

Safe Return Plan

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

Updated: 6/17/2021

Introduction

Safe Return

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.

South Carolina will receive \$2,112,051,487 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 LEA or district will provide the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services for all schools, including those that have already returned to in-person instruction. 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

Horry County Schools (HCS) will begin the 2021-22 school year with a five-day per week, face-to-face instructional model and will adhere to the following health protocols. Accordingly, the District will:

- limit ~~non-essential~~ visitors and activities ~~for non-essential purposes~~.
- provide sanitizing stations throughout the building.
- provide opportunities for and promote frequent hand-washing and the use of hand sanitizer.
- utilize guidelines to minimize the number of students being sent to the office area and the health room/nurse's office.
- encourage each school to monitor student arrival and dismissal to discourage students from congregating in groups.
- encourage schools to incorporate a combination of face-to-face and virtual events to reduce the number of large gatherings in the school. ~~such as parent/family meetings, assemblies, etc., where possible.~~
- follow all CDC and SCDHEC guidelines for mask wearing and social distancing.
- encourage use of technology conferencing for District and school staff meetings.
- monitor the spread of viruses or other contagious diseases, such as but not limited to, influenza and COVID-19.

Policies or Practices Regarding CDC Recommendations

Universal and correct wearing of masks

HCS will adhere to CDC and SCDHEC guidelines that are in effect during the 2021-22 school year. CDC currently recommends that all employees and students who have not been vaccinated wear a mask. Each school will continue to provide guidance on the correct wearing of face coverings to the school's staff, students, and parents. Additionally, the District will continue to make available to parents the SCDHEC face covering opt-out form for students for the 2021-22 school year. **The District will also continue to make available to employees the face covering opt-out form for the 2021-22 school year.**

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

Mitigation measures such as proper signage in multiple languages, the installation of floor decals and water bottle filling stations, and the promotion of social distancing have been implemented at each HCS facility. Extended and/or staggered meal service will be implemented to support social distancing while ensuring adequate time for students to consume their meals. Students will be assigned to cohorts in the PowerSchool student management system in the event public health conditions warrant the use of hybrid or distance instructional models. Transportation will comply with SCDHEC and CDC guidelines regarding capacity that are in effect during the 2021-22 school year.

Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

HCS will provide adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors (e.g., soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol for safe use by staff and older children, paper towels, and tissues). Schools will

systematically and frequently check and refill hand sanitizers. Schools will utilize age-appropriate activities that encourage sound personal hygiene practices and respiratory etiquette.

Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

In addition to the numerous mitigation efforts in place, HCS disinfects high touch areas with an EPA-approved germicide throughout the District each day. An electrostatic sprayer is used at the end of the day to disinfect classrooms, restrooms, buses, and other common areas.

The HCS Facilities Department has completed a number of HVAC upgrades both last summer and this summer to improve outdoor air delivery to schools. Additionally, several upcoming HVAC upgrades are being planned for the 2021-22 school year including replacement of old HVAC units and the installation of air purifier devices in the supply side air ventilation system.

Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine

HCS takes pride in extensive contact tracing and transparent reporting to the public of COVID-19 cases and staff quarantines 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, as necessary, for the 2021-22 school year.

HCS will provide guidance to parents/students, employees, and contractors on screening protocols for the daily pre-screening process, a process which all parties should complete prior to 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. HCS will continue to follow the 2020-21 plan for assisting students and staff who exhibit COVID-19 symptoms during the school day.

Each school will establish a dedicated space for symptomatic individuals that will not be used for other purposes. Students who present COVID-19 symptoms will immediately be isolated to the designated space. The symptomatic person will be required to wear a cloth face covering while waiting to leave the facility.

Students who display COVID-19 symptoms or who have received a SCDHEC confirmed positive COVID-19 test result will be asked to quarantine for the SCDHEC recommended period of time.

Diagnostic and screening testing

HCS completed the SCDE survey requesting to be a pilot district for voluntary diagnostic and screening testing during the summer. However, the District did not meet the qualifications. The District hopes to be able to offer voluntary screening during the 2021-22 school year. **Parent permission must be given for a student to participate in the diagnostic and screening testing.**

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

During the 2020-21 school year, HCS worked collaboratively with Conway Medical Center (CMC) to offer the COVID-19 vaccination to all of the District's employees. CMC conducted four two-day vaccination events for District employees at CMC facilities. To prepare for these vaccination events, HCS surveyed

all employees and provided the needed information to CMC who scheduled all appointments. The District will continue its partnership with CMC for the 2021-22 school year.

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

When circumstances require specific policies or practices 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

HCS has a valued partnership with both local SCDHEC staff and local health care providers. For the 2021-22 school year, HCS will continue to implement directives from the CDC and SCDHEC concerning face coverings, social distancing, and contact tracing.

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

Academic Needs

HCS will begin the 2021-22 school year with a five-day per week, face-to-face instruction for students in child development through twelfth grade. The District will also provide a full-time K12 virtual program for students.

Spring and fall 2021 data will be used as baseline measures to determine academic gaps in reading and math. This information will be used to identify learning loss and skill identification to employ additional interventions in reading and math including, but not limited to, tutorials before and after school, as well as reading and math interventions during the school day. Literacy academic growth and progress for students in K-2 will be assessed via the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) assessment in fall, winter, and spring. Literacy and math academic growth and progress for students in K-8 will be assessed via NWEA MAP assessments in fall, winter, and spring. In grades 6-8, iReady Math Diagnostic will also be utilized.

