### LEA Plan on the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services

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

For further context, please reference ARPA (https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/1319/text) or the Interim Final Requirements of ARP ESSER (https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2021-04-22/pdf/2021-08359.pdf).

I.		General Information
	1.	LEA Name: Merrimack School District
	2.	Date of Publication: March 30, 2020 and June 21, 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: The Merrimack School District Mid -Year Instruction and Learning Plan was made available through our District Website and through the use of Facebook. An email was sent to all families though our School Massager system identifying where to view the plan and watch the presentation to the school board on March 20, 2020. This same process will be followed as we modify the plan for 2021-22 school year. The revised plan will be presented to the school board on June 21, 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: X Somewhat: No: No:
		Description: The plan was first submitted and presented to the Merrimack School Board on March 22, 2020. After public comment and modifications, a separate public meeting was held on March 30, 2020 to address modifications to the plan. As we revise and continue to modify the plan we have developed a broad-based steering committee involving community members, students, board members, administrators and educators.
	3.	The plan is in an understandable and uniform format (please check one):  Yes: X Somewhat: No: No:
		Description: The plan is presented in a clear format with charts, grafts and limited text. The plan was also broken down into a PowerPoint presentation that was published on the district website and Facebook. This process will be similar as we present the modified plan to the Merrimack School Board.
	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: X Somewhat: No: No:
		Description: The plan is presented in a practicable format with charts, grafts and limited text. The plan was also broken down into a PowerPoint presentation that was published on the district website and Facebook. The oral presentation video form the March 30 <sup>th</sup> (and all meetings) are available through

Merrimack TV, our website and Facebook. This process will be similar as we present the modified plan to the Merrimack School Board.

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: X Somewhat: No:
	Description: We will provide the information to a person with a disability or in an alternate format.

#### III. Health and Safety

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

Description during SY20-2:

# Classrooms and Buildings

- Masks will be worn at all times
  - Mask breaks will be allowed
  - o Lunchtime remove for mask when eating
- Classrooms shall be arranged to maximize physical distance between students.
- Assigned seats required.
  - o Individual chairs/desks should be arranged so that students are spaced at least three feet apart when possible
- Water bubblers shut down, except for bottle fill stations.
- Students are encouraged to bring a water bottle to school, and we have installed additional filling stations at schools
- Hallways marked with social distancing and direction markers.
- Meals in the cafeteria, classroom & other areas, social distanced, with students seated with their classroom groups.

#### Maintenance

• The maintenance department will provide schools with all cleaning supplies, as well as hand

sanitizer stations in every classroom.

- Additional cleaning frequency & methods.
  - o cleaning during school, and after school
  - o deep cleaning and spraying in the evening
- High touch point cleaning of handrails and door handles (inside and out) throughout the school day.

# **School Operations**

- School bus transportation / cleaning:
  - Busses will load from back to front;
  - students must wear masks
  - o assigned seating (with siblings if multiple children from the same family)
  - unload from front to back
  - o windows open when possible.
- Food services will be school specific:
  - O Students may eat in the cafeteria or other assigned areas sitting with classroom social distanced 3-6 feet.
  - Classroom delivery provided from cafeteria when needed
- Utilize outside spaces as much as possible for instruction, eating, and breaks
- Restrict all visitors (parents and vendors included) to allow only essential access
- Schools are closed for all non-school functions and after school activities

No assemblies or large group gatherings

### Description during SY21-22:

# Classrooms and Buildings

- Masks policies will be revisited in the summer of 2021 by the Merrimack School Board
- Classrooms shall be arranged to maximize physical distance between students.
- Assigned seats are recommended.
- Students are encouraged to bring a water bottle to school, and we have installed additional filling stations at schools
- Hallways marked with social distancing and direction markers.
- Meals in the cafeteria, & other areas, social distanced, with students seated with their classroom groups.

#### Maintenance

- The maintenance department will provide schools with all cleaning supplies, as well as hand sanitizer stations in every classroom.
  - Additional cleaning frequency & methods.
    - o cleaning during school, and after school
    - o deep cleaning and spraying will be addressed in the summer of 2021
- High touch point cleaning of handrails and door handles (inside and out) throughout the school day.

