

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:

Great Oaks Charter School Bridgeport was consistently provided information by the Bridgeport Department of Health that showed our host city experiencing a COVID-19 positivity rate that was nearly double the posted Connecticut State COVID-19 Positivity Rate. As a result, Great Oaks Charter School developed procedures and policies to implement the CDC and State guidelines, as closely as possible, with regard to the reentry of students. These steps focused on measures such as podding, limited student movement, mandatory face coverings for students and staff, measuring classrooms for social distancing (beginning at six-foot per classroom), constant and consistent parent communication regarding cases, reminders of procedures to students during morning announcements (shared with parents on social media), and the limiting of entry and exit points into the building. The strategies listed below were all implemented by Great Oaks Charter School and will continue to be the basis for our plan this fall until otherwise indicated by CDC and CSDE.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Masks are provided to all students and staff that may not have access to a mask prior to entering past the threshold of the building. - Students, staff, and visitors are instructed and reminded to continue to wear their masks, even if vaccinated as per CDC and State guidelines; shared through social media as well. - All staff is responsible for reminding students to continue to wear masks in classrooms, hallways, and areas where social distancing is more challenging.
	Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student movement is limited throughout the day, providing less contact and the ability to provide podding. - Teachers have schedules that reduce the amount of students they see by increasing their time with the students that they work with. - Students are given the maximum distance afforded in classrooms for distancing as a result of the removal of non-instructional items from classes. - Students travel to and from other areas of the school in pods inclusive of mask breaks, outdoor breaks, and physical movement breaks.
	Handwashing and respiratory etiquette	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School nurse reviews handwashing procedures with students periodically. - School principal reinforces handwashing and respiratory etiquette with students through announcement videos periodically shared with parents on social media. <p>School staff reinforce handwashing and respiratory etiquette within the classroom with frequent reminders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Touchless hand sanitizer dispensers are located in all classrooms and are checked for functionality. - All restrooms are checked frequently for supplies and cleaning, inclusive of soap dispensers.
	Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High contact surfaces are cleaned hourly by school staff. - High traffic areas are cleaned every two hours by school staff. - Ventilation is serviced and checked frequently to ensure proper ventilation. - Disinfecting and deep cleaning happen on a nightly basis in all classrooms, bathrooms, offices, and high traffic areas inclusive of hallways. - Cleaning staff is given up to date information regarding any changes in CDC or State guidelines.

Mitigation strategy	LEA response
<p>Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Any reported or confirmed case(s) of COVID-19 are reported to teachers for immediate in-school contact tracing for those immediately impacted (students, staff, AmeriCorps volunteers). - Communication goes to the community to ensure they self-monitor for symptoms. - Local Department of Health is notified or asked for clarity on procedures to ensure that the school has the most up to date information and is acting in accordance with directive; State data is updated. - All CDC recommendations on quarantine are communicated to parents/staff and enforced.
<p>Diagnostic screening and testing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Through our Learning Management System, students are provided a health screening survey that is completed daily during homeroom. - The health screening survey is updated through the operations department to include any new relevant information or look-fors by the Department of Health, CDC, or State with regard to symptoms, travel restrictions, etc.; data shared with admin daily. - The health screener data is reviewed by the Nurse who interviews any student indicating symptoms and a determination on next steps is made and communicated to administration.
<p>Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Through our partnership with South West Community Health we were able to secure multiple appointments for staff members and AmeriCorps volunteers. - Assistance was given to families through our partnership with South West Community Health to provide any information as needed, and to obtain and make use of appointments for our students (eligible) and their families (eligible).
<p>Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Any doctor or medical professional requests were made and will continue for students and families. - All required accommodations in alignment with IEP's or 504 plans will continue. - Families of students requesting alterations to the policies as outlined by the CDC or State Education will be discussed on a case by case basis.

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 ARP ESSER funding will be used to support students in closing gaps experienced as a result of school closures and the delivery of instruction through non-traditional methods. Students will be provided additional academic support through teachers and additional AmeriCorps tutors tailored to individual need based on updated and monitored data systems. Also, students will have extended learning opportunities before and after-school that focus on academic support, social and emotional support, and hands-on applications of learning. Snacks and additional food opportunities will be provided during these programs. Students will also have the opportunity to engage in distance opportunities on Saturday for academic and social and emotional support, and after-hours support for homework through social-media homework help as well as online tutoring after typical dinner hours through our LMS.

Our plan provides supports students through Guidance and Social Worker support to assist staff and students with trauma informed teaching practices throughout the day. Partnerships are currently being developed to provide more of a therapeutic support to many members of our AmeriCorps volunteer team and staff members that may have not taken the time to experience their or address their own personal responses to the pandemic.

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:

Great Oaks Charter School Bridgeport engaged the community throughout the pandemic and in the formulation of this plan in a variety of ways. Surveys were provided to parents asking them which of several strategies aligned to CDC and State guidelines made them feel most comfortable. These surveys were available in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. Additionally, the links to these surveys were sent to parent emails and made available to our parents through social media outlets.

Great Oaks Charter School Bridgeport also held three parent forums for our plan to return students to the building this Spring. Parents were invited to hear our plans, provide feedback or suggestions at the meeting, through email, or through other means to give us insight regarding the return to in-person learning. During these meetings simultaneous meetings were held in Spanish and Portuguese. A video of these meetings was posted on our website inviting additional comment.

Great Oaks Charter School Bridgeport has also continuously discussed plans for reopen and in person learning at our Public Board Meetings allowing for comment, questions, or concerns from various stake holders.

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:

Great Oaks Charter School Bridgeport will make this document available on its website for public review. Additionally, a presentation regarding this plan will be published through our Social Media account with readings of it in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. Finally, during the summer, the plan will be translated into Spanish and Portuguese and also published on our website for public review.