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**State Plan for the  
American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund**



**U.S. Department of Education**

**Issued: April 21, 2021**

OMB Number: 1810-0754  
Expiration Date: October 31, 2021

## Introduction

The American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (“ARP ESSER”) Fund, authorized under the American Rescue Plan (“ARP”) Act of 2021, provides nearly \$122 billion to States to support the Nation’s schools in safely reopening and sustaining safe operations of schools while meeting the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of students resulting from the coronavirus disease 2019 (“COVID-19”) pandemic. It is particularly important that ARP ESSER funding will enable States and local educational agencies (“LEAs”), and more directly schools, to support students who have been most severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and are likely to have suffered the most because of longstanding inequities in our communities and schools that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The U.S. Department of Education (“Department”) is committed to working in partnership with States so that these unprecedented resources are quickly put to work to ensure students have sustained access to in-person instruction and that the resources are used to provide the effective support students need as they persist through and recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The thoughtful and timely use of these funds will have a lasting impact on our Nation’s schools and help to address the inequities in resources, services, and opportunities available to our students.

This template presents an opportunity for States to share their plans for the use of ARP ESSER funds with the public. The Department must approve a State educational agency’s (“SEA’s”) plan in order to make the State’s remaining ARP ESSER allocation available for use. Please note that the Department intends to issue ARP ESSER reporting requirements separately.

## Instructions

Each SEA must provide descriptions and other information that address each requirement listed below. An SEA may use this template or another format as long as every item and element is addressed in the SEA’s response. Throughout this document, questions that refer to an SEA’s ARP ESSER funding are referencing the total allocation to be received by the SEA, including that which it allocates to its LEAs.

Each SEA must submit to the Department by **June 7, 2021**, either: (1) its ARP ESSER plan or (2) the State requirements that preclude submission of the plan by that date and a date by which it will be able to submit its complete ARP ESSER plan.

To submit the SEA’s plan, please email the plan to your Program Officer at [State].OESE@ed.gov (e.g., [Alabama.OESE@ed.gov](mailto:Alabama.OESE@ed.gov)).

In order to ensure transparency, the Department will post each plan on the Department’s website when it is received and will indicate each plan’s approval status.

This template also allows States to fulfill the requirement of the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (“CRRSA”) Act ESSER II 6-month reporting requirement in section 313(f) of the CRRSA Act.

**Cover Page**


**Grantee and Contact Information**

**ARP ESSER PR Award Number (e.g., S425U2100XX):**

**SEA Contact:** Eve Carney

**Telephone:** 615-532-1245; 615-854-9598

**Email address:** Eve.Carney@tn.gov

By signing this document, I agree to each of the assurances listed in Appendix C and further assure that: To the best of my knowledge and belief, all information and data included in this plan are true and correct.	
<b>Chief State School Officer or Authorized Representative (Printed Name)</b>  Dr. Penny Schwinn, Ph.D.	
<b>Signature of Authorized SEA Representative</b>  	<b>Date:</b> 6/7/21

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<b>Chief State School Officer or Authorized Representative (Printed Name)</b>  Dr. Penny Schwinn, Ph.D.	
<b>Signature of Authorized SEA Representative</b>  	<b>Date:</b> 7/2/21

## A. Describing the State's Current Status and Needs

The Department recognizes the extraordinary efforts made by States, LEAs, and educators to support students during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this section, SEAs will describe the progress they have made, the priorities and student needs guiding their ARP ESSER funding decisions, and their current and projected operating status.

1. **Progress and Promising Practices:** Provide your assessment of the top 2-3 strategies that have been most effective in supporting the needs of students in your State during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially for students most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Please include, if applicable, how your State will submit and encourage its LEAs to submit lessons learned and best practices to the Department's [Safer Schools and Campuses Best Practices Clearinghouse](#) so that they can be shared with other States and LEAs.

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted every community across our state but in varying degrees – and often with unique, local challenges. In assessing the most effective strategies implemented over the past 14 months, Tennessee invested early in several key areas designed to support districts in addressing student and teacher needs in this unprecedented health crisis: Communication (guidance, frequent touch points, and feedback groups) and Flexible Academic Options.

### Communication

**Guidance:** The Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) produced a series of individual [toolkits for school reopening, similar to the significant number of toolkits produced when school buildings needed to close in Spring 2020](#). The toolkits were comprehensive and included detailed planning guidance. In effect, TDOE worked to outline potential risks, scenarios, and options for districts to consider within each of the topics identified in relation to work at the district and school levels. This was provided to LEAs, public charter schools and the general public, for consideration in the midst of reopening safely and employing best practices. The toolkits addressed a host of topics including academics, health, nutrition, safety and operations, child well-being, and supports for students with disabilities; as well as other topics requested by our stakeholders. Further, it is worth noting that within each planning document, guidance page, or FAQ produced by TDOE, a specific staff member point of contact was offered for direct contact and questions. These were especially important smaller and rural districts who might not have the same size central office staff to do the level of strategic thinking and planning as larger districts. The role-specific toolkits also gave districts the option to provide district directors with a ready-made resource to advance the work. Each of the guidance toolkits was focused on how to best meet the needs of all students (with specific call-outs for specific student groups) and provided roadmaps for districts to use to open schools safely and ensure continuity of services.

**Frequent touch points:** In March of 2020, the Commissioner began tri-weekly calls with Tennessee superintendents to disseminate information in real time, which was especially beneficial given how quickly the information was changing. Each week, TDOE hosted officials from partner agencies (Tennessee Department of Health, TSSAA, Department of Health and Human Services, TEMA) to address available supports and services. Further, Q&A lines were made open for direct inquiries on topics at hand or for future planning. Slide decks, notes, and email blasts followed these engagement calls to collect the information for relevant parties to review and address.

In addition, regular office hours were hosted by TDOE to support districts on the allowable use of the CARES Act relief funding designed to address the immediate needs of students, families, teachers, and districts. These office hours allowed TDOE staff to provide and tailored support for districts.

These frequent touch points provided a clear opportunity for district leadership to ask questions related to how best to support their students, within the specific contexts they were facing. They further provided options and opportunities for individual follow-up and often created a needs assessment for the state for additional resources to produce.

**Feedback Groups:** In the spring of 2020, TDOE also developed three Superintendent Engagement groups and hosted bi-monthly feedback sessions. These groups provided TDOE leadership critical information and feedback to surface the issues schools, districts and communities were facing. Each group focused on one of Tennessee’s strategic priorities: Academics, Whole Child/Student Readiness, and Educators. This group has been especially beneficial in the following areas:

- **Risk assessment:** direct communication about potential flags, gaps, or issues with decisions, feedback, input, etc.
- **Review:** real-time review and feedback delivered on department grants, supports, and initiative roll outs
- **Ideas and innovation:** qualitative and quantitative feedback on district implementation, efforts, and impact

These three engagement groups have transformed TDOE’s relationship with districts and fostered more district-to-district collaboration and sharing of best practices of the best ways to support all students and individual student groups throughout the pandemic. These strategies have also provided insight into student groups that have been most impacted by the pandemic. For example, we heard directly from districts in late spring specific needs for economically disadvantaged students including food service, technology, as well as communication challenges. With these direct feedback loops and frequent touchpoints, TDOE personnel has been able to respond with specific resources and support in real time –

with the state equipping districts with information and materials needed for local implementation.

### **Flexible Academic Options**

In its [Reopening Schools – Overview Guide for LEAs](#) document, TDOE also provided flexibility to LEAs based on the local impact of the pandemic. Even within these four options, TDOE provided additional flexibility related to implementation – knowing that first and foremost, we must keep people safe. LEAs could opt to implement one of the four academic options below:

1. **All students physically in school buildings:** This option is the most straightforward, assuming that it is safe to reopen in a traditional format. LEAs also have flexibility within this option to return all students simultaneously, implement staggered student return or scheduling, or offer year-round option.
2. **All students participate in virtual and distance education:** This option addresses LEAs offering either full-time distance learning or self-paced/semi-independent instruction. This may be done either through an existing platform provided by the LEA/school or when students are enrolled in a virtual school. As a note, full sets of instructional materials, with videos and assessments have been provided at no cost to all districts in Tennessee in order to provide an option for distance education, should it be needed.
3. **Some students in physical buildings and some students virtual:** Within this option students attend half days at school and half days virtually – either with split days, alternating days or physical attendance based on need.
4. **Cyclical or intermittent physical and virtual education:** This option was intended to prove a more flexible option to families and staff to accommodate health and level of comfort with physical attendance. LEAs may opt for families and staff members to select the form of education that they would like to use- selecting to learn from home (while still being enrolled in the district). Similarly, teachers who are unable to return to work may be those teachers who also participate in distance instruction. This option also met the need for a contingency plan based on emergent or responsive situations.

This flexibility was especially helpful and well received by LEAs who were facing both health and education crises simultaneously.

2. **Overall Priorities:** Provide your assessment of the top 2-3 issues currently facing students and schools across your State as a result of or in response to the COVID-19 pandemic including, to the extent possible, data illustrating why these are the most critical and/or most widespread issues facing schools and students.

Schools and students across Tennessee are facing a number of academic and non-academic issues as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As noted above, this pandemic surfaced some



distinctive challenges in communities; however, there were other issues that were more widespread across the state.

- **Achievement Gaps:** Overall, Tennessee’s achievement gaps have not closed in the last 15 years and school building closures, extended quarantines, or disrupted learning environments are expected to widen those gaps further. This is not a new challenge, but the pandemic has served to highlight existing gaps more poignantly in student achievement and opportunity.
- **Rural Communities:** School building closures have continued to highlight the disparity that exists related to connectivity and broadband, access to more community resources to support students, and opportunities to raise and use local funds in support of public schools in our rural communities.
- **Early Literacy:** In Tennessee, just over 33% of 3rd graders and 27% of 8th graders are reading proficiently. Reading proficiency in 3rd grade is one of the most important indicators for future success and must continue to be an area of focus. School building closures will likely exacerbate this challenge, especially for children in our youngest grades.
- **Mental Health:** The pandemic has highlighted the significant challenges that districts, schools, and educators face related to student mental health and behavioral needs. School building closures have brought this conversation to the forefront as children and families struggle with the anxieties associated with the pandemic, and in some cases additional familial struggles that would normally be identified and addressed earlier by schools.

3. **Identifying Needs of Underserved Students:** Describe your State’s 2-3 highest priority academic, social, emotional, and/or mental health needs for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year (if applicable) and for the 2021-2022 school year related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on each of the following student groups:

- i. Students from low-income families,
- ii. Students from each racial or ethnic group (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by race or ethnicity),
- iii. Gender (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by gender),
- iv. English learners,
- v. Children with disabilities (including infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (“IDEA”)),
- vi. Students experiencing homelessness,
- vii. Children and youth in foster care,
- viii. Migratory students, and

- ix. Other groups disproportionately impacted by the pandemic that have been identified by the SEA (e.g., youth involved in the criminal justice system, students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-20 and 2020-2021 school years, students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures, and LGBTQ+ students).

To the extent possible, this description should include data on indicators such as estimates of the academic impact of lost instructional time,<sup>1</sup> chronic absenteeism, student engagement, and social-emotional well-being.

The Tennessee Department of Education must support high-quality educational opportunities for the nearly one million students in our care, such that we can ensure no child is disadvantaged by the current COVID-19 pandemic and that our schools and districts are supported moving into and throughout next year and beyond. Ultimately, we must keep people safe. The pandemic has elevated known gaps, and we must accelerate a child-centered strategy to address these gaps. During this crisis, several challenges within our field have become apparent. In some cases, these are new challenges that we must face together. In others, they are challenges that have existed over decades but have been brought to the forefront of the public consciousness and demand to be addressed in ways that may not have been so dire and so clear as we know them to be now.

