



## LEA Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Service Pursuant to the Federal American Rescue Plan Act, Section 2001(i)

Burlington County Institute of Technology-District: 0610

### Introduction and Background

As announced in the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE)'s [April 28, 2021 broadcast](#), in March 2021 President Biden signed the Federal [American Rescue Plan \(ARP\) Act](#), Public Law 117-2, into law. The ARP Act provides an additional \$122 billion in Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) to States and school districts to help safely reopen, sustain the safe operation of schools, and address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the nation's students. As with the previous ESSER funds available under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA), the purpose of the additional funding is to support local educational agencies (LEAs) in preparing for and responding to the impacts of COVID-19 on educators, students, and families. Additional information on ARP ESSER may be found in the NJDOE's [funding comparison fact sheet](#).

Section 2001(i)(1) of the ARP Act requires each LEA that receives ARP ESSER funds to develop and make publicly available on the LEA's website, no later than 30 days after receiving ARP ESSER funds, a plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services for all schools (Safe Return Plan) A Safe Return Plan is required of all fund recipients, including those that have already returned to in-person instruction. Section 2001(i)(2) of the ARP Act further requires that the LEA seek public comment on the Safe Return Plan and take those comments into account in finalization of the Safe Return Plan. Under the interim final requirements published in [Volume 86, No. 76 of the Federal Register](#) by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE), an LEA must periodically, but no less frequently than every six months through September 30, 2023, review and, as appropriate, revise its Safe Return Plan.

Pursuant to those requirements, **LEAs must submit to the NJDOE and post on their website their Safe Return Plans when updated and no less than every six (6) months.** LEAs will submit their Safe Return Plans to the NJDOE via EWEG. To assist LEAs with the development of their Safe Return Plans, the NJDOE is providing the following template.

This template incorporates the federally-required components of the Safe Return Plan. The questions in the template below will be included in the LEA ARP ESSER Fund application in EWEG. LEAs will submit responses to the questions within the LEA ARP ESSER Fund application in EWEG by June 24, 2021. The NJDOE hopes that this template will allow LEAs to effectively plan for that submission and to easily post the information to their websites as required by the ARP Act.

Note that on May 17, 2021, Governor Murphy [announced](#) that upon the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year, portions of Executive Order 175

allowing remote learning will be rescinded, meaning that schools will be required to provide full-day, in-person instruction, as they were prior to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. The NJDOE and New Jersey Department of Health will share additional information regarding State requirements or guidance for health and safety protocols for the 2021-2022 school year as it becomes available.

Subsequent coordinated recommendations and guidance documents were provided on June 28, 2021 by New Jersey Governor Murphy in collaboration with the Acting NJDOE Commissioner Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan, and New Jersey Department of Health Commissioner Judy Perischilli. The NJDOE provided guidance to districts through three documents: Health and Safety, District Self-Assessment Measure and Research Based Learning Acceleration.

Subsequent to the prior June 28, 2021 guidance noted earlier, the Governor under Executive Order No. 251 announced on August 6, 2021 a mask mandate for all staff and students in schools where all must wear masks inside with notable exceptions which were outlined. On August 20, 2021, the NJDOE released revisions to the Road Forward document which were intended to supplant health and safety protocols outlined in Executive Order No. 175 and the Road Back. The following reflect the most recent guidance and executive orders. On August 23, 2021, the Governor announced in an Executive Order no. 253 that all preschool-through-12 school personnel are required to complete a full vaccination course by October 18, 2021 or undergo regular testing at a minimum of once to twice each week.

On April 10, 2023 President Biden approved the signing of a joint resolution of Congress ending the national emergency.

## **LEA Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services**

**LEA Name: Burlington County Institute of Technology-District Code : 0610**

**Revision Date: May 31, 2023**

### **1. Maintaining Health and Safety**

For each mitigation strategy listed below (A–H), please describe how the LEA 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 and Meals:** The district will continue to follow the guidelines of the CDC, Governor Murphy, and the Burlington County Health Department with respect to the wearing of masks. Our district has made wearing masks in schools optional for students, staff, and visitors. Students and staff may continue to wear protective masks for added protection if they prefer to do so. No adverse reaction of any masked individual in our school facility or on school grounds will be tolerated.

