Concord School District Preliminary Plan on the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services

June 23, 2021

This document is intended to meet the federal statutory requirement that, within 30 days of receiving ARP ESSER LEA allocation (anticipated May 24th), an LEA shall publish an LEA Plan on the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services, which is often called a “school district reopening plan.”

Note, if an LEA developed a plan before The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) was enacted on 03/11/2021 that complied with the federal statutory requirements for public posting and comments but does not meet all of the requirements below, then the LEA must revise its plan no later than six months after receiving ARP ESSER funds.


I. General Information

1. LEA Name: Concord School District, SAU #8

2. Date of Publication: June 23, 2021

II. Transparency and Accessibility

1. This plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services was published and made publicly available online here:

   Description: This plan is posted on Concord School District’s website at sau8.org as of June 23, 2021.

2. Before making the plan publicly available, the LEA sought public comment on the plan and took such comments into account in the development of the plan (please check one).

   Yes: ☐ Somewhat: ☐ No: ☒

   Description: The District developed and sent out a survey to all families, staff and middle/high school students. A total of 966 families, 428 staff, 601 middle school students and 247 high school students completed the survey. Translators were used to gain input from our families who speak other languages. We reviewed the responses from the surveys and took these into account as the plan develops.

3. The plan is in an understandable and uniform format (please check one):

   Yes: ☐ Somewhat: ☐ No: ☒

   Description: This Plan is accessible to all stakeholders. We are committed to using translators and staff to assist families in understanding the plan.

4. The plan, to the extent practicable, is written in a language that parents can understand or, if not practicable, orally translated (please check one):

   Yes: ☒ Somewhat: ☐ No: ☐

   Description: We will employ translation services and use staff to support any barriers to understanding.

5. The plan, upon request by a parent who is an individual with a disability, is provided in an alternative format accessible to that parent (please check one):

   Yes: ☐ Somewhat: ☐ No: ☒

   Description: We will accommodate any needs in our community in accessing this plan.
III. Health and Safety

1. How the LEA will maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other school and LEA staff:

Description during SY20-21:

During the 2020-2021 school year, the district employed a variety of strategies to support the well-being of students and staff. For the first 6 weeks of school, most of our students and staff remained in a remote learning model. By mid-October, 80% of our staff and students were in our buildings for a minimum of 2 days per week and up to 5 days per week. This model continued until April 19th, when 85% of our students and 95% of our staff returned to school full-time. Over the course of the in-school period, we have required masking inside our buildings, and outside of our buildings until the last 2 weeks of school. When our students and staff had their masks off (at mealtimes and for meetings between staff) they maintained 6-foot distance. During structured times in classrooms, from mid-October until mid-April, 6-foot distancing was used between students. In structured activities for students (in classrooms, for example) 3-foot distancing was employed beginning in mid-April. In addition, we put into place a significant cleaning and disinfecting program in our schools. Hand hygiene was emphasized with all stakeholders. We had sanitizer stations in every classroom in the district and scattered in hallways and office areas.

The district arranged for tents to be erected at each school and emphasized the benefit of learning in outdoor spaces.

We employed a comprehensive program of active screening of students before they entered our buildings, including temperature-taking, from mid-October until March, when we pivoted to an indirect approach (family screening and self-screening) while continuing to provide screening stations for all adults. Volunteers and parents were not allowed in our buildings—online software was used for all meetings. A comprehensive evaluation of our HVAC-ventilation systems revealed good ventilation and air quality in our buildings overall. We did purchase air purifiers, air conditioning units and fans to support improvements in some classrooms in several buildings beyond that solid baseline.

The district provided tens of thousands of meals, delivering them directly to families across the district, as well as providing bundles of weekend food for about 200 families. We supported families without Wi-Fi connectivity by helping them sign up for assistance programs with local providers and by providing Wi-Fi hotspots. We provided training and support to students, staff and families to help them access and use their one-to-one devices. We purchased software that allowed students to learn from home or school, and that allowed meetings to be held virtually across the year. Thousands of books and basic school supply items were mailed or delivered in person to homes across the district to support students’ success with our curricula.