When Tennessee first moved to reopen schools, we focused on ensuring that every district and charter school across our state had plans in place to address how the district would continue to provide instruction in light of school closures. This included a [Reopening Guide](#) to support the strategic thinking and planning of our districts. The department also considered the needs of those districts, schools and classrooms that may need or locally choose to be remote. In partnership with the State Board of Education, the department developed the requirement to have [Continuous Learning Plans](#) (CLPs), which outlined what remote learning would look like for those choosing to implement it. The department developed a template that included key areas while allowing for flexibility to address individual student needs and held districts accountable to the [Continuous Learning Plan rubric](#). All CLPs were posted on the department’s website to increase public transparency in the ways that districts were supporting all students during virtual or remote instruction. The Department of Education’s interim report for those Continuous Learning Plans is accessible [here](#) (with a final report to be completed early this fall).

Over the past fifteen months, there has been regular collaboration across state agencies including the Governor’s office, the State Board of Education, the TN Emergency Management Agency and the TN Department of Health. These collaborative partnerships have yielded an [extraordinary legislative session being called by Governor Lee; emergency](#)

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of the plan, “academic impact of lost instructional time” refers to “learning loss” experienced by students as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, as referenced in the ARP Act and the CRRSA Act.

[state board rules to address emergent needs](#); the first (and only) state to provide for the full-year [delivery of PPE](#) to all schools and classrooms across our state using a *school-based* ordering system in partnership with TEMA; and a COVID-19 testing grant opportunity for districts. Tennessee’s 147 districts have benefitted from these partnerships and the shared commitment of the state agencies.

Additionally, the department has partnered with a number of groups to provide supports to students, schools, districts and families. The state supported distance learning [resources](#) for [teachers](#) and [principals](#), and built upon those opportunities through Summer 2020 and into the 2020-21 school year. Further, the department partners with [PBS](#) to provide programming to families, higher education to provide [family-based support](#), [family resource guide](#), [CTE partners](#) to ensure students were able to access content virtually as needed, [TSIN to provide regular access to STE\(A\)M resources](#), and more. The department will continue to incorporate these best practices of asynchronous training, combined with in-person and follow-up coaching and support to maximize lessons learned and overall impact and scale.

As supported by prioritized needs in Table A1, Tennessee will focus on ensuring that [districts have summer programming plans and supports in place to address academic remediation and acceleration](#); that they are [appropriately staffed with both teachers and support positions to address academic and mental health needs of students](#); and that they have scheduled staff members to attend [training](#) over the summer for the remainder of the 2020-21 school year. Further, there have been a host of summer learning [curriculum resources](#) provided for math, science, and English language arts, grades 1-8.

For the 2021-22 school year, the highest priority needs noted below will continue to be prioritized, with the inclusion of tutoring and after-school opportunities to address the academic needs of student groups most significantly impacted by the pandemic. TDOE (department) is also working closely with districts in the development of plans and funding applications to ensure that food security, technology, and other supports specific to individual student groups are met.

**Table A1.**

<b>Student group</b>	<b>Highest priority needs</b>
Students from low-income families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology, food security</li> </ul>
Students from each racial or ethnic background used by the State for reporting purposes – please add a row for each racial or ethnic group (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by race/ethnicity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Black – academic remediation and acceleration, technology, food security</li> <li>• Hispanic – academic remediation and acceleration, language,</li> <li>• Native American – academic remediation and acceleration</li> <li>• Asian/Pacific Islander – academic remediation and acceleration</li> </ul>

Student group	Highest priority needs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• White – academic remediation and acceleration</li> </ul>
Students by gender – please add a row for each gender (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by gender)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None of the prioritized needs were specific to gender.</li> </ul>
English learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summer learning opportunities and transportation to address learning loss in academic subjects</li> <li>• Interventions/after school tutoring and summer school specifically for English Learners/ specific to advancing writing skills</li> <li>• Parental support and clear communication in other languages as appropriate, resources to support language acquisition at home</li> <li>• Technology/access to internet</li> <li>• Headphones/headsets with microphones</li> </ul>
Children with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to learning loss/summer/bridge programs</li> <li>• Assessments to measure the impact of learning loss</li> <li>• Mental health supports</li> <li>• Delivery of compensatory services</li> </ul>
Students experiencing homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food security, technology, internet access</li> </ul>
Children and youth in foster care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology, internet, transportation</li> </ul>
Migratory students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grade-level academic programming and transportation to and from camps and opportunities offered after school or during the summer.</li> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• Clothing for summer school activities</li> <li>• Support with classroom materials and resources, including, but not limited to technology, classroom supplies, bilingual or ESL picture/word dictionaries, etc.</li> </ul>
Other groups of students identified by the State: students in LEAs that offered no in-person options for students for the majority of the school year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental health supports</li> <li>• Academic remediation and acceleration</li> <li>• Technology</li> </ul>

4. Understanding the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Describe how the SEA will support its LEAs in identifying the extent of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student learning and student well-being, including identifying the groups of students most impacted by the pandemic. Where possible, please identify the data sources the SEA will suggest its LEAs use in thoughtfully diagnosing areas of need, including data on the academic, social, emotional, and mental health impacts of lost instructional time.

TDOE has worked diligently since the pandemic began to support LEAs (districts) in continually assessing and identifying the needs of their students resulting from the pandemic. The vast majority of districts across the state re-opened with some form of in-person instruction at the start of the 2020-21 school year, with 98% operating with an in-person option for at least half of the year, 100% operating with an in-person option by early Spring 2021, and 100% of districts offering a remote learning option for families who needed it. TDOE was the first state education department to produce a [dashboard to provide greater transparency for families in case-counts and school models](#), and also provided support to districts, both in the form of resources and guidance as well as with technical assistance from its regional (CORE) offices. The CORE offices supported districts in the development of continuous learning plans to ensure robust academic plans were in place for remote learners and in the event a school or district needed to close quickly in response to COVID-19. In addition, districts expressed the need for assistance in addressing well-being and mental health supports of not only [students](#), but also [families](#), [teachers](#) and [administrators](#).

The department released [school reopening grants](#), to help with district planning. Further, the department worked to provide [additional access](#) to [technology for students](#) – including [specialized technology for students with disabilities](#) – and [ongoing partnerships to expand access to high-speed internet](#).

In particular, educators and school officials had multiple supports for mental health from the state, in addition to what was provided at the local level. The department launched educator [emotional support video series](#) to provide guidance, resource and interactive activities for educators using licensed clinical social workers. The department further produced courses to support teachers and students including: [Movement as Medicine](#), [Everyone Plays a Role](#), and [Shifting Our Lens](#). In partnership with the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS), the COVID-19 [Emotional Support Line](#) for Educators was launched in December of 2020. This anonymous, free resource was designed to offer emotional and mental health support to educators in Tennessee. This support was expanded in April of 2021 to include text message functionality as another way to communicate with and support our state's

educators. Governor Lee and the Tennessee General Assembly further invested \$250M into a mental health trust fund for schools, along with expanded support for school-based mental health professionals.

The development of district resources began June 2020, with a host of reopening toolkits and other documents to address the evolving needs of districts. Some of the initial resources for districts included toolkits for [Wellbeing and Mental Health](#), as well as one specific to [Counseling](#). These toolkits were designed to assist district leaders, school administrators, and school counselors in providing opportunities to support the wellness of school staff and social, emotional, and physical wellbeing of students. The guidance in these documents also outlined important considerations for continuing emotional and mental health supports for an in-person, virtual distance learning environment, or hybrid approach.

As the school year launched in the fall of 2020, the state's CORE offices offered support to districts in addressing [learning loss](#) from the prior year [through just-in-time modifications of current-year curricula and pacing](#) to avoid districts spending the first several weeks of school re-teaching past content, particularly in mathematics. To assist further in this effort, the department produced [instructional practice guides](#) and beginning of year [checkpoint assessments](#) for use at no cost to districts to allow them to assess student mastery of prior year content quickly.

In addition, as LEAs completed the needs assessment as part of their annual district plan, TDOE provided additional reflection questions that required districts to articulate how the pandemic had impacted the prioritized needs they had previously identified, and what might have changed as a result. Districts completed this needs assessment in February and March of 2021 in preparation for completing their [Consolidated Funding Application \(CFA\) for ESEA and IDEA funds](#) to support the 2021-22 school year.

Further, the department emphasized providing social and emotional support to students, faculty, staff, and leaders with training opportunities created and available through TDOE's [Best for All Central](#) website. Training offerings included the following:

- [Shifting Our Lens: Strategies to Build Relationships for All Students](#)
  - This training opportunity focused on the importance of relationships in schools and that positive daily interaction and reactions to student behavior plays a significant role in a student's day. The training emphasized that all adults in a child's life contribute to these relationships: educators, assistants, bus drivers, front office personnel, nutrition workers, and others.
- [Whole Adult: Self Care Matters](#)
  - This learning series was designed for educators and leaders and focused on the importance caring for oneself to be able to care for others.

As we prepare for the 2021-22 school year, TDOE continues to provide districts with tools, data, and free resources to assess the impact of the pandemic on student learning and well-being - understanding that needs will likely change or evolve. To maximize other relief funding, the department has encouraged districts to utilize the following resources:

- **Summer programming pre- and post-test data:** the department has provided free assessments to all districts for use in assessing student progress in summer programming (which is required statewide), and that can be used to prepare individualized instruction and tutoring for students in the upcoming school year.
- **TCAP results:** the department has administered its annual assessments statewide and is requiring districts to ensure at least 80% of students take these assessments, providing robust data to Tennessee districts.
- **Universal screener:** the department is procuring a universal screener that is available at no cost to districts, which will allow them to assess and monitor student needs and progress throughout the upcoming school year.
- **Local Benchmarks:** the department is encouraging districts to utilize local assessment data to assess student progress and need resulting from the pandemic.

LEAs will be required to include information on student needs in their district [ARP ESSER Plan](#). The department will offer technical assistance in completing these plans through its regional CORE offices and Federal Programs and Oversight (FPO) division, in addition to providing free tools to support districts in data collection.

5. **School Operating Status:** It is essential to have data on how students are learning in order to support the goals of access and equity, especially for student groups that have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Describe the current status of data collection on operational status and mode of instruction of all schools in your State. This description must include:
  - i. A description of to what extent, and how frequently, the State collects now and will collect in the future data for all schools in your State on:
    - a. Mode of instruction: The number of schools in your State that are offering fully remote or online-only instruction; both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid model); and/or full-time in-person instruction;
    - b. Enrollment: Student enrollment for all students and disaggregated for each of the student groups described in A.3.i-viii for each mode of instruction; and
    - c. Attendance: Student attendance for all students and disaggregated for each of the student groups described in A.3.i-viii for each mode of instruction.



Tennessee has invested in data collection and allowing this data to inform our decision making – while also supporting LEAs to do the same. This pandemic has heightened the need for collecting and analyzing data to determine the impact of the pandemic across our state and across student groups. The information below provides details on the specific data components currently captured and planned for future use:

- **Mode of instruction:** The state’s data dashboards currently collect and display the primary operating model for the schools within each district, including the number of schools conducting in-person learning, remote learning, and those utilizing a hybrid approach for instruction. At the school level, the district reports any deviation from the district’s primary operating model as needed and may include additional notes as necessary as to the reason and length of time. This data collection process will continue in the 2021-2022 school year, but reporting will shift to a monthly basis.
- **Enrollment:** Enrollment data are captured in the state’s Education Information System (EIS) and may be disaggregated down to the required school and district-level reporting. While the state’s report card currently captures a snapshot of enrollment data, overall and disaggregated by student group, districts report enrollment data on an ongoing basis throughout the school year with records tied to the student groups described in A.3.i-viii. In the 2021-22 school year, the state will add this information to the dashboards to report on enrollment at each school by student group monthly.
- **Attendance:** Attendance data are captured in the state’s EIS and may be disaggregated down to the required school and district-level reporting. While the state’s report card currently captures an indicator on chronic absenteeism, overall and disaggregated by student group, districts report attendance on an ongoing basis throughout the school year with records tied to the student groups described in A.3.i-viii. In the 2021-22 school year, the state will add this information to the dashboards to report on attendance at each school by student group monthly.

