

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



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**Paperwork Burden Statement** 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. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1810-0754. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 100 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 under Section 2001 of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP Act). If you have any comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimate, suggestions for improving this individual collection, or if you have comments or concerns regarding the status of your individual form, application or survey, please contact Britt Jung, Office of State and Grantee Relations, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20202-6450, email: [SGR@ed.gov](mailto:SGR@ed.gov) directly.

## 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):** S425U210045

**SEA Contact:** Stephanie Graff, Assistant Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Education

**Telephone:** 651-582-8820

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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.

**Chief State School Officer or Authorized Representative (Printed Name)**

Heather Mueller, Ed.D.

**Signature of Authorized SEA Representative**

Date

*Heather Mueller, Ed.D.*

July 20, 2021

## **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 Wisconsin-Minnesota Comprehensive Center (WMCC), housed at the University of Minnesota's Center for Applied Research and Education Improvement (CAREI) conducted a survey in winter 2021 with follow-up survey results coming in spring 2021 and fall 2021. The winter survey included 9,333 educators, 11,651 family members and 2,988 students and highlights the successes and the challenges from this school year.

The survey results demonstrated that the use of and access to reliable technology has been cited as an area of success among educators, families and students this school year. Families, in particular, reported this as a top success. While this shows improvement from spring 2020 when technology access was reported as a widespread issue (prompting GEER I funds to be focused on increasing access to technology), Minnesota still has work to do to ensure every student and family has access to high-speed internet and technology for learning. This remains a challenge in rural Minnesota in particular.

Relationship building and connection with students has been critical this year to supporting the needs of students. While ensuring students are engaged in their learning has been a consistent challenge, maintaining relationships with students through intentional outreach by school staff has been a successful strategy this year to ensure connection with students. This has been especially important for secondary students, especially those in high school grades, as compared to younger students. As a part of ensuring family connection with school and their students' learning, translated materials and communications have been critical for our families that do not speak English.

Minnesota's community organizations have been significant partners in supporting the needs of students during the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, wrap-around early care and education services provided by community organizations were supported through the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund. These wrap-around supports have been, and will continue to be, incredibly important to meet the needs of our historically underserved student populations across Minnesota.

MDE heard from parents, advocates and schools at the end of the 2019-2020 school year about the challenges students receiving special education services experienced in distance learning. In the summer of 2020, MDE staff worked with the field to create contingency learning plans (CLPs) for students receiving special education services. MDE anticipated the volatility

that would exist in learning models throughout the state when the 2020-2021 school year began. We knew schools would be quickly shifting from in-person to distance or hybrid models due to shifting case rate data or outbreaks in the school building. CLPs were designed so Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams could create plans for special education service delivery in all three learning model options (in-person, hybrid, or distance learning). That way, when a school shifted from in-person to hybrid or distance, or vice versa, the IEP teams would not need to meet to determine how services would be provided. They use the CLP to quickly shift services in a way that provided continuity of services with no gaps. While the field struggled to put these plans together initially, we heard overwhelmingly positive feedback throughout the year about the staff time it saved and how it benefited students. So much so, that schools have requested to continue using CLPs in 2021-2022 school year and beyond.

Lastly, schools worked this year to implement proven mitigation strategies including, but not limited to: face coverings and personal protective equipment, physical distancing, contact tracing protocols, and COVID-19 testing for students and staff. More information can be found in Section B of this plan. The WMCC survey also showed that ensuring the health and safety of students and staff, including communication with families, was reported as an area of success this year. Two notable strategies are Minnesota's COVID-19 testing plan, including a requirement that every school district offer on-site testing for all school staff and optional testing for students, as well as Minnesota's early commitment and efforts to prioritize school staff for the vaccination.

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.

Support for the mental health of students, families and staff has been a top challenge throughout this school year and these supports must be a top priority moving forward. Administrators have reported that supporting mental health has been a number one issue, and approximately 50% of teachers and support professionals report that taking care of their own mental health and supporting student mental health has been a challenge. Mental health has also been shared as a significant and consistent issue from both students and families this school year.

Ensuring students are engaged and connected to their learning has been a top issue as well. Teachers reported challenges in engaging students, administrators reported ensuring student attendance as a challenge, families reported needing support to keep their students engaged, and students reported that understanding what they learned and keeping up with their schoolwork were top challenges. In the WMCC survey, approximately 63% of families reported that strategies to keep students engaged in learning were needed. Student and family engagement and connection has been a particular need at the high school level.

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 2019-2020 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.

Minnesota’s highest priority needs by student group (Table A1) are provided below. The racial and ethnic groups of students included below are those that are most populous in Minnesota and those that were most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. For the purposes of this plan, Minnesota did not include the Two or More Races, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, or White student groups. While each racial and ethnic group included below has unique needs, it is also important to note that there are common priority needs across these groups as well.

- **Students from low-income families**

- Digital literacy training for families unfamiliar with digital technology; internet connection or device adequate for distance learning at home.
- Provide students with wrap-around services to support their well-being, including food security, physical and mental health services, and basic student and family needs.
- Match students with caring and qualified educators, including increasing low student achievement with high teacher content knowledge and culturally responsive teaching.

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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.

- **Hispanic or Latino**
  - Address the language access needs of the Latinx community through relevant information pertaining to school to increase engagement with families, including access to multilingual family and community engagement specialists and supports.
  - Access to high quality English language development programs, bilingual paraprofessionals and tutors as well as programs to ensure schools have more bilingual teachers as language and content teachers.
  - Programming that emphasizes culturally proficient mental and emotional health support, especially in the forms of school counselors, psychologists, and support group facilitators that have shared language and life experience as students from Latinx communities.
  - Improved classroom experiences, inclusive curriculum, and a more welcoming environment for Latinx students and families.
  
- **American Indian**
  - A more responsive process for credit recovery and support for high school students as they prepare to graduate.
  - Remove barriers to students in reaching graduation goals (such as transportation and authentic connections).
  - More supportive and authentic engagement strategies to reach out to American Indian families and students, specifically, home-visits.
  - More comprehensive and culturally responsive social-emotional learning and mental health supports.
  
- **Asian**
  - Culturally proficient mental and emotional health support, especially in the forms of school counselors, psychologists, and support group facilitators that have shared language and life experience as students from refugee/immigrant communities.
  - Year round student enrichment and empowerment opportunities that focus on building meaningful home, school, and community connections with the goal of eliminating discord between these fundamental pieces in a child's developmental journey.
  - Cost-free and flexible academic support/tutoring service that facilitate access for students and parents to work with content experts and teachers to identify students' area(s) of need and develop a personalized after-school engagement plan that works for the family.
  
- **Black**
  - Disrupt and eliminate racial bias and racial stressors that persist for Black, Indigenous, and Students of Color and impact their ability to thrive in classrooms.
  - Re-engage Black students and reduce and eliminate disparities in accessing high quality, in-person instruction for Students of Color (Black, Latinx, and Asian families demonstrate more hesitancy to send their children back to school).

- Provide equitable health opportunities, to reduce and eliminate the disproportionate impact of social determinants of health and social inequities that put Black students at increased risk.
- **Gender: Need to support gender equity for all students who missed opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic to have their learning needs met**
  - Empower all students – critically examine gender bias and affirm students’ sense of self and others’ value.
  - Promote positive gender identities – defy stereotypes by gender (social identity as male, female, or non-binary - other than male or female).
  - Classroom disparities examples:
    - Male – represented more often in curricular materials; disciplined more severely; rated higher in math, science, technology; provided with more praise, feedback, and attention.
    - Female – receive less attention; lower-quality feedback; praised on physical appearance, neatness, cleanliness, or artistic quality; rated higher in art and language arts topics.
    - Non-binary – omission of people outside the gender binary of male or female.
- **English learners**
  - Ensure language access to all relevant information pertaining to school to increase engagement with families, including access to multilingual family and community engagement specialists and supports.
  - School navigators and more robust opportunities for parents to learn in their primary language about the US school system and resources and strategies for advocating for their children.
  - Bilingual paraprofessionals and tutors as well as programs to ensure schools have more bilingual teachers as language and content teachers.
- **Children with disabilities**
  - Re-engage families of children with disabilities ages birth through 5 who chose not to continue to receive special education services during the pandemic.
  - Outreach and programs to re-engage and support older/high school/transition age students who left school or aged out.
  - Access and provision of social-emotional/mental health services and tutoring supports for students with disabilities, ages birth to 21, and their families.
  - Compensatory services and learning recovery for students who missed special education and related services during the pandemic.
- **Students experiencing homelessness**
  - Increased and enhanced outreach and identification of students and families experiencing homelessness.



- More systems navigators to help families and youth access education and other services, such as shelter, utilities, housing and rental assistance, and child care.
  - More transportation options.
  - Supports to meet rising mental health needs, including increased counseling and social work services.
- **Students in foster care**
    - Significant support for trauma and mental-health.
    - Robust efforts to ensure school stability and prompt enrollment when children have to change schools when living placements may change.
    - Strategies to promote regular school attendance in order to boost academic support and learning.
    - Meaningful collaboration with child welfare agency partners, including the creation of new partnerships.
- **Migratory students**
    - Mental health and social-emotional supports for migratory students and families.
    - Food security efforts for migratory students and their families.
    - Increased connectivity, including internet and devices, to participate in remote learning as many migratory students live in areas with little or no access. This also includes the need for basic technology literacy skills for parents to support students.
- **Neglected, delinquent and incarcerated students**
    - Support in transitions from facility to school or community so that health as well as academic needs are addressed.
    - Mental health supports to address mental health issues arising from isolation and stress of incarceration or treatment.
    - Greater support and re-engagement in education of students in facilities.
    - Communication and connections with families and neglected and delinquent youth to ensure frequent communication between incarcerated youth and their families.
    - Mentorship opportunities in life skills.
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.

MDE will use a combination of data tools to assess the effectiveness of interventions, recognizing that interpretation of results will depend on local factors (such as participation rates

in statewide assessments) that impact the usefulness of collected data. Potential tools that could be used in a given analysis include: Kindergarten Entry Profile data; statewide assessments of reading, mathematics, science, and English language development; course completion and performance (including in rigorous coursework); changes in enrollment; attendance and absenteeism; Minnesota Student Survey data; graduation; and postsecondary outcomes. Use of evidence will, by necessity, be localized and conducted in conjunction with program monitoring of intervention implementation.

Risk of disproportionate impact on key groups of students can be anticipated using both pre- and mid-pandemic data, allowing for targeted technical assistance focused on each of the populations previously discussed. In addition, Minnesota's accountability system under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act and state World's Best Workforce law disaggregate data by race and ethnicity, income, language, and disability and that disaggregation informs both school and district support. Staff who support these systems will work in concert with the program staff supporting ARP ESSER funds.

State data on enrollment, attendance, and student mobility can help to identify those students and LEAs experiencing the greatest impact of lost instructional time, allowing for corresponding attention to those LEAs in their implementation of their local spending plans.

As MDE supports LEAs in identifying the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student learning and student well-being, it is important to support the meaningful use of data by building data literacy. Data are provided to districts, schools, educators, community members and families, including explanations, graphs, charts and visual resources. It is essential that these audiences understand the data so that they are interpreted and used appropriately. Therefore, MDE is committed to educating all stakeholders in the proper comprehension and use of data and information. MDE is building agency-wide data literacy to ensure that the agency has a strong, dependable voice across the state with regard to outcome data, program evaluation, and meaningful implementation of educational policies.

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;

For school year 2020-21, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) collected Safe Learning Model information from districts and schools on an ongoing basis. Public school districts and charter schools were required to report changes to their safe learning model within

24 hours of the change occurring. This data was reported publicly on the [Safe Learning Model Dashboard](#) through June 30, 2021 and can still be searched using the [Safe Learning Model Look-Up](#). Organizations reported all in-person, all hybrid, all distance or a combination for each grade-level, as well as a summary for each district, charter, and school building. While the Governor's executive order allowed any family to select distance learning for their student during the 2020-21 school year, the Safe Learning Model data does not account for students who elected distance learning apart from their school learning model. MDE did not collect student-level learning model information in school year 2020-21. We are exploring the possibility of collecting at the individual level through student information systems in the future.

- 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

MDE collects enrollment data for all categories described in A.3.i-viii except race/ethnicity, children and youth in foster care, and migratory students. MDE currently has enrollment data for two reporting periods: fall and end-of-year. In terms of learning modality, learning model information was collected at the district, school, and grade level throughout the 2020-21 school year. Student-level learning model information was not collected, which means MDE does not know which students elected distance learning during the 2020-21 school year. Therefore, it is possible to report enrollment data for student groups by learning modality only if we make an assumption that all students followed the school learning model. We know that some students elected for distance learning instead of their school learning model so these data will be skewed. MDE is exploring the possibility of collecting learning model information at the individual level through student information systems in the future.

- 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.

MDE collects student-level attendance information each school year. Using these data, we calculate a measure for consistent attendance, which is the percentage of days in attendance out of all days enrolled. Students with 90% or higher attendance are considered to have consistent attendance. Since we did not collect individual-level learning model information in the 2020-21 school year, it is not possible to report the percentage of students with consistent attendance in each student group for each learning modality. Again, MDE is exploring the possibility of collecting learning model information at the individual level through student information systems in the future.

- 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 website.

Please see Appendix A.

- 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.

On May 27, 2021, the Minnesota Department of Health released the [COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Summer School: Executive Summary](#), along with the detailed guidance in the [COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Summer School](#). This guidance provides health recommendations for in-person summer programming to pre-K through grade 12 schools that have completed the 2020-21 school year. This summer school guidance, as well as guidance and health recommendations for the 2021-22 school year, will be updated if national and state recommendations evolve over the coming months.

Additionally, as the Governor’s executive order that allows for localized learning models (in-person, hybrid, and distance learning) is discontinued at the end of the 2020-21 school year, MDE is considering distance or hybrid learning options for the 2021-22 school year for districts.

### **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;

MDE works very closely, and has a strong history of collaborating, with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH). MDH is the lead agency establishing guidance and recommendations based on CDC guidance during the COVID-19 pandemic. This narrative is a sampling of the many ways that MDE has supported LEAs in guidance at a state level, streamlining the guidance that MDH has established. During the 2020-2021 school year, guidance was released within the Safe Learning Plan & aligned with the Governor’s executive

orders. This guidance highlights requirements that are effective through June 13, 2021. Moving forward, MDH released guidance for year round schools and summer school on May 27, 2021 based on current CDC recommendations.