We put into place a contact-tracing system, including hiring additional staff to complete this work, in cooperation with DPHS, that included attention to quarantine and isolation, as needed. We hired additional nursing staff to support the school nursing programs. The district partnered with our local public health network to offer several vaccination clinics onsite, including for high school students, middle school students, and for our adult population of individuals who settled in Concord from refugee status in Africa and Asia. We partnered with the network for vaccination for all staff offsite.
In addition to these efforts focused on physical health and well-being, our administrators and staff were cognizant of the toll of the pandemic on the emotional well-being of our students and staff and employed a variety of strategies to support this across the year and in whichever model we employed. Above all, we understood the power of strong relationships, and everyone pitched in to support this goal, with unprecedented amounts of time spent with families, and on checking in with students. We supported those staff members who needed to work remotely, hiring additional staff to be a physical present in the buildings with students who were sometimes being taught by remote staff members.

We were very satisfied with the outcomes of our year in terms of health—we had relatively small numbers of COVID-19 cases in our schools, no clusters or outbreaks, and almost no evidence of transmission within our buildings.

**Description during SY21-22:**

The district will continue to monitor the guidance provided by New Hampshire’s Division of Public Health Services and the CDC, and will continue to seek advice from a contracted infectious disease specialist in order to determine specific strategies across the 2021-2022 school year. Over the course of the pandemic, understanding of the way that COVID-19 is transmitted from person to person has evolved. It is generally understood that COVID-19 is transmitted through airborne aerosols. Extensive cleaning and disinfecting and the use of Plexiglas shields are no longer considered a primary method for mitigation. Instead, the district will continue to focus on the following: ventilation and good air quality, optimizing outdoor learning, typical school cleaning and sanitizing protocols, hand-washing and respiratory etiquette, access to opportunities for voluntary vaccination, managing students and staff with symptoms, and optional use of masks. Contact tracing and management of quarantines and isolation will follow state and federal procedures.

The district will continue to work with HVAC/air quality experts to support any necessary upgrades to our systems, especially as they pertain to supplying cool air in our older buildings during hot weather. Tents and other learning spaces will continue to be available on school grounds. Additional nursing staff will support the management of students and staff with symptoms, with the goal to provide onsite a Rapid COVID-19 Antigen Test to anyone who is identified in the building with a related symptom. (In the case of a minor, parent/guardian permission will be required for this test.) Staff will continue to advise about and monitor necessary quarantine and isolation periods, according to state guidelines. Mask use will be optional for students and staff, both indoors and outside. We intend to provide 3-feet of distancing when students are in the school lunchrooms.

The district will monitor the level of COVID-19 in the community and the schools, with an emphasis on the impact of COVID on the operations of the school, and will be prepared to implement additional mitigation strategies as the situation warrants.

2. The LEA’s adoption of the following CDC health and safety strategies are described below:
(Note federal regulation on this plan requires such reporting, but does not require adoption of CDC safety recommendations. The NH DOE recognizes schools will implement localized safety measures based on the guidance provided by the CDC, NH Public Health, and local public health officials.)
a. Universal and correct wearing of masks:
During SY20-21 (check one): Yes: [X]  Somewhat: [ ]  No: [ ]
During SY21-22 (check one): Yes: [ ]  Somewhat: [X]  No: [ ]

Description of both SYs:
During the 20-21 schoolyear, masking was universal and mandatory both in and outside school, except when 6-foot distancing could be maintained. During the last several weeks of the school year, masks were not required when staff and students were outside. Masks were provided for all students and staff throughout the year.