- ii. The data described in A.5.i.a. and b. using the template in Appendix A (and to the extent available, the data described in A.5.i.c.) for the most recent time period available. Please note that this data can be submitted separately within 14 calendar days after a State submits this plan. The SEA must also make this data publicly available on its website as soon as possible but no later than June 21, 2021, and regularly provide updated available information on its website. The Department will periodically review data listed in A.5.i on SEA websites.

See Tables 1 and 2 in Appendix A for state data.

- iii. To the extent available, a description of the planned operational status and mode of instruction for the State and its LEAs for Summer 2021 and for the 2021-2022 school year.



For both summer programming in 2021 and for the 2021-2022 school year, the state plans for districts and schools to be providing in-person instruction. At the close of the 2020-21 school year, every district was offering in-person instruction, and both the state and districts plan to operate in person moving forward.

**B. Safely Reopening Schools and Sustaining their Safe Operations**

The Department recognizes that safely reopening schools and sustaining their safe operations to maximize in-person instruction is essential for student learning and student well-being, and especially for being able to address the educational inequities that have been worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. In this section, SEAs will describe how they will support their LEAs in this vital area.

1. Support for LEAs: Describe how the SEA will support its LEAs in safely returning to in-person instruction and sustaining the safe operation of schools. This description must include:
  - i. How the SEA will support its LEAs implementing, to the greatest extent practicable, prevention and mitigation policies in line with the most up-to-date guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) for the reopening and operation of school facilities to effectively maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other staff;

**Table B1.**

Mitigation strategy	SEA response
Universal and correct wearing of masks	Disseminate current CDC and Tennessee Department of Health (TDH) guidance and recommendations for correct use of masks; provide technical assistance and training, when requested, on proper use of masks, including support to LEAs and schools on identifying adaptations and alternatives for staff and students who cannot correctly wear masks or need accommodations; provide direct support to LEA lead nurses to enable them to provide technical assistance to their schools in supporting this primary prevention strategy
Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)	Disseminate current CDC and TDH guidance and recommendations for physical distancing, including social distancing supports for physical education and physical activity; share CDC K-12 Operational Strategy and Modifying School Spaces during Meal Times; provide technical assistance and training, when requested, on strategies for

	promoting proper physical distancing, not only for students and staff, but also for visitors
Handwashing and respiratory etiquette	Disseminate current CDC and TDH guidance and recommendations for handwashing and respiratory etiquette; provide support in promoting and reinforcing proper handwashing technique and other hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette through teaching of our disease prevention and personal hygiene health education standards; provide support to LEAs on setting up classrooms to support handwashing and respiratory etiquette
Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation	Disseminate current CDC and TDH guidance and recommendations for cleaning and disinfecting facilities, including CDC guidance for improving ventilation and indoor air quality; when to clean and disinfect using CDC guidance for safe and correct application of disinfectants; and regular cleaning of high-touch surfaces and objects
Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments	Disseminate current CDC and TDH guidance and recommendations for contact tracing; collaboration with state, regional and county health departments including using the TDH's <a href="#">COVID-19 Case Response Rubric</a> with applicable privacy laws, including Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act(FERPA), IDEA and Protection of Pupil's Rights Amendment (PPR); support school plans for isolation rooms, close contacts and quarantining; contact tracing support; technical assistance and training provided for LEA lead nurses through regional professional development; and the promotion of CDC's Considerations for Case Investigation and Contact Tracing in K-12 Schools
Diagnostic and screening testing	Supporting districts choosing to implement testing in effective testing strategies, including providing implementation supports necessary to have proper staff, physical space, and testing administration needed to keep schools open safely
Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible	Update and implement vaccination guidance to reflect current CDC and TDH guidance and recommendations; gather and share testimonials of staff who have been vaccinated and share case studies; work with internal and external partners,

	such as the TDH Vaccine-Preventable Diseases and Immunization Program, to support creative, science-based, trusted, community-based initiatives to educate communities about COVID-19 vaccination, such as hotlines and innovative communication materials
Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies	Collaboration with TDH and Tennessee Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD) on addressing the impact of COVID-19 among students with disabilities, chronic health conditions and special health care needs including support, training and technical assistance provided to LEA lead nurses through regional professional development; identify and develop, when needed, resources for health and safety policies for supporting the management of students with disabilities, chronic health conditions and special health care needs and disseminate those to LEAs statewide

- ii. Any Statewide plans, policies, estimated timelines, and specific milestones related to reopening and operation of school facilities, including any mechanisms the SEA will use to track, monitor, or enforce their implementation;

In March of 2020, the Tennessee General Assembly passed Public Chapter 652 which authorized the State Board of Education (SBE) to promulgate emergency rules to address the exceptional circumstances created by COVID-19 related school closures.

In June 2020, with assistance from TDOE and other stakeholders, the SBE approved [Continuous Learning Plan Emergency Rule 0520-01-17](#) and [Continuous Learning Policy 3.210](#). The rule and policy required each LEA and public charter school to develop a continuous learning plan (CLP) for the 2020-21 school year and submit their plan to TDOE for review and approval. CLPs were required to address how the LEA or public charter school will continue to provide instruction and meet 180-day instructional day requirements in the event of COVID-19 school closures. The CLP also allowed TDOE to gather information on districts’ reopening model for the 2020-21 school year.

Through the CLP emergency rule, LEAs were authorized to offer remote, in-person, and hybrid learning options for students throughout the 2020-21 school year. The rule has provided flexibility to LEAs to adjust their school operations based on local health needs. The CLP emergency rule has now expired as the 2020-21 school year has concluded.

In April 2021, the State Board of Education, through consultation with TDOE, developed and approved a [permanent CLP rule](#) for the 2021-22 school year and beyond. The permanent CLP rule specifies narrower conditions under which an LEA or public charter school may implement its CLP going forward. For an LEA or charter school to implement its CLP, the following conditions must occur:

- The Governor has issued a state of emergency or disaster declaration;
- The state of emergency or disaster declaration disrupts traditional operations of the one or more schools in the LEA;
- The LEA or public charter school provides notice to TDOE of intent to implement the CLP; and
- TDOE grants permission for the LEA or public charter school to implement the CLP.

By specifying these narrow conditions, the CLP permanent rule ensures all LEAs and public charter schools resume traditional, in-person school operations for the 2021-22 school year. While students may choose to continue virtual or remote learning through enrollment in an approved virtual school, the CLP permanent rule establishes the expectation that LEAs and public charter schools provide in-person instruction to students.

- iii. **To what extent the SEA and its LEAs consult with Federal, State, and local health officials. This description should include, if available, whether the SEA and its LEAs have received support for screening testing from their State or local health department based on funding awarded by the CDC; and**

Both TDOE and TDH have leveraged CDC funding to support school districts in addressing health and safety resulting from the pandemic. Through supplemental funds provided through the *Improving Student Health and Academic Achievement through Nutrition, Physical Activity, and the Management of Chronic Conditions in Schools* ([1801 funds](#)), TDOE has invested in regional-based, Health & Well-being Consultants to support districts in strategizing how to incorporate CDC guidance into local context to the extent practicable. These positions were onboarded in early 2021 and will continue through the next academic year. TDH and TDOE have also submitted an application for the Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC) grant funds to support district testing strategies. This grant is currently being processed by both state agencies and will augment testing in communities across our state. Based on intent to apply information, over half of the districts in the state are seeking to leverage funds with additional intents being submitted by non-public schools. As these plans are still under development and review, these local programs have not yet fully launched.

- iv. Any guidance, professional learning, and technical assistance opportunities the SEA will make available to its LEAs.

Throughout the 2020-21 school year, TDOE coordinated closely with the Tennessee Department of Health (TDH) to provide [ongoing guidance](#) to districts on proper health and safety protocols. The TDH consistently joined the department's three-times per week calls with Superintendents to provide guidance and answer questions as CDC guidance changed throughout the year. The department also created a K12Health email inbox to respond to LEA health-related questions – acknowledging that many of the questions LEAs had, at least initially, were educationally based, but health related. The department worked closely with TDH to ensure consistent messaging and clarity of information to LEAs.

TDOE also partnered with the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA) to provide monthly shipments of PPE to every school in the state at no local cost. The state leveraged an existing ordering system to allow schools to place initial orders and restock shipments throughout the year, with these orders being delivered directly to school sites to minimize the distribution burden on LEAs. The shipments included masks, face shields, hand sanitizer, gloves, non-contact thermometers, and additional supplies for nurses. The state provided sufficient supplies for all school-based staff to have these resources for the entire school year.

Having operated in-person for the majority of last school year, school districts in Tennessee are well positioned to support a safe and healthy reopening of schools for the 2021-22 school year. The state prioritized educators early in its vaccine rollout, and school districts have worked with local and state health departments to ensure vaccine access for educators - conducting educator-specific vaccine clinics and using professional development days to provide access to vaccines. All Tennessee educators who want to be vaccinated have had the opportunity to do so. As we move into the 2021-22 school year, As noted previously, TDOE is also administering the federal ELC grant, in partnership with TDH, to support ongoing COVID-19 testing needs in districts throughout this school year. The department will also continue its close coordination and engagement with the TDH to provide timely and accurate and information to LEAs.

- 2. **Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plans:** Describe how the SEA will ensure that its LEAs that receive ARP ESSER funds meet the requirements in section 2001(i) of the ARP Act and the requirements relating to the ARP ESSER funds published in the Federal Register and available at <https://oese.ed.gov/offices/american-rescue-plan/american-rescue-plan-elementary-and-secondary-school-emergency-relief/> (ARP ESSER requirements) to either: (a) within 30 days of receipt of the funds, develop and make publicly available on the LEA's website a plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services, or (b) have developed and made publicly available on

the LEA's website such a plan that meets statutory requirements before the enactment of the ARP Act, including:

- i. How the SEA will ensure that each LEA plan includes, or will be modified to include, the extent to which it has adopted policies and a description of any such policies on each of the strategies listed in table B1;

While the state does not currently collect its LEAs', policies related to implementation of CDC guidance, TDOE has provided extensive guidance to districts in making appropriate health and safety decisions in each local context. First, the department released a large number of school re-opening [toolkits](#) for districts that included resources focused specifically on guidance related to health and safety. As noted previously, the department also worked closely with TDH to provide ongoing guidance, clarification and technical assistance to districts in making health-related decisions.

The department also released a [template](#) for districts to utilize in the development of Health and Safety plans. This template includes all requirements from section 2001(i) of the ARP Act and will be reviewed alongside the LEA ARP ESSER plan and ARP ESSER spending plans in TDOE's application approval process. Further, we are requiring each LEA to provide the URL where the public-facing documents will be posted, and this plan will also be incorporated into our monitoring protocols led by the FPO division at TDOE.

- ii. How the SEA will ensure that each LEA plan describes how it 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;

In summer of 2020, all districts across the state had to complete a Continuous Learning Plan (CLP) articulating how they would ensure continuity of learning and supports for the needs of staff in the event of COVID-19 related closures. Districts utilized those plans during the 2020-21 school year as needed and continue to have them in place for the coming school year. As previously noted, the State Board of Education recently passed a policy that does not allow LEAs to use these plans unless the state is in a Governor-declared state of emergency. As such, all LEAs will open fully in-person in fall 2021.

The state has provided detailed guidance to LEAs on the required components of LEA plans, including how it will address students' academic needs, and students' and staff social, emotional, and mental health needs. This guidance includes details on the ARP strategy plan, the health and safety plan, and the spending plan. Templates have been developed and provided for the comprehensive needs assessment, LEA plan, and health and safety plan to ensure LEAs address the required components.

- iii. How the SEA will ensure that the LEA periodically reviews, no less frequently than every six months for the duration of the ARP ESSER grant period (i.e., through September 30, 2023),<sup>2</sup> and revises as appropriate, its plan, and how the SEA will ensure that the LEA seeks public input, and takes such input into account on (1) whether revisions are necessary and, if so, (2) the revisions to the plan; and

The FPO division at TDOE will lead the monitoring for ensuring the periodic review of its plan and making appropriate updates. This will occur through desktop, virtual on-site, and focus monitoring throughout the grant period. Where appropriate, these plan elements will be embedded into existing monitoring protocols; however, the department has also recognized the need for additional capacity - adding four positions focused solely on monitoring and oversight. This funding relief team will report to the Assistant Commissioner of FPO and will be deployed over the life of the grant. Further, within the ARP ESSER application, TDOE has collected the URL for each LEA where the ARP plans will be positioned on the website, and the relief funding team will be charged with ensuring that the health and safety plans are updated at least every six months - specifically noting any updates on the items listed in B1. As stated above, the original health and safety plans will be submitted in the funding application as part of the original approval and again during the required six-month revision.