MDE and MDH established statewide networks connecting schools to local public health forming regional teams to help establish the proper steps in mitigation to coincide with current guidance and also be reflective of current COVID-19 data within local communities. The plan is to continuously update guidance, communicate out this guidance to schools and communities, and provide technical assistance through state agency support as well as the regional team network. Ongoing communications to school nurses, school administrators and superintendents, families and community members will be consistent in the continuation of the safe operation of schools. Consistent updates are provided on the [COVID-19 webpage](#). The [2020-2021 Planning Guide for Schools](#) will be updated for the coming school year. In addition to guidance MDE provides, there are consistent connections to the numerous resources that are housed on [MDH's website](#) including: videos, posters, fact sheets, and many print publications with multiple translations.

MDE's mitigation strategies (Table B1) are summarized below:

- **Universal and correct wearing of masks:** The Governor's July 22, 2020 executive order required face masks in all indoor public spaces, including K-12 school buildings. Last August, schools were provided with a supply of face masks and shields for staff and students as follows:
  - Every K-12 student received one cloth face covering
  - Every school staff member received one cloth face covering
  - Every school received three disposable face masks per student
  - Every school received face shields for all licensed teachers and 50% of non-licensed staff.

At the end of 2020 and in early 2021, districts and charter schools received additional masks and shields from the state for school leaders to provide them to staff.

MDE will continue to provide recommendations on the universal and correct wearing of masks when determined necessary. The Governor's statewide mask mandate was lifted on May 14, 2021, but masks continued to be required in schools during the instructional day through the last day of the 2020-2021 school year. As per CDC requirements, facial coverings will continue to be required on public transportation, including school buses as was identified in the summer school guidance released on May 27, 2021 by MDH ([Frequently Asked Questions About Wearing Face Coverings](#)).

- **Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding):** MDE will continue to update resources and share guidance on social distancing and minimizing exposure.

- **Handwashing and respiratory etiquette:** Resources will continue to be updated and shared, such as [videos](#) that can be shared with both staff and students on proper handwashing & respiratory etiquette.
- **Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation:** Resources will continue to be updated and shared, such as the [MDH webpage on ventilation for schools and COVID-19](#).
- **Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments:** Each school has identified a COVID-19 coordinator, as MDE recommends, to assist with [proper contract tracing](#) in adherence to state guidance. MDH uses CDC guidance in establishing the [isolation and quarantine protocol](#). This mitigation strategy will continue to be reassessed and communicated on school nurse calls and weekly superintendent calls.
- **Diagnostic and screening testing:** MDE will continue to implement & revise as needed the COVID-19 testing program (training and saliva test kits provided by the State) every other week for all school staff, beginning January 4, 2021. School leaders are directed to strongly recommend their students and families learning in-person or in a hybrid learning model to receive a COVID-19 test every two weeks. Families can find locations for free COVID-19 testing on MDH's website. Beginning April 26, 2021, all Minnesota middle and high schools are strongly encouraged to offer [COVID-19 testing options for students](#). This will continue throughout the summer with the state program.
- **Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible:** As CDC recommends, all Minnesotans who are age 12 years or older are eligible and recommended to get vaccinated. Many resources have been developed and promoted as part of the Roll Up Your Sleeve MN Campaign, including a specific reach out to families focused on 12-15 year-olds and their families with shots being prioritized at the state's community vaccination site at Mall of America. In addition, MDE is promoting the [Vaccine Connector](#), where Minnesotans can plug in their zip code and find vaccination clinics within 10 miles. Mobile units are also being launched with targeted marketing campaigns being used to reach local communities. Finally, MDE is assisting with connecting local public health departments and school districts in providing onsite school vaccination clinics for students, staff, and community members. Minnesota prioritized adults who work in childcare & educational settings with the initial roll out of vaccine administration.
- **Appropriate accommodations for students receiving special education services with respect to the health and safety policies:** Resources will continue to be updated and shared, such as the guidance for providing [direct service in school](#) and, if applicable, [in home settings](#).

- 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;
- **August 2020:** MDE’s 2020-21 School Year Planning Guidance and MDH’s 2020-2021 Planning Guide for Schools
- **August 27, 2020:** Safe Learning Plan
- **September 2020:** School staff tests – URL codes
- **October 2020:** MDE’s 2020-21 Safe Learning Model Portal Launch: Any change in learning model must be reported within 24 hours of making the shift. This includes a temporary change, such as a 14-day building closure due to confirmed COVID-19 cases.
- **December 2020:** Staff Testing Program
  - Requiring districts and charter schools to provide testing every other week for all school staff working in-person. Staff participation is optional.
  - State of Minnesota provided schools with supplies necessary to hold on-site testing events.
- **January 18, 2021:** Safe Learning Plan Update
- **April 2021:** Student Testing Program
  - Recommending districts and charter schools provide testing every other week for all students in grades 6-12
  - Recommending students participating in youth sports are tested weekly.
- **May 27, 2021:** COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Summer School
  - [COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Summer School: Executive Summary](#)
  - [COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Summer School](#)
- 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

Testing of students and staff in onsite programs is provided free of charge, without billing to insurance, through the State of Minnesota’s partnership with Vault. This program is funded by ELC grant funding awarded by the CDC. MDH and MDE have consulted with Federal officials about potential testing pilots for summer programming, summer camps, and 2021-2022 school year testing.

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

MDE and MDH will continue to provide guidance, professional learning, and technical assistance opportunities to LEAs. The following MDH and MDE inboxes are frequently used for inquiries from LEAs and the public.

MDE inboxes:

- Questions on IEPs/504 plans, attendance requirements and drops, distance learning: COVID-19.Questions.MDE@state.mn.us
- Questions about the school staff vaccine program: EducatorVaccine@state.mn.us
- Questions on COVID-19 Saliva Screening Testing Program: COVIDTesting.MDE@state.mn.us

MDH inboxes:

- Questions from School Nurse, Staff, or Child Care Provider: Health.schools.covid19@state.mn.us
- Public (parents, staff, non-nurse or childcare provider) Inquiry Inbox: Health.covid19@state.mn.us
- Question/Positive Case in Youth and Adult Sports: Health.sports.covid19@state.mn.us
- Positive Case in Child Care, School, Day Camp: Health.schoolcc.followup@state.mn.us

Regional Support Teams (RSTs): In partnership with MDE, MDH, and local public health, the RSTs were created to provide regional support to districts/charters in navigating the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the school year.

From the onset, the RSTs have provided a “one stop shop” for schools for questions/support on testing, learning models, health best practices, and when they have cases/exposures. This has included:

- Guidance and action steps to districts/charters when there are COVID-19 cases, close contacts, or exposures within school communities.
- Collaboration and consultative support from MDH as districts/charters make decisions related to learning models.
- Assistance related to COVID-19 testing.
- Relevant data, resources and information in partnership with school districts as they make localized decisions.

Training and ongoing assistance for school testing program is provided by MDE in collaboration with Vault Health. Resources have included a testing program guide for schools, question and answers documents, a recorded training webinar, and several template communications documents for schools to refine to fit their local context.

MDH Resources and Support:

- Guidance resources are housed and maintained on the MDH COVID-19 Schools and Child Care page.
- Weekly school nurse calls and local public health calls. These are opportunities to hear MDH updates and receive the latest information, including any new guidance.

