

Uncommon Schools Rochester Prep Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction, Continuity of Services, and Use of ARP ESSER Funds

– Pursuant to the Federal American Rescue Plan Act, Section 2001(i)

Introduction and Background

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.

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 develop and post on their website their Safe Return Plans by July 1, 2021. The New York State Education Department did not develop a template or require LEAs to formally submit plans,

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

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Date: 07/01/2021

Date Revised 12/6/2023, 6/16/2023, 12/12/2022, 06/24/2022, 12/15/21

Ensuring Continuity of Services

True North Rochester Preparatory Charter Schools (Rochester Prep) will ensure the continuity of high-quality student learning by being responsive to students' and staff's needs including health and safety, mental health, and access to food and technology. All schools will use a social and emotional learning (SEL) curriculum. Rochester Prep has developed lessons for each grade span that explore physical, social, and emotional wellness. The objective is to provide students with safe spaces to explore their emotions during these challenging times and take care of their whole selves.

In our effort to continue to expand efforts to support students in need of additional mental health, behavioral and emotional support, our schools will also implement:

1. Summer School - Schools are offering a no-cost, five-week summer school experience with an emphasis on academic development in literacy and math to help close COVID-related student learning gaps. Participating students will also engage in enrichment activities during the program.
2. Social and Emotional Supports - Rochester Prep has a team of full-time, school-based social workers as well as psychologists and counselors to support the social-emotional well-being of our students and their families. Social Worker Supervisors will also conduct professional development for all school-based social workers and counselors on trauma, social emotional learning, wellness, grief, loss, and anxiety.
3. Streamlined Systems for Wellness Service Referral/Documentation - A "Student Wellness Referral and Tracker" tool will be utilized to identify any and all supports that student may need and submit a referral directly to social workers and/or counselors who can determine the appropriate next steps.

School staff have access to a variety of mental health resources. One no-cost resource is the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). This program is designed to provide staff and family members with confidential assistance to support a variety of needs and concerns, including emotional health and well-being, substance abuse, marriage and relationship problems, parenting advice, stress and anxiety management, grief and loss, and financial and legal advice. Our Human Resources Department also shares monthly email newsletters with resources for staff including links to physical and mental health programs available. Schools also include a "Wellness Corner" in weekly communications to families and staff with student and teacher-facing wellness resources and activities.

Public Comment

At Rochester Prep, we believe that seeking input from diverse stakeholders is essential as we develop plans that are responsive to the needs of students, families, and educators. At regularly intervals through the year, we survey school community stakeholders through a robust series of questions to solicit their input into how they believe we can enhance our schools with these funds. The <[survey](#)> is also available to all families, staff, and partners ongoing for additional input. Once we receive input, organizational and school leaders will review the findings and determine the best way to use these funds to support our students and larger school community.

Our plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services and accompanying public comment are translated into the most common non-English speaking languages of our families, namely Spanish. Copies of the plan are available in print form or with oral translation upon request at any in-person school location or by contacting a school Main Office.

Maintaining Health and Safety

For each of the below mitigation strategies, Rochester Prep will implement the following policies, based on the safety recommendations established by the CDC and the New York State Department of Health.

A. Universal and correct wearing of masks

#1. Universal and correct use of masks	
Non-Negotiables	Flexible Implementation
<p>1. All adults and students can continue to wear masks if they choose to and any adult or student who has experienced exposure should wear a mask for 6-10 days following their exposure</p> <p><i>*Limited exceptions/situations are defined as moments where it is impossible for a person to complete a function with a mask on. For example, eating breakfast and lunch or if a student is being assessed for a facial injury (nosebleed, scratch, etc.).</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthy adults and students can choose to remain mask-free at their discretion
Rationale	
<p>The CDC recommends people wear masks in public settings, at events and gatherings, and anywhere they will be around other people. For further information on mask choice, fit and storage guidance, see the CDC's Guide to Masks.</p> <p>For reference, the CDC does not recommend the use of face shields. For limited activities, such as temperature checks or nurse visits, schools may choose to provide face shields for staff personnel, but the overall effectiveness of face shields is unknown and should always be used in tandem with masks.</p>	