- iv. Describe, to the extent the SEA collects it, information about LEA implementation, to the greatest extent practicable, of each element of the most up-to-date CDC guidance listed in table B1 and its LEAs' needs for support and technical assistance to implement strategies consistent, to the greatest extent practicable, with relevant CDC guidance.

TDOE has also launched a COVID-19 [dashboard](#) in fall of 2020 that, in addition to providing transparency about district and school operating models, provided information on COVID-19 case counts in schools to ensure transparency for parents and stakeholders.

As previously mentioned, the department also worked with TEMA to provide monthly shipments of PPE to all schools in the state throughout the 2020-21 school year. Further, TDOE continues to partner with TDH on an ongoing basis to ensure that LEAs are receiving the most up-to-date CDC guidance as it is updated. These updates are shared in our superintendent calls hosted twice weekly by TDOE and included in the Commissioner's Update for Directors as appropriate. Further, we continue to develop resources that align

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<sup>2</sup> ARP ESSER funds are subject to the Tydings amendment in section 421(b) of the General Education Provisions Act, 20 U.S.C. 1225(b), and are therefore available to SEAs and LEAs for obligation through September 30, 2024. Review and revisions of these plans, if necessary, are not required during the Tydings period.



with and support CDC recommendations, to the extent practicable and in partnership with TDH, as LEAs resume in-person learning.

### **C. Planning for the Use and Coordination of ARP ESSER Funds**

The Department recognizes that seeking input from diverse stakeholders is essential to developing plans for the use of ARP ESSER funds that are responsive to the needs of students, families, and educators. In this section, SEAs will describe their plans for consultation and for coordinating the use of ARP ESSER funds with other resources to meet the needs of students.

1. **SEA Consultation**: Consistent with the ARP ESSER requirements, describe how the SEA engaged in meaningful consultation with stakeholders, and incorporated input into its plan, including, but not limited to:
  - i. students;
  - ii. families;
  - iii. Tribes (if applicable);
  - iv. civil rights organizations (including disability rights organizations);
  - v. school and district administrators (including special education administrators);
  - vi. superintendents;
  - vii. charter school leaders (if applicable);
  - viii. teachers, principals, school leaders, other educators, school staff, and their unions; and
  - ix. 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.

The description must include how the SEA provided the public the opportunity to provide input in the development of the plan, a summary of the input (including any letters of support), and how the SEA took such input into account.

The TDOE reached out to more than 150 education stakeholder [organizations](#) with the request for input on the following: information districts should include in publicly-facing ESSER plans so they are easily understood by community members; and changes to existing structure and systems, improvements, and student-centered ideas moving forward.

The stakeholders groups included youth development nonprofits, parent engagement nonprofits, philanthropists, superintendents, principals, teachers, business associations, policy organizations, education preparation programs, foundations representing students and families, charter schools, state agencies, educator associations, civil rights organizations, English Language Learner organizations, and other entities representing other student groups. Input was secured by e-mail to allow stakeholders the time and space to convey a clear understanding of the recommendation, the rationale, and how it may benefit



all Tennessee students on a path towards academic and economic success. This input was organized by the TDOE's strategic priorities of academics, student readiness, and educators. Below is a summary of the stakeholder input received organized by strategic priority.

- First, input for the *Academics* priority focused on building the capacity of school districts statewide to provide high-dosage tutoring and academic enrichments before, during, and after-school to accelerating student learning; scaling successful models of high school and postsecondary preparation and persistence; and competency-based education.
- Input for *Student Readiness* priority focused on the community school model or components of it providing students the academic and non-academic support system to thrive. Recommendations included partnerships with two-generation providers, mental health professionals, school-based health clinics, after-school programming, additional high school counselors, and integrated student supports. A structural recommendation included a request for proposal-type process/memorandum of understanding guidance for all school districts to have the skillset and resources for establishing (or shifting) community partnerships from a vendor relationship to true partnership with shared deliverables, outcomes, and collaboration.
- Input for the *Educators* priority included expansion of additional endorsements for existing teachers to include reading specialist; expand well-prepared, highly compensated, and diverse educator workforce; adequate funding and high-quality training for early educator career mentoring programs; and mental health training.

In addition, input from students was solicited through several mechanisms. First, the department engaged students during school visits taking place in spring and fall 2020 and spring 2021. There was also student representation in the roundtable discussions that the Commissioner of Education led earlier this spring. Finally, Tennessee's State Board of Education has a student member as one its eleven-members. The SBE has partnered with TDOE over the past year, including input on the state plan. The department considered this thoughtful input from a range of stakeholders by initially reviewing the effectiveness of our current initiatives measurably improving academics, student readiness, and educator development. Based on the feedback loops in-place with our 147 school district leaders, and the experience we have with initiatives such as literacy, in-district educator preparation programs, education-to-career high school models, and trauma-informed schools; it was determined that one of the best ways we can add value to all districts was a depth instead of breadth approach.

We want to provide our districts with sustainable solutions and, therefore, examined which current academic, student readiness, and educator initiatives need additional funding to serve more school districts and students. Further, we examined the viability of statewide

expansion of a recommended model based on the rural, urban, and suburban landscape of our state. Finally, we evaluated the sustainability of a recommendation to transcend the ESSER spending timeframe and have a long-term impact on the success of our school districts, educators, and students.

The department has also developed [overview guidance](#) for the public, to help build transparency in the decision made at the state level and the expected outcomes related to those decisions. Further, a public facing [webinar](#) (targeted for districts, but publicly posted) is intended to enhance ongoing communication related to department decisions and allocations.

The department has also provided for [ESSER Planning Grants](#) for districts, to provide additional funds for districts prioritizing students in their ESSER strategies. The department wants to ensure that districts who are spending money to best support student achievement and acceleration are provided the resources necessary to do that work strategically.

2. **Coordinating Funds**: Describe to what extent the SEA has and will coordinate Federal COVID-19 pandemic funding and other Federal funding. This description must include:
  - i. How the SEA and its LEAs 1) are using or have used prior to the submission of this plan and 2) plan to use following submission of this plan, Federal COVID-19 funding under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (“CARES”) Act and the CRRSA Act to support a safe return to and safely maximize in-person instruction, sustain these operations safely, and address the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on individual student groups (including students from low-income families, children with disabilities, English learners, racial or ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, and migratory students);

TDOE has been intentional from the initial release of funding to ensure strategies were meeting immediate and evolving needs identified in the field and leveraging the state’s capacity to support at scale across districts. This planning began in the spring of 2020 with a survey to gather stakeholder input from students, parents, teachers, staff, school and district leaders, and the general public. While the results highlighted immediate needs as schools closed buildings, these results mirrored subsequent input and feedback gathered from stakeholder engagement sessions that emphasized the same areas already identified in TDOE’s strategic plan. Given TDOE’s strategic plan was developed through a similarly robust engagement strategy, the identified needs in the strategic plan, the survey, and district feedback were all aligned, often highlighting more severe needs on the same subjects as the

pandemic exacerbated needs for additional academic supports, especially in early grades, the educator pipeline and preparedness, and student readiness and supports.

Based on the results of that survey, the state prioritized initial funding supports from the CARES Act, including leveraging Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF) to immediate wide-spread issues of technology device and connectivity access. The department also provided federal grant support from CRF for district reopening planning grants, giving targeted support to develop, plan, and implement reopening strategies. With the release of the CRRSA funds with an emphasis on learning loss and school buildings, the state encouraged districts to continue to build out their funding plans strategically to meet both immediate and mid-term needs. The state complemented these strategies by developing plans for summer and tutoring programming during a targeted session of the state’s General Assembly. Throughout the pandemic and various funding opportunities, the state has also leveraged a collaborative working group of state legislators to review funding proposals, ensuring transparency and cohesion in the use of funds. This strong alignment in need, policy, and law, provided TDOE with a streamlined context to develop resources and additional grant opportunities to support high need areas aligned to the strategic plan, and within all activities, incorporate strategies that address both immediate needs and long-standing needs that were exacerbated by the pandemic.

With the release of ARP ESSER funding, the state supported alignment to existing strategies with an emphasis on deepening their scope and reach. This approach ensures that the state encourages targeted and cohesive strategies rather than disjointed initiatives. As a result, the state’s intent with the latest round of funding is to further support strategies previously identified, allowing for more strategic use of funds across sources and across rounds. The state has released a consolidated document of [expected grants](#) to be made available to districts, to support their planning and capacity allocation in the months to come.

- ii. **To what extent ESSER I and ESSER II funds have been awarded to LEAs and, if funds have not yet been made available to LEAs, when they will be. In addition, please provide any available information on the total dollar amounts of ESSER I and ESSER II funds that have been obligated but not expended by the SEA and its LEAs, including whether the SEA is able to track LEA obligations.**

ESSER 1.0 funds were allocated to districts in the spring of 2020 totaling \$233,902,038, with 100% of LEAs receiving approval by the end of June 2020. One-hundred percent of the ESSER 1.0 state reservation (\$24,689,659) was obligated within the first twelve months of the state’s award. To date, there is \$87,627,234 remaining against its ESSER 1.0 LEA and state obligations.

ESSER 2.0 allocations were released January 15, 2021, and the formula funds were awarded to LEAs prior to March 15 totaling \$879,923,063.57 of the \$996,890,420 awarded. One LEA is in the process of making final updates for approval. TDOE continues to obligate meaningfully the ESSER 2.0 state reservation (\$105,227,322). To date, there is \$1,038,908,599 remaining against its ESSER 2.0 LEA and state obligations.

Tennessee tracks its LEA obligations through the state's [ePlan system](#). This system allows the department to track individual LEA reimbursement requests, as well as the supporting documentation for each request. It also allows TDOE to track how LEAs are spending by line item. Further, it allows us to monitor LEA spending over the life of the grant – flagging LEAs who are and are not trending in alignment with the grant period. The FPO division creates and disseminates to TDOE leadership monthly reports with stoplight, gradient ratings to track spending. This allows us to identify potential issues and provide technical assistance to LEAs more proactively. The Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) and the FPO division also review this information at bi-weekly and follow up with questions or to provide assistance if we find LEAs are not drawing funds as expected over the life of the grant.

For the state reservation, TDOE tracks goods and services procured via contract through the state's system of record, Edison. This data is then used in the Power Business Intelligence (BI) software and utilized in monthly business manager meetings organized by division and led by the CFO. During these monthly meetings, each contract is reviewed and discussed. TDOE has also developed an additional monitoring protocol for any contract funded with federal dollars. This protocol includes both program and fiscal components for accountability, compliance, and fiscal management.

- iii. In supporting LEAs as they plan for the safe return to and continuity of in-person instruction and for meeting the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of students resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the extent to which the SEA is also using other Federal funding sources including but not limited to under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (“ESEA”), IDEA, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (“WIOA”), funding for child nutrition services, and McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, and the funds to support the needs of students experiencing homelessness provided by section 2001(b)(1) of the ARP Act.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Please note that the needs of students experiencing homelessness must be addressed (along with the other groups disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic) through the use of the ARP ESSER SEA reservations and the required LEA reservation for the academic impact of lost instructional time; the funding provided to support the needs of students experiencing homelessness by section 2001(b)(1) of the ARP Act is in addition to the supports and services provided with ARP ESSER funds.

TDOE continues to support students experiencing homelessness in several ways. First, under ESEA/ESSA all LEAs that receive Title I, Part A funds must reserve funds to support homeless students. This required set-aside is part of the state’s CFA and is reviewed and approved by the department annually for all LEAs. This review includes cross referencing homeless counts and the set aside to ensure that LEAs are earmarking a reasonable amount based on number of students. Second, a McKinney-Vento subgrant is administered annually. The subgrant runs on a three-year competitive grant cycle, and currently, 24 LEAs are implementing McKinney-Vento grants. The TDOE review of this competitive grant includes a cross reference to the CFA to evaluate more fully the LEA’s plan for serving students. Third, the new ARP Homeless 1.0 program is a competitive grant that is available to all current McKinney-Vento subgrantees. A total of \$3,055,380 will be allocated to LEAs in ARP Homeless 1.0. TDOE has developed plans for ARP Homeless 2.0 but are awaiting clarifying guidance from the U.S. Department of Education. The McKinney-Vento project director and FPO team provide technical assistance to LEAs to support in coherent planning for these multiple funding streams in support of students experiencing homelessness.

#### **D. Maximizing State-Level Funds to Support Students**

The Department recognizes that States have an extraordinary opportunity to address the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on underserved students through the ARP Act’s required State set-asides to address the academic impact of lost instructional time, provide summer learning and enrichment programs, and provide comprehensive afterschool programs. In this section, SEAs will describe their evidence-based strategies for these resources.

1. Academic Impact of Lost Instructional Time: Describe how the SEA will use the funds it reserves under section 2001(f)(1) of the ARP Act (totaling not less than 5 percent of the State’s total allocation of ARP ESSER funds) on evidence-based interventions to address the academic impact of lost instructional time by supporting the implementation of evidence-based interventions, such as summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs, or extended school year programs, and ensure that such interventions respond to students’ academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. The description must include:
  - i. A description of the evidence-based interventions (e.g., providing intensive or high-dosage tutoring, accelerating learning) the SEA has selected, and the extent to which the SEA will evaluate the impact of those interventions on an ongoing basis to understand if they are working;

The Tennessee Department of Education will use this 5% set aside under section 2001(f)(1) to focus on high-dosage tutoring to address the academic impact of lost instructional time. This statewide tutoring model, called [TN ALL Corps](#), will ensure Tennessee students have

access to high-dosage, low ratio tutoring over the next three years. Structured tutoring programs have proven to increase student achievement significantly. When the program is fully subscribed, as many as 240,000 students will have access to 300-500 additional hours of targeted support through tutoring. Students will be in low-ratio groups (maximum of 1:3 in elementary and middle), and complete 100 sessions per year in English language arts or math support. Students are expected to see as much as 50% more growth than similar peers.

Districts will have the opportunity to apply for matching grants to fund this high-dosage tutoring. Further, the department will also offer matching grants for community partners to ensure all stakeholders have access to provide academic acceleration supports for students. These grants will consider district resources and local partnership networking to determine the level of match. The state's 5% set aside to address the academic impact of lost instructional time for LEA grants to support high-dosage tutoring.

To ensure quality within the tutoring program, the state will provide tutor training and certification; essential focus content for mathematics by grade level; significant guidance and tutoring resources for literacy tutoring; and a directory of TDOE-reviewed providers. LEAs will be required to align their tutoring structures and monitor tutor sessions for delivery quality, tutor certifications, student progress, and quarterly performance reporting. The department will also offer significant needs assessment and planning support for districts to ensure that they maximize tutoring opportunities for underserved or prioritized student groups.

To measure the impact of the high-dosage tutoring, the following data elements will be collected and analyzed: data on the LEA student prioritization process, student baseline, progress, and monthly interim assessments.

- ii. **How the evidence-based interventions will specifically address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on certain groups of students, including each of the student groups listed in question A.3.i.-viii. When possible, please indicate which data sources the SEA will use to determine the impact of lost instructional time; and**

All Tennessee districts will complete a needs assessment to determine which students had a disproportionate impact of COVID-19 (Attachment 1). As districts across Tennessee had varying in-person schedules, quarantine rates, and options for virtual learning; each district and its student groups were impacted at varying degrees. These impacts will be captured in the needs assessment completed by each LEA. Districts will have end of course and additional benchmark data on academic progress from 2021 to help inform the identification of students most significantly impacted and therefore, prioritize those students for these evidence-based interventions.

- iii. The extent to which the SEA will use funds it reserves to identify and engage 1) students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years; and 2) students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures.

As part of the TN ALL Corps tutoring program, the department will encourage districts to prioritize tutoring supports to students who missed the most in-person instruction in the 2020-21 school year and those who struggled to engage consistently in remote learning. The vast majority of Tennessee school districts were open in-person during the 2020-21 school year, but all offered remote options for students. The department required LEAs to assess all students this year, regardless of learning modality. As a result, districts will have information from summer school as well as state assessments to identify the impact on these students in particular and prioritize them for tutoring offerings during the 2021-22 school year.

2. **Evidence-Based Summer Learning and Enrichment Programs:** Describe how the SEA will use the funds it reserves under section 2001(f)(2) of the ARP Act (totaling not less than 1 percent of the State’s total allocation of ARP ESSER funds) for evidence-based summer learning and enrichment programs, including those that begin in Summer 2021, and ensure such programs respond to students’ academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. The description must include:
  - i. A description of the evidence-based programs that address the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of students (e.g., providing intensive or high-dosage tutoring, accelerating learning) the SEA has selected, and the extent to which the SEA will evaluate the impact of those programs;

The TN General Assembly generously funded [summer programming](#) for students using state dollars in January 2021. This gave districts the advantage of (1) being able to plan for summer programming and (2) being able to expand offerings. At the state level the department will meet the required set-aside through [the development of resources and materials](#), partnership with [PBS](#) and [TSIN](#) for summer learning resources, [summer professional development training in literacy for teachers to immediately implement](#), [free decodable readers for families to prevent summer slide](#), and additional tutoring opportunities for students to expand from the school year into summer months.

Within this set-aside, the department will provide community partner grants to support high-dosage tutoring models focused on high school students. The community partners will design tutoring opportunities in partnership with high schools across the state to provide targeted high dosage tutoring and summer supports for high school students. Each grant application will require a needs assessment to determine the prioritized needs of the high-



school students within the district they are serving. Community partners and districts will use the needs assessment outlined in D1. ii above to prioritize the design of high school tutoring, the content served, and the prioritized students who will receive high-dosage tutoring. To measure the impact of the high-dosage tutoring, the following data elements will be collected and analyzed: LEA student prioritization process, student baseline, progress, and monthly interim assessments.

- ii. **How the evidence-based programs will specifically address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on certain groups of students, including each of the student groups listed in question A.3. i.--viii. When possible, please indicate which data sources the SEA will use to identify students most in need of summer learning and enrichment programs; and**

All districts will complete a needs assessment to determine which students had a disproportionate impact of COVID-19. This needs assessment will also include an analysis of students across all grade bands, including high school. As districts across Tennessee had varying in-person schedules, quarantine rates, and options for virtual learning; each district and its student groups were impacted at varying degrees. These impacts will be captured in the needs assessment completed by each LEA. Districts will have end of course and additional benchmark data on academic progress from 2021 to help inform the identification of students most significantly impacted and therefore, prioritize those students for these additional high-dosage tutoring opportunities. Districts will work with community partners to assess their needs assessment, develop targeted high school tutoring plans, and submit this planning as part of their community grant application.

- iii. **The extent to which the SEA will use funds it reserves to identify and engage 1) students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years; and 2) students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures.**

As part of the [TN ALL Corps tutoring program](#), the department will encourage community partners to work with districts to prioritize high school tutoring supports for students who missed the most in-person instruction in the 2020-21 school year and those who struggled to engage consistently in remote learning. The overwhelming majority of Tennessee districts were open in-person during the 2020-21 school year, but all offered remote options for students. The department required LEAs to assess all students this year, regardless of learning modality. As a result, districts will have information from summer school as well as state assessments to identify the impact on these students, and how to prioritize high school students for the community partnership tutoring offerings during the 2021-22 school year.



3. Evidence-Based Comprehensive Afterschool Programs: Describe how the SEA will use the funds it reserves under section 2001(f)(3) of the ARP Act (totaling not less than 1 percent of the State’s total allocation of ARP ESSER funds) for evidence-based comprehensive afterschool programs (including, for example, before-school programming), and ensure such programs respond to students’ academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. The description must include:
  - i. A description of the evidence-based programs (e.g., including partnerships with community-based organizations) the SEA has selected, and the extent to which the SEA will evaluate the impact of those programs;

The department is setting aside funds in this section to contribute to the [TN ALL Corps program](#), as described in section D.1 above. This state investment in comprehensive high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring programs statewide is grounded in the evidence-base related to tutoring and will serve as the department’s most significant learning loss investment. All responses in section D.1 apply to this set-aside as well.

- ii. How the evidence-based programs will specifically address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on certain groups of students, including each of the student groups listed in question A.3.i.-viii. When possible, please indicate which data sources the SEA will use to identify students most in need of comprehensive afterschool programming; and

As noted previously, please refer to the response in section D.1. above.

- iii. the extent to which the SEA will use funds it reserves to identify and engage 1) students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years; and 2) students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures.

As noted previously, please refer to the response in section D.1 above.

4. Emergency Needs: If the SEA plans to reserve funds for emergency needs under section 2001(f)(4) of the ARP Act to address issues responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, describe the anticipated use of those funds, including the extent to which these funds will build SEA and LEA capacity to ensure students’ and staff’s health and safety; to meet students’ academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs; and to use ARP ESSER funds to implement evidence-based interventions.

The state does not currently intend to leverage this reserve funds per section 2001(f)(4).

## **E. Supporting LEAs in Planning for and Meeting Students' Needs**

The Department recognizes that the safe return to in-person instruction must be accompanied by a focus on meeting students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs, and by addressing the opportunity gaps that existed before – and were exacerbated by – the pandemic. In this section, SEAs will describe how they will support their LEAs in developing high-quality plans for LEAs' use of ARP ESSER funds to achieve these objectives.

LEA Plans for the Use of ARP ESSER Funds: Describe what the SEA will require its LEAs to include in LEA plans consistent with the ARP ESSER requirements for the use of ARP ESSER funds, how the SEA will require such plans to be made available to the public, and the deadline by which the LEA must submit its ARP ESSER plan (which must be a reasonable timeline and should be within no later than 90 days after receiving its ARP ESSER allocation). The LEA plans must include, at a minimum:

- i. The extent to which and how the funds will be used to implement prevention and mitigation strategies that are, to the greatest extent practicable, in line with the most recent CDC guidance, in order to continuously and safely operate schools for in-person learning.

TDOE has included the submission of a [Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan](#) as a requirement of the ARP ESSER application. This plan must be developed in consultation with the specified stakeholders, and meet the requirements specified in the instructions, including prevention and mitigation strategies, as well as the ARP ESSER Fund Assurances in the application. Once approved this plan must be made public on the LEA's website. The Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan will be updated every six months and uploaded into the related documentation folder in the ARP ESSER application. It will also be part of TDOE's ongoing ESSER monitoring over the life of the grant.

The department continues to engage regularly with the Tennessee Department of Health (TDH) and have developed strong partnerships that will serve districts well – providing regular information and updates on CDC guidance and answering district questions in the Commissioner's weekly calls. As we plan to launch the 2021-22 school year and these plans are implemented and updated, this partnership will continue to be a valued resource both for TDOE and LEAs across the state.

- ii. How the LEA will use the funds it reserves under section 2001(e)(1) of the ARP Act (totaling not less than 20 percent of the LEA's total allocation of ARP ESSER funds) to address the academic impact of lost instructional time through the implementation of evidence-based interventions, such as summer learning or summer enrichment,

extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs, or extended school year programs;

TDOE has included two specific sections in the ARP ESSER application in which districts will be required to provide additional insight into how their ESSER funds will be spent, including requirements under section 2001(e)(1). Each LEA application will undergo a multi-level state review to ensure the program requirements are met and appropriately documented.

On the [Spending Plan](#) page, LEAs are required to provide information and complete the applicable focus areas - verifying the amount and explaining how each focus area addresses the prioritized needs of students. New for the ARP grant is the Learning Loss focus area. The amount will auto-populate based on the input from the LEA's proposed budget. This functionality will allow TDOE to ensure that the 20% requirement is met while also providing detail to ensure the interventions meet the evidence-based requirement.

On the Program Details page, LEAs are required to provide information on how they will measure and address learning loss. This page will also require LEAs to detail how the ARP ESSER funds will support these measures.

This required reservation will be part of the department's monitoring of the ARP ESSER funds – ensuring that the interventions are implemented with fidelity and that LEAs are measuring student gains.

**iii. How the LEA will spend its remaining ARP ESSER funds consistent with section 2001(e)(2) of the ARP Act; and**

In two sections of the ARP ESSER application, districts will be required to provide additional insight into how the remaining 80% of ESSER funds will be spent.

On the Spending Plan page in the ARP ESSER application, LEAs are required to complete the applicable focus areas, verify the amount, and explain how each focus area addresses the prioritized needs. The amount will auto-populate based on the input from the LEA's proposed budget.

On the Program Details page in the ARP ESSER application, LEAs are required to respond to the following: *How will the LEA use the remaining ARP ESSER funds consistent with statutory requirements?* Each LEA application will undergo a multi-level state review to ensure the program requirements are met and appropriately documented.

- iv. How the LEA will ensure that the interventions it implements, including but not limited to the interventions under section 2001(e)(1) of the ARP Act to address the academic impact of lost instructional time, will respond to the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of all students, and particularly those students disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, including students from low-income families, students of color, English learners, children with disabilities, students experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, and migratory students.

On the program details page on the ARP ESSER Spending Plan, LEAs will be required to complete the following question, *How the LEA will ensure that the ARP ESSER funded interventions, including but not limited to the 20% set-aside, will respond to the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of all students, and particularly those students disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, including students from low-income families, students of color, English learners, children with disabilities, students experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, and migratory students?*

LEAs must submit all plans to the department no later than August 27, 2021. This time will allow for thoughtful planning and engagement for this historic infusion of one-time funds. Attachments 2, and 3 represent the public plan and safe return to instruction/continuity of instruction plans respectively. Attachment 4 is a sample of the spending plan template. Upon receipt, each LEA applications will undergo a multi-level state review to ensure the program requirements are met and appropriately documented.

2. **LEA Consultation:** Describe how the SEA will, in planning for the use of ARP ESSER funds, ensure that, consistent with the ARP ESSER requirements], its LEAs 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.

The LEA must also engage in meaningful consultation with each of the following to the extent present in or served by the LEA:

- i. Tribes;
- ii. civil rights organizations (including disability rights organizations);  
and

- iii. 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.

The description must also include how the SEA will ensure that LEAs provide the public the opportunity to provide input in the development of the LEA's plan for the use of ARP ESSER funds and take such input into account.

The LEA application for ARP ESSER specifically addresses [stakeholder consultation and engagement](#). Further, the strategy or public-facing plan also includes specific information on input and engagement with community and other stakeholder groups. LEAs will be asked to provide specific information on this consultation, as well as the URL where the LEA plan will be available to the public. The stakeholder consultation and engagement and supporting documentation will be integrated into Tennessee's monitoring framework led by the FPO division. In this framework, all LEAs will be monitored annually in one of the three tiers (self, desktop, onsite) based on the department's risk assessment. Stakeholder consultation and engagement is an indicator in the instrument across all tiers of monitoring.

On the Program Details page in the ARP ESSER application, LEAs are required to respond to a series of questions that will be reviewed in the TDOE application approval process. LEAs have been instructed to retain supporting documentation for this engagement and consultation for TDOE monitoring of ARP ESSER.

1. *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:*
  - o students;*
  - o families;*
  - o school and district administrators (including special education administrators); and*
  - o teachers, principals, school leaders, other educators, school staff, and their unions.*
  - o Tribes;*
  - o civil rights organizations (including disability rights organizations); and*
  - o 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.*
2. *Provide an overview of how the public stakeholder input was considered in developing the LEA's plan for ARP ESSER funds.*

3. Describe how the SEA will support and monitor its LEAs in using ARP ESSER funds. The description must include:
  - i. How the SEA will support and monitor its LEAs' implementation of evidence-based interventions that respond to students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs, such as through summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs, or extended school year programs – including the extent to which the SEA will collect evidence of the effectiveness of interventions employed;

Tennessee's multi-tiered monitoring framework includes three distinct levels: on-site, desktop, and self monitoring. A risk analysis comprised of multiple indicators identifies the level of potential risk. Results from the analysis designate each LEA's risk as one of three levels: significant, elevated, or low risk – resulting in identification for on-site, desktop, or self monitoring respectively. Each LEA in the state must participate in one level of monitoring annually; however, TDOE has also developed business rules to this process to ensure that all LEAs are monitored (desktop or on-site) at least once every five years.

To provide a comprehensive monitoring of ESSER, ESEA, and IDEA programs, numerous staff members across multiple divisions at the department are involved with the related processes. FPO divisional coordinators provide technical assistance to LEAs and are primarily responsible for conducting on-site and desktop program monitoring. In addition, state project directors participate in the monitoring processes to review and provide input on the monitoring instrument (embedded in ePlan) and monitoring results are shared with LEAs. FPO staff members also review the results of the self-assessment submissions each year and share the results to inform technical assistance needs.

- ii. How the SEA will support and monitor its LEAs in specifically addressing the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on certain groups of students, including each of the student groups listed in question A.3.i.-viii; and

The FPO division at TDOE has hosted office hours throughout the planning and application process to provide technical assistance to LEAs as they develop plans, budget funds, and engage stakeholders. The department has hired additional staff to continue to support LEAs throughout implementation and to monitor how LEAs are addressing specific student-group needs. The department's largest investment in addressing learning loss, TN ALL Corps, requires LEAs to identify priority students – those most impacted by the pandemic and those in the state's historically underserved groups. Further, the department is also offering district planning grants to fund third-party partnerships for more targeted and robust planning.

- iii. How the SEA will support and monitor its LEAs in using ARP ESSER funds to identify, reengage, and support students most likely to have experienced the impact of lost instructional time on student learning, such as:
  - a. Students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years;
  - b. Students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures; and
  - c. Students most at-risk of dropping out of school.

Most Tennessee districts were open in-person during the 2020-21 school year, and all offered remote options for students. Nonetheless, there have been students who have been less engaged or did not participate fully in remote learning. To re-engage these students, it will be necessary for LEAs to have access to academic data to identify at-risk students. Further, this data will also be utilized to inform decisions on re-engagement and address learning loss. TDOE will continue to support LEAs by providing resources and technical assistance as students transition into summer programming and into the 2021-22 school year. The department will also continue to monitor student progress over the life of the grant through benchmark and summative data collection.

- 4. Describe the extent to which the SEA will support its LEAs in implementing additional strategies for taking educational equity into account in expending ARP ESSER funds, including but not limited to:
  - i. Allocating funding both to schools and for districtwide activities based on student need, and
  - ii. Implementing an equitable and inclusive return to in-person instruction. An inclusive return to in-person instruction includes, but is not limited to, establishing policies and practices that avoid the over-use of exclusionary discipline measures (including in- and out-of-school suspensions) and creating a positive and supportive learning environment for all students.

As previously noted, most Tennessee districts were in person most of the 2020-21 school year. We encourage LEAs to think strategically about economies of scale and how to maximize resources – identifying what should be district led and what should be school specific. TDOE has also developed and provided LEAs resources on coordinating spending across federal programs.

The department has also provided supports and data, specific to creating positive learning environments for students. The department administers an annual teacher survey and the opportunity to participate in a state-provided climate survey, with the mission to create and sustain safe and supportive learning environments, thereby, increasing academic success for



all students. These resources are intended to provide LEAs with data to inform decisions on school culture, including discipline, student perception, and teacher working conditions.

**F. Supporting the Educator Workforce**

The Department recognizes the toll that the COVID-19 pandemic has taken on the Nation’s educators as well as students. In this section, SEAs will describe strategies for supporting and stabilizing the educator workforce and for making staffing decisions that will support students’ academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs.

1. Supporting and Stabilizing the Educator Workforce:
  - i. Describe the extent to which the State is facing shortages of educators, education administration personnel, and other school personnel involved in safely reopening schools, and the extent to which they vary by region/type of school district and/or groups of educators (e.g., special educators and related services personnel and paraprofessionals; bilingual or English as a second language educators; science, technology, engineering, and math (“STEM”) educators; career and technical education (“CTE”) educators; early childhood educators). Cite specific data on shortages and needs where available.

**Table F1.**

Area	Data on shortages and needs	Narrative description
Special educators and related service personnel and paraprofessionals	148 reported teacher vacancies in K-12 Special Education, as of 01/19/2021	Please see below our investment in SPED Additional Endorsement Grants, Grow Your Own, Integrated Endorsements, TN Teacher Job Connection and TN Educator Job Board
Bilingual educators	N/A	Please see below our work with the TN Educator Job Board
English as a second language educators	64 reported teacher vacancies in Pre-K-12 English as a Second Language (ESL), as of 01/19/2021	Please see below our investment in Grow Your Own, Additional Endorsement Grants, TN Teacher Job Connection



		and TN Educator Job Board
STEM educators	205 reported teacher vacancies in STEM subject areas (grades 6-12), as of 01/19/2021	Please see below our investment in Grow Your Own, Math 6-10 Endorsement, TN Teacher Job Connection and TN Educator Job Board
CTE educators	47 reported teacher vacancies in CTE (grades 6-12), as of 01/19/2021	Please see below our work in LEA as Education Preparation Provider (EPP) which specifically focuses on occupational CTE, TN Teacher Job Connection and TN Educator Job Board
Early childhood educators	31 reported teacher vacancies in Early Childhood Education/Pre-K, as of 01/19/2021	Please see below our work in Integrated Pre-K-3 Endorsement, TN Teacher Job Connection and TN Educator Job Board
School counselors	N/A	Please see below our work with the TN Educator Job Board
Social workers	N/A	Please see below our work with the TN Educator Job Board
Nurses	N/A	Please see below our work with the TN Educator Job Board
School psychologists	N/A	Please see below our work with the TN Educator Job Board
Educational Administration	N/A	Please see below our investment in the Aspiring Assistant

		Principal Network and Diverse Leaders Network along with multiple professional development opportunities and supports.
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- ii. Describe how the SEA will assist its LEAs in identifying the most urgent areas of shortages or potential shortages, with particular plans for individual LEAs facing the most significant needs (e.g., by avoiding layoffs, providing high-quality professional learning opportunities, and addressing the impact of stress or trauma on educators). Include a description of how other Federal COVID-19 funding (e.g., ESSER and GEER funds under the CARES Act and CRRSA Act) have already been used to avoid layoffs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Tennessee General Assembly and the Governor’s Office ensured there would be no cuts in state education funding, and schools were funded for the 2020-21 school year based on their 2019-20 enrollment. Therefore, Tennessee has not experienced layoffs like other states have experienced.

Prior to the emergence of the pandemic, TDOE worked with the Tennessee Organization of School Superintendents (TOSS) association to begin collecting teacher vacancy data for the 2019-2020 school year. The department proposed a policy to make this an annual reporting requirement to the State Board of Education. This proposal was successfully passed which allowed TDOE to collect this data from LEAs for the 2020-21 school year.

Overall, vacancies were down year-over-year with approximately 1,080 vacancies compared to over 1,120 from the previous year. We also worked with the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System (TCRS) to track teacher retirements. We experienced a lower overall number of retirements in 2020 compared to 2019. By first acknowledging the need to collect this data back in 2019, it allowed TDOE to work closely with our superintendents and human resources directors to analyze the data to drive programming and policy recommendations to address teacher vacancies.

In the summer of 2020, TDOE partnered with Trevecca University to offer free professional development focused on remote teaching and learning. We were quick to identify that one potential reason educators may resign or retire is because most teachers were never trained on teaching remotely by their educator preparation program or via district professional development. This partnership focused on eliminating anxiety in the technology space around remote learning by providing multiple modules that exposed our educators to

platform agnostic programming, free tools, and resources they could immediately use in their classrooms, as well as a community board where educators across Tennessee could encourage each other. Over 20,000 educators registered for these free and optional modules. TDOE also hosted informational calls with several other states interested in learning more about this initiative.

During this same time, we partnered with the University of Tennessee – Knoxville to launch our Principal Professional Learning Series for our administrators. This free and optional professional development opportunity was eligible for professional development points from TDOE. To date, more than 1,000 principals and assistant principals from every region and nearly every district in the state have participated in the [series](#), addressing timely topics including Effective Digital Learning Strategies, Student Support & Wellness, Beyond Quarantine: Resetting School Culture, Collaboration & Community, Supporting Educators in the Age of COVID, and Educating the Whole Child in the Age of COVID. This series was continued into the fall based on demand.

As previously noted, TDOE also launched a free and online platform called Best for All Central in August of 2020. This site is a repository which provides free resources to support our educators. The department developed several videos and resources to address the impact of stress and trauma not only for our students, but for educators and leaders as well.

Finally, TDOE launched the [COVID-19 Emotional Support Line](#), in partnership with the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS) and other statewide organizations. This emotional support line is available for all Tennessee educators and provides free and confidential support from specially trained volunteer mental health professionals to callers experiencing increased anxiety and stress due to the national pandemic. The COVID-19 Emotional Support Line is available to call at 888-642-7886 from 6 a.m.- 10 p.m. CT/ 7 a.m.- 11 p.m. ET daily.

- iii. Describe the actions the SEA will take to fill anticipated gaps in certified teachers for the start of the 2021-2022 school year and to what extent the SEA will further support its LEAs in expanding the educator pipeline and educator diversity while addressing the immediate needs of students disproportionately impacted by the pandemic (e.g., recruiting teaching candidates to provide high-dosage tutoring or implementing residencies for teacher candidates).

TDOE has taken several steps to fill anticipated gaps in hiring certified teachers in Tennessee schools, prioritizing the timely processing of submissions. In 2020, TDOE processed over 38,000 licensure transactions of which over 91% were processed within 21 business days.

TDOE also works closely with our LEAs to fill anticipated gaps, and this has been a strategic priority for the last two years. We formed a “kitchen cabinet” of human resources directors from across the state to solicit feedback on potential policies and programs, review edits to proposals, and ensure there is continuous, two-way communication to surface needs in the field. In addition, TDOE sends regular emails to all HR directors with updates and resources and presents regularly at conferences.

Within the policy space, TDOE proposed and received approval a change to a restrictive policy for out-of-state educators. Previously, to be licensed in Tennessee, out-of-state educators with an active teaching license in another state still had to take the Praxis exam(s). This policy created a significant cost barrier, as well as professional deterrent. Tennessee is bordered by eight states, so it is important to make it easier for qualified educators to come into the state.

For shortage areas such as math and world languages, we added alternative assessments options for educators in lieu of the Praxis exam. In addition, Tennessee has experienced a lower-than-average pass rate on the Praxis assessment (compared to other subjects) for our Math 6-12 endorsement. We proposed adding a Math 6-10 endorsement that would allow for prospective math educators to teach Algebra I, Geometry, and Integrated Math I and II. Secondary math makes up approximately 15% of vacancies in the state, and this endorsement will provide more flexibility to fill these positions.

Prior to the beginning of the 2020-21 school year, we launched the [Tennessee Teacher Job Connection](#) and the [Tennessee Substitute Teacher Job Connection](#). The Tennessee Teacher Job Connection was launched to support our LEAs recruit the following categories of educators: out-of-state educators due to the changes to policies that made it easier for them to come into the state, graduates from educator preparation programs within the state, and educators looking to move between LEAs. This initiative allowed educators to sign up to have their information disseminated across the state to human resources directors in our LEAs. To date, over 2,500 educators have participated, providing LEAs twice as many potential candidates as the number of vacancies reported. On a similar note, since Tennessee has been opened in person for the 2020-21 school year, we supported our LEAs with the Tennessee Substitute Teacher Job Connection, providing LEAs with over 700 substitutes that could add to their regular rotation.

TDOE has supported LEAs to expand their pipelines by putting forth an opportunity for LEAs to become EPPs. We launched our first LEA as an EPP in July 2019 and will have another LEA recommended for approval July 2021. These programs allow districts to build talent pipelines from within at significantly reduced costs with clear practitioner-based experience while meeting all the requirements of an EPP in Tennessee.

The TDOE has also supported expanding the pipelines of educators while also diversifying the profession with our Grow Your Own (GYO) program. In October 2020, TDOE awarded 20 grants that reflect 37 LEAs with 7 EPPs to produce 262 future educators who will all graduate dual endorsed in either special education or English as a second language, earn their degree for free while being paid to do so, and receive residency experience that significantly surpasses the current requirements of clinical practice for EPPs. We have since used ESSER funds for our GYO Round Two grant which will be awarded in May 2021.

TDOE has also expanded pipelines for future school leaders. We launched the Aspiring Assistant Principal Network which allowed for every district to select at least one educator to earn their master's degree in school leadership at no cost while getting daily clinical practice experience as an administrator, with over 150 participants each in our first and second cohorts. We have also diversified our leadership pipeline by launching the Diverse Leaders Network, which also allows for educators to earn their master's degree in school leadership at no cost, with 20 participants in our first cohort and 95 participants in our second cohort.

As demonstrated in the initiatives described above, supporting educators is one of the state's strategic priorities – knowing that teachers are the most impactful in advancing student achievement. Our work around diversifying the profession led us to be the only state in the country to receive a green rating in all five categories of [The Education Trust's Prioritizing Educator Diversity and Equity](#).

1. **Staffing to Support Student Needs:** Describe the extent to which the SEA has developed or will develop strategies and will support its LEAs in increasing student access to key support staff within school buildings, including school counselors, special education personnel, nurses, social workers, and psychologists (e.g. hiring additional personnel or freeing up these staff to focus on providing services to students).

TDOE has supported our LEAs in increasing student access to educators, support staff and services they need through a variety of measures. In Tennessee there are 146 LEAs, many of which are rural. TDOE has been able to bring awareness to their various staffing needs by launching the [Tennessee Educator Job Board](#). This initiative allows for LEAs to submit any job posting (i.e. teachers, counselors, nurses, social workers, etc.) that they have in their district to be displayed on the TDOE's website. Prospective and current educators may also utilize this resource for licensure inquiries.

Based on the success during the 2020-21 school year of our Special Education Additional Endorsement grant and need of LEAs, we are continuing this grant opportunity into 2021-22 while adding additional endorsement opportunities for English as a second language (ESL) and secondary math. The first installment of the grant paid for over 150 educators to earn

their special education endorsement at no cost including covering the cost of the Praxis. We expect to offer this opportunity up to 1,800 educators (one for each school) in 2021-22 for special education and up to 600 educators for ESL. TDOE is also pursuing the opportunity to become a provider for additional endorsements specifically in special education and ESL.

## **G. Monitoring and Measuring Progress**

The Department recognizes that transparency on how ARP ESSER funds are used and their impact on the Nation's education system is a fundamental responsibility of Federal, State, and local government. In this section, SEAs will describe how they are building capacity at the SEA and LEA levels to ensure high-quality data collection and reporting and to safeguard funds for their intended purposes.

1. Capacity for Data Collection and Reporting: It is important for an SEA to continuously monitor progress and make adjustments to its strategies, as well as to support its LEAs in making adjustments to LEA strategies, based on impact. Describe how the SEA will ensure its capacity and the capacity of its LEAs to collect data on reporting requirements, including but not limited to the examples of reporting requirements described in the SEA's Grant Award Notification (listed in Appendix B). Describe the SEA's capacity and strategy to collect data from its LEAs (disaggregated by student group, where applicable), to the greatest extent practicable, including any steps the SEA will take to build its capacity in the future (which may include the use of ARP ESSER and other Federal COVID-19 pandemic funds at the SEA and LEA levels), on issues that may include the following:
  - i. Student learning, including the academic impact of lost instructional time during the COVID-19 pandemic;
  - ii. Opportunity to learn measures (e.g., chronic absenteeism; student engagement; use of exclusionary discipline; access to and participation in advanced coursework; access to technology, including educator access to professional development on the effective use of technology; access to high-quality educators; access to school counselors, social workers, nurses, and school psychologists; and results from student, parent, and/or educator surveys);
  - iii. Fiscal data that is comparable across the State (e.g., per-pupil expenditures at the LEA and school levels);
  - iv. Jobs created and retained (by position type);
  - v. Participation in programs funded by ARP ESSER resources (e.g., summer and afterschool programs); and
  - vi. Other reporting requirements reasonably required by the Secretary (please refer to Appendix B of this template; final requirements will be issued separately).

TDOE conducted a needs assessment to identify the areas of greatest impact for data collection and reporting, identifying the following prioritized areas: the collection of quality data, the capacity to collect and report, and analysis to monitor and inform decisions.

For the collection of quality data, the department has emphasized the importance of ensuring the baseline year for data reporting is meaningful for all by requiring and providing incentives for a minimum 80% participation in our statewide summative assessments and in-person summer school options for underserved students. This emphasis includes standardized pre-tests and post-tests to support district and school decision-making and monitoring. In the Tennessee General Assembly's [Special Legislative Session](#) called by Governor Lee, the state reaffirmed its commitment to assessment, while balancing [reasonable accountability provisions](#) and [teacher evaluation](#) processes for the year.

Additionally, the department is expanding the assessments offered throughout the school year to address persistent gaps in the assessment resources of districts across the state. This expansion will help ensure uniformly high levels of access to not only summative assessment but also to effective, embedded progress monitoring tools (universal screener) and measures that will enable districts to make thoughtful, timely programmatic and instructional decisions that drive improvement:

- Providing timely and accurate information about student performance necessary to inform the programmatic and instructional decisions necessary to ensure the effectiveness of Learning Loss Summer Camps, Learning Loss Tutoring Programs, and other Learning Loss policy impacts.
- Increasing the quality and quantity of feedback to all stakeholders about student learning throughout the school year, instead of relying solely on a summative exam.

Through our summer school programming and corresponding application and TN All Corps initiative, the department will also be collecting information statewide on the interventions and activities associated with ESSER-funded initiatives.

The state has been intentional since the beginning of the school year to [monitor attendance for distance learners with a separate attendance code](#) which can be cross referenced against LEA instructional and health status updates. These new data points are collected through SIS data sent to the department, which collects records on discipline, attendance, enrollment, scheduling, and coursework.

For additional data points on school climate, the department also administers a school climate survey with components for educators, students, and families. Collecting quality data around school climate will inform the department's approach to providing necessary supports that ensure every child's non-academic and academic needs are met.



TDOE collects district level spending annually as part of its final expenditure report (FER) process. Districts submit their FERs through ePlan in the late summer / early fall, which are then reviewed by TDOE. After district level data are submitted, TDOE distributes templates to districts to report school level expenses during the winter, which are then received back and reviewed by TDOE before ultimately publishing them to our report card data downloads page. Collecting school and district-level fiscal data will provide transparency and inform LEA decisions on budgeting.

As discussed in Section F above, the department began collecting teacher vacancy data from LEAs for the 2020-21 school year. We also worked with the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System (TCRS) to track teacher retirements. Data will be submitted by each LEA's HR Director, Director of Schools, or another qualified designee.

Additionally, the department administers an annual, confidential [survey](#) to all P-12 school-based educators statewide each spring. The department has administered this survey since 2015 and expects the survey will continue to provide valid and reliable insight into educators' perspectives across the state and over time, amplify educators' voices in policy decisions, and provide first-hand data. Historically, a majority of Tennessee educators respond each year.

- 2. Monitoring and Internal Controls:** Describe how the SEA will implement appropriate fiscal monitoring of and internal controls for the ARP ESSER funds (e.g., by updating the SEA's plan for monitoring funds and internal controls under the CARES and CRRSA Acts; addressing potential sources of waste, fraud, and abuse; conducting random audits; or other tools). In this response, please describe the SEA's current capacity to monitor ARP ESSER; steps, if needed, to increase capacity; and any foreseeable gaps in capacity, including how the SEA will provide its LEAs with technical assistance in the anticipated areas of greatest need.

The department is also working closely with the Office of the Comptroller to ensure common understanding of the federal regulations, and the state has already added relief funding to its current performance audit plan. As the Comptroller is also responsible for reviewing local audits, by engaging early and often, the department and Comptroller are able to provide aligned guidance to local officials in developing plans.

The department's FPO division, responsible for technical assistance and monitoring to LEAs on federal grant funds, will also be expanded to include targeted supports on ESSER funds. Additional personnel and contract support are being secured to give districts designated contacts to navigate multiple rounds of ESSER funding. The resources will be deployed for overall monitoring purposes and also on a targeted basis to LEAs with either identified historical monitoring issues or issues surfaced during the grant period. Beyond staffing, the



FPO division is releasing ongoing guidance resources to ensure LEAs have the most recent and robust information as provided by the U.S. Department of Education.

To provide support at both the state and LEA levels, the department is also planning to pursue auditing capacity from a third-party vendor. This external review will offer an additional layer of analysis and provide the department with interim feedback on which to improve internal controls as needed. This third-party vendor may also be secured to provide districts with additional auditing support on an as-needed basis. The state intends to simplify the process for LEAs to procure these additional internal control supports as much as possible.

## Appendix A: School Operating Status and Instructional Mode Data Template

Data Dates: Table 1 below captures enrollment information as of October 1 and represents the data sets confirmed by districts and consistent with data submitted for other federal reporting. Table 2 reflects data pulled on 5/24/21, the most recent reported LEA data.

**Table 1**

In the most recent time period available, how many schools in your State offered each mode of instruction or learning model described below? Each row should account for all schools in your State, so that, for each row, the sum of the numbers in the “offered to all students,” “offered to some students,” and “not offered” columns is equal to the number in the “all schools” column.

Number of schools	All schools	Offered to all students	Offered to some students	Not offered
Remote or online only	40	#	#	#
School buildings open with both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)*	1,582	#	#	#
School buildings open with full-time in-person instruction only	220	#	#	#
<b>ELEMENTARY**</b>				
Number of schools	All schools	Offered to all students	Offered to some students	Not offered
Remote or online only	13	#	#	#
School buildings open with both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)*	905	#	#	#
School buildings open with full-time in-person instruction only	137	#	#	#
<b>MIDDLE**</b>				
Number of schools	All schools	Offered to all students	Offered to some students	Not offered
Remote or online only	10	#	#	#

School buildings open with both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)*	304	#	#	#
School buildings open with full-time in-person instruction only	41	#	#	#
<b>HIGH**</b>				
<b>Number of schools</b>	<b>All schools</b>	<b>Offered to all students</b>	<b>Offered to some students</b>	<b>Not offered</b>
Remote or online only	13	#	#	#
School buildings open with both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)*	333	#	#	#
School buildings open with full-time in-person instruction only	40	#	#	#

\*Note: All districts in TN closed the 2020-21 school year with in-person options for students. The fields above capturing both remote/online and in-person instruction reflect schools identified as Hybrid-Alt Schedule, Hybrid-Parent Choice, and In Person - Parent Choice.

\*\*Note: ES represents grades K-5, MS represents 6-8, and HS represents 9-12. Some schools serve grades spanning these bands, and therefore, may be reflected in multiple categories.

## Table 2

In the most recent time period available, what was the enrollment and mode of instruction for the schools in your State?

<b>Number of students</b>	<b>Total enrollment</b>	<b>Remote or online only</b>	<b>Both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)*</b>	<b>Full-time in-person instruction only</b>
Students from low-income families	322,328	5,562	290,404	26,362
White, not Hispanic	588,932	3,644	483,408	101,880
Black or African American, not Hispanic	207,161	6,690	193,423	7,048
Hispanic, of any race	119,903	2,551	108,043	9,309

Asian, not Hispanic	19,927	83	15,893	3,951
American Indian or Alaskan Native, not Hispanic	1,436	23	1,198	215
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, not Hispanic	994	5	889	100
Two or more races, not Hispanic	38,770	294	33,916	4,560
Race/Ethnicity information not available	-	-	-	-
English learners	51,448	1,108	47,796	2,544
Children with disabilities	136,607	1,485	117,737	17,385
Students experiencing homelessness	10,841	99	9,528	1,214
Children and youth in foster care	4,214	10	3,715	489
Migratory students	420	2	397	21

\*Note: All districts in TN closed the 2020-21 school year with in-person options for students. The fields above capturing both remote/online and in-person instruction reflect schools identified as *Hybrid-Alt Schedule, Hybrid-Parent Choice, and In Person - Parent Choice*.

**Appendix B: Reporting Language Included in the Grant Award Notification (“GAN”)**

As described in the Grant Award Notification (“GAN”), the SEA will comply with, and ensure that its LEAs comply with, all reporting requirements at such time and in such manner and containing such information as the Secretary may reasonably require, including on matters such as:

- How the State is developing strategies and implementing public health protocols including, to the greatest extent practicable, policies and plans in line with the CDC guidance related to mitigating COVID-19 in schools;
- Overall plans and policies related to State support for return to in-person instruction and maximizing in-person instruction time, including how funds will support a return to and maximize in-person instruction time, and advance equity and inclusivity in participation in in-person instruction;
- Data on each school’s mode of instruction (fully in-person, hybrid, and fully remote) and conditions;
- SEA and LEA uses of funds to meet students’ social, emotional, and academic needs, including through summer enrichment programming and other evidence-based interventions, and how they advance equity for underserved students;
- SEA and LEA uses of funds to sustain and support access to early childhood education programs;

- Impacts and outcomes (disaggregated by student subgroup) through use of ARP ESSER funding (e.g., quantitative and qualitative results of ARP ESSER funding, including on personnel, student learning, and budgeting at the school and district level);
- Student data (disaggregated by student subgroup) related to how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected instruction and learning;
- Requirements under the Federal Financial Accountability Transparency Act (“FFATA”); and
- Additional reporting requirements as may be necessary to ensure accountability and transparency of ARP ESSER funds.

## Appendix C: Assurances

By signing this document, the SEA assures all of the following:

- The SEA will conduct all its operations so that no person shall be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under the ARP ESSER program or activity based on race, color, national origin, which includes a person’s limited English proficiency or English learner status and a person’s actual or perceived shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics; sex; age; or disability. These non-discrimination obligations arise under Federal civil rights laws, including but not limited to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975. In addition, the SEA must comply with all regulations, guidelines, and standards issued by the Department under any of these statutes;
- The SEA will comply with all ARP Act and other ARP ESSER requirements and all requirements of its Grant Award Notification, including but not limited to:
  - Complying with the maintenance of effort provision in section 2004(a)(1) of the ARP Act, absent a waiver by the Secretary pursuant to section 2004(a)(2) of the ARP Act; and
  - Complying with the maintenance of equity provisions in section 2004(b) of the ARP Act, and ensuring its LEAs comply with the maintenance of equity provision in section 2004(c) of the ARP Act (please note that the Department will provide additional guidance on maintenance of equity shortly);
- The SEA will allocate ARP ESSER funds to LEAs in an expedited and timely manner and, to the extent practicable, not later than 60 days after the SEA receives ARP ESSER funds (i.e., 60 days from the date the SEA receives each portion of its ARP ESSER funds). An SEA that is not able to allocate such funds within 60 days because it is not practicable (e.g., because of pre-existing State board approval requirements) will provide an explanation to the Department within 30 days of receiving each portion of its ARP ESSER funds (submitted via email to your Program Officer at [State].OESE@ed.gov (e.g., Alabama.OESE@ed.gov)), including a description of specific actions the SEA is taking to provide ARP ESSER funds to LEAs in an expedited and timely manner and the SEA’s expected timeline for doing so;

- The SEA will implement evidence-based interventions as required under section 2001(f) of the ARP Act and ensure its LEAs implement evidence-based interventions, as required by section 2001(e)(1) of the ARP Act;
- The SEA will address the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on underserved students (i.e., students from low-income families, students from racial or ethnic groups (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by race or ethnicity), gender (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by gender), English learners, children with disabilities, students experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, and migratory students), as required under section 2001(f) of the ARP Act, and ensure its LEAs address the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on underserved students (i.e., students from low-income families, students from racial or ethnic groups, gender, English learners, children with disabilities, students experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, and migratory students), as required by section 2001(e)(1) of the ARP Act; and
- The SEA will provide to the Department: (1) the URL(s) where the public can readily find data on school operating status and (2) the URL(s) for the SEA and/or LEA websites where the public can find the LEA plans for a) the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services required under section 2001(i) of the ARP Act, and b) use of ARP ESSER funds. SEAs should consider ensuring a standardized URL format in all cases (e.g., xxx.gov/COVIDplan).

## Appendix D

OMB Control No. 1894-0005 (Exp. 06/30/2023)

### NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS

The purpose of this enclosure is to inform you about a new provision in the Department of Education's General Education Provisions Act ("GEPA") that applies to applicants for new grant awards under Department programs. This provision is Section 427 of GEPA, enacted as part of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Public Law (P.L.) 103-382).

#### **To Whom Does This Provision Apply?**

Section 427 of GEPA affects applicants for new grant awards under this program. **ALL APPLICANTS FOR NEW AWARDS MUST INCLUDE INFORMATION IN THEIR APPLICATIONS TO ADDRESS THIS NEW PROVISION IN ORDER TO RECEIVE FUNDING UNDER THIS PROGRAM.**

(If this program is a State-formula grant program, a State needs to provide this description only for projects or activities that it carries out with funds reserved for State-level uses. In addition, local school districts or other eligible applicants that apply to the State for funding need to provide this description in their applications to the State for funding. The State would be responsible for ensuring that the school district or other local entity has submitted a sufficient section 427 statement as described below.)

#### **What Does This Provision Require?**

Section 427 requires each applicant for funds (other than an individual person) to include in its application a description of the steps the applicant proposes to take to ensure equitable

access to, and participation in, its Federally-assisted program for students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries with special needs. This provision allows applicants discretion in developing the required description. The statute highlights six types of barriers that can impede equitable access or participation: gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age. Based on local circumstances, you should determine whether these or other barriers may prevent your students, teachers, etc. from such access to, or participation in, the Federally-funded project or activity. The description in your application of steps to be taken to overcome these barriers need not be lengthy; you may provide a clear and succinct description of how you plan to address those barriers that are applicable to your circumstances. In addition, the information may be provided in a single narrative, or, if appropriate, may be discussed in connection with related topics in the application.

Section 427 is not intended to duplicate the requirements of civil rights statutes, but rather to ensure that, in designing their projects, applicants for Federal funds address equity concerns that may affect the ability of certain potential beneficiaries to fully participate in the project and to achieve high standards. Consistent with program requirements and its approved application, an applicant may use the Federal funds awarded to it to eliminate barriers it identifies.

## **What are Examples of How an Applicant Might Satisfy the Requirement of This Provision?**

The following examples may help illustrate how an applicant may comply with Section 427.

(1) An applicant that proposes to carry out an adult literacy project serving, among others, adults with limited English proficiency, might describe in its application how it intends to distribute a brochure about the proposed project to such potential participants in their native language.

(2) An applicant that proposes to develop instructional materials for classroom use might describe how it will make the materials available on audio tape or in braille for students who are blind.

(3) An applicant that proposes to carry out a model science program for secondary students and is concerned that girls may be less likely than boys to enroll in the course, might indicate how it intends to conduct "outreach" efforts to girls, to encourage their enrollment.

(4) An applicant that proposes a project to increase school safety might describe the special efforts it will take to address concerns of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students, and efforts to reach out to and involve the families of LGBT students.

We recognize that many applicants may already be implementing effective steps to ensure equity of access and participation in their grant programs, and we appreciate your cooperation in responding to the requirements of this provision.

[Click here to enter text.](#)



## Estimated Burden Statement for GEPA Requirements

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 3 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is required to obtain or retain benefit (Public Law 103-382). Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20210-4537 or email [ICDocketMgr@ed.gov](mailto:ICDocketMgr@ed.gov) and reference the OMB Control Number 1894-0005.

