



# **DISTRICT: Public Plan**

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

*NOTE: If any of your answers to the following questions require additional space,  
please use the supplemental blank pages at the end of this document.*

# DISTRICT: \_\_\_\_\_

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



The Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief 3.0 (ESSER 3.0) Fund under the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021, Public Law 117-2, enacted on March 11, 2021. ARPA ESSER Funding provides a total of nearly \$122 billion to states and local educational agencies (LEAs) to help safely reopen and sustain the safe operation of schools and address the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the nation's students. In addition to ARP ESSER Funding, ARP includes \$3 billion for special education, \$850 million for the Outlying Areas, \$2.75 billion to support non-public schools, and additional funding for homeless children and youth, Tribal educational agencies, Native Hawaiians, and Alaska Natives.

LEAs must develop and make publicly available a *Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan* that meets the following requirements within 30 days of receiving ARP ESSER allocation. If an LEA developed a plan before ARP was enacted that does not address the requirements, the LEA must revise its plan no later than six months after it last reviewed its plan. All plans must be developed with meaningful public consultation with stakeholder groups (i.e.,

families, students, teachers, principals, school and district administrators, school leaders, other educators, school staff, advocacy organizations representing student groups). The consultation process must include an opportunity for input and meaning consideration of that input. ARP ESSER plans to be in an understandable and uniform format; to the extent practicable, 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. All plans must be made publicly available on the LEA's website and published on the Tennessee Department of Education's (department) website within thirty (30) days.

Please note that LEAs need to **update** the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan **at least every six months** through September 30, 2023, and must seek public input on the plan and any revisions, and must take such input into account. All revisions must include an explanation and rationale of why the revisions were made.

Questions in this health plan were developed by the US Department of Education.



## ESSER 3.0 Health Safety Plan

On Friday, Aug. 27, 2021, Knox County Schools submitted an application to the State of Tennessee in accordance with the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief 3.0 (ESSER 3.0) Fund under the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021.

As part of that application, the district submitted a “Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan.” In an effort to make that safety plan readily accessible, the questions (which were developed by the U.S. Department of Education) and answers submitted by KCS are reprinted below.

### **Question #1**

#### Consultation with Stakeholders

Describe how the LEA will, in planning for the use of ARP ESSER funds, engage in meaningful consultation with stakeholders, including, but not limited to:

- i. students;
- ii. families;
- iii. school and district administrators (including special education administrators); and
- iv. teachers, principals, school leaders, other educators, school staff, and their unions.
- v. tribes;
- vi. civil rights organizations (including disability rights organizations); and
- vii. stakeholders representing the interests of children with disabilities, English learners, children experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, migratory students, children who are incarcerated, and other underserved students.

### **KCS Answer #1**

As part of the ESSER planning process, Knox County Schools (KCS) utilized several strategies to meaningfully engage and consult with stakeholders. KCS launched a community wide survey to engage all students, educators, families, and other stakeholders to provide input on critical needs and priorities for the ESSER funds. The district intentionally shared the survey with all of the required stakeholder groups and with the general public. KCS also held focus group opportunities for teachers, principals, and parents to provide feedback in a small group setting. Finally, the district also held two open forum community meetings to gather additional stakeholder feedback.

### **Question #2**

Provide an overview of how the public stakeholder input was considered in the development of the LEA’s plan for ARP ESSER funds.

**KCS Answer #2**

Public stakeholder feedback was reviewed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The survey was assessed to see overall trends across the Academics, Student Readiness, Educators, and Foundational Elements categories established by TDOE. These trends were then compared to the comments and trends shared in the community meetings and focus groups. Finally, open ended responses to the survey were reviewed to see additional trends, ideas, or priorities mentioned in the community. This feedback was shared with the district leadership team and board members to consider during the plan development. A comprehensive stakeholder feedback report outlining trends and priorities was developed and shared.

**Question #3**

How did the LEA compile feedback during the open comment period for the ARP Plan?

**KCS Answer #3**

KCS engaged with a technical assistance provider through its partnership with the Knoxville Education Foundation to support the open comment period and stakeholder engagement process. This partner developed in partnership with KCS the focus group questions, survey questions, and facilitated community meetings. The partner developed a comprehensive stakeholder feedback report outlining the open comment period trends and data and also made available to KCS detailed notes from surveys and meetings.

**Question #4**

How was the input considered during the open comment period time?

