



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Hope Academy Charter School 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: Hope Academy Charter School

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 09/04/20

Date Revised (mm/dd/yyyy):01/11/2024

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 staff and students are currently not required to wear masks. At the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year, all staff were instructed on correct mask wearing. They were informed masks should be worn above the nose, and under the chin, be form fitting, dry, not soiled and to be washed daily if cloth material. Students had classes with the nurse teaching them the same. Teachers were encouraged to model appropriate behavior, teach and provide reminders on

mask wearing. Everyday upon entry, the school nurse reminded students they may not enter without a mask, and enforced proper wearing of masks. If a student did not have a mask, it was ripped, soiled, wet, or ill fitting, a mask was provided for them. Students were provided with one home mask, and at least two school masks. When students arrived, they are to put away their home mask, and wear their school mask, which was washed daily on the premises. Presently with the relaxed guidance mask are not required. However, Hope Academy will follow any CDC guidance as this requirement could possibly change.

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

Physical distancing is not required. Distancing stickers were placed on floors and signs on walls. Teaching has been provided to staff and students on the importance of socially distancing and remaining in one's cohort. Every day the school nurse corrects student spacing, reiterating that students must social distance and gives visuals. Students were allowed to be three feet apart at their desk with desk shields. When students and staff are not at their desks, they were expected to be six feet apart.

Classrooms have been kept in separate cohorts from one another. The only time classes in the same grade are together is outside for exercise, or during lunch, in which students are spaced out and using desk shields. For the first half of the 2020-2021 school year, students had half days to reduce time in communal spaces, and prevent the need to remove masks for lunch, as well as, to give extra time for school cleaning. For the rest of that school year, we continued to send breakfast home rather than serve it at school.

The plan for the 2023-2024 school year includes monitoring the need for social distancing, per CDC guidance. However desk shields will only be used if recommended by the CDC or NJ Department of Education.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

Staff and students have been instructed on proper hand hygiene, such as the proper procedures, and required instances to use of handwashing and hand sanitizer. Staff and students have been instructed on proper respiratory etiquette, such as coughing or sneezing into a tissue or one's own elbow, and keeping your mask on. Damp or wet masks are replaced. Also, everyone was instructed to clean their hands after blowing their noses, and to do so away from others. This will remain in place for the 2023-2024 school year.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

HVAC has been installed throughout the building, as well as, air purifiers put in the school health office and other offices. Staff were educated on cleaning versus disinfecting and meetings held addressing custodial staff and proper cleaning procedures. School custodians have greatly increased cleaning of common touch surfaces, such as phones, door knobs, desk shields. They also increased cleaning bathrooms 2-3 times a day. A fogging machine with vital oxide disinfectant was used daily throughout the building. Extra cleaning staff were hired. When necessary, the school deep cleaned after the classroom was closed for the appropriate period of time, such as after a positive case in the building. This will remain in place for the 2023-2024 school year.

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

Contact tracing was performed by the school nurse in cooperation with the local health department and school administrators following state and local guidelines. Any possible contact or parent of a contact were notified as soon as possible with personal phone calls home. Although the need for contract tracing has decreased dramatically, contact tracing will remain in place during the 2023-2024 school year should it be needed per state and CDC guidelines.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing

Hope Academy Charter School held three free Covid-19 testing clinics on campus this school year. It was open to the school community including students, family members, and staff.

For the 2020-2021 school year our school has conducted daily temperature screenings. In 2021-2022 school year it had been found to be an ineffective tool as we have not found any student with elevated temperature through our daily screenings. It is the recommendation of the school nurse to discontinue this practice, based on CDC recommendation that schools not do daily screenings, including temperature taking. Further, the majority of school nurses with the National Association of School Nurses, the NJSSNA, and the Kinsa school nurse panel discussion, also support the statement that daily temperature school screening is ineffective. Our school also made a daily screening questionnaire available to parents through our parent portal on Real Time software. We stated that it was required on several school phone calls and through announcements at parent meetings. The school nurse checked the screening questionnaire daily and follows up with parents when an answer to the screening form indicates the need for it. The questionnaire is not in place for the 2023-2024 school year. However, Hope Academy will follow any CDC guidance as this requirement could possibly change.

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

Staff were notified of all Covid-19 vaccination opportunities, as often as possible. Interested staff members were signed up with the department of health, county department of education, Hackensack Meridian Health or local churches.

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

All parents were given the option of virtual or in person learning. Students were given masks that fit properly and provided with teaching and reminders on social distancing, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette. No other specialized accommodations were necessary. During the 2023-2024 school year it is expected that all students will be full time in person for learning unless there are health related reasons.

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)

Hope Academy provided safe, in-person learning opportunities for students since September 2020 and will continue to provide Social Emotional Learning and Character Education classes to our students. Hope Academy continues to provide free meals for all of our students. The school nurse will continue to provide referrals to resources based on the community's needs, such as to health care providers and testing centers with free services or bilingual staff. We will continue to engage students with engaging and enjoyable afterschool and summer programs to address learning loss and SEL needs as well as promote attendance with extra curricular and incentive programs. These include but are not limited to an extension to our TLC after school program (additional 4 weeks), Summer Surge academic program during the months of July and August that will incorporate Social Emotional Learning during the academic classes, Yoga, Basketball, Photography, and Stem tutoring by NJIT college students.

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).

September 2020 updated policies and the Reopening Plan were shared on the school's website and during remote learning, parent meetings that took place once a month and included topics such as health examinations and immunizations, illness, transportation, instruction, attendance, school operation, maintenance plan, and visitors. This information was available to staff and the community. Our policies have reflected the most recent guidance put forth by the CDC, NJ Department of Health, NJ Department of Education and local health department. We have held weekly staff meetings

and bimonthly parent-staff meetings where individuals voiced comments or concerns. Community members were encouraged to visit the school website and provide feedback. Blackboard was used to send bimonthly phone blasts out to remind parents about the reopening plan.

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)

The district's strategic Restart and Recovery Plan for 2021-2022, has been discussed during virtual Saturday school on May 22, 2021 as well as during staff meetings and feedback solicitation on the staff and parent surveys. There was also a discussion with the Board of Trustee members during the May, 26, 2021 Board meeting followed by an open public comment opportunity. The plan can be viewed on the Website and we have invited feedback on this plan, which can be submitted via email to amartinez@hopeacademy.org. The district has returned to a full return to in-person learning in 2023-2024, since the 2021-2022 school year. The reopening plan is available in Spanish as well. Our school social worker and school secretaries are ready and willing to translate in Spanish and French-Creole in order to meet the language needs of our families. Hope Academy strives to meet an individual's needs with a disability as defined by the ADA. Alternative formats of the reopening plan are available as needed.

Presently the Hope Academy Board of Trustees receives monthly updates as needed, regarding COVID-19 from the Chief School Administrator. During the 2022-2023 school year an Emergency Virtual/Remote Plan was adapted by the Board of Trustees should the school need to transition.