

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 ES- SER) 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, ARPESSER 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:

New London Public Schools will continue to work closely with our district's medical advisor and partners at Ledge Light Health District (LLHD, and the CT DPH to receive and follow health and safety recommendations from health experts. Our policies and procedures will be updated on a regular basis to respond to ongoing health data and mitigations strategies recommended by the CDC and the DPH. Throughout the 2020-2021 school year all staff, students and families have received ongoing communications and training in various mitigation strategies used to control the spread of the virus. Staff, students, and families are now knowledgeable about the immediate actions the district will take should we have a positive case of COVID-19 to include quarantining assignments and classes and/or school closures.

Together with the CT VNA, School Nurses and COVID liaison staff will continue to communicate and monitor for adherence to COVID safety protocols including frequent handwashing, coughing, or sneezing into one's arm, wearing masks (as assigned by Governor's orders and/or recommended by our medical advisor), and weekend deep cleaning will occur. Use of the isolation room for those exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms will continue to be used. Screens purchased at

the height of the pandemic will continue to be made available to students and staff upon request or as warranted by COVID-19 data. The safety of all school community members – students, staff, and families – continues to be the highest priority.

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
Universal and correct wearing of masks	The New London Public Schools will only require masks for all students, staff and visitors should public health measures dictate such a need. Both regional and local data will be used to determine if there is a need to shift to universal wearing of masks. Absent the necessity for such, no masks will be required.
Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)	The New London Public Schools will continue efforts to physically distance all individuals on all campuses, where feasible, only if public health measures dictate such a need. Both regional and local data will be used to determine if there is a need to shift to universal wearing of masks. Absent the necessity for such, no physical distancing will be required.
Handwashing and respiratory etiquette	As hand washing and respiratory etiquette are good reasonable practices to help stop the spread of disease, the New London Public Schools will continue to teach and encourage good hygiene practices in these areas. Hand washing stations, hand sanitizer supplies, and wipes previously made available to students and staff in response to the pandemic will remain in place. Instruction in appropriate coughing and sneezing etiquette, especially for those students in the early grades, will be provided and frequent reminders will be given.
Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation	The New London Public Schools will continue our regular cleaning practices. Ventilation will continue to meet or exceed building standards set by the CSDE and industry best recommended practices. The use of stand-alone fans (that blow air around) is to be avoided. Only fans that blow air out the window are permitted until further notice from the CT DPH.

	Mitigation strategy	LEA response
	Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments	Should contact tracing become necessary, our District COVID Liaison together with our school nursing staff and external contact tracer will continue to follow these well-established practices and procedures. Additionally, they will continue to follow local health guidelines specific to notification and quarantine requirements. Should a student be directed to quarantine, a virtual learning model will be assigned to minimize the impact on student learning and will ensure continuity of instruction. Staff who are directed to quarantine <i>may</i> be authorized to teach virtually; this will be determined on a case-by-case basis.
	Diagnostic screening and testing	The New London Public Schools will not offer any COVID-19 testing for students or staff; however, the district may partner with other health entities to make screening, testing, and vaccination opportunities available to students, staff, and families.
	Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible	The New London Public Schools will continue to notify families and staff members about vaccination opportunities but will not require either students or staff to get vaccinated for COVID-19. We will adhere to all applicable state laws and regulations regarding vaccinations.
	Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies	NLPS will continue to use all required safety gear, masks, gloves, shields, and gowns where necessary. Additionally, all special education students with IEPs (individualized education programs), and 504 plans will have health and safety plans as needed. Medically fragile children will each have the prescribed plan as indicated by their medical professional.

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:

The NLPS school calendar was developed to ensure time and opportunity to set, clarify, and train all staff and students on fall reopening protocols and expectations. Academic programming and scheduling (begun in the summer of 2021) is planning to accelerate learning for all students following the COVID-19 pandemic of SY 20-21. Increased staffing to support this effort and our students to include additional administrators, certified instructional staff, certified student and support specialists, non-certified instructional interventionists, bilingual certified and non-certified staff, guidance counselors, etc. Staff decisions are intentionally designed to address the needs (academic, social, emotional, mental health, etc.) of both students and staff. Additional programming opportunities such as mentoring programs that connect NLPS students with meaningful adults, academic enrichment and support programming, and high-interest after-school programming will also be implemented throughout SY 21-22. The expansion of existing and the formation of new partnerships will be utilized to support students, staff, and families. Turn-around efforts will drive the work at the secondary level and data from those efforts will be used to inform district-wide adjustments. Differentiated instructional methods will continue to be utilized for all students.

Blended learning environments, consisting of scheduled virtual and in person learning days, may be considered for selected high school juniors and seniors. To participate in blended learning opportunities, interested students and families will make a request through the Academic Office. Criteria is based on previous year's success in blended/virtual learning and include a co-created Individual Learning Plan (ILP) in August. The ILP will include personal student success goals, weekly check ins, attendance goals, and college and career planning expectations.

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 with 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:

Beginning June 21st, 2021, the New London Public Schools will gather public input on this plan by presenting it at our Board of Education meetings, sending it home to families through email and posting it on our social media district and school sites. Input will be gathered through a dedicated email (NLReopening2021-2022@newlondon.org). Input will continue to be reviewed as we prepare for the restart of school at the end of the summer.

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 comments on the plan and developing the plan after considering 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, 2021

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: