

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



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Introduction

On March 11, 2021, the American Rescue Plans (ARP) Act was signed into law. In it, the U.S. Department of Education provided an additional \$121.9 billion for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER III Fund). This legislation awarded grants to state educational agencies (SEAs) for providing local educational agencies (LEAs) with emergency relief funds to address the impact that COVID-19 has had, and continues to have, on elementary and secondary schools across the nation.

South Carolina received \$2,112,051,487 in ESSER III funds from the Act, with 90 percent being awarded to school districts. Amounts were determined in proportion to the amount of Title I, Part A funds they received in summer 2020 from funds under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The remaining funds are being used for state-level activities to address issues caused by COVID-19.



This plan describes how the LEA or district will provide the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services for all schools. This report template complies with all reporting requirements of the ARP Act (Public Law 117-2), the [ESSER III grant](#) terms, conditions, and assurances (CFDA Number 84.425U), and the interim final rule established by the U.S. Department of Education, [86 FR 21195](#).

Maintaining Health and Safety

Overview

A district's plan must include how it will maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other school and LEA staff, and the extent to which it has adopted policies or practices and a description of any such policies or practices, on each of the CDC's safety recommendations including: universal and correct wearing of masks; modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing (e.g., use of cohorts/podding); hand washing and respiratory etiquette; cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation; contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the state, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments; diagnostic and screening testing; efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible; appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies or practices; and coordination with state and local health officials.

Description of maintaining health and safety

In the spring of 2020, Ware Shoals School District created a Reopening Team to develop a plan for the reopening of our schools. The Team was composed of teachers, administrators, nurses, and county / local emergency responders. Four subcommittees supported work in the following areas:

Communications and Policies - chaired by the District Superintendent

Instruction and Student Services - chaired by the middle school principal

HR, Finance, and Administration - chaired by the Chief Academic Officer

Facilities, Transportation, Operations, Food Service – chaired by the Safety Coordinator

The Facilities, Transportation, Operations, Food Service subcommittee's work focused on the following key elements:

- Safety and Cleaning
- School Site Recommendations
- Transportation
- Symptom Identification and Response
- Food Service Recommendations
- Stakeholder Expectations

In developing a model for the reopening of Ware Shoals School District, task force members relied heavily on recommendations from the Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) and referred to the latest guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). They also followed recommendations made by the South Carolina Department of Education's AccelerateED task force. These recommendations and other resources can be located here: [dedicationtoeducation.com](https://www.ded.sc.gov/ded/ded-education/ded-education-2020-2021).

The Reopening Team chairpersons convene every six months in order to gather input for the development of the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan. In order to provide as much clarity as possible for students, families, and staff, the district posts an overview of our scheduling and operational plans (i.e. this document) on our district website. The district continues to make the best decisions based on the most current information, and most recently

reconvened the stakeholder committee on June 23, 2022.

Policies or Practices Regarding CDC Recommendations

Universal and correct wearing of masks

Description of Policies or Practices, if applicable

Ware Shoals School District strongly encourages students and staff to wear masks in accordance with the most current guidelines from CDC and the United States Department of Transportation.

Modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing (e.g., use of cohorts/podding)

Description of Policies or Practices, if applicable

School Site Recommendations

To limit transitions throughout our schools, several steps will be taken if needed. These include staggering transition between periods in middle and high schools, designating traffic patterns with clearly marked hallways, and limiting contact with as many surfaces as possible. Students will engage in recess and other outdoor activities.

Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

Description of Policies or Practices, if applicable

For the duration of the COVID-19 period, all staff members are expected to:

Follow basic infection prevention measures, included but not limited to:

Frequent and thorough hand washing for at least 20 seconds.

Follow appropriate respiratory etiquette (e.g., covering sneezes and coughs with crook of arm). Refrain from using other colleagues' desks, phones, offices or other work tools when possible.

Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

Description of Policies or Practices, if applicable

To maintain safe, clean, and secure spaces, Ware Shoals School District's maintenance staff will implement heightened cleaning protocols consistent with the most recent guidance from DHEC and/or the CDC. Medical grade face masks for staff, disposable gloves, spray disinfectant/disinfectant wipes are available at each school. All school buildings and high-traffic touch points (chairs, faucet knobs, handrails, door handles, light switches, countertops, etc.) will be disinfected daily.

All custodians, maintenance staff, and other selected staff have received training in appropriate disinfecting/cleaning techniques.

All staff is trained in maintaining appropriate social distancing, good hygiene, and school/district COVID-19 protocols.

Exterior and interior signage communicating how to stop the spread and describing symptoms of COVID-19, good hygiene, and school/district specific protocols have been placed throughout our campuses and buildings.

The District and schools will review and revise School Safety Plans to account for any new risks associated with COVID-19 and close contact drills, in consultation with our District Safety Coordinator, County Emergency Management Coordinator, and School Resource Officers.

Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine

Description of Policies or Practices, if applicable

Teachers will conduct wellness checks as needed. If a student is displaying COVID-19 symptoms, the teacher will contact the school nurse. Touchless thermometers will be available for use by each school nurse to take student temperatures if the student is displaying symptoms. Students who present symptoms while at school will be isolated until a designated adult is able to pick them up from school.

Schools will follow current DHEC reporting guidelines when notifying parents of a suspect COVID-19 exposure.

Schools will follow current DHEC guidelines for COVID-19 cases within a classroom and other contact tracing protocols.

School Nurses will report daily to the principal the daily health conditions at each school. This report should include daily absentee count of students and staff and identifying reasons, when known.

Diagnostic and screening testing

Description of Policies or Practices, if applicable

Symptom Identification and Response

Knowing that early detection is paramount, parents are requested to screen their children daily and are expected to keep their children home if they answer yes to the screening questions that are available through the DHEC website or have a temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher. In addition, children should not be sent to school if anyone in their household tests positive for COVID-19 or is displaying COVID-19 symptoms.

Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible

Description of Policies or Practices, if applicable

Ware Shoals School District has hosted two staff/community vaccination clinics and several other community clinics. Ware Shoals School District will maintain communication with local DHEC officials and will continue to provide our facilities if future vaccination clinics are deemed necessary.

Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies and practices

Description of Policies or Practices, if applicable

Students who are medically fragile can continue to receive FAPE as a medical homebound student, if it is not considered safe to return to face-to-face instruction, pending appropriate documentation for home-based services. These services can be served either face-to-face in the student's home or a safe location deemed appropriate by both the parent and school district. If the parent or guardian refuses face-to-face services, then the school district/service provider will provide appropriate services virtually.

Coordination with state and local health officials

Description of Policies or Practices, if applicable

Ware Shoals School District will maintain communication with state and local health officials. Further, local health officials are part of our Western Piedmont Education Consortium (WPEC), an organization of school and higher education leaders who meet monthly with the purpose of supporting our districts, campuses, and community to make them a better place to live and work.

Continuity of Services

Overview

Districts must describe how the LEA 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.

District response on continuity of services

The Instruction and Student Services subcommittee worked to determine the safest and most effective way to ensure student learning continues. The subcommittee considered the following:

- Ensuring a high-quality effective instructional program
- Providing clear expectations and communication for instruction
- Providing families with the communication, resources, and support
- Ensuring professional development for teachers to deliver quality instruction
- Implementation of a well-aligned, districtwide SEL Program
- Implementation of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) team
- Clear and consistent communication

2022-23 Model: Traditional Scheduling

In this scenario, health guidelines and facility considerations allow for all students and staff to return to a school building to open the school year and during the school calendar. The Traditional Model most closely resembles school operations prior to the pandemic. This option embraces face to face instruction to happen in a safe and effective manner. In the traditional learning model schools follow their regular school-created schedule.

We are fortunate to have the infrastructure in place to continue services should health officials / government agencies require a change in instructional delivery due to a rise in positive COVID-19 cases. Our district has fully implemented a 1:1 system where every child from K4 to 12th grade is provided with an electronic device. This access to technology allows our students to connect with teacher generated lessons and even participate in live teacher directed instruction. Wireless hotspots have been issued to families who do not have access to the internet.

Professional Learning

To provide students with a high-quality learning experience, Ware Shoals School District will continue to focus its professional development efforts. These professional development topics may include items listed below:

- Safety Protocols
- Effective and Engaging Instruction
- School-Based Instructional Software
- Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Components

This focused list of professional development topics will help create consistency in the quality of instruction and delivery of teaching for all students. It is important to note that this professional development will be ongoing throughout the 2022-2023 school year.

Social and Emotional Health

The social and emotional health of our students and staff has been a priority in Ware Shoals School District. Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. To ensure staff and students have the necessary support and resources to process through their emotions in a safe and secure setting and transition successfully back to school, school counselors and administrators will work to provide needed support to staff and students.

Implementation of a well-aligned, districtwide SEL Program

We strive to create and cultivate a healthy, supportive learning environments in each of our schools. Our guidance counselors will lead class lessons focused on self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making and relationship skills – the foundations to the CASEL Social-emotional framework. We have Behavior Threat Assessment Teams in place at each location to respond in the event of a mental health emergency. We have a partnership with Beckman Mental Health for School Based Mental Health services.

Implementation of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Teams

Upon recommendation of AccelerateED, school and district administrators reviewed their current state-mandated MTSS implementation plans. Each school has an established MTSS team which meets regularly to examine the tiered academic supports for students. In an effort to fully implement a true MTSS model, these teams will address behavioral and social-emotional tiered support in addition to academics.

Clear and Consistent Communication

The district has made and will continue to make clear communication with all stakeholders a priority. Communication modes include: surveys of staff, surveys of parents/families, requests for stakeholder input and feedback. The district strives to provide clear, consistent, and transparent communications to families in order to best meet student needs.

Food Service Recommendations

Ware Shoals School District is returning to traditional in-person meal service in our school cafeterias. Our district has established and tested procedures for continuing food services during school closures. Should the need arise, our food service department will coordinate a drive-thru line on our high school campus. Meals will consist of a bagged lunch and will include breakfast for the following morning. The social and emotional well-being of our students and staff is critical. Our guidance counselors will lead class lessons focused on self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making and relationship skills – the foundations to the CASEL Social-emotional framework.

Periodic Review

Overview

Districts are required to 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, including seeking public input and taking 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.

If a district developed a plan prior to enactment of the ARP Act that was made publicly available and was developed with public comment, but does not address each of the required aspects of safety established in the ARP Act, the district must, as part of the required periodic review, revise its plan consistent with the ARP Act requirements no later than six months after it last reviewed its plan.

District response on ensuring periodic updates to its plan

Periodic Review

Ware Shoals School District 51 commits to review and, as appropriate, revise our *Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan* at least every six months. The district will seek public input and consider feedback when determining if the plan should be revised. The plan will be published on our district website for the convenience of our stakeholders.

Public Input

Overview

The ARP Act requires that school districts make their Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan available to the public online and that the plans be in an understandable and uniform format; to the extent practicable, are 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.

Before making its plan publicly available, school districts must seek public comment on the plan and develop the plan after taking into account public comment.

District response on public input in development of its plan

In the spring of 2020, Ware Shoals School District created a Reopening Team to develop a plan for the reopening of our schools. The Team was composed of teachers, administrators, nurses, and county / local emergency responders. Four subcommittees supported work in the following areas:

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The Task Force held a meeting on June 23, 2022 in order to gather input for the development of the 2022 Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan. The district will continue to make the best decisions based on the most current information. Members of WPEC provide feedback as well. In order to provide as much clarity as possible for students, families, and staff, the district provides an overview of our scheduling and operational plans by positing this document on our website. Stakeholder feedback was incorporated into this latest version of the plan.

Updated June 23, 2022