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;

During the 2020-2021 school year, guidance was released within the Safe Learning Plan & aligned with the Governor's executive orders. This guidance highlights requirements that were effective through June 13, 2021. Moving forward, MDH released guidance for year round schools and summer school on May 27, 2021 based on current CDC recommendations. LEAs that receive ARP ESSER funds will provide their plans in MDE's SERVS application. MDE will maintain a focus on equity in our review of plans and our continued support of LEAs in ensuring these policies are adopted and implemented.

- 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;

MDE will review and approve required components in the plans LEAs submit through the SERVS application. MDE will support LEA work to ensure continuity of services in a variety of other ways as further described below.

MDE, in collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), will provide policy and practice guidance to the Minnesota Specialized Instruction Support Personnel (MSISP). MSISP is comprised of all of Minnesota's school psychologists, counselors, social workers, and nurses). MDE will host bi-weekly conference calls with MSISP to provide guidance and answer questions about continuity of services.

DHS administers a state-funded school-linked mental health (SLMH) grant program. The grant program connects or co-locates effective mental health services with schools and students at the local level. Over 1,000 schools participate in the SLMH grant program and offer a statewide network for communication and support for continuity of services.

MDE will continue to implement the Minnesota Safe Schools Levy that can directly fund costs associated with licensed school counselors, school nurses, school social workers, school psychologists, and alcohol and chemical dependency counselors to help provide early responses

to students social-emotional, and mental health problems. MDE, through its weekly communications with superintendents and charter school leaders, will communicate the importance of braiding funding to ensure continuity of services.

MDE will continue to work with MDH to develop health and safety COVID-19 guidance for schools and coordinate the implementation of the most current guidance.

MDE's School Climate Center developed implementation guidance for social-emotional learning implementation and comprehensive school mental health quality improvement and will continue to provide training and technical assistance to schools in this area.

MDE's nutrition division will continue to provide guidance and support to schools on food service programs that align with USDA's guidance, as well as safety guidance from MDH.

Lastly, MDE's division of special education will continue to provide guidance, training, and technical assistance on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) implementation.

- 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 LEA application for ARP ESSER awards includes a required link to the LEA's Safe Return to In-Person Learning Plan and the link to the related summary of public comment. The SEA will request updated links as part of progress reports. Technical assistance and related guidance will be provided to LEAs to support their implementation of this requirement.

- 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.

District/charter plans are locally held. As school leaders engage in conversations with internal teams, public health experts, and state agencies to make decisions about how to safely reopen schools and the recommended mitigation strategies, there are many tools and resources available to them to assist in their planning as identified in item B.1.iv.

### **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

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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.

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.

## **Overview of Opportunity to Comment**

- **Input leading to creation of suggested strategies**

Note: in Minnesota, when we reference school leaders we mean superintendents and charter school leaders.

MDE was engaging and consulting with superintendents, charter school leaders, tribal school leaders and non-public school leaders regularly prior to and following Minnesota's transition to distance learning due to COVID-19 in the spring of 2020. Through that communication (including a technology survey and superintendent feedback at regional meetings), MDE was able to identify very early on three statewide high need areas: technology resources for equitable distance learning, academic summer school to address student learning gaps, and mental health services and supports. These needs were supported with prior ESSER and GEER funds. MDE's current list of suggested strategies for ARP ESSER funds was created following a year of engagement with stakeholders, with additional outreach and public comment opportunities leading up to the completion of this State Plan, as further detailed below.

MDE conducted two rounds of outreach to education partner groups in March and April 2021, in addition to multiple conversations with legislative leaders and policy staff. The first 35 organizations represent stakeholder groups that partnered with MDE on various mutual interests related to education policy and legislation over the past year. The stakeholder groups represent a variety of interests including superintendents and charter school leaders, educators (and their unions), families and students, students receiving special education services, English learners, among other historically underserved families and students. A second round of outreach was

conducted to over 100 individuals representing Minnesota's 11 tribal nations, tribal education leaders, as well as representatives from other organized Indigenous groups such as urban American Indians. The groups were asked to share their ideas about the best solutions for students, families, communities, and schools as part of pandemic recovery. MDE received approximately 30 formal responses, most of which were undersigned by multiple groups that shared similar interests. The results were compiled with the most common responses focusing on student and staff mental health, additional programming, and learning loss strategies.

- **Families and Stakeholder Input Sessions**

Between May 20 and June 25, 2021, MDE conducted 15 virtual public input sessions with stakeholders from the following groups:

- Minnesota Tribal Nations Education Committee
- Minnesota Youth Council
- American Indian individuals
- Disability rights organizations and advocates
- Special education administrators
- Stakeholders representing the interests of English learners
- Stakeholders representing the interests of students in foster care
- Stakeholders representing the interests of migrant students
- Stakeholders representing the interests of students who are incarcerated
- Stakeholders representing the interests of students experiencing homelessness
- Students
- Parents and families

In organizing these sessions, MDE relied on program staff and community organizations to distribute invitations to public input sessions that generally ran for an hour per session. During these sessions, stakeholders were given a high level overview of the ARP and some background on a list of proposed strategies that were compiled from input MDE has received over the course of the pandemic (see "Summary of the Input" for a more detailed discussion of how this was developed). After participants were given this background information, they were broken into smaller groups and given four questions to discuss and answer for MDE. These questions were:

- How did COVID-19 impact your community?
- Which of the proposed strategies would most support student learning in your community?
- Which of the proposed strategies do you see as less aligned with the learning needs of your community?
- Are there any strategies related to student learning missing from this list that you would like to see added?

After learning that MDE was granted an extension to submit their state plan on June 30, MDE reopened its public comment process to continue gathering feedback from the public. The federal extension also presented an opportunity for the agency team to re-examine its outreach strategy and adjust accordingly to collect feedback from our American Indian and communities of color that had not been engaged to a degree the agency deemed was necessary. The resulting strategy was to reinforce MDE's Public Comment Period with targeted outreach to community-based service providers, advocacy groups, and stakeholders who serve racially and linguistically diverse constituents to increase direct engagement with parents, care givers, and students. The agency team reached out to these identified groups with the following requests: 1) cohost a conversation between MDE and their constituents, 2) share MDE's public comment link and

encourage their constituents to submit their response, and 3) encourage their constituents to contact the agency's team directly to give their feedback.

The agency team also had 55 additional direct conversations with individual family members and students. A majority of these parents and students are members of Minnesota's emerging diverse cultural and linguistic communities such as the Karen, Somali, and Oromo communities.

The agency team partnered with the Minnesota Statewide Family Engagement Center (MNSFEC) at PACER (a parent training and information center for families of children and youth with all disabilities from birth to young adults) on the best way for MNSEFC members to provide input on the plan. As a result, the agency team provided training to MNSFEC staff in order to conduct their own conversation with members of their Parent Leadership cohort. On Thursday, June 17<sup>th</sup>, MNSFEC convened their Parent Leadership Get Together meeting and gathered the following feedback: 4 parents identified the need to expand access to tutoring; 3 parents identified the need to provide training to families on technology and use of virtual learning apps; 6 parents identified the need to provide additional supports and trainings for families on use of technology and improved family engagement in children's education; and there was group consensus of the need for expansion of mental health activities for teachers, students, and families with an emphasis on development of safe spaces for children to return to in schools.