During the 21-22 school year, masking will be optional assuming that the level of COVID-19 remains at low transmission levels in the community and within the schools. If levels increase, mandatory masking will resume, based on the advice from our guiding authorities, including NH DPHS and our medical consultant.

b. Physical distancing (e.g., use of cohorts/podding and modifying facilities):
During SY20-21 (check one): Yes: [X]  Somewhat: [ ]  No: [ ]
During SY21-22 (check one): Yes: [ ]  Somewhat: [X]  No: [ ]

Description of both SYs:
During the 2020-2021 school year, schools used cohorting and podding practices to the extent feasible when students returned to in-person learning beginning in October 2020. This was most easily and effectively done at the preschool and elementary levels, where students spent much of the year in small hybrid groups. Middle school students also were formed into cohorts, especially within the course content classes. For most of the year, most students attended school in two-day cohorts, thus limiting exposure and transmission. Physical distancing was embraced by all schools, with 6-foot distancing used for most of the year, turning to 3-foot distancing for the last 8 weeks as most of our students returned to in-person classes. In many cases, entrance and exit, stairway and hallway procedures were modified to reduce the number of students congregating within school buildings. The limited number of cases, lack of clusters or outbreaks and almost no evidence of in-school transmission attests to the success of the use of these mitigation strategies, even when the number of COVID-19 cases in our community was substantial.

For the 2021-2022 school year, the district anticipates relaxing most of the cohort/podding, physical distancing and facility modifications used in 2020-2021. Schools will use 3-foot distancing in the cafeterias and other locations during mealtimes.

c. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette:
During SY20-21 (check one): Yes: [X]  Somewhat: [ ]  No: [ ]
During SY21-22 (check one): Yes: [X]  Somewhat: [ ]  No: [ ]

Description of both SYs: During the 2020-2021 school year, emphasis was placed on hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette. Signage prompted students and staff to follow appropriate protocols, including hand washing before and after meals and upon entering or exiting the building. Hand-sanitizing stations were located in every classroom in the district, as well as in halls and various offices.

During the 2021-2022 these efforts will continue in a similar vein. We expect to reduce the usage of hand sanitizer somewhat to avoid overuse of these products, but will continue to prompt students for washing and respiratory etiquette at appropriate times (eating, bathroom, etc.)
d. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation:

During SY20-21 (check one): Yes: [x] Somewhat: [ ] No: [ ]

During SY21-22 (check one): Yes: [x] Somewhat: [ ] No: [ ]

Description of both SYs:

During the 2020-2021 school year, revised cleaning and disinfecting routines were established that allowed for regular and deep cleaning of all of our facilities on a daily basis. Our ventilation systems and air quality were assessed by outside experts early in the pandemic and found to be good. Additional air purifiers, fans and air conditioning units were installed to support the additional improvement of the air quality in several areas within several buildings. Our relatively low incidence of COVID-19 (and colds and flu) was a testament to the incredible work of our custodial and maintenance staff.

In preparation for and during the 2021-2022 school year, we will continue to assess and determine ways to further improve air quality and ventilation systems, especially in our 4 older buildings which do not have the ability to supply cooled air to the entire building during periods of hot weather. We will return to typical pre—pandemic cleaning schedules and routines.

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

During SY20-21 (check one): Yes: [x] Somewhat: [ ] No: [ ]

During SY21-22 (check one): Yes: [x] (as guidance suggests) Somewhat: [ ] No: [ ]

Description of both SYs:

During the 2020-2021 school year, we maintained a consistent and comprehensive program of contact tracing in collaboration with the DPHS. We supported our nursing staff by hiring a contact tracer to do this work. Our staff closely monitored any required isolations and quarantines. Throughout the school year, we followed the rules provided by the DPHS regarding quarantine and isolation, and our families, students and staff were compliant with these expectations. The lack of spread of COVID-19 within our buildings (no clusters or outbreaks and almost no evidence of in-school transmission) attests to the strong work of our school-based teams.

During the 2021-2022 school year, we will continue to follow the guidance of the NH DPHS and our medical consultant to implement contact tracing, as well as isolation and quarantine procedures, as warranted.

f. Diagnostic and screening testing:

During SY20-21 (check one): Yes: [ ] Somewhat: [ ] No: [x]

During SY21-22 (check one): Yes: [x] Somewhat: [ ] No: [ ]

Description of both SYs:

During the 2020-2021 school year, the district employed active 'at the door' screening, including temperature taking, for most of the school year, pivoting later in the year to home screening. Students at middle and high school completed online self-checks once we stopped screening at the door. We screened all adults coming into our buildings. We did not offer diagnostic or screening testing within the district but referred individuals to no-cost opportunities for this testing.
During the 2021-2022 school year, we intend to hire an individual to provide on-the-spot antigen testing for anyone (student or staff) in our buildings who exhibit symptoms, if this is still warranted based on the nature of the virus in our community. We do not plan to test or screen asymptomatic individuals. We will continue to communicate often with our families, students, and staff about the symptoms of COVID-19 and ask that they stay home and seek testing if symptomatic. Keeping symptomatic individuals out of our schools will be a key consideration going forward.

g. Efforts to provide vaccinations to school communities:
   During SY20-21 (check one): Yes: X Somewhat: No: 
   During SY21-22 (check one): Yes: X Somewhat: No: 

   Description of both SYs:
   The district worked closely with the Capital Area Public Health Network to provide vaccination clinics to our staff, students, and families. We held clinics in our schools for middle and high school students. We also held a vaccination clinic for families in our district who had come to this country as refugees. We collaborated with stakeholders in Concord, including private schools and childcare facilities, to provide vaccination for every member of the staff who was interested.

   The district intends to continue to work with the Network to offer clinics during the 2021-2022 school year.

h. Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies:
   During SY20-21 (check one): Yes: X Somewhat: No: 
   During SY21-22 (check one): Yes: X Somewhat: No: 

   Description of both SYs:
   During the 2020-2021 school year, district staff worked closely with parents of students with disabilities to develop, revise and implement appropriate IEPs and 504 Plans, including determining any special needs with respect to health and safety. A variety of modifications and accommodations were used to provide students with access to specialized instruction and related services, to the extent possible, including both remote and in-person learning options, providing specialized devices, software, and materials at home to support access to the curriculum, the use of specialized PPE and Plexiglas barriers, where appropriate. Some of Concord's students with disabilities attended school in-person for some or all of the week; others participated solely through remote learning.

   During the 2021-2022 school year, teams will continue to develop, revise and implement appropriate IEPs and 504 Plans, with continued attention to specific health and safety needs. Appropriate individualized accommodations and modifications will continue to be provided, within the context of the pandemic.

i. Coordination with state and local health officials (please check one):
   During SY20-21 (check one): Yes: X Somewhat: No: 
   During SY21-22 (check one): Yes: X Somewhat: No: 

   Description of both SYs:
During the 2020-2021 school year, school staff (administrator and/or school nursing staff) attended weekly virtual meetings with officials from NH's Department of Education and Division of Public Health Services. Guidance from these meetings informed the district's plans across the year. District staff worked closely with DPHS staff on contact tracing, as well as quarantine and isolation protocols and procedures. Close coordination with the area public health network resulted in collaborative vaccination clinics in district schools and in the region.

To the extent that these opportunities for coordination with state and local health officials are available in 2021-2022, district staff will continue to be active partners and participants.

IV. Continuity of Services

1. The LEA has provided continuity of services in addressing student academic needs:

Description during SY20-21: The district operated using three different models during the 2020-2021 school year: remote learning for the first six weeks of school, hybrid instruction (most students attending 2 days per week in-person) between mid-October and mid-April, and full in-person learning for most students from mid-April through June 18. Across the year, administrators, teachers and staff worked to provide students with continuity of services, identifying high-impact academic targets, and continuing to use school and district curricula and instructional practices to the greatest extent feasible given the instructional models. Every student and instructional staff member was provided with a personal technology device and a variety of software to support teaching and learning. Google Classroom (grades 3-12) and SeeSaw (Preschool-grade 2) were used to support the organization of learning materials. Books, school supplies and specialized learning materials were mailed or delivered to homes across the city to support ongoing learning. Teachers used a variety of assessment strategies to monitor student progress across the year, and the typical competency-based grading and reporting systems were employed. Additional staff was hired to support students; attention was paid to making class size as small as possible to support teaching and learning.

Students and families were offered the opportunity to participate in remote learning for the entire school year; approximately 20% of Concord's families chose this option. Students in grades K-6 attended fully remote self-contained classes, meeting synchronously with their class and teachers daily. Students in grades 7-12 used Google Meet or Zoom to join into classes that included students who were in-person in school.

A variety of summer learning opportunities will be provided to students during the summer months, 2021. Students will attend competency-recovery programs, programs that will provide remedial tutoring in literacy and math, and programs that will orient students to kindergarten, middle school and high school. Many students learning English and students with IEPs will attend summer school programs designed to provide specialized and individualized learning opportunities.

Description during SY21-22: The district anticipates returning to full in-person learning for the 2021-2022 school year, however, this is preliminary and based on the current pandemic and vaccination conditions in Concord and the region. The plan will be reviewed and revised, as needed, during the summer months. ESSER funds will be used to provide additional academic support for students and professional learning opportunities for staff aimed at accelerating
learning as students return to post-pandemic teaching and learning. Additional instructors, coaches, tutors, and instructional assistants will be available to assist students who have learning gaps. ESSER Funds will be used to support class sizes that are at the lower end of the policy expectation, whenever feasible, and add support to some primary classrooms. Along with information from assessments completed in the spring of 2021, teachers will employ diagnostic and pre-assessments to identify student needs and target instruction. Ongoing progress monitoring will allow teachers to assess student performance across the year and provide adjustments and support as needed.

The district is using ESSER funds to provide a significant range of summer programming in June-August, 2021. Small group and 1:1 interventions, with a focus on core academic skills, credit/competency recovery, and social-emotional support will be offered at each of the district’s schools. Afterschool programs in each of the district’s schools will provide students with additional learning opportunities.

1:1 technology devices and appropriate software and infrastructure are available for all students, preschool through high school. The district has the ability to return to remote learning models if circumstances require this.

Professional development will be provided to staff on an ongoing basis, and will include additional support from onsite coaches. Programs to support families will also be a priority during the 2021-2022 school year.

2. The LEA has provided continuity of services in addressing student social, emotional, mental, and other health needs, which may include student health and food services:
Description during SY20-21:

Social, emotional, mental, and physical health were priority areas for district schools for the 2020-2021 school year. SEL lessons and structures (for example, responsive classroom structures and advisory programs) were used regularly in all schools. Tier 1, 2, and 3 supports and services have been implemented within the umbrella of multi-tiered systems of support. Mental health and substance misuse counseling and supports were provided in both remote and in-person settings across the year. Social workers, school counselors and school psychologists provided ongoing services within their buildings and in the community, as appropriate. Collaboration with Concord’s local community mental health center provided continuity of community supports and services. Home visitors remained connected to families and students across our community. Facilitated referrals to community partner agencies were made, and an increase in family contact was seen across all levels of the district. Students with social/emotional, mental, and physical health needs were provided services in both remote and in-person settings, based on plans developed by teams that included families and school staff. Afterschool program services were provided across the school year, and summer programs, with an emphasis on social-emotional well-being, were provided in July-August 2020 and will be provided in the summer 2021.