# **School Operations**

- School bus transportation / cleaning:
  - o Busses will load from back to front:
  - o students must wear masks as long as the Merrimack Policy stays in effect
  - o assigned seating (with siblings if multiple children from the same family)
  - o unload from front to back
  - o windows open when possible
- Food services will be school specific:
  - O Students may eat in the cafeteria or other assigned areas social distanced 3-6 feet.
  - o Delivery provided to other areas from cafeteria when needed
- Utilize outside spaces as much as possible for instruction, eating, and breaks
- Restrict unnecessary visitors (vendors included) to allow only essential access
- After school programs will resume in 2021-2022

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.)				
	<ul> <li>Universal and correct wearing of n         During SY20-21 (check one):     </li> <li>During SY21-22 (check one):</li> </ul>	nasks: Yes: X Yes: □	Somewhat: Somewhat:	No: ☐ No: ☑	
	Description of both SYs: The Mer Students and Staff Policy. The Mer 2021-2022 school year during sums	rrimack School	Board will address the pol	ted the Use of Mask by icy for Masks for the	
	Physical distancing (e.g., use of col During SY20-21 (check one): During SY21-22 (check one):	horts/podding ar Yes: X Yes: X	nd modifying facilities):  Somewhat:  Somewhat:	No: □ No: □	

Description of both SYs: Classrooms were arranged to maximize physical distance between

students. Outside storage facilities were purchased to move furniture out of building and create more space in the classrooms. Plexi dividers were purchased in all schools. Directional tape in the hallways was used to maintain spacing and limit hall way traffic. Assigned seats were required in the class and on the bus. Individual chairs/desks were arranged so that students are spaced at least three feet apart when possible. We will continue to follow the CDC recommendations as they become available for the 2021-22 school year.

b.	Handwashing and respiratory etiqu	uette:		
	During SY20-21 (check one):	Yes: X	Somewhat:	No:
	During SY21-22 (check one):	Yes: X	Somewhat:	No:

Description of both Sys: Additional portable sinks were purchased to increase opportunities for students to wash their hands. Students had access to hand washing or sanitizing before meals and snacks. The Merrimack Leadership Team along with the district nurses developed reconditions for the educators on the health of the student is directly related to personal hygiene and cleanliness. Students who are present at school on a regular basis benefit from increased instruction and learning. To support this need, the district has established practices to reduce the spread of bacteria and viruses, such as the flu, the common cold, Norovirus, and Hepatitis A. Students shall have access to hand washing or sanitizing before and after meals and snacks. School staff is directed to implement these procedures whenever students use the restroom and prior to dining. The purpose of these procedures is to reduce the spread of bacteria and viruses, from person to person and from people to food contact surfaces which are the main cause of the spread of Norovirus, the common cold and the flu. Secondly to reduce germs and bacteria found on the hands to safe levels, to prevent or to eliminate the spread of bacteria and viruses, which increase the spread of illness in the cafeteria and classroom. Also, to reinforce and practice personal hygiene practices with all students and to provide an opportunity for the class to develop correct hand washing procedures and then apply the procedures on a regular basis.

Hand Washing Procedures 1. Wash hands using soap and warm, running water, at least 100°F. 2. Vigorously rub hands during washing for at least 15 - 20 seconds (Sing the Happy Birthday song) with special attention paid to the backs of the hands, wrists, between the fingers and under the fingernails. 3. Rinse hands well while leaving the water running. 4. With the water running, dry hands with a single-use towel or a warm air dryer. Turn off the water using a paper towel, covering washed hands to prevent recontamination from the dirty faucet. When to Wash Hands: Hands should be washed after the following activities: f After touching bare human body parts other than clean hands and clean, exposed portions of arms. f After using the toilet f After coughing, sneezing, using a handkerchief or disposable tissue f After eating or drinking f After recess f After handling dirty equipment, utensils and supplies f After engaging in other activities that contaminate the hands

Hand Sanitizer was purchased and distributed throughout the building. Hand sanitizers may be used in place of hand washing ONLY when access to soap and hand sinks are not available.

c.	Cleaning and maintaining healthy	facilities, includ	ing improving ventilation	:
	During SY20-21 (check one):	Yes: X	Somewhat:	No:
	During SY21-22 (check one):	Yes: X	Somewhat:	No:
	Description of both Sys: The Merri	mack School Di	strict took the following r	neasures in
	cleaning and maintaining healthy f	facilities:		