B. Physical distancing

#2. Physical distancing

Non-Negotiables

1. 1. All group gatherings must follow state guidelines for indoor and outdoor settings in addition to RP Health & Safety guidelines related to masks and physical distancing.
2. 2. All extracurricular activities (e.g. athletics) must adhere to RP Health & Safety guidelines, as well as state/local guidance for the specific activity

Flexible Implementation

- N/A

Rationale

The CDC recommends physical distancing, whereby individuals keep space between themselves and other people outside of their home. Further recommendations are outlined in the [CDC's Considerations for Schools](#).

#3 Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

Non-Negotiables

1. All students required to sanitize/wash hands frequently throughout the day, at a minimum at arrival, mealtimes, bathrooms, and dismissal.
2. Display clear and prominent hygiene signage (hand wash signs, hygiene station, etc.).
3. Hand sanitizer and hygiene stations are available and frequently re-stocked for all students and staff in all classrooms, offices, and common spaces.

Flexible Implementation

- Sanitizing protocols are implemented after each time a space is used (including classrooms and common spaces).

Rationale

The CDC states that the virus is spread from person-to-person via respiratory droplets and via surfaces, albeit less frequently. As a result, some of the best ways to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus through frequent and thorough handwashing, cleaning and disinfecting, and avoiding close contact with others.

C. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

#4. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities	
Non-Negotiables	Flexible Implementation
<p><u>Facilities</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve ventilation to the extent possible to increase circulation of outdoor air. 2. Ensure all HVAC systems are maintained and operating at manufacturer's specifications. <p><u>Cleaning</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regularly clean frequently touched surfaces, such as door handles, sink handles, and toilets. Limit the sharing of resources for staff and students, whenever possible, or provide sanitization supplies and instructions when equipment is shared. 	<p><u>Facilities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prohibit use of spaces without adequate ventilation, either via HVAC or windows/doors. • Ensure that windows and doors (except external doors) are open whenever possible and use fans to circulate outside air into the building. • Confirm all HVAC units are properly maintained, and filters are cleaned/changed according to manufacturer's specifications.
Rationale	
<p>The CDC states that making changes to physical spaces can promote a healthy environment and facilities, as well as routine and consistent cleaning of high-touch surfaces. For further information on ventilation standards, see the CDC's Ventilation in Schools guidance.</p>	

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

#5. Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine	
Non-Negotiable	Flexible Implementation
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consistent and clear school-based procedures for managing staff and students who have a positive diagnosis of COVID-19, symptoms or exposure. These procedures should be based on and in line with RPCS's policies outlined in the HR Library, including Stay Home, Return to Work, Travel, Exposure, Vaccination, etc. 2. If needed, implement COVID-19 screening testing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools offer Covid tests to staff and students based on symptoms or exposure. • The goal of this testing is to be able to identify individuals who are infected and enable them to take precautions immediately to protect themselves, their families, and the broader school community. You can read more about the CDC's guidance here 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrict all non-essential visitors to the building as per Rochester Prep policy.
Rationale	
<p>Critical to the success of Health & Safety guidelines is the ability for schools to quickly identify positive cases and/or exposure, isolate and mitigate future risk. This requires collaboration with the Health Department to provide information about people diagnosed with or exposed to COVID-19 and for students, teachers and staff with positive test results to isolate, and close contacts quarantine.</p>	

E. Isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, and local health departments

#6. Isolation and quarantine	
Non-Negotiable	Flexible Implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent and clear school-based procedures for managing staff and students who have a positive diagnosis of COVID-19, symptoms, or exposure. These procedures should be based on and in line with Rochester Prep’s policies outlined in the HR Library, including Stay Home, Return to Work, Travel, Exposure, Vaccination, etc. <p><i>*NY State and local guidelines regarding testing always take precedence over the Uncommon policy, if the requirement is to test onsite population. Rochester Prep will default to state and district in-school testing requirements if over 10% of students and staff are to be tested to be in compliance with local regulations.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restrict all non-essential visitors to the building as per Rochester Prep policy.
<p>Rationale</p> <p>Precautions for individuals with COVID-19 are vital to prevent transmission. Isolation, masking, and avoiding contact with high-risk individuals minimize the spread, protecting both oneself and the community.</p>	

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

Rochester Prep encourages all eligible staff, families, and students to get vaccinated to support the health and safety of our communities. Our schools are dedicated to supporting our communities and families by providing easy access to the COVID-19 vaccine. Once educators became eligible for the vaccine, and now that the vaccine is available to all individuals, we will continue vaccination efforts to support our school community with equitable access to the vaccine. Rochester Prep employees are required to be fully vaccinated, or in the rare case of an approved exemption, an employee must complete and submit weekly testing. Previous efforts to support community vaccination during the pandemic have included: two back-to-school pop-up vaccination clinic at our schools. One at our Rochester PrepElementary School campus, located at 899 Jay Street, Rochester, NY 14611 and the other at our High school campus located at 14 Mark Street, Rochester, NY 14621 serving our eligible students, families, and wider community members. At this time, we are pursuing partnerships to provide additional opportunities for community vaccination. Most importantly, all USNYC employees are strongly encouraged to be fully vaccinated.

G. Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies

No students are currently required to wear face masks, but if the school determined this was necessary because of a COVID outbreak, Rochester Prep will work compassionately and collaboratively with students with disabilities, their families, and teachers to provide inclusive options in consideration of a child’s disability to support in person learning with accommodations in reflection of a child’s Individual Education Program (IEP), and Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP). If a parent/guardian of a student with a disability believes the use of a face covering would not be possible for the child because of the child’s disability, the parent should provide documentation from the child’s healthcare provider to the student’s case manager or school principal.

Flexible Implementation: Immunocompromised/Medically Fragile Students
For any students that have increased risk associated with COVID-19, schools should create individualized plans to support them. Individualized plans should consider, but not be limited to the following support strategies:
<p>Additional preventative measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferential seating in classroom (close to door/window, nearest to air vent for circulation, etc.) • Supplemental sanitizing of desk and chair • Extra opportunities to wash/sanitize hands • Phone calls to monitor and educate family on social distancing, hand hygiene, etc. <p>Additional symptom monitoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temperature monitoring throughout the day (past arrival) • Daily check-ins with Nurse for observation <p>Alternate arrival/dismissal location(s)/time(s) to avoid crowds</p>

Plan for Use of ARP ESSER Funds

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Date Revised (if applicable): 12/6/2023, 6/16/2023, 12/12/2022, 06/24/2022, 12/15/21,

Rochester Prep plans to use ESSER funding to work in new and innovative ways to support core instructional and operational priorities, namely addressing learning loss and safely returning to in-person instruction for school years 2020-21 – 2024-25. Funds will support one-time investments in expanded summer school programming that will focus on closing COVID-related learning gaps in literacy and math, rewriting curriculum to implement evidence-based strategies for social emotional learning and academic achievement, and providing additional professional development for all staff around these initiatives. There will also be continued investment into educational technology, remaining committed to providing 1:1 Chromebooks for students with access to related online learning platforms while ensuring continuity of services to students in school or at home as required. Funds will also be used to provide PPE for all staff and students, perform surveillance testing, and test and upgrade our facilities’ ventilation, as necessary.

Please see our charters completed ARP ESSER Applications for additional details on the current Use of Funds plan.

ARP ESSER Applications	
Rochester Prep Charter School	Reporting Survey
Rochester Prep West Campus	Reporting Survey
Rochester Prep #3	Reporting Survey