

American Rescue Plan (ARP) Safe Return Plan

LEA Name: East Rutherford School District

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Members of the Return to School Planning Team:

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- o Ms. Gina Lorusso, Board Member & SEPAC President
- o Mrs. Regina Barrale, Middle School Principal
- o Mr. Brian Barrow, Elementary School Principal
- o Ms. Sharon King-Dobson, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services and Curriculum
- o Mr. Peter Vilardi, Principal & Supervisor of Instruction and Technology
- o Mrs. Christine Green, PTA President
- o Dr. Martha Sliwowski, District Physician
- o Mrs. Kristin Pacelli, School Nurse
- o Mrs. Sharon Dunn, School Nurse
- o Mr. Bryan Consulmagno, Head of Maintenance
- o Mr. Cory Scelsa, EREA President

Areas of Focus:

1. Universal and Correct Wearing of Masks
2. Physical Distancing
3. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette
4. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation
5. Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments
6. Diagnostic and screening testing
7. Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible
8. Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies
9. Mental Health & Social Emotional Initiatives
10. Public Comments
11. Understandable Format
12. Professional Learning

1. Universal and correct wearing of masks (including school buses)

As of August 31, 2023, NJ Health, aligning with CDC guidelines, advises measures to curb COVID-19 in schools:

- High COVID-19 hospital admissions trigger universal indoor masking in schools/ECE programs.
- School nurse offices should adhere to specific masking infection control protocols.
- Post-exposure, masks or respirators are recommended for 10 days.
- Support for mask/respirator use is essential at all COVID-19 hospital admission levels.
- Those immunocompromised or at severe illness risk should wear masks/respirators, especially at medium/high admission levels.
- ERSD commits to implementing these measures as well as flexible, non-punitive mask-wearing policies and accommodations for high-risk students, irrespective of hospital admission levels.

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

Following NJ Health's August 31, 2023, and CDC guidance, ERSD will adopt measures against COVID-19 spread in schools:

- Address crowding based on COVID-19 hospital admission levels or outbreaks.
- Apply physical distancing in classrooms, especially during high or very high admission levels or outbreaks.
- Combine masks and physical distancing in high/very high transmission areas.
- Ensure distancing in non-classroom areas like hallways, locker rooms, gym, and on transport.
- Implement student cohorts with dedicated staff for daily activities, including recess and lunch.
- Avoid separating vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals into different groups.
- East Rutherford is committed to equitable cohort implementation.

3. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

As of August 31, 2023, NJ Health released several recommendations based on CDC guidelines to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in schools. As such, ERSD will:

- Teach and reinforce proper handwashing techniques to lower the virus transmission risk.
- Monitor and reinforce handwashing at critical times of the day, such as before and after eating, after using the restroom, and after recess.
- Ensure the availability of handwashing supplies, including soap and water.
- In situations where handwashing is not feasible, ERSD will provide hand sanitizers containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Hand sanitizers will be kept out of reach and sight of younger children, and children aged five years and under will use them only under adult supervision.
- The CDC also stresses the importance of teaching and reinforcing cough and sneeze etiquette to help prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

4. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

As of August 31, 2023, NJ Health, based on CDC guidelines, recommends that schools clean surfaces at least once daily. As such:

- Frequently touched areas such as desks, chairs, door handles, handrails, kitchens, bathrooms, light switches, shared telephones, shared desktops, shared computer keyboards and mice, drinking fountains, school bus seats, and windows will be cleaned daily in ERSD.
- ERSD will continue using no-touch foot pedal trash cans when there is a lid on the trash can or as necessary.
- With safety in mind, doors should be propped open to avoid frequent touching of handles.

- Disposable wipes are provided in ALL classrooms and offices so that commonly used areas, such as keyboards, etc., can be wiped down before use.

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

According to the August 29th, 2023 health update, schools can move away from contract tracing; however, ERSD will continue working with the local health department to determine the best ways to respond to clusters of cases and outbreaks.

- As of April 28, 2023, the recommendation for quarantine has changed regarding individuals who have been exposed to COVID-19, in school settings which are generally considered lower risk. However, ERSD will ensure that those exposed to COVID-19 adhere to guidelines such as wearing a properly fitted mask and undergoing testing.
- According to the CDC, Administrators of K-12 schools and ECE programs have the flexibility to handle exposures based on local circumstances and the advantages of maintaining in-person learning.
- ERSD will make accommodations for individuals who were exposed but are unable to wear a mask or face challenges in wearing one that fits correctly.

6. Diagnostic and screening testing

- In line with NJ Health guidelines, the ERSD has updated its COVID-19 testing strategy for K-12 schools. Routine screening is not broadly recommended, but targeted testing may be considered in areas with high COVID-19 hospital admissions. This includes testing during high-risk activities (e.g., sports, band), key events (e.g., post-holidays), and for at-risk students (e.g., with immunocompromised). The ERSD will guide staff, students, and families to community testing, healthcare providers, or at-home tests, covering both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals. Privacy and confidentiality will be ensured in compliance with state laws and FERPA.

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

- Vaccines remain the best defense against COVID-19.
- The District continues to provide staff and parents/guardians with information regarding where vaccines may be obtained. This information is posted on the district nurse's and district websites.
- The District works closely with local hospitals, pharmacies, and healthcare providers to disseminate vaccine information to staff and parents/guardians as appropriate.
- The East Rutherford School District has continued to partner with Dr. Martha Sliwowski at 42 Locust Avenue, Wallington, NJ, for any students, parents, or staff members interested in vaccinations. The Pfizer vaccine is administered at this location.

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

Our School District will continue to provide free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) consistent with all health and safety guidelines. If students with disabilities are unable to access the district reopening plan as designed, school teams facilitate individualized and alternative plans based on student needs, present levels of functioning, developmental levels, and student/parent input. Students with Disabilities follow the school routines with accommodations and modifications required per the IEP or impact of the student's disability. Related services are provided primarily through individual and small group sessions in a separate setting with staff wearing appropriate PPE. Special Education services will be provided as described in the student's current IEP to the

maximum extent possible in order to maintain the safety of the student and staff. Parents continue to be partners in the planning for students with disabilities.

9. Mental Health & Social Emotional Initiatives

Mental Health & Social Emotional Initiatives: The School Counselors, the social worker, and the School Psychologists who constitute our mobilized crisis recovery team provide emotional and psychological support as needed. School counselors, a social worker, and our three School Psychologists in conjunction with pertinent outside providers co-facilitate staff training related to trauma, grief, school avoidance, etc.

School counselors and district behaviorists consult with classroom teachers about student needs and develop classroom strategies to provide support as appropriate to the age and grade level. Our new Social Emotional initiative was launched and this has been an area of focus for all District staff. Some of the goals are to change or broaden faculty perspectives on SEL, change faculty expectations with SEL, identify and empower like-minded staff interested in change, commitment, and consistency with the whole team, and focus on all levels of stakeholders in the plan.

10. Public Comments

- Parents are provided a forum to give input at work sessions and public board meetings
- The District will continue to provide professional development and training for staff members and continue to do so throughout the 2023-2024 school year.
- -Furthermore, the school safety return team consisting of multiple stakeholders will continue to meet on a regular basis to keep all relevant stakeholders informed of the changes and upcoming plans of the district. This process will continue although the pandemic has subsided.

11. Understandable Format

- The plan is written in simple language using bullet points to delineate essential information.
- Subheadings, bold, and italics were utilized to highlight essential information.
- The plan is presented in Spanish as well for our Spanish-speaking parents.
- The plan will be translated into other languages as requested on a needs basis.

12. Professional Learning

- All staff district-wide will receive continuous training during monthly staff meetings.
- Parent sessions will be offered through our parent academies.