/08/2022), (03/02/2022), (12/16/2021):

1. Maintaining Health and Safety

For each mitigation strategy listed below (A–H), 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**

Effective March 7, 2022, face masks became optional indoors and on buses for students and staff, per Governor Murphy’s February 7, 2022 announcement that the mask mandate would be lifted. Face masks are not required outside [see B below\*]. Parents are to remind their children not to comment on other students or staff preferences when wearing or not wearing a mask. Bullying will not be tolerated. While supplies last, face coverings will still be located in the nurse’s office if a student or staff member would like a mask.

**B. Physical distancing (could include the use of cohorts/podding)**

Social Distancing, to the best of our ability, or, when there is an overarching requirement from the state

- Students, staff, desks/tables, and chairs
- During increased activity areas [PE/exercise, band, singing, instruments, sports]
- \*Sports/Physical Education: masks are not needed outdoors unless an individual chooses to wear a mask (i.e. during days 6-10 after completing 5-day isolation or quarantine)

Cohorts (if mandated)

- students may be spaced apart, to the best of our ability

**C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette** Students and staff will be encouraged to wash their hands frequently throughout the day, particularly before and after eating.

**D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation** The district purchased HEPA air purifiers for each room/area. The district is utilizing the highest recommended MERV rating filter already appropriate for our HVAC system. The district purchased electrostatic sprayers for the custodial team to efficiently and effectively clean surfaces including student lockers, surfaces, and furniture. A disinfecting of the building will take place daily.

To maintain operational, heating and ventilation systems, air conditioning will remain on throughout the building, windows can also be opened as a request from the teacher's association (against the recommendation manufacturing specs for the unit to work properly), and filters for A/C units and HEPA air purification units will continue to be maintained according to manufacturer recommendations

High touch areas:

- Restrooms, door handles, latches, push bars and handrails, cabinet handles, light switches
- Student & teachers' desks and chairs, computers sign-in area, buzzers on main entrance doors
- Elevators, Media Center
- Bookshelves
- wall mats, bleachers
- sinks, student cubbies, and water fountains
- Garbage and recycling cans
- Carpets will be vacuumed
- desks and chairs, floors

Cafeteria:

- Tables, desks, chairs, floors, and benches
- Faculty lounges, appliances, machines, counters, tables, sinks, carpets
- Staff will be encouraged to wipe down their area
- food appliances and accessories
- garbage cans and recycle cans

Health Office:

- Areas will be wiped down throughout the Health Office

Procedures Manual - Cleaning of targeted areas - Classrooms and offices daily:

- 1) Computers, bookshelves, cabinet handles, and light switches in rooms
- 2) Sinks and water fountains will be disinfected
- 3) Classroom cubbies will be disinfected
- 4) Garbage and recycling cans
- 5) Carpets will be vacuumed, and floors washed
- 6) door handles, windows, and ledges
- 7) desks and chairs
- 8) whiteboards & blackboards, unless there is something written on them, (not Smart Boards)

- 9) Restrooms, elevators, student lockers
- 10) Media center, Faculty lounge areas, copy rooms
- 11) Door handles, latches, push bars, and handrails
- 12) wall mats - gymnasium
- 13) Bleachers, after use
- 14) bathrooms - toilets, sinks, mirrors, garbage, floors, walls
- 15) Buzzers on main entrance doors
- 16) Sign in area
- 17) Board and Main Office areas, including bathrooms
- 18) Water fountains, filling station

Ventilation:

- heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) will be maintained and monitored
- individual classroom HEPA filtration systems will be utilized and monitored
- exhaust fans will be maintained and monitored
- windows may be opened to bring in outdoor air
- room layouts may be modified to maximize space and/or airflow

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

Bedminster Township School [BTS] will continue to work with the state and local Somerset County Department of Health regarding best practices for contact tracing and quarantining if required. If there is a situation of a lab-confirmed positive COVID case, the district will follow the guidance regarding isolation and return to school criteria. The school nurse will continue to communicate positive cases to the local department of health if it is required. If there is close contact with a positive COVID case, the district will follow the guidance regarding quarantine, if required. We will provide the health department with any and all classroom student lists to report cases and for tracing if required.

BTS will closely monitor cases in collaboration with the SCDoH when decisions need to be made about transmission, investigation, contact tracing, cases, and in-person or virtual instruction if required. Decisions will be made based on school clusters of cases epidemiologically linked.