**B. Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding):** Per existing CDC/NJDOH guidance, the district will maintain physical distancing between individuals to the maximum extent practicable. Throughout the school year, the district will consult with the BCDOH in measuring local health data/needs, in conjunction with CDC/NJDOH guidelines, in determining its distancing policies. As these data/needs/guidelines change, the district will adjust its policies and protocols accordingly by balancing the benefits of mitigating risk of virus transmission relative to distancing with the benefits of providing a quality in-person learning experience.

**C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette:** The faculty, staff, and students at BCIT shall utilize good hygiene techniques/practices. All BCIT faculty, staff and students are to use hand sanitizing stations frequently and practice the appropriate protocols for the use of proper handwashing techniques. The district will continue to consider CDC/NJDOH guidance in promoting behaviors, such as frequent handwashing and respiratory etiquette, that reduce the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses. Individuals will continue to be expected to wash their hands for at least twenty seconds at regular intervals during the day, before/during eating, after using the bathroom, and after coughing, sneezing, or blowing their noses. Water bottle filling stations and water fountains will be available and subject to CDC guidelines indicating the contrary.

**D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation:** In conjunction with the protocols identified by the CDC and in correlation with the guidance documents provided by the BCDOH, BCIT will consider the type of surface and how often the surface is touched. Generally, the more people who touch a surface, the higher the risk. BCIT will prioritize cleaning high-touch surfaces and practice frequent cleaning when needed.

In most situations, regular cleaning (at least once a day) at BCIT will be sufficient to remove viruses that may be on surfaces. However, if certain conditions apply, disinfection may be used after cleaning. High-touch surfaces must be cleaned at least once a day or as often as determined is necessary. Examples of high-touch surfaces include: pens, counters, tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, stair rails, elevator buttons, desks, keyboards, phones, toilets, faucets, and sinks (CDC, 2021).

**E. Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health department:**

BCIT faculty, staff, and students will be required to complete a COVID-19 Screening Form prior to the start of the school year and for all new hires which indicates that they or parent/guardian will be responsible to report a change in medical status or as a result of increased symptoms related to COVID-19 which would necessitate that he/she remain home or be self quarantined. Subsequently as a signed joint resolution of Congress on April 10, 2023, President Biden approved the ending of the national emergency. Faculty, staff, students and families should report all changes to their health conditions to the principal or designee, stay home if they are sick, and report all potential or positive cases of COVID-19 to the BCIT School Nurse or BCIT Administrator when applicable. Staff as well as parents/caregivers are strongly encouraged to monitor their own symptoms and that of their children for signs of illness every day as they are the front line for assessing illness in their children.

Key considerations:

- Students or staff who are sick should not attend school.
- Schools should strictly enforce exclusion criteria for both students and staff.
- Schools should educate parents about the importance of monitoring symptoms and keeping children home while ill.

- Schools can use existing outreach systems to provide reminders to staff and families to check for symptoms before leaving for school.
- Schools should provide clear and accessible directions to parents/caregivers and students for reporting symptoms and reasons for absences.

**Remote Instruction and 180 Day Requirement:** Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9, schools must be in session for 180 days to receive state aid. The statute requires that school facilities be provided for at least 180 days during the school year.

- Section (b) notes that where a district is required to close the schools of the district for more than three consecutive school days due to a declared state of emergency, declared public health emergency, or a directive and/or recommendation by the appropriate health agency or officer to institute a public health-related closure, days of virtual or remote instruction commensurate with in-person instruction will count towards the district's 180-day requirement.
- Districts may be confronted with the incidence of COVID-19 positive cases amongst staff and/or students. If a District is required to exclude a student, group of students, a class, or multiple classes as a result of the scenarios listed above, while the school itself remains open for in-person instruction, in accordance with the NJDOE guidelines for Chapter 27 Emergency Virtual and Remote Instruction Programs to which Districts must submit annually a plan to address emergency virtual or remote instruction, the District will be prepared to offer virtual or remote instruction to those students in a manner commensurate with in-person instruction to the extent possible. This will be made on a case by case basis at the District level.
- In circumstances when the school facilities remain open and in-person instruction continues in those classrooms that are not required to quarantine, those days in session will also count towards the district's 180-day requirement in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9.
- Students with underlying health conditions that may make them more susceptible to or exacerbate the symptoms of COVID-19 may be eligible for home instruction per the process outlined at N.J.A.C. 6A:16-10.1 or as required by the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 plan.

F. **Diagnostic and screening testing:** Pre-Screening/Symptom Monitoring/Mandatory Reporting to Parents/guardians, students, and to staff are required in all potential case instances. All faculty, staff, and students are required to complete a COVID-19 Screening Form prior to the start of the school year.

G. **Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible:** BCIT administration will continue to provide educators, other staff, families and students with information from the CDC and the BCDOH regarding updates on health and safety protocols and information regarding vaccination options and distribution locations throughout Burlington County. <https://www.co.burlington.nj.us/1889/COVID-19-Vaccinations>. The Board of Education and the Superintendent shall continually work with the local BCDOH to implement mitigation strategies when and where based on data. <https://covid19.nj.gov/pages/finder>. <https://www.nj.gov/health/>. For assistance, please reach out to NJ COVID vaccine hotline at: 1-855-568-0545. You may also find more information here (<https://acl.gov/COVID-19>) for individuals with disabilities.

H. **Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies:** The Director of Pupil Personnel will work with BCIT faculty, staff, and administrators to monitor the academic, as well as the social, emotional, and intellectual needs of all students with disabilities. Child Study Team Members, Case Managers, and other appropriate BCIT faculty and staff will monitor student progress and maintain the highest level of communication with all parents and guardians to ensure student safety and success during the 2022-2023 school year. Annual IEP Meetings and periodic progress reports will also continue to be utilized to monitor student progress and the need for intervention when applicable and as aligned to the BCIT policies and procedures for I&RS screening and services.

## **2. Ensuring Continuity of Services**

A. **Describe how the LEA will ensure continuity of services, including but not limited to services to address students' academic needs and student's and staff's social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services. (1000 character limit):**

BCIT continues to offer students support in academic remediation and acceleration. We are offering an extended algebra I class which equals ten credits of seat time. We also offer tutoring in all mathematics subjects online in the evenings for students who need extra assistance. Our students sit for progress monitoring several times per year. Once the data from progress monitoring is collected, our specialists meet with each teacher to assist in identifying individual and class needs. Teachers are encouraged to utilize the data in small group and individual targeted instruction. Additionally, individual student conferences are held in which students review their previous data, assess strengths and weaknesses, and plan accordingly. Training and professional development continue the discussion of data by reviewing the strengths and weaknesses of our instruction. BCIT continues its support of student mental health through a variety of programs and resources which are available to all students. We will continue to provide relevant experiences and resources to support and guide staff in improving academic performance and the SEL needs of all learners and their families.

## **3. Public Comment**

A. **Describe how the LEA sought public comment on its plan, and how it took those public comment into account in the development of its plan.**

**Note, the ARP requires that LEAs seek public comment for each 60-day revision to the plan. (1000 character limit):** The LEA has posted the BCIT NJDOE Safe Reopening Plan on the district website for review and feedback from our valued community stakeholders. Continuous updates and communication to the community will be available via blackboard and through the Genesis Parent Portal. The BCIT Learning Community are invited to attend and speak at monthly Board of Education Meetings. The opportunity for public comment and discussion commenced with the opportunity listed on the Superintendent's Agenda at the September 22, 2022 Board of Education Meeting which helped with the updates to the plan. Central office administration will continue to work with all local and state organizations to ensure the most current information regarding COVID-19 health and safety practices and protocols is available to all students, families, and the community. Members of the BCIT Learning Community are also welcome to email their comments and suggestions to [BCITsafereturn@burlcoschools.org](mailto:BCITsafereturn@burlcoschools.org) which is being monitored and taken into account when doing updates to the plan.

B. **Describe how the LEA ensured that the plan is in an understandable and uniform format; is to the extent practicable written in a language that**

**parents can understand or, if not practicable to provide written translations to a parent with limited English proficiency, will be orally translated for such a parent; and upon request by a parent who is an individual with a disability as defined by the ADA, will be provided in an alternative format accessible to that parent. (1000 character limit):** BCIT will utilize a plan that is written in easily understandable language along with a format that has bullets, titles, subtitles, and a table of contents to assist readers. The plan is available via social media and our ADA compliant district website. Hardcopies may be requested. Parents with limited English proficiency may request a copy of their native language. All hardcopy requests should be sent to [BCITSafereturn@burlcoschools.org](mailto:BCITSafereturn@burlcoschools.org)