

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

## CSDE ARP ESSER



Aug. 23, 2022

### 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:

Ansonia Public Schools is committed to ensure the health and safety of our students and staff as we plan our return to school for the 2022-23 school year. We will continue to follow the most current Connecticut DPH and CSDE guidance and protocols. We will continue to implement strategies to maintain a safe and healthy school environment.

Our schools will be prepared to reinforce healthy practices among our staff and students, take preventative actions to prevent the spread of all respiratory illnesses, and prepare for any potential cases or increased transmission of COVID-19.

We will continue to make decisions that maximize in-person learning for all our students. It is clear that in-person attendance provides the greatest benefit for children to grow academically and social emotionally. New guidance stresses the importance of returning to a full in-person educational experience for all students. Ansonia Public Schools will continue to monitor community levels and implement mitigation strategies to maximize in-person instruction.

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>Ansonia Public Schools adopted a mask optional policy. We respect the rights of every individual who chooses to wear a mask or to not wear a face covering.</p> <p>There may be instances when the district in collaboration with health officials require temporary mask wearing and other additional mitigation strategies in response to an outbreak of COVID-19.</p> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)                 | <p>This strategy may be used in response to an outbreak of COVID-19. Ansonia Public Schools has discontinued the use of cohorts, podding, and 6ft for social distancing.</p>  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Handwashing and respiratory etiquette  | <p>Ansonia Public Schools will continue to support handwashing etiquette. Frequent hand washing or hand sanitizing is expected and encouraged. Teachers and students must engage in frequent hand washing or sanitizing upon arrival, before and after meals, after bathroom use, and after coughing or sneezing.</p>   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation | <p>All Ansonia Public Schools will be cleaned and sanitized according to all adopted procedures. Facilities staff have all been trained on proper cleaning and disinfecting procedures. All buildings have been provided with proper cleaning and sanitizing products. Ventilation has been assessed and will be monitored to maintain proper airflow.</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 | Ansonia Public Schools will follow CDC, DPH and CSDE guidelines and recommendations on contact tracing. At this time there is no contact tracing in schools. Close contacts at home are encouraged to test, stay home if symptoms of COVID-19 develop and to mask for 10 days after last exposure.   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Diagnostic screening and testing  | CDC no longer recommends routine screening testing in K-12 schools. However, at a high COVID-19 Community Level, APS may consider implementing screening testing for students and staff for high-risk activities at key times in the year and when returning from breaks. Information will be provided on where to obtain free test kits by school health staff.                               |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible  | We will continue to work in collaboration with the Naugatuck Valley Health District to provide access to all staff and students who wish to be vaccinated. We will continue to offer space for vaccine clinics to be offered on school property for easier access to the school community.<br>Vaccination clinics are publicized through ParentSquare, the district website, and social media. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies  | Ansonia Public Schools will make reasonable modifications for students at risk for getting very sick with COVID-19 when necessary to ensure that all students, including those with disabilities, are able to access in-person learning.   |

*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:

Ansonia Public Schools will continue to provide a safe space for in-person learning. Ansonia Public Schools will continue to educate the entire school community on our plan to implement all mitigation measures. These measures will help decrease the spread of illness while still allowing in-person learning and activities. The district will continue monitoring COVID-19 case numbers in schools and collaborating with NVHD and DPH on community spread levels. We will provide communication on school events that focus on the SEL of our students. Opportunities will continue to be provided for staff to access services to address their social, emotional and mental health needs.

## 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:

Board of Education meetings offer an opportunity for the public to share concerns and ideas. Surveys for staff and families have been conducted to gauge interest in vaccines, masking options etc.

## 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:

Ansonia Public Schools is a diverse community and our Director of Communications and Equity is able to translate information in the language preferred by each individual family.