**KCS Answer #4**

The district reviewed survey responses at the midpoint of the survey administration period and again at the completion of the survey window. During the survey period, the KCS Executive Team reviewed the midpoint survey responses against the data in the needs assessment to begin to identify priorities based on the intersection of the two documents. They also reviewed community input to determine if additional data needed to be considered in the needs assessment. KCS leadership and board members were also engaged in the community meetings to hear feedback from stakeholders firsthand. While they did not participate in the small group discussions, they listened, took notes, facilitated deeper questioning to understand the community input during the community listening sessions. Notes and trends from the focus groups were also shared prior to the process for identifying the key priorities in the plan. Ultimately, all this information was compiled into a stakeholder feedback report at the conclusion of the open comment period, which ended on July 1, 2021. The Executive Team and other district leaders reviewed all the notes from the process to develop six priorities that aligned with the guidelines of ESSER 3.0, the needs assessment, and the stakeholder feedback. Additionally, the external consultant met with each School Board member during the month of July to share the results of the needs assessment, stakeholder feedback, and list of key priorities with key actions. The draft plan was then presented to the Principal Advisory Council and the larger principal body for feedback. It was also published with the school board agenda and discussed at the August 4, 2021, meeting, which was also open for public comment. The final draft of the plan was approved by the school board on August 11, 2021. The district team completed the plan between August 11 and the August 27 submission date.

## **Question #5**

### Safe Return to In-Person Instruction

Describe to the extent to which the LEA has adopted policies and a description of any such policies on each of the following health and safety strategies:

- universal and correct wearing of masks;
- 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;
- diagnostic and screening testing;
- efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible; and
- appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies.

## **KCS Answer #5**

The responses below reflect the practice and policies Knox County Schools will be following at this time.

**Universal and correct wearing of masks** The Tennessee Department of Health recommends the use of face coverings; however, the district recognizes that this is a family decision. The district strongly recommends teachers, students, school personnel, and visitors use face coverings when indoors and physical distancing is not possible, regardless of vaccination status. Physical distancing (e.g., use of cohorts/podding) Students and staff are expected to maintain 3ft of physical distancing while indoors to the greatest extent possible.

**Hand washing and respiratory etiquette** Students and staff are expected to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Staff will reinforce good handwashing habits through modeling and verbal reminders. In addition, KCS provides additional hand sanitizer and paper towels to all of our classrooms.

**Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities** Knox County Schools maintains clean and healthy facilities through a combination of regular custodial support and both preventative and reactive maintenance programs. Our custodial support includes regular surface disinfecting with a high quality COVID effective agent, and our maintenance teams ensure that work orders for HVAC and environmental related issues are prioritized. KCS also provides hand sanitizer and disinfecting agents to all classrooms and common areas used by students and staff. We use antibacterial soap in all restrooms and restrooms have disinfectant applied multiple times each day.

**Including improving ventilation** Knox County Schools HVAC and ventilation systems are centrally controlled and professionally balanced for introduction of fresh air and the maintenance of proper humidity levels. We have a regular filter replacement program and units are inspected for proper function at the time of filter replacement. Our systems are designed and balanced to circulate the building air three times an hour with the introduction of 15% fresh air with each circulation. We are replacing almost 65% of the air in the building each hour.

Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine Confirmed Positive Case:

- The Knox County Health Department (KCHD) will contact trace. KCS will support the process by providing readily available and relevant information to KCHD.
- KCS/KCHD will document these positive cases and the individual will be required to isolate.
- KCS will notify families in the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19 in their school.
- Close contacts are expected to quarantine based on the guidance communicated by the KCHD.
- Staff and families who have specific questions will be directed to their primary care provider or to KCHD.
- Staff and students who are isolated due to a positive case of COVID-19 will only be allowed to return with documentation. This can be a release from a physician or KCHD.
- A dashboard on the Knox County Schools website will share data from the Knox County Health Department regarding active student and staff COVID cases. This dashboard will update as Knox County Health Department updates its database.

Diagnostic and screening testing Knox County Schools does not offer COVID-19 testing; however, the district does encourage families to reach out to their primary care physician or the Knox County Health Department for testing.

Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible KCS partnered with East Tennessee Children's Hospital in the Spring of 2021 to provide vaccination to staff members who wished to be vaccinated. KCS has not organized any vaccination opportunities for students. KCS will distribute fact sheets regarding COVID-19 vaccination to all staff and parents.

Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies. Families whose student require special accommodations can request a 504 or IEP meeting to discuss the individual needs of the student and what accommodations are needed for their students to access their education.

#### **Question #6**

##### Continuity of Services Plan

How the LEA will ensure continuity of services including but not limited to services to address the students' academic needs, and students' and staff social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services.