In grades 9-12, schools will utilize state-provided strand data, as well as the state data review, to provide professional development for teachers who teach courses for which the state requires an end-of-course assessment (EOC). HCS common-assessment data will be utilized to monitor growth and progress in EOC courses throughout the year. Schools will provide ongoing support for academically at-risk students who have demonstrated learning loss, as a result of the pandemic, through small-group instruction, interventions, credit recovery, and tutoring. All high schools will continue to strive to increase the number of students who are deemed college- or career-ready and to increase the number of students

who are on-time graduates. In addition, schools will continue to develop and implement strategies to improve all state report card measures.

A continuum of interventions will be provided that supports Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS). Instructional staff will participate in professional learning opportunities to ensure compliance with Act 213, which requires all district and charter schools to report data on the implementation of MTSS and universal screening procedures for students in kindergarten through second grade.

Family Connections

HCS recognizes that families are equal partners in attaining educational goals for students. Educators view families and creating family-school relationships as essential for children's optimal academic, social, and emotional learning. Schools will provide opportunities for family engagement through events such as literacy nights, book fairs, family nights, open houses, musical performances, sports events, and parent-conference days/nights.

Special Education Services and FAPE

HCS is committed to the continued Child Find obligation and efforts under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The District will continue to work in collaboration with schools and parents, guardians, and adult students to provide a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of students with disabilities and those individuals providing education, specially designed instruction, and related services to these students. Specially designed instruction and related services will be provided as specified in student individualized education programs (IEPs) and Section 504 plans. Progress-monitoring data relevant to students' IEP goals will be monitored to identify learning loss/gains and skill identification that may warrant revisions to these plans to meet the individual needs of students. Section 504 meetings and IEP meetings will be scheduled in accordance within the required timelines and processes and will be scheduled at mutually agreed upon times and locations between the school and the parent, guardian, or adult student.

Multilingual Learners

HCS will prioritize the scheduling of ESOL services for English learners in order to maximize service minutes. Schools will continue to schedule EL students with teachers trained in sheltered-instruction content strategies. Teachers will follow the students' individualized learning plans to ensure accommodations are provided for EL students as identified. Essential information, at a minimum, will be provided in the top five languages of students in the District to include Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, Mandarin, and Vietnamese.

Gifted and Talented Students

Existing screening tools used for the identification of gifted and talented students will be utilized. Schools will schedule gifted and talented students with thoughtful consideration to ensure that continuity of services is maintained. Schools will determine the master schedule and groupings, keeping in mind the needs of gifted and talented students.

Grading Practices

HCS will follow the S.C. Uniform Grading Policy and established HCS grading protocols.

Professional Development

Opportunities will be provided to facilitate collaboration and professional development that safely supports the professional growth and development of all staff. Educators will receive ongoing professional learning related to the pedagogy and strategies to promote student learning, social-emotional wellness, and success. New instructional personnel will be provided the opportunity to attend New Teacher Academy in August. Professional development support for the implementation of instructional standards and priorities and updated curriculum maps will be customized for educators based on their grade-level assignments and/or specific content areas such as special education, English as a Second Language, career and technical education, physical education, fine arts, foreign languages, etc. Professional learning communities within and across schools will be utilized in an ongoing manner for the exchange of resources, best practices, as well as discussion of challenges and needs.

Social, Emotional, Mental Health of Students and Staff (Could also include health and food services)

Schools are equipped to address social, emotional, and mental health needs through counseling services and integration of social-emotional learning utilizing the following resources: Caring School Community (CD-5), Second Steps (6-8), and School Connect (9-12).

Rehabilitative Behavioral Health Services (RBHS) is available to all students. RBHS counselors are present in the schools five days a week during the school hours and beyond, if needed. Staff are an integral part of the school community and are involved in meetings regarding students, crisis situations that may involve children not involved with the program (as school administration expresses the need), and other non-academic programs (assemblies, special teams). HCS is fortunate to work collaboratively with Waccamaw Mental Health (WMH) and have seven WMH counselors assigned to our schools. **HCS will continue to provide professional development and resources for school guidance and RBHS counselors in an effort to better assist students.**

Each HCS campus has a nurse on site to assist students.

Meal Service will be provided in disposable containers or bags to reduce contact. For breakfast, Nutrition Services will provide grab-n-go breakfast to the classrooms or allow students to pick up a breakfast meal at a designated entrance as students arrive. For lunch, Nutrition Services will allow students to come to the cafeteria to pick up a pre-packaged hot or cold meal with milk to take back to their classroom to consume. Should conditions allow, students will be allowed to dine in the cafeterias with social distancing. Boxed or bagged meals will also be provided, as needed, for unique situations to serve special needs or virtual learners.

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

During the period of the ARP ESSER award (until September 2023), HCS will periodically review and, as needed, revise its 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 during the review process. Plan revisions will address updated CDC and SCDHEC 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 development of its plan

HCS has taken the following steps to make its plan available to the public:

- ❖ The plan is posted at <https://www.horrycountyschools.net/>
- ❖ The plan is available in multiple languages through the use of our web provider powered by Google Translate. The plan is available in more than 100 languages.
- ❖ The plan will be sent to parents, students, and employees via our messaging systems.
- ❖ The plan will be shared at the June 7 and June 21, 2021, Horry County Board of Education meetings. An opportunity for public comment will be available during the June 21, 2021, Board meeting.
- ❖ *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 Kristin Wilson, Executive Director of Federal Programs, KWilson001@horrycountyschools.net, (843) 488-6562.