

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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- Mr. Peter Vilardi, Principal & Supervisor of Instruction and Technology
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- Mrs. Sharon Dunn, School Nurse
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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 May 17, 2024, the CDC updated its guidance for mask use in schools, focusing on promoting universal and correct mask-wearing as part of a broader strategy to mitigate the spread of respiratory viruses, including COVID-19. The CDC advocates for universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors in K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status during an outbreak.

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

East Rutherford School District recognizes the role of physical distancing in minimizing the risk of respiratory virus transmission. There isn't a universally "safe" distance since the spread of viruses depends on various factors.

How It Works:

Infectious droplets generally accumulate near the individual emitting them. Being close to someone with a respiratory virus increases the likelihood of transmission.

Steps East Rutherford Will Take:

- Encourage individuals to keep a safe distance from anyone showing symptoms of a respiratory virus.
- Avoid crowded settings where maintaining physical distancing is challenging.

These measures aim to reduce the risk of the virus spreading within the school community.

3. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

The East Rutherford School District emphasizes the importance of handwashing to prevent the spread of respiratory and gastrointestinal infections. The district promotes thorough handwashing education and has implemented scheduled handwashing routines. Adequate handwashing facilities, equipped with soap, water, and paper towels, are provided across all schools to ensure accessibility. In response to increased illness or absenteeism, the district evaluates and enhances handwashing practices. When soap and water are unavailable, hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol are provided, but their use is supervised for children under 6 years old to ensure safety.

4. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

East Rutherford School District adheres to standard procedures for routine cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting to maintain a safe school environment. The protocol involves daily cleaning of frequently touched surfaces such as desks, countertops, doorknobs, computer keyboards, learning materials, faucet handles, phones, and toys. The district follows local policies and regulations for cleaning specific areas like food service locations and bathrooms. On rare occasions, specialized cleaning may be necessary due to an outbreak of a specific pathogen like norovirus or when a new infectious disease emerges. In such cases, the district consults with state or local health authorities to determine the necessary cleaning and disinfection measures.

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

ERSD will continue working with the local health department to determine the best ways to respond to clusters of cases and outbreaks. ERSD will ensure that individuals 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

The East Rutherford School District emphasizes the importance of staying up-to-date with recommended vaccinations to prevent illness and reduce the severity of infections. Adhering to state and national vaccination requirements for school attendance is crucial for maintaining high coverage rates and minimizing the incidence of vaccine-preventable diseases. The District will continue to provide detailed information about recommended vaccines to staff, students, and families to raise awareness.

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 School Psychologists who constitute our mobilized crisis recovery team provide emotional and psychological support as needed. School counselors, Social worker, and 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's Safety Committee met to determine safety procedures for the 2023-2024 school year.

-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.

-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.