## **KCS Answer #6**

Knox County Schools has gone to great lengths to prepare and address instructional challenges caused by the pandemic. During the summer of 2020, the district invested in 1:1 Chromebooks for all students and teachers with earlier Covid relief funds. Throughout the re-entry to school in 2020-2021 school year, the Teaching and Learning Department trained teachers in evidence-based practices with technology, distance learning, and disciplinary pedagogy through remote delivery systems. Additionally, the district invested time and resources to consider equitable grading systems for in-person and remote learning methods. While KCS has returned to in-person school except for the students who have applied for and been admitted to the Virtual Schools, teachers are expected to maintain their content on their LMS, Canvas, and they have access to Microsoft Teams for synchronous virtual instruction should conditions warrant a move to remote instruction.

With ESSER 2.0, KCS invested in an assessment strategy to monitor student learning throughout the 2021-2022 school year. Case21 is a tool that schools will use to monitor student learning of the standards. Schools will use Aimsweb+ to monitor students' mastery of foundational skills in reading and numeracy, and new curriculum assessments will provide ongoing assessment throughout the courses of study. Additionally, the district has a battery of diagnostic assessments for reading and numeracy to use to further understand student learning difficulty to be able to prescribe the right interventions if necessary. The assessment suite can be used remotely if that becomes necessary.

Through ESSER 3.0 funding and supported with Title IIA professional development funding, tutors will be deployed to support students in the 25th-41st percentiles as identified on TCAP assessments, and the Case21 and curriculum-based assessments will provide the information for the tutors to identify the students' needs. The tutors will be employees of the school district and will operate in-person; however, because they are KCS employees, they have the capability to tutor remotely if necessary.

Using ESSER 2.0, KCS has also purchased High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) for reading and English K-12 and has made a shift in middle grades math to an HQIM in response to the Algebra I data. All materials have a print and digital component, but they can be used remotely if that becomes necessary.

The expectation for all KCS teachers for the 2021-22 school year is to post daily make-up work for all students in Canvas. Students who miss school for any reason can access their assignments asynchronously and submit work on a daily basis. While the in-person teacher will remain the teacher of record for any quarantined or isolated student, KCS will establish a virtual helpline to support students during the school day.

Knox County Schools will continue to provide tiers of support services for students to meet their social emotional and mental health needs. Schools continue to implement the 1-2-3 connect program in which each student is matched with a caring adult, a needs assessment is conducted by counseling and social workers to help with programming for students, and staff are provided additional supports and resources to work with students. During the summer of 2021 over 1700 classroom staff were provided a variety of professional development experiences that helped prepared them for the students' reentry into in-person learning. Additional behavioral health support for virtual students is provided through the

department of School Culture. Every new teacher to KCS has been trained in trauma informed practices and social and personal competencies prior to entering their classroom. KCS also implements a comprehensive counseling program which is designed to meet the identified needs of the students. Designated clinical staff work to provide consultation to the school counselors as they support students who experience increased anxiety and stress returning to school. As part of its ESSER 3.0 application, KCS has proposed funding to allow the mental health contracted services continue to all the middle and high schools. The Coordinated School Health program will continue to facilitate Healthy School Teams in each of our schools to provide assessment and data to drive school initiatives to support the healthy choices of students.

To address ongoing concerns for student nutrition, KCS will continue to provide breakfast and lunch meal service at no cost for in-person students through the continuation of the Seamless Summer Program. Due to continued flexibility from USDA, we are also offering a pickup option for those students choosing virtual learning at one of our KCS virtual schools.

Knox County Schools values the mental and physical health of our staff. Our employees who are enrolled in health insurance through KCS have access to an employee assistance program (EAP) which allows for up to 5 free counseling sessions. Benefits eligible dependents are also eligible even if not enrolled in medical insurance. Employees (and dependents over 18 who are working full or part time) also have access to a free “take charge at work” program through EAP. The Take Charge at Work program is a telephonic coaching program that helps members with depression improve performance at work. Sanvello is an on-demand mobile app available to employees enrolled in health insurance through KCS that helps with stress, anxiety, and depression.

Finally, our Office of School Culture has been able to provide acute emotional assistance or resources to employees.

### **Supplemental Responses**

Should you require additional space to complete your response to any of the above questions, please use these supplemental blank pages. If using this space for multiple answers, leave a space between and *be sure to include which area you are adding a response to at the beginning.*

### **KCS Supplemental Responses**

#### **Safe Return Responses**

Below are quotes and trends captured from different forms of community engagement during the ESSER 3.0 planning process. The survey quotes are direct from the survey and capture all mentions of the topics covered in the final three open response questions.

Of the specific topics asked about, handwashing was not directly mentioned on any surveys. Additional potential topics have also been included.