- Recommendations to Reduce the Probability of Transmission for the School Community
- Portable hand sanitizing stations in critical areas in the schools for staff, student, and visitor use
- Adequate supply of hand sanitizer and other personal protection equipment
- Portable hand sanitizing stations in critical areas in the schools for staff, student, and

visitor use

- Due to the limited number of sinks for handwashing in each building, the only way to adequately increase capacity was through the acquisition of portable self-contained handwashing stations
- Adequate Inventory of "no-touch" portable temperature scanners
- Enhanced cleaning procedures by our staff alone will not meet the goal of trying to disinfect every surface.
- electrostatic disinfectant sprayers to "fog" each building after school in the evening.
- Busses will be disinfected before every route
- <u>Install Unit Ventilators in classrooms</u>

d.	Contact tracing in combination with local, territorial, and/or Tribal health During SY20-21 (check one): During SY21-22 (check one): Description of both SYs: 2020-2021, Yes:		rantine, in collaboration w  Somewhat:   Somewhat:	vith the State,  No:   No:   No:
	The Merrimack School District collal of Health and Human Services when COVID-19 in our students or staff me participated regularly in the weekly (current with the most up to date contains)	the District was nembers. The district and then bi-week	nade aware of positive cas ict nurses and Human Res ly) Call for School Partne	es of ources also rs to stay
	2021-2022 – The District will continued from NHDHHM and federal CDC.	ue to collaborate v	with DOE and follow reco	mondations
e.	Diagnostic and screening testing: During SY20-21 (check one): During SY21-22 (check one):	Yes:	Somewhat: Somewhat:	No: X No: X
	Description of both SYs:  We did not participate as a district in	screening on our	campus.	
f.	Efforts to provide vaccinations to sch During SY20-21 (check one): During SY21-22 (check one):	nool communities Yes: X Yes: X	Somewhat: Somewhat:	No:  No:
Description of both SYs: 2020-2021 The Merrimack School District began reaching out to Greater Nashua Public Health back on March 5, 2021 to inquire about possible "Closed Site Vaccination Clinics". Unfortunately, Public Health was unable to provide us with a Closed Clinic, however we were able to participate in a "Regional Vaccination Site" for our staff, held at Fidelity Investments in Merrimack, NH on Saturday March 27th and Sunday March 28th.				
	2021-2022 In an effort to be proactive to Public Health about a vaccination for the vaccination clinic for our distribution of the vaccination of the vaccina	clinic in the fall o	of 2021, and have secured	two dates
g.	Appropriate accommodations for chi policies:	ldren with disabil	ities with respect to health	n and safety
	During SY20-21 (check one): During SY21-22 (check one):	Yes: X Yes: X	Somewhat:  Somewhat:	No:  No:

Description of both Sys: Under federal and state mandate all regulations and laws were in effect for students with Individual Education Plans. Ensuring the academic, physical, emotional, and psychological safety of every student is a priority for all reopening plans. This means considering the heightened risks facing our most vulnerable students and the staff who support them, including but not limited to those with compromised immune systems, impulse control issues, or other behavioral issues or disabilities who cannot follow public health guidelines. The plan for these students will be developed on a case by case basis.

Students with complex needs were offered

- met by a staff member at the bus/parent vehicle each day
- staff member to guided them to the main entrance.
- Staff guided through the hand washing process by a staff member upon arrival and will have a schedule of hand washing throughout the day.
- They were escorted by the staff member directly to their assigned classroom. whenever possible, be provided with special education services in the classroom.
- All remote services and therapy were offered to students
- Parents remined a key member of the IEP team

h.	Coordination with state and local During SY20-21 (check one): During SY21-22 (check one):	health officials (p Yes: Yes: Yes:	lease check one): Somewhat:  Somewhat:	No:
	Description of both SYs: 2020-202 Worked closely with our main con Service as well as other contacts at 211 call center line when needed at as well as stayed up to date on the and updated regularly on the NH D	tact, Sheryl Nielsen the NH DHHS for fter hours. Attended most up to date guid	contact tracing guidance.  zoom conference calls he	Also utilized the eld by NH DHHS
	2021-2022			

# IV. Continuity of Services

1. The LEA has provided continuity of services in addressing student academic needs: Description during SY20-21: The Merrimack School District developed an instructional model for the 2020-2021 school year that was based on the theories of <u>Universal Design for Learning</u> and <u>Understanding by Design.</u> The model acted as a guide for our educators to look at the essential components of learning during the pandemic. Whether a child attended school in person or remotely, the staff is committed to providing an education that is:

The Merrimack School District will follow the same procedure in the 2021-2022 school year.

