

# ESSER III 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 is providing an additional \$121.9 billion for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER III Fund). This legislation will award 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.

Wisconsin will receive \$1,540,784,854 in ESSER III funds from the Act, with 90 percent being awarded to school districts with amounts 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 will be used for state-level activities to address issues caused by COVID-19.

This plan describes how the Ripon Area School District will provide a safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services for all schools, including those that have already returned to in-person instruction.

# 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 the 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 on maintaining the safety of staff and students**

The Ripon Area School District will begin the 2021-22 school year with a five-day per week, face-to-face instructional model and adhere to the following health protocols. Accordingly, the District will:

- publish the COVID-19 pre-screening symptoms checklist and strongly encourage students and staff members to utilize the checklist before entering a school facility,
- encourage staff members and students to stay home or go home if they are showing COVID-19 symptoms or if they have tested positive for COVID-19,
- limit visitors and activities for non-essential purposes,
- provide sanitizing stations throughout the building.

### **Description to continue to provide services regardless of the mode of instruction (for example, health and food services if the LEA must pivot to virtual or hybrid instruction)**

The Ripon Area School District will offer in-person learning five days a week according to the Board adopted 2021-2022 Academic Year Calendar. The school district has also provided families the option to enroll their students in Odyssey Academy of Virtual Learning. In the event of school closure due to the pandemic, the District has Chromebooks for all students to continue virtual learning and provides hotspots as needed for families without Internet access.

Regardless of the mode of instruction, the Ripon Area School District will continue to provide meals under the community provision as long as USDA continues the allowance. Meals will be provided for summer school attendees as well as all eligible youth during the school year. If school is closed due to a pandemic, the District will provide meals utilizing the same process or one similar to the one used during the spring of 2020.

The Ripon Area School District employs two RN's each at .6 FTE, an LPN at 1.0 FTE and two additional

LPN's at 0.6 FTE who will continue to offer health services in-person or virtually. The school district also partners with Wisconsin Mental Health to provide mental health support for families.

## Mitigation Measures

### Universal and correct wearing of masks

#### *Description of Policies or Practices, if applicable*

The Ripon Area School Board will adopt thresholds to determine when students, staff, and visitors will be required to wear masks and when mask-wearing will be optional. These thresholds are based on COVID activity in individual classrooms or schools, the level of COVID transmission within the district's geographic boundaries, and in Fond du Lac County. Details about these thresholds can be found on the district website

Modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing (for example, the use of cohorts and podding)

#### *Description of Policies or Practices, if applicable*

Mitigation measures such as proper signage and water bottle filling stations, and the promotion of social distancing have been implemented at each facility. Extended and/or staggered meal service will be implemented to support social distancing while ensuring adequate time for students to consume their meals. Individual schools will determine the cafeteria service that best suits the needs of their students. Cafeterias and/or classrooms may be used as settings for student meals.

Students will be assigned to cohorts in the Infinite Campus student management system if public health conditions warrant the use of hybrid or distance instructional models. Transportation will comply with masking requirements and CDC guidelines that are in effect during the 2021-22 school year.

### Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

#### *Description of Policies or Practices, if applicable*

Handwashing and respiratory etiquette is taught to students with high emphasis in the primary grade levels. Signage is posted throughout buildings as reminders of handwashing and respiratory etiquette. In addition, hand sanitizing stations/liquids are available in all classrooms.

### Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

#### *Description of Policies or Practices, if applicable*

Enhanced sanitation procedures have been implemented and continue at all schools focusing on high-touch surfaces. The District has increased the outside air exchange rate and utilizes higher rated filters. In addition, the ventilation system exceeds required run times. The District uses cleaning solutions that are rated to kill the SARS virus. In addition to daily cleaning, all rooms and surfaces are treated with an electro-static solution on a bi-weekly basis and as needed.

## **Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments**

### *Description of Policies or Practices, if applicable*

The Ripon Area School District will continue contact tracing and transparent reporting to the public of COVID-19 cases and close family contacts within the District. To provide transparent reporting for our stakeholders, the District maintained a COVID-19 case dashboard throughout the 2020-21 school year and will continue to do so for the 2021-22 school year.

The Ripon Area School District will guide parents/students, employees, and contractors on screening protocols for the daily pre-screening process, which all parties should complete before entering the campus/building. Each school will continue to provide current health information to staff, students, and families about the signs and symptoms of COVID-19, when they should stay home, and when they can return to school. Procedures for contact tracing can be found on the district website.

### **Diagnostic and screening testing**

The Ripon Area School District provided free PRC COVID testing beginning in March 2021. Both free Antigen and PCR COVID tests have been available since the last week of August 2021. This testing continues to be available on site at each school through district nursing staff and at a district testing site for students, staff and the families of all students and staff. The turnaround time for results at the Ripon Area School District is generally within 48 hours. The District is also working with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services to coordinate COVID testing at our schools. Students have the option to be tested with parent permission when they are identified as a close contact or become symptomatic.

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

All eligible staff employed in 2020-2021 were provided the opportunity to be vaccinated. Students ages 16 and older were provided access to on-going vaccination clinics through the health department in the spring of 2021. Students ages 12 and older were provided access to an on-site vaccination clinic in the summer of 2021. New staff will be given access to vaccinations by working with local healthcare partners and County Public Health.

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

#### *Description of Policies or Practices, if applicable*

When circumstances require specific policies or procedures designed to protect the health and safety of students, 504 and IEP teams will determine if modifications and/or reasonable accommodations are needed for individual students with disability-related issues.

## **Coordination with state and local health officials**

### *Description of Policies or Practices, if applicable*

The CDC recommends that all decisions about implementing school-based strategies should be made locally, collaborating with local health officials who can help determine the level of transmission in the community. The Ripon Area School District continues to work with the Fond du Lac County Public Health (FCHD) to implement mitigating strategies for the safety of students and staff.

# 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

#### **Student Academic Needs**

The Ripon Area School District has implemented a summer school program to assist all K-12 students with academic recovery. The District plans to continue full-time, in-person instruction beginning the fall of 2021, with limited exception. Additional instructional personnel has been added to staffing to implement further academic recovery efforts in core curriculum areas. These specialists will be available during the instructional day and during after-school through the District's BRAVE tutoring programs throughout the year.

#### **Student Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Needs**

Additional counseling and behavior interventionist staff has been added to the Pupil Services Team to address our students' social and emotional learning needs.

#### **Other Student Needs (which may include student health and food services)**

Food services will continue to provide meals under the community provision as long as USDA continues the allowance. Meals will be provided for summer school attendees as well as all eligible youth during the school year. Summer meals will be provided for summer school and all children age 18 and under through the rest of summer. It is assumed that the USDA will continue community eligibility provision during the 2021-2022 school year under the new school meal application.

#### **Staff Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Needs**

The District has provided staff with opportunities for social and emotional supports through post-school hour meetings with the counseling staff and nursing staff. The staff's social, emotional, and mental health needs may also be addressed through the Employee Assistance Program provided through the District insurance program.

#### **Other Staff Needs**

The District will follow national, state, and local governing agencies' laws and directives concerning staff employment and benefits.

# 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.

### **District response on ensuring periodic updates to its plan**

The Ripon Area School District will periodically review and, as needed, revise the plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services. The plan will be reviewed at least every six months, and the school system will seek and take into account public input at School Board Meeting during the review process. Plan revisions will address updated CDC and County Public Health guidance on safely reopening schools if any are issued.



# 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 the development of its plan

The Ripon Area School District has taken the following steps to make its plan available to the public:

- The plan is posted at:  
[https://www.ripon.k12.wi.us/cms\\_files/resources/Ripon%20ESSER%20III%20Safe%20Return%20to%20In-Person%20and%20Continuity%20of%20Services%20Plan%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.ripon.k12.wi.us/cms_files/resources/Ripon%20ESSER%20III%20Safe%20Return%20to%20In-Person%20and%20Continuity%20of%20Services%20Plan%20(1).pdf)
- The plan was sent to parents, students, and employees via our messaging systems.
- The plan was shared at the Ripon Area School District Board of Education meetings on August 16, November 15 and December 20, 2021. An opportunity for public comment is available during monthly Board meetings for items on the agenda.
- A survey seeking input was sent out to parents and other stakeholders from November 9-13.
- Upon request, a parent who is an individual with a disability as defined by the ADA may be provided with the plan in an alternative format accessible by contacting our district office.