Meals were provided to the district’s students free of charge beginning in March 2020. Meals were delivered daily to homes and school bus stop routes, and served in schools for those students attending in-person classes. The district collaborated with local agencies and the faith community to provide weekend food to approximately 200 families.
Description during SY21-22:
Social, emotional, mental, and physical health will be priority areas for district schools for the 2021-2022 school year. SEL lessons and structures will continue to be infused into school and classroom programming. MTSS teams will continue to support Tier 1, 2 and 3 programs and interventions based on data. ESSER funds will be used to increase mental health supports, including additional social worker, counselor, and home visiting and special education staff. Parent engagement will be a priority. Afterschool programs will be expanded to support social-emotional learning. Ongoing collaboration with other child and family-serving organizations will be emphasized.

School means will continue to be free of charge to all students in the district. Weekend food support will be provided.

3. The LEA has provided continuity of services in addressing staff social, emotional, mental, and other health needs:
Description during SY20-21:
During the 2020-2021 school year, the district provided flexible scheduling to many staff members to support their ability to work remotely based on health and other needs before school reopened for full in-person learning. The district opened an in-district center to provide childcare services for teachers working in the hybrid model. Administrators regularly checked in with staff to provide support and determine needs. Activities aimed at supporting social/emotional well-being were included at staff meetings and other times. A mid-year conference provided staff with opportunities to learn and practice self-care routines. Referrals were made, as appropriate, to the employee assistance program. Staff were provided with a Wednesday 'Flex Day', which provided opportunities to work remotely and meet with colleagues. Vaccination clinics were offered to staff and building nursing staff routinely provided staff with advice around COVID-related issues. Staff was provided with PPE and other supplies needed to maintain a healthy environment.

Description during SY21-22:
During the 2021-2022 school year, opportunities to provide services for staff to support healthy mental and physical health will continue. Vaccination clinics will continue to be supported. PPE will be supplied as needed based on the nature of the pandemic. Attention will be paid to proper ventilation, and good air quality. Additional staff will be hired with ESSER funds to provide more student support, keep class and caseload sizes reasonable, and provide teachers with opportunities for embedded professional development, including coaching support. Teachers will be provided with opportunities to learn about and practice self-care strategies.

V. Plan Review

1. The LEA will meet the federal regulatory requirement to review and, as appropriate, revise its Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan at least every six months through September 30, 2023 (the award period including the Tydings period). (Note an LEA that developed a plan before ARPA was enacted on 03/11/2021 that complied with the federal statutory requirements for public posting and comments but does not meet all of the requirements above must revise its plan no later than six months after the LEA receives LEA ESSER funds.)
Yes: X  No: [ ]

Description: This document represents a preliminary plan for the re-opening of school in September 2021. It will be reviewed for possible revision in July and again in August, with particular attention to the situation in our schools and community with respect to COVID-19, and changes in guidance from the NH DPHS and the district’s contracted infectious disease specialist.
The district is prepared to use additional mitigation strategies if needed based on environmental and operational conditions.

2. In doing so, the LEA will meet the federal statutory requirement to seek public input and take such input into account in determining whether to revise the plan and, if revisions are determined necessary, on the revisions it makes to its plan.
   Yes: [X] No: [ ]
   Description: The district has sought input from the community, including students, staff and families, to support the development of school plans using surveys, electronic media (virtual meetings, email) and through in-person meetings.

3. In doing so, the LEA will also meet the federal regulatory requirement to address CDC safety recommendations and, if the CDC has updated its safety recommendations at the time the LEA is revising its plan, each of the updated CDC safety recommendations.
   (Note federal regulation on this plan requires such reporting, but does not require adoption of CDC safety recommendations. The NH DOE recognizes schools will implement localized safety measures based on the guidance provided by the CDC, NH Public Health, and local public health officials.)
   Yes: [X] No: [ ]
   Description: The district regularly reviews updated safety and health recommendations provided by the CDC, NH’s Division of Public Health Services, and local health officials. These recommendations have informed our school plans since March 2020.

VI. Authorization

LEA Superintendent’s Signature: [Signature]
Date: [June 23, 2021]