- Consistent

   there will be a schedule to follow and regular communication about assignments and missing work
- Reliable and Understandable- there will be an understanding of expectations, when assignments are due, and how to receive help from the educator(s)
- Rigorous-high quality all work will have purpose; it will help to prepare for new skills, provide practice, and/or allow for demonstration of mastery.



curriculum and a increased attention to rigor and assessments. The Merrimack School District has also established an Instructional Committee, comprised of educators, PreK-12. The committee is tasked with the following:

- Reflecting upon best instructional practices that were honed during the pandemic
- Reading professional articles on recommended steps to take for the re-opening of schools in the
  fall, including the scope of sequence of instruction, instructional materials and tools, and, 'student
  readiness' to learn relative to social emotional wellness.
- Determining means by which to examine gaps in students' skills, competencies and content (note: an assessment committee will determine the measurement tools)
- Planning for the implementation of standards based 'essential learning competencies', and,
- Providing PreK-12 educators with shared 'givens' relative to instructional practices for the first quarter/trimester

The committee will begin convening the last week of June 2021.

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:

3

Description during SY20-21: <u>As a District we have developed a System of Care and Learning Supports Committee</u> (SoC). Our goal before and through the pandemic has been to develop a trauma-informed, integrated, multi-tiered system of care that develops our capacity as educators to address the social-emotional and mental health concerns that are barriers to learning and achievement, and to increase the resiliency of all students.

A SoC meets the needs of students by using a holistic perspective to understand barriers and leverage strengths. Six years ago, after going through a process of identifying the problem and laying the groundwork for the development of the SOC, we came up with this goal statement, that despite the passage of time, still works as a guide for us.



As we look ahead, we are working toward developing our SOC within the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS B model) – which is to say that we know that we want to have supports for ALL students. We want to target supports to those who need more support at the top two tiers. Continue to develop our system that enable us to identify the needs of students in a timely way. Perhaps the most important component of the SYSTEM OF CARE for ALL students is that students feel SAFE, SEEN and SECURE in school, and that every student feels there is an adult they can trust to support them in school.

What we have done in the 2020-21 school year and will continue in 21-22:

- Continuous professional development
- School and district family outreach
- Teams across district with TI/SEL focus i.e. Report Card committee
- Building connections with GNMH, Harbor Care, NAMI, Bureau of Student Wellness
- Partnership for Universal Learning
- Systems at each school to provide "check-ins" to ensure contact with each student
- PD for all staff on SEL, relationship building and trauma-informed teaching, based upon collective work of SEL Task Force.
- SoCaLS exploring best ways to identify and meet the needs of families and educators in order to target supports in a timely, effective manner, within a tiered approach.
- Increased teaming, building capacity of helpers, including HSLS, School Counselors, Behavior Specialists and School Psychologists
- · Additional Home School Liaisons
- SoC Coordinator
- Suicide Prevention Policy, Planning and Training
- A Task Force dedicated to reopening with Trauma Informed and SEL practices in mind
- Required PD for all Staff on TI and SEL practices

- Consultation and connections to youth serving agencies in the area and DOE
- · Check-ins with students
- Educator efforts to make every student feel safe, seen and secure every day at school!
- IPDPs about SEL, Trauma Informed practices
- A Capstone project about SEL
- Teachers assessing their classroom libraries for equity and diverse representation
- Weekly Coffee Chats with the Director of Student Services in Partnership with, our parent group the Partnership for Universal Learning

Food Services: The district provide lunches to all students free of charge. When the district was fully remote the Merrimack School District provided a outdoor space for pick up lunches and partnered with STA and Caring Hands Bus Company to deliver lunches to families when requested.

Description during SY21-22: The Merrimack School District will follow the same procedure in the 2021-2022 school year. Th SoC committee will meet as a task force over the next few months to identify individual, group, building and universal needs. This is a continual process of improvement.