#### **Social distancing**

#### **Survey Quotes**

- I'm guessing the academic space is referring to social distancing which is my least concern at this moment. – HS Family Member



- Some of our classes, especially the ones in the portables, are limited to the size that is needed for all the technology, groups, centers, social distancing, etc – Teacher
- We need safe spaces for students to socially distance-most will not have vaccinations-and will not be required to wear masks--SO we need more space. – ES Family Member

#### Focus Group Notes

Excited about a normal year and doing the things he's used to doing. Having peace of mind not having to worry about social distancing as much – ES Teacher Mask-wearing

#### Survey Quotes

- STOP MAKING OUR CHILDREN WEAR MASKS!! – ES Family Member
- Masks optional to allow students to feel normal again while interacting with others – MS and HS Family Member
- Stop the outrageous infringement on our kids civil rights with the unnecessary mask – ES Family Member
- You know how Knox isn't requiring masks? That is a serious problem on several fronts. Relates to sending children and teachers into buildings with older HVAC. Must be upgraded. More space allowing students to spread out, also smart. – ES Family Member
- I appreciate the school board and superintendent requirement of face mask and cleaning protocol provided last year. – Teacher
- No mask requirement!!!! – ES, MS, and HS Family Member

#### Focus Group Notes

- You lose some emotional contact when all students are masked all of the time. - Principal

#### Sanitation measures

#### Survey Quotes

- Updating physical space and keep in mind how to make things easier to keep sanitary – ES Family Member
- CLEANLINESS OF FACILITIES- more focus on SANITATION by hiring more custodial staff. Actual DAILY SANITATION of each desk space and the bathrooms should occur. Not just sweeping the classrooms and bathrooms with a broom and emptying the trash containers. Actual wipe down of each desk space with a sanitation solution daily. Actual sanitation solution on all bathroom surfaces daily. Not just a weekly sanitation wand spray. – ES Family Member
- Focus on facilities safety, security, sanitation first so that our students can know and not worry about being SAFE so that they can focus on learning instead. Hard to learn when you are worried about getting sick/getting hurt/dying. - ES Family Member (same as above)
- install air systems that sanitize and UV lighting – ES Family Member
- The custodial situation is abysmal. Classroom desks and floors are not cleaned from August through May, which is disturbing even in non-pandemic times. – Teacher

#### Focus Group Notes

- Having a clean school is important. That's the custodial staff. Year-round staff are a tremendous resource for teachers and students. – Family Advisory Council Member Quote

#### Quarantine

#### Survey Quotes

- Do away with quarantines for “exposed” individuals. SO MUCH learning time was completely wasted because of perfectly healthy students being forced to stay home and quarantine for so long. – MS and HS Family Member

- High speed is needed for distance learning but the distance Learning we experience during quarantine was dismal because it tried to combine in class with viewing in in the in class students were very disruptive – HS student

HVAC and ventilation

Survey Quotes

- Thank you for considering smaller class sizes and better ventilation for existing classrooms – Teacher
- There are out dated systems, moldy rooms, not enough space, no storage, old hvac etc – Support Staff
- The head/air turnover, appropriate ventiation systems, necessary furniture, lighting, HVAC systems are imperative and the next up Internet/Tech go hand in hand. But whatever it takes to have healthy humans comes first. – Teacher

- If students and teachers are safe and comfortable, such as with consistently working HVAC systems, then better learning can take place. – Teacher

- They need new carpets, new rugs, fresh paint and removal of mold and mildew. They also need new HVAC systems to prevent mold and mildew. Improved building conditions would lead to healthier school populations, less absences and less lost learning days. Also a positive physical environment promotes positive attitudes, which increase learning. – Teacher

- HVAC systems need to be compliant with current recommendations for Covid-19 (4-6 air changes per hour; filters at greater than MERV 13, etc.). – Teacher

- HVAC and proper ventilation to reduce the spread of airborne pathogens should be the top priority. – Teacher

- Please update buildings (including HVAC systems) and provide more custodial staff. – Teacher and MS & HS Family Member

- Could we upgrade some of our out dated HVAC systems that would increase our air quality? - School Admin

- Building repair/custodial upkeep, especially HVAC systems, window access, number of custodian – Teacher

- Evaluate the infrastructure of the schools - HVAC, electrical, plumbing - and update as needed to provide a safe learning environment. – HS Family Member

- Invest in HVAC equipment to improve consistency and comfort in the schools with old antiquated heating and cooling; or leaky, loud widows. We know that students learn best between 68 and 74 degrees with adequate ventilation. There are still a few schools that don't have the HVAC equipment capable of maintaining those conditions. – Support staff

Focus Group Notes

- Facilities is a must! Our portables are not suitable for children or teachers - poor structure and ventilation. – ES Teacher

Community Meeting Trends

- Ventilation concerns were mentioned multiple times during community meetings

Protocols

Survey Quotes

- We need to continue health and safety protocols for the upcoming year – Teacher

Other

Survey Quotes

- Concerns about potential shut downs and the messaging therein was mentioned multiple times during community meetings