

# Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan Template

## CSDE ARP ESSER



May 27, 2021

### Introduction

Our Connecticut school communities — with students at the center — continue to be bold and innovative as they respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The United States Department of Education (USED) has recognized the importance of supporting these efforts, particularly with the infusion of resources to support education in Connecticut. The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ARP ESSER) has granted the State of Connecticut an additional \$1,105,919,874, providing the opportunity to develop bold, high-impact plans to address the substantial disruptions to student learning, interpersonal interactions, and social-emotional well-being. While earlier sources of federal relief funding during the pandemic supported our ability to first survive, and then thrive, ARP ESSER is Connecticut's opportunity to transform our schools.

The federal government requires that each Local Education Agency (LEA) create a *Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan* (the Plan). This plan must be publicly available online by June 23, 2021 and submitted to the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) as a part of the ARP ESSER application due mid-August 2021. To aid in the planning process, CSDE is providing this template to guide LEAs planning as well as serve as an opportunity to share the Plan with the public.

Due to the expansive efforts of the CSDE and the educational community, as of the week of May 3–7, no district in the state of Connecticut was fully remote. This was achieved through extensive planning by each LEA; therefore, this template should be seen as a means to support LEAs' efforts to date and can be used to expand upon or revisit previous Reopening School Plans.

There are five areas that LEAs must consider when developing the *Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan*:

- I. Health and Safety Strategies
- II. Continuity of Services
- III. Public Comment
- IV. Periodic Review Process
- V. Understandable and Uniform Format

The CSDE has maintained consistently that in-person learning is the preferred opportunity for students and that schools should work to safely open their buildings for the 2020–21 school year. We are proud to have led the nation in safe return to in-person instruction — as of April 30 nearly 82.7% of Connecticut school districts were offering a predominately fully in-person learning. Thank you for your work and helping us continue to be an example of how we can best serve our children safely in school buildings.

### I. Health and Safety Strategies

Describe how the LEA plan includes (or will be modified to include) the extent to which the LEA has adopted policies and a description of any such policies on each of the strategies listed in the table on page 2:

The Winchester Public Schools (WPS) since July of 2020 has offered full-time, in-person instruction. During said time, WPS has developed procedures and policies to support in-person instruction. During the 2021-2022 school year, WPS will commit to continuing to follow the protocols set forth by the Connecticut Department of Public Health and our local Torrington Area Health District to ensure continuity of education in alignment with health and safety practices.

\*As of 6/23/21, the State Department of Public Health and the State Department of Education have not released the "Re-Opening" guidelines for the 21/22 school year. Once the guidelines are released, this document will be updated accordingly.

Please complete the table below with the LEA's mitigation strategy for each category. In developing the LEA's response, please review and consider the [CDC guidance](#) and the [Connecticut DPH and CSDE guidance](#) for each category.

	Mitigation strategy	LEA response
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Universal and correct wearing of masks	<p>As of 6/23/21, WPS will follow as guidelines/policies associated with mask wearing.</p> <p>If the CDC and local health department deems masks mandatory for in-person school attendance, WPS will comply with all regulations.</p> <p>At this point, all students while in school buildings must wear an appropriate face covering. Students are not required to wear a mask while outdoors.</p> <p>At this point, staff are required to maintain wearing a face covering during in-person instruction. Staff are</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)	<p>As of 6/23/21, WPS continues to utilize a third school building to ensure proper social distancing strategies. Currently, Batcheller School has PK - Students and staff will continue to maximize distance. There will not be a set distance requirement. Students and staff will be able to partner work, utilize carpet time, and small group instruction with the proper safety procedures followed.</p> <p>Strategies used:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cleaning of materials;</li> </ol>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Handwashing and respiratory etiquette	<p>As of 6/23/21, WPS has signage throughout all public and private areas of the building reminding everyone of proper handwashing and respiratory etiquette. Students throughout the day have access to sanitation stations, increased handwashing opportunities, and mask breaks to ensure respiratory health.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation	<p>As of 6/23/21, WPS has conducted ventilation assessments of all school buildings. All school buildings exceed the air exchange rates set for a healthy building. During times in which the weather allows for windows to be opened, all exterior windows and interior doors are open.</p> <p>WPS will continue to log daily cleaning protocols through the use of cleaning trackers. Cleaning trackers are required to be updated daily and documentation of proper cleaning standards is</p>

	Mitigation strategy	LEA response
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments	As of 6/23/21, WPS will continue with extensive efforts surrounding contact tracing, isolation, and quarantine. All protocols will be in accordance with local and state health guidelines. Currently, all student and staff (non-vaccinated) are required to quarantine for 10 days should they be a direct contact to a positive case. Students that are notified or become ill during the school day are moved to the nurse's office for isolation until a parent/guardian is able to pick them up from school. Students during a quarantine time will be <span style="float: right;">+</span>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Diagnostic screening and testing	As of 6/23/21, WPS does not conduct any on-site diagnosis or testing. Testing and diagnosis is completed through private entities. WPS does not require a direct contact to be tested, the direct contact must complete their 10 day quarantine to return to the work or educational setting.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible	In the spring of 2021, WPS offered three vaccination clinics to all staff members. About 75% of the staff to date have elected to be vaccinated. At this point, the majority of our student body due to age is unable to be vaccinated. If the opportunity presents, WPS will encourage students to be vaccinated. WPS will also continue to encourage staff to become vaccinated.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies	As of 6/23/21, WPS will continue to provide accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies. These accommodations are addressed in either a 504 plan, IEP or health plan.

LEA must implement, to the greatest extent practicable, each element of the most up-to-date guidance listed in the table.

## II. Continuity of Services

Describe how the LEA plan will ensure continuity of services including but not limited to services to address the students' academic needs, and students' and staff social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services:

Since July of 2020, WPS has offered in-person Early Start Summer School, After School programming, full-time in-person instruction, etc. We also have offered meals to families since March 2020 for distance learners and summer-time/vacation-time. The continuity of programming and consistency of education opportunities has served our community through consistent implementation of academics, social-emotional therapeutic supports, mental health programming, etc. Some of the supports in place include DESSA, Relationship Mapping, Second Step, partnership with CHC, Lunch Bunch, 211, etc. Academically, we have continued with our PPT process, Birth to Three Referrals, Preschool placements, small group instruction, SRBI intervention programming, etc. these supports have yielded students received appropriate accommodations and interventions to assist with any academic/social-emotional deficits they may be experiencing.

## III. Public Comment

Public comment is a key element of stakeholder engagement, and at times a stand-alone element which may include dedicating time to open forums at board of education meetings, conducting surveys, or soliciting written input from external residents not involved in the decision-making process. Describe how the LEA plans to provide the public the opportunity to provide input and for public comment in the development of the plan, a summary of the input (including any letters of support), and how the LEA took such input into account:

Since March of 2020, WPS has consistently lead the way with communication to stakeholders. WPS has routinely conducted the following:

1. Virtual Town Meetings on COVID and the relation to the district (recorded and posted);
2. Informational brochures sent to families on safety, protocols, procedures, etc.;
3. Posting of PowerPoints to memorialize information related to protocols/guidelines;
4. Facebook LIVE sessions to answer questions in real-time;
5. 24/7 cell phone access to the superintendent of schools for family/staff situations related to COVID;
6. BOE public comment;
7. Surveys on family comfortability and needs;

In addition, during the creation of the Re-Opening Plan, 21 stakeholders from family members to union leaders participated in the development of the plan. This joint effort has yield wide support for our in-person educational

#### IV. Periodic Review Process

LEAs are required to periodically review and, as appropriate, revise their *Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan* **at least every six months** through September 30, 2023. Each review must include seeking public comment on the plan and developing the plan after taking into account the public comment.

Below are the dates that LEAs must submit a refreshed or updated plan to CSDE via eGMS.

**Review/revisit Dates:**

- June 23, 2021
- December 23, 2021
- June 23, 2022
- December 23, 2022
- June 23, 2023

#### V. Understandable and Uniform Format

Federal regulations require that this plan be in an understandable and uniform format, to the extent practicable; is written in a language that parents can understand or, if not practicable, orally translated; and upon request by a parent who is an individual with a disability, provided in an alternative format accessible to that parent. Describe the unique needs of the LEA's audience and confirm the LEA's approach to ensuring the document is accessible:

This plan is written in common language. Should translation of this plan be necessitated, please contact [melony.brady-shanley@winchesterschools.org](mailto:melony.brady-shanley@winchesterschools.org) and a fully translated version will be sent. The website in which the plan is posted is fully ADA compliant and monitored for accessibility. Our community audience is 99% capable of having reliable internet access.