One of the groups who took MDE up on their request to host a conversation between MDE and the Minnesotans they serve is a coalition of education advocates including EdAllies, Advancing Equity Coalition, Ciresi Walburn Foundation for Children, Coalition of Asian American Leaders, Education Evolving, Educators for Excellence-MN, Fannie Education Alliance, Minnesota Parent Union, Multicultural Autism Action Network, National Parents Union-Midwest, Teach for America-Twin Cities, Uplift MN, and Voices For Racial Justice. EdAllies et al. hosted what they described as a "town hall" for the students and families they represent so families and students could share with MDE what they would like to see the ARP ESSER dollars used for. Key feedback from the family member and student who spoke at the meeting on how they would like to see the funding used include increasing funding to meet the technology needs of students, funding for schools to purchase culturally affirming textbooks and for schools to invest in diverse meals in order for students to learn about nutrition from other cultures.

- **Public Comment Period**

MDE recognizes how important it is to gather ideas and feedback from parents, caregivers, and students on the use of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) education funds, especially from traditionally underrepresented groups and communities as they have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 global pandemic. This is why, in addition to conversations with various targeted stakeholder groups, MDE offered a public comment period that initially lasted approximately 13 days. After learning that MDE was granted an extension to submit their state plan on June 30<sup>th</sup>, MDE reopened its public comment process to continue gathering feedback from the public, thus leaving the public comment period open for almost a month. The public comment period effort involved a survey that was available in English, Hmong, Somali, Spanish, and offered special instructions for Karen native speakers to submit feedback. MDE reinforced its public comment period with extensive outreach and engagement into linguistically and

culturally diverse immigrant and refugee-experienced communities to inform and encourage their participation in the survey. The survey generated over 4,000 comments.

## Summary of the Input

### • Summary from Stakeholder Input Sessions

Stakeholder groups were presented with a list of proposed strategies meant to address student learning loss. These strategies were:

- Expand full service community schools that provide wraparound services to students and their families (dental care, mental health supports, etc.)
- Expand access to tutoring
- Implement a multi-tiered teaching framework to provide high-quality instruction that is responsive to the needs of all learners
- Increase student support personnel (counselors, social workers, school psychologists, school nurses, and chemical dependency staff)
- Expand or add life skills programming for students receiving special education services
- Expand access to early learning programs
- Teacher recruitment and retention, including teachers of color and Indigenous teachers
- Expand language access for families who do not speak English as a first language (translation services, cultural liaisons, and culturally-specific public engagement)
- Expand rigorous coursework, such as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate Career Program (IBCP), Career and Technical Education (CTE), and Concurrent Enrollment courses to foster opportunities for underserved and under-represented students both demographically and geographically
- Develop, implement, and maintain Ethnic and Indigenous Education studies curriculum processes
- Increase staff hiring to reduce class sizes
- Field trips and hands-on learning experiences
- Expanding after school activities and summer learning opportunities

Across the 15 groups, there were 7 strategies that were identified as aligned with the needs of students at least 10 times in the small group conversations that took place during the input sessions. These strategies were:

- Expand access to tutoring
- Expand full service community schools that provide wraparound services to students and their families (dental care, mental health supports, etc.)
- Increase student support personnel (counselors, social workers, school psychologists, school nurses, and chemical dependency staff)
- Expand language access for families who do not speak English as a first language (translation services, cultural liaisons, and culturally-specific public engagement)
- Implement a multi-tiered teaching framework to provide high-quality instruction that is responsive to the needs of all learners
- Expanding after school activities and summer learning opportunities
- Increase staff hiring to reduce class sizes

Two strategies did come up with some frequency as being less aligned with the needs of students: the expansion of rigorous coursework (6 mentions) and field trips and hands on learning experiences (4 mentions).

When asked if there were specific strategies that the stakeholders would like to see added to the list, a few themes emerged. Access to broadband and devices such as laptops, for example, remains a critical concern across stakeholder groups, as do access to transportation. There were also numerous mentions of including programs such as heritage language and dual language along with ethnic and Indigenous studies, as well as other culturally sustaining practices.

Several groups pointed out that while many of the strategies listed could be beneficial, they may not have the intended impact if the providers of the strategy are not culturally competent, proficient in the language of the community, or otherwise knowledgeable of the community that they are serving. Many stakeholder groups noted that existing community groups and local service providers may be better positioned to provide some of these services, given the specialization of some organizations and existing relationships with the communities that have been acutely affected by the pandemic.

Another broad theme that emerged was the need to not only provide services, but actively connect students and families with services. Participants noted that the burden of connecting students and families with services should be on the school, not on students and families themselves. Stakeholders suggested investing in strategies that could be compatible with the full-service community school and wraparound models, such as investing in parent navigator positions and formalizing existing community initiatives that provide similar services for students and families.

- **Summary of Public Comment**

Themes that emerged during the first round of MDE's Public Comment Period are as follows: 1) expansion of robust academic supportive services for children with Independent Educational Plans (IEP) and their parents/care givers; 2) increase access and opportunities to tutoring services and culturally responsive afterschool programs; and 3) expansion and improvement of onsite family supportive services around COVID-19 information, economic, employment, and housing resources.

Themes that emerged during this second round of MDE's Public Comment Period are as follows: 1) robust professional development for educators to ensure they have opportunities to build capacity to support students and families, 2) expand access and opportunities for students to participate in community-based service learning projects, 3) increase on-site school counselors, social workers, psychologists, and student/family support staff with a goal of increasing staff of color in these positions, 4) improve identification and expand supportive services and outreach to students who are in foster care, precariously housed, highly mobile, and identity as LGBTQ, and 5) expand opportunities for students to participate in affordable mentoring services that support their social/emotional needs in a community-based setting.

- **How Input is taken into Account**

The input from stakeholder groups broadly confirmed that the list of proposed strategies—which themselves were constructed after numerous input sessions—reflected the needs of students and

families in Minnesota. There were a number of themes, however, that provided important considerations for how to implement the strategies that MDE put forth. As MDE provides assistance to schools and districts as they implement strategies to alleviate lost instructional time, particular attention will be paid to ensuring that supports are provided in a culturally appropriate way, that community partners are utilized when appropriate, and that schools and districts are proactive in providing appropriate services to students and families.

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);

The uses and planned uses of Federal COVID-19 pandemic funding in Minnesota is summarized below by requested funding source (Table C1).

ESSER I and II 90% funds were allocated based on Title formula to eligible Minnesota LEAs (with a portion going to non-public schools most impacted by the pandemic) to address impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on elementary and secondary schools in Minnesota.

ESSER I 9.5% funds were allocated to all Minnesota schools for mental health supports, summer school programming, and technology. Schools that did not qualify for the 90% allocation were provided \$1.5 million from this source (allocated based on free and reduced lunch population percentages) to address impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

GEER I funds were used to address all technology needs identified by schools through a state-wide survey. \$5 million from this source was granted to educational entities throughout the state to support wraparound services focused on underserved communities.

ESSER II 9.5% will be used for expanding summer programming as well as providing schools that did not qualify for the 90% allocation with flexible funding to continue to address impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

GEER II is funding school-age care and youth programming in Minnesota through an allocation to public schools operating a certified school-age child care program over the summer. School-age care has been a vital resource for both parents who are tier 1 essential workers and low-income working parents who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. These funds will be used to stabilize staffing and ensure programs can operate on a sliding fee scale. An



equal portion went to reducing the early learning scholarship program waitlist by approximately 900 low income children, with at least 1/3 of them in high risk populations including: children of teen parents, children experiencing homelessness, in foster care, and in need of child protection, ensuring them access to high quality early learning. A small portion of these funds was provided to Minnesota Service Cooperatives as a reimbursement for their support of Minnesota schools throughout the pandemic. As required by law, a portion of the GEER II funds was also identified for use by non-public schools in Minnesota. Allocation amounts were communicated to schools that qualified for the funds and schools were able to begin requesting reimbursements and/or services from MDE's third party vendor as of May 24, 2021.

- 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.

100% of ESSER I funds (90% and 9.5%) have been awarded to LEAs. About 97% of ESSER II dollars (90% and 9.5%) have been awarded to LEAs. The balance of the funds are dedicated to expanding summer learning and will be awarded in two parts. This fall participating LEAs will receive a final payment for summer 2021 offerings. Next spring, MDE will award the balance of the funds to schools offering summer programming during the summer of 2022.

- 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>

- Some LEAs used Title IA and Title IIA funds to reduce class sizes.
- School district staff who are funded with IDEA Part B and Part C funds provided special education and early childhood intervention services to students with disabilities who may be homeless. In addition, these staff coordinated with county and other community agency staff to provide needed social, mental health, and medical services for children and youth with disabilities and their families.

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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.

- MDE is providing guidance to schools on choices available to them with funding for child nutrition services through the National School Lunch/Breakfast Programs and Seamless Summer Options from July 1 through June 30, 2022.
- MDE received supplemental funding from the CDC related to our Improving Student Health and Academic Achievement grant to provide statewide support to school districts, charter schools, and out-of-school time partners related to COVID-19 testing; vaccine confidence, particularly in highly vulnerable populations, including staff and students; and social-emotional, and mental health needs. With these funds, MDE will hire a COVID-19 Communications Consultant to further streamline updates for schools, districts, and partners on mitigation strategies, best practices, and COVID-19 related opportunities for support through training and technical assistance. Professional development, particularly around the social-emotional, and mental health needs of faculty, staff, and students, will also be provided along with student access to the evidence-based *Kognito Friend2Friend* online training made available to 200 sites, with additional follow-up technical assistance provided.
- MDE works to support LEAs in all aspects of using funds to support students experiencing homelessness. MDE intends to continue to use funding provided under Homeless ARP I and II to support the needs of students experiencing homelessness by: providing direct supports in high-need LEAs, providing training and technical assistance to all LEAs, increasing community-based supports through funded partnerships with community-based organizations, and increasing capacity for all LEAs to successfully serve students experiencing homelessness.
- MDE provided guidance on braiding and blending existing federal, state, and local funding with COVID-19 relief funding in order to coordinate and leverage all funding, including ESEA, IDEA, McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, and child nutrition funds, to meet the academic, social-emotional, and mental health needs of students experiencing homelessness resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- MDE provided funding under ARP Homeless I to 16 LEAs with existing McKinney Vento subgrants in order to:
  - Connect students experiencing homelessness and their families to summer learning and enrichment programs this summer (summer 2021) and engage students and their families in preparation for this fall
  - Provide contracts to community-based organizations to identify historically underserved populations such as rural children and youth, students of color and American Indian students, students receiving special education services, English learners, LGBTQ+ youth, and pregnant or parenting youth, and connect them to educationally related support and wraparound services

- Enhance identification, enrollment, outreach, retention, and educational success of children and youth 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;

MDE will use the funds it reserves under section 2001(f)(1) of the ARP Act to make subgrants to LEAs to fund additional interventions to address the academic impact of lost instructional time by supporting the implementation of evidence-based strategies.

Allocations to LEAs will be focused on LEAs' historically underserved populations, with an emphasis on students receiving special education services. A comparison will be made to LEA allocations from the 90% ARP ESSER allocations, and unmet need will be funded with these dollars. MDE will compare the allocations that districts received under the 90% allocations to projections using characteristics of historically underserved students (HUS) with an emphasis on students receiving special education services. HUS students are defined as:

- Students of color or American Indian students
- Students eligible for free or reduced priced meals
- Students receiving special education services
- Students who are English learners
- Students experiencing homelessness

If a district's allocation from the 90% is less than the projection, they will receive additional funding to support their unmet need. Therefore, these projections specifically target students disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

These funds will be earmarked specifically for implementing supplemental interventions within systems of multi- tiered supports focused on supporting historically underserved students,

especially those who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years and who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures.

Overall, the goal for ARP funds is that LEAs use ARP allocations to implement programs and strategies that accelerate learning for all students and use these additional funds to offer supplemental interventions for historically underserved students.

As a part of administering and supporting these funds, MDE will promote and support LEAs and their partnerships with culturally specific community-based programs in order to develop and implement evidence-based strategies to address lost instructional time. Though not required, MDE will prioritize partnerships with culturally-specific community organizations in the LEA application process so that we are continuing to support and grow these local partnerships.

MDE has identified state priority strategies that LEAs will be encouraged to utilize ARP funds to support. Among these strategies, several are specific to addressing the academic impact of lost instructional time as well as responding to students' social-emotional and mental health needs and would be among the allowable uses for these additional funds.

LEAs will be required to select and implement evidence-based practices that are aligned to the state priority list.

The state priority list is as follows:

1. Expand full service community schools that provide wraparound services to students and their families
2. Develop and implement community partnerships
3. Develop and implement neighborhood programs
4. Expand access to tutoring
5. Implement a multi-tiered teaching framework to provide high-quality instruction that is responsive to the needs of all learners
6. Increase student support personnel (counselors, social workers, school psychologists, school nurses, and chemical dependency staff)
7. Expand or add life skills programing for students receiving special education services
8. Expand access to early learning programs
9. Implement the Kindergarten Entry Profile (KEP)
10. Teacher recruitment and retention, including for teachers of color and Indigenous teachers
  - Teacher mentoring programs
  - Grown Your Own expansion
  - Educator Career Pathways
11. Develop and implement a family engagement model
12. Expand language access for families who do not speak English as a first language (translation services, cultural liaisons, and culturally-specific public engagement)
13. Expand rigorous coursework, such as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate Career Program (IBCP), Career and Technical Education (CTE), and Concurrent Enrollment courses to foster opportunities for underserved and under -represented students both demographically and geographically
14. Develop, implement, and maintain Ethnic Studies curriculum processes

15. Develop, implement, and maintain Indigenous Education curriculum processes
16. Increase staff hiring to reduce class sizes
17. Provide field trips and hands-on learning experiences
18. Expand after school activities and summer learning opportunities

As described in section C, some of the state priorities were of higher interest to stakeholders and communities. Some of the state priorities that may be of particular importance in the area of addressing the impact of lost instructional time include:

- **Full Service Community Schools:** The Full-Service Community School model is an evidence-based model designed to help schools support students and their families so that they can fully engage in high-quality learning opportunities. The purpose of a full-service community school is to coordinate resources to mitigate both academic and non-academic challenges for children, students, families, and communities. Evidence-based community school approaches include: integrated student supports, active family and community engagement, expanded learning time opportunities, and collaborative leadership and practices. Services could include: primary health and dental care, mental health, childcare, career counseling, and enriched learning experiences outside of the school day. Funding could be used to create a plan to implement or expand a full-service community schools model, including hiring a community school coordinator to implement the model or increasing services for historically underserved students, especially those who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years and who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures.
- **Tutoring:** Tutoring can be an effective evidence-based intervention for a wide range of students if implemented in particular ways. Funding could be used to establish or expand tutoring services for historically underserved students by funding school resources, community resources, and partnerships with program providers who offer needed services to maintain the operation of and continuity of tutoring supports in youth development and education prioritizing the needs of historically underserved groups.
- **Multi-Tiered Systems of Support:** MTSS provides a framework for providing high-quality, research-based prevention and intervention supports to meet the needs of all students, using data to guide educational decisions to improve academic, social-emotional, and behavioral outcomes for students. Funds could be used for multiple evidence-based interventions within MTSS for historically underserved students. The MTSS strategies include:
  - Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Early Childhood Pyramid Model
  - Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) Training
  - Building Assets, Reducing Risks (BARR)
  - Non-exclusionary discipline practices and professional development
  - Progress monitoring tools and resources
  - Trauma-informed instruction professional development