Parents/caregivers are expected to monitor their children for signs and symptoms of illness every day and keep them home if they:

- Have tested positive (viral test) for COVID-19
- Have symptoms of respiratory or gastrointestinal infections (e.g., cough, fever, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea)

**Positive test results:**

- Positive staff and students should isolate themselves at home and notify close contacts
- Positive test results should be reported to the school
- When students or staff are sick, they are encouraged to stay home from school and obtain a COVID-19 test if symptomatic
- COVID exclusion (isolation) criteria for a person who tests positive for COVID-19 remain the same:
  - Stay home for at least 5 full days after the onset of symptoms or if asymptomatic after the positive test (day of symptoms is day 0; if asymptomatic, the day the test was performed is day 0)
  - If they have no symptoms or symptoms are resolving after 5 days and they are fever-free (without the use of fever-reducing medication) for 24 hours, they can leave home
  - Masking is recommended for days 6-10 following a positive test (unless 2 negative tests are subsequently obtained)
- To support and prioritize uninterrupted, full-time, in-person learning and care, the NJDOH has moved from an individual case-based response strategy to a transmission mitigation strategy, where the risk of the whole school community, including the risk of interruptions to learning, is considered. This model focuses on response to clusters of cases, outbreaks, and evidence of ongoing transmission in Bedminster Township School, and less on individual case investigation and contact tracing
- Bedminster Township School District will consider the most recent guidelines from the NJDOH regarding isolation and quarantining in order to maintain a healthy school environment
  - Quarantining close contacts is no longer recommended
  - A close contact (or parent) is asked to monitor for symptoms for 10 days after the last contact with a positive case, wear a mask, and get tested at least 5 days after exposure, on day 6
  - A close contact who develops symptoms should stay home, get tested and report the test results to the school

**F. Diagnostic Testing and Symptom Screening testing**

If students/staff have symptoms or a positive COVID diagnosis, the district will follow the guidance regarding quarantining. As long as parents monitor their child's symptoms and report any symptoms to the school nurse we will continue to use the screener approach below.

### Symptom Screening and Diagnostic Testing

- Students and staff should only attend school if they are healthy. Anyone experiencing symptoms of COVID should stay home and get tested (home test or lab test)
- Parents and staff will be responsible for their own daily symptom screening
- If students are sick in school and display symptoms, the school nurse will follow guidance to contact a parent/guardian to stay home from school and consult with private healthcare providers, as needed

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

The school district will inform staff and students of opportunities for COVID-19 vaccination.

COVID-19 Vaccines for Staff - For more information, please review the following resources:

New Jersey Immunization Requirements: [https://nj.gov/health/cd/imm\\_requirements/](https://nj.gov/health/cd/imm_requirements/), New Jersey Immunization Information System: <https://njiis.nj.gov>. Families who need help paying for vaccines should ask their healthcare provider about the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program. The VFC program provides vaccines to uninsured and underinsured children younger than 19 years old. Parents may have to pay administration and office visit fees. For more information, contact the NJ VFC at (609) 826-4862.

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

The Bedminster Township School District will collaborate with the school physician and local department of health in an effort to support students with disabilities. Health and safety are our highest priority. Communication will be shared as the district receives health and safety updates. The district will collaborate with health care professionals and families to the greatest extent to meet individual student needs.

## **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 Bedminster Board of Education will continue to:

- partner with St. Elizabeth's College to promote training, activities, and resources for staff and students in the areas of SEL/wellbeing. They will continue to partner with Horizon Blue Cross/Blue Shield for wellbeing services geared toward staff members

- partner with SHMAYSC the BTS Wellness Team, BTS Green/Sustainability Team, and, with Guidance and Administrative initiatives to ensure programs that promote wellness, good health, safe choices, and inclusivity, such as (Wellness Week, Asthma & Allergy Awareness Week, HIB Prevention Programs, Red Ribbon Week, Week of Respect, monthly kindness calendar/alerts, Celebrating Students of Character {weekly in ES and monthly in the MS})
- offer intervention and enrichment through Summer Academy for students (as identified by data, narratives, and attendance records) to provide support and interventions exacerbated by the Covid pandemic. Summer activities in STEM, SEL, and supportive strategies in core subject areas may be offered in summer sessions
- create a schedule for teachers that allows for time to dialogue (team and department meetings) around current student data on academic and emotional progress and curtailing programs around those data points (ASI, ESL, G&T/Enrichment, Counseling Services, school-wide Climate/Culture activities)
- use the SONDAY intervention program, DRA, F&P, and other early literacy intervention sessions (LLI), are utilized as both pull-out and push-in for students in need of intervention and support by our literacy specialists
- School/Family Partnership series in conjunction with our PTO to support resources for mental health, well-being, educational best practices, technology, and other informative topics as parents are key stakeholders and need to be informed and included in the realm of information literacy and engagement.

### **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. The ARP requires that LEAs seek public comment for each 60-day revision to the plan.

The Bedminster Board of Education included the Return to School Plan as a public discussion item at the meeting held on Thursday, May 20, 2021 at 7:30 pm. It was listed on the agenda that was posted in advance of the meeting. There were no public comments. The administration team did take into consideration comments that were received during the school year. The administration also opened up a comment opportunity for all staff members to share their thoughts through Google Forms in 2021 and again by March 1, 2022.

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 Plan has been converted to Google Docs so that the Google Translate function has the ability to translate it into 108 languages using the user's browser. The link is accessible on the school website which is ADA compliant and has a translation feature built in. The button to translate is at the top of the page and easy to find.

### **References**

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)                      <https://www.nj.gov/health/>                      <https://njiis.nj.gov/core/web/index.html#/home>  
<https://www.co.somerset.nj.us/government/public-health-safety/health-department>  
[https://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/RecommendationsForLocalHealthDepts\\_K12Schools.pdf](https://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/RecommendationsForLocalHealthDepts_K12Schools.pdf)