4. The LEA has provided continuity of services in addressing staff social, emotional, mental, and other health needs:

Description during SY20- School Year: To support staff mental health and wellbeing, the District created an Employee Support Team to bring forth resources and information available to our staff including webinars focused on stress management, coping with anxiety, and Employee Assistance Program resources. We created a page on our intranet for our employees to easily access these materials and resources 24/7. The System of Care monthly newsletter also provided information and resources for staff wellness. A district level book group focusing on staff wellness explored this topic more deeply with those who volunteered to participate. Finally, the district also utilized funds from our HealthTrust partners to raffle off \$25.00 gift cards to staff to help boost overall morale during an extremely stressful time.

#### 2021-2022

The district plans to continue all of the offerings from 2020-2021 school year, and we also plan to send out a staff survey to gauge interest in employee events focused on mental health and wellbeing.

#### Plan Review

5.	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: As we move out of the pandemic and all students and adults are given the opportunity to
	be vaccinated we will review the plan in committee, return to the school board for public comment and
	communicate the updates/revisions to the greater Merrimack community.

6.	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: No: No: Description: Merrimack School District has and continues to survey the parent and larger Merrimack community seeking input on the developing plan. Results from these periodic surveys are then reviewed by reopening task force groups and integrated into the developing plan.
7.	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: No:  No:  The Merrimack School District consistently follows and adheres to all CDC and NH DHHS safety guidance. In addition, the Merrimack School District adheres to all reporting requirements relative to safety protocols in place and anticipated in the district.
V.	Authorization
LEA Su	Date:  Tuly 21, 2021

## VIII. Appendices

# Appendix A. ARPA Statutory Excerpt

- "(i) Safe return to in-person instruction.—
- (1) IN GENERAL.—A local educational agency receiving funds under this section shall develop and make publicly available on the local educational agency's website, not later than 30 days after receiving the allocation of funds described in paragraph (d)(1), a plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services.
- (2) COMMENT PERIOD.—Before making the plan described in paragraph (1) publicly available, the local educational agency shall seek public comment on the plan and take such comments into account in the development of the plan.
- (3) PREVIOUS PLANS.—If a local educational agency has developed a plan for the safe return to in-person instruction before the date of enactment of this Act that meets the requirements described in paragraphs (1) and (2), such plan shall be deemed to satisfy the requirements under this subsection."

# Appendix B. Interim Final Requirements of ARP ESSER Excerpt

- "(3) LEA Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services.
  - (a) An LEA must describe in its plan under section 2001(i)(1) of the ARP Act for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services—
    - (i) how it will maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other staff and the extent to which it has adopted policies, and a description of any such policies, on each of the following safety recommendations established by the CDC:
      - (A) Universal and correct wearing of masks.
      - (B) Modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing (e.g., use of cohorts/podding).
      - (C) Handwashing and respiratory etiquette.
      - (D) Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation.
      - (E) Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments.
      - (F) Diagnostic and screening testing.
      - (G) Efforts to provide vaccinations to school communities.
      - (H) Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies.
      - (I) Coordination with State and local health officials.
    - (ii) how it will ensure continuity of services, including but not limited to services to address students' academic needs and students' and staff social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services.
  - (b) (i) During the period of the ARP ESSER award established in section 2001(a) of the ARP Act, an LEA must regularly, but no less frequently than every six months (taking into consideration the timing of significant changes to CDC guidance on reopening schools), review and, as appropriate, revise its plan for the safe return to in person instruction and continuity of services.
    - (ii) In determining whether revisions are necessary, and in making any revisions, the LEA must seek public input and take such input into account.
    - (iii) If at the time the LEA revises its plan the CDC has updated its guidance on reopening schools, the revised plan must address the extent to which the LEA has adopted policies, and describe any such policies, for each of the updated safety recommendations.
  - (c) If an LEA developed a plan prior to enactment of the ARP Act that meets the statutory requirements of section 2001(i)(1) and (2) of the ARP Act but does not address all the requirements in paragraph (a), the LEA must, pursuant to paragraph (b), revise and post its plan no later than six months after receiving its ARP ESSER funds to meet the requirements in paragraph (a).
  - (d) An LEA's plan under section 2001(i)(1) of the ARP Act for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services must be—
    - (i) In an understandable and uniform format;
    - (ii) To the extent practicable, written in a language that parents can understand or, if it is not practicable to provide written translations to a parent with limited English proficiency, be orally translated for such parent; and
    - (iii) Upon request by a parent who is an individual with a disability as defined by the ADA, provided in an alternative format accessible to that parent."