- Anti-bias/anti-racist instructional practices professional development
- Data literacy professional development
- Student Support Personnel: Funds can be used to address the issue of inadequate access to support personnel for students, which has been magnified by the COVID-19 pandemic. For years, Minnesota has had one of the highest student-to-counselor ratios in the country. Funds could be used to support additional school-based student support personnel for historically underserved students such as counselors, social workers, school psychologists, or school nurses to provide evidence-based support.
- Extended Learning Opportunities After School or During Summer: Extended learning programs can offer another opportunity to accelerate learning, especially for historically underserved students most impacted by disruptions to learning during the school year. Schools and districts could use funds to expand programs that work best in the local context and reflect the characteristics that evidence suggests lead to successful extended learning programs.

LEAs will use ARP ESSER funds to implement strategies to address overall student needs by establishing multi-tiered systems of support that respond to students' and communities' health, academic, social-emotional, and mental health needs. In addition to supporting core instruction, LEAs will use these additional funds to supplement services and strategies with interventions specific to tier 2 and tier 3 supports for historically underserved students, especially those who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years and who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures. To receive funds LEAs will submit supplemental plan information that will include:

- A statement of need specific to the academic impact of lost instructional time on historically underserved students, especially those who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years and who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures.
- Data used to identify students being prioritized for interventions supported by these funds.
- Interventions supported by these funds for historically underserved students, especially those who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years and who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures.
- Data that will be used locally to evaluate the impact of interventions on an ongoing basis to improve interventions and understand if they are working.

MDE will be supporting LEAs' implementation of strategies within their ARP plans. Strategies could include resources, networking opportunities, and professional development. MDE will supplement supports for LEAs with information specific to addressing the academic impact of lost instructional time for historically underserved students, especially those who have missed

the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years and who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures.

As districts and charter schools work with MDE to choose their focus and specific evidence-based strategy/strategies they will implement with their ARP ESSER funds, MDE will develop regional cohorts of districts/schools who have chosen similar strategies in order to create professional learning communities. MDE will facilitate and work with the regional cohorts to ensure the evidence-based strategies are being implemented and evaluated with fidelity as well as offer ongoing support.

MDE will implement a data collection and evaluation system to evaluate the impact of ARP ESSER funds and LEAs' strategies locally and statewide on an ongoing basis. See Section G for more information on how MDE will continuously monitor progress and make adjustments to its strategies as well as support LEAs in making adjustments to local strategies based on impact.

- 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

MDE will use the funds it reserves under section 2001(f)(1) of the ARP Act to make subgrants to LEAs to fund additional interventions to address the academic impact of lost instructional time by supporting the implementation of evidence-based interventions specifically for the historically underserved student groups listed in question A.3.i.-viii, especially those who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years and who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures.

These funds will be allocated to LEAs based on their enrollment of historically underserved student populations, with an emphasis on special education students. A comparison will be made to LEA allocations from the 90% ARP ESSER allocations, and unmet need will be funded with these dollars.

These additional funds will be used by LEAs specifically to offer supplemental interventions for historically underserved students and could include partnerships with culturally-specific organizations in their communities that focus on meeting the needs of our most under-served students. MDE will encourage partnerships with culturally-specific community organizations in the LEA application process so that we are continuing to support and grow these local partnerships.

MDE will implement a data collection and evaluation system to evaluate the impact of ARP ESSER funds and LEAs' strategies locally and statewide on an ongoing basis. See Section G for more information on how MDE will continuously monitor progress and make adjustments to its strategies as well as support LEAs collecting and using data to determine the impact of lost instructional time and to making adjustments to local strategies based on impact.

- 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.

MDE will use the funds it reserves under section 2001(f)(1) of the ARP Act to make subgrants to LEAs to fund additional interventions to address the academic impact of lost instructional time by supporting the implementation of evidence-based interventions specifically for historically underserved student groups, especially those who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years and who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures.

LEAs will use these additional funds to offer supplemental interventions including interventions that re-engage students whose schools have not been successful in engaging them during the COVID-19 pandemic. LEAs will use indicators such as chronic absenteeism during in-person and/or remote instruction to identify students in need of these targeted interventions and services. These additional funds may be used by LEAs to conduct child find activities to identify, locate, and evaluate students who are suspected of having disabilities and need special education and related services; to support activities that re-engage disconnected youth; to fund activities to increase community safety in places where the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequities and increased the number of disconnected youth; or to expand or supplement summer learning and enrichment programming for high school students most impacted.

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;

MDE will use the funds it reserves under section 2001(f)(2) of the ARP Act to support implementation of effective, high-quality summer learning and enrichment programs that address the academic, social-emotional, and mental health needs of students (e.g. providing intensive or high-dosage tutoring, accelerating learning).

The funds will be allocated to community organizations to support historically underserved populations. All of the funds will be allocated to community organizations, with 50% of the funding specifically dedicated to culturally-specific organizations. These dollars are earmarked



specifically for implementing interventions focused on supporting historically underserved students, especially those who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years and who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures.

Community organizations receiving these funds will be required to implement evidence-based summer learning and enrichment programs that respond to students' social-emotional and mental health needs.

Through the subgrant application process, MDE will prioritize several strategies, including partnerships with local schools and libraries. These strategies also could connect back to the state priority list outlined above and are inclusive of, but not limited to, the following:

- **Full-Service Community Schools:** The Full-Service Community School model is an evidence-based model designed to help schools support students and their families so that they can fully engage in high-quality learning opportunities. The purpose of a full-service community school is to coordinate resources to mitigate both academic and non-academic challenges for children, students, families, and communities. Evidence-based community school approaches include integrated student supports, active family and community engagement, expanded learning time opportunities, and collaborative leadership and practices. Services could include primary health and dental care, mental health, childcare, career counseling, and enriched learning experiences outside of the school day. Funding could be used to implement summer learning and enrichment opportunities as part of a full service community school model.
- **Community Partnerships and Neighborhood Programs:** School-community partnerships assist in ensuring student needs are met whether it is in a school building, community center, neighborhood park, or even an apartment building. Funds may be used for community-based summer learning and enrichment programs to complement and reinforce district/school learning recovery programs and to promote school-community partnerships that ensure that the academic, social-emotional, and mental health needs of students are easily accessible throughout the community.
- **Tutoring:** Tutoring can be an effective evidence-based intervention for a wide range of students if implemented in particular ways. Funding could be used to establish or expand tutoring services as part of summer learning for historically underserved students by funding school resources, community resources and partnerships with program providers who offer needed services to maintain the operation of and continuity of tutoring supports in youth development and education prioritizing the needs of historically underserved groups.
- **Hands-on Learning Opportunities, including Field Trips:** Hands-on Learning opportunities as part of summer learning and enrichment programming provide common

experiences for students to engage their thinking, reinforce learning, and exposure to new experiences. When aligned to standards and designed to complement and reinforce academic instruction, these experiences can have a positive impact on the academic, social, and emotion needs of students, particularly for historically underserved students. Funding could be used for hands-on learning and enrichment in the summer.

- **Out-of-School Time Learning Opportunities:** Out-of-school time learning programs can offer another opportunity to accelerate learning, especially for historically underserved students most impacted by disruptions to learning during the school year. Community organizations could use funds to expand summer learning or enrichment programs that work best in the local context and reflect the characteristics that evidence suggests lead to successful extended learning programs.

MDE will implement a data collection and evaluation system to evaluate the impact of ARP ESSER funds and community organizations' strategies locally and statewide on an ongoing basis.

To receive funds community organizations will submit information that will include:

- A statement of need specific to meeting the academic, social-emotional and mental health needs through summer learning and enrichment programs for students, especially those who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years and who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures.
- Data used to identify students being prioritized for interventions supported by these funds.
- Interventions supported by these funds for historically underserved students, especially those who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years and who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures.
- Data that will be used locally by the community organization to evaluate the impact of interventions on an ongoing basis to improve interventions and understand if they are working.
  - 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

MDE will use the funds it reserves under this section to make subgrants to community organizations to fund additional interventions to address the academic, social-emotional, mental health needs through evidence-based summer learning and enrichment programs specifically for the historically underserved student groups listed in question A.3.i.-viii, especially those who

have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years and who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures.

As part of the needs assessment provided by community organizations applying for these funds, data for student groups that were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 will be used to determine needs and strategies to meet the academic, social-emotional and mental health needs of students.

Fifty percent of the funding for this section will be specifically dedicated to culturally-specific organizations that have experience working with student populations that were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

MDE will implement a data collection and evaluation system to evaluate the impact of ARP ESSER funds and community organizations' strategies locally and statewide on an ongoing basis. See Section G for more information on how MDE will continuously monitor progress and make adjustments to its strategies as well as support community organizations in collecting and using data to determine the impact of summer learning and enrichment and to making adjustments to local strategies based on impact.

- 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.

MDE will use the funds it reserves under section 2001(f)(2) of the ARP Act to support implementation of additional interventions that address the academic, social-emotional and mental health needs of students (e.g. providing intensive or high-dosage tutoring, accelerating learning). Funding will be used to assist community organizations, including culturally specific organizations, to support historically underserved populations. These dollars are earmarked specifically for implementing interventions focused on supporting historically underserved students, especially those who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years and who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures.

Recipients will use these funds to offer effective, high-quality summer learning and enrichment programs that re-engage students whose schools have not been successful in engaging them during the COVID-19 pandemic. Community organizations will use indicators such as chronic absenteeism during in-person and/or remote instruction to identify students in need of these targeted interventions and services. These funds may be used by community organizations to engage in community outreach activities to identify, locate and evaluate students who are suspected of having disabilities and need special education and related services; to support activities that re-engage disconnected youth; to fund activities to increase community safety in

places where the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequities and increased the number of disconnected youth; and to expand or supplement summer learning and enrichment programming for high school students most impacted.

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;

MDE will use the funds it reserves under section 2001(f)(3) of the ARP Act to support implementation of effective, high-quality afterschool programs that address the academic, social-emotional and mental health needs of students (e.g., providing intensive or high-dosage tutoring, accelerating learning).

Funding will be coordinated through Ignite Afterschool, the Minnesota affiliate of the National Afterschool Association and member of the 50-State Afterschool Networks. Ignite coordinates the afterschool partnership network bringing partners together to strengthen afterschool programming in Minnesota. This includes representations from youth serving organizations, city systems, intermediary organizations, and funders of youth programs.

Ignite Afterschool will coordinate and administer grant dollars to community organizations, with 50 percent of the funds going to culturally-specific community organizations, to provide evidence-based comprehensive afterschool programs. These dollars are earmarked specifically for implementing interventions focused on supporting historically underserved students, especially those who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years and who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures.

Community organizations receiving these funds will be required to implement evidence-based afterschool programs that respond to students’ academic, social-emotional and mental health needs.

The grant making process will require community organizations to implement strategies, including partnerships with local schools and libraries. These strategies also could connect back to the state priority list outlined above and are inclusive of, but not limited to, the following:

- **Full-Service Community Schools**: The Full-Service Community School model is an evidence-based model designed to help schools support students and their families so that they can fully engage in high-quality learning opportunities. The purpose of a full-service

community school is to coordinate resources to mitigate both academic and non-academic challenges for children, students, families, and communities. Evidence-based community school approaches include integrated student supports, active family and community engagement, expanded learning time opportunities, and collaborative leadership and practices. Services could include primary health and dental care, mental health, childcare, career counseling, and enriched learning experiences outside of the school day. Funding could be used to implement the after school time expanded learning time opportunities as part of a full-service community schools.

- **Community Partnerships and Neighborhood Programs:** School-community partnerships assist in ensuring student needs are met whether it is in a school building, community center, neighborhood park or even an apartment building. Funds may be used for community-based after school programs to complement and reinforce district learning recovery programs and to promote school community partnerships that ensure that the academic, social-emotional and mental health needs of students are easily accessible throughout the community.
- **Tutoring:** Tutoring can be an effective evidence-based intervention for a wide range of students if implemented in particular ways. Funding could be used to establish or expand after school tutoring services for historically underserved students by funding school resources, community resources, and partnerships with program providers who offer needed services to maintain the operation of and continuity of tutoring supports in youth development and education prioritizing the needs of historically underserved groups.
- **Hands-on Learning Opportunities, including Field Trips:** Hands-on learning opportunities as part of summer learning and enrichment programming provides common experiences for students to engage their thinking, reinforce learning and exposure to new experiences. When aligned to standards and designed to complement and reinforce academic instruction, these experiences can have a positive impact on the academic, social and emotion needs of students, particularly for historically underserved students. Funds may be used for after school hands-on learning opportunities.
- **Out-of-School Time Learning Opportunities:** Out-of-school time learning programs can offer another opportunity to accelerate learning, especially for historically underserved students most impacted by disruptions to learning during the school year. Community organizations could use funds to expand after school programs that work best in the local context and reflect the characteristics that evidence suggests lead to successful extended learning programs.

MDE will implement a data collection and evaluation system to evaluate the impact of ARP ESSER funds and community organizations' strategies locally and statewide on an ongoing basis.

To receive funds community organizations will submit information that will include:

- A statement of need specific to meeting the academic, social-emotional, and mental health needs through afterschool programs for students, especially those who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years and who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures.
- Data used to identify students being prioritized for interventions supported by these funds.
- Interventions supported by these funds for historically underserved students, especially those who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years and who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures.
- Data that will be used locally by the community organization to evaluate the impact of interventions on an ongoing basis to improve interventions and understand if they are working.
  - 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

Ignite Afterschool will coordinate grant dollars to community organizations, with 50% of the funds going to culturally-specific community organizations, to provide evidence-based comprehensive afterschool programs in order to meet the academic, social-emotional, and mental health needs of students listed in in question A.3.i.-viii, especially those who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years and who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures.

As part of the needs assessment provided by community organizations applying for these funds, data for student groups that were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 will be used to determine needs and strategies to meet the academic, social-emotional and mental health needs of students.

Fifty percent of the funding for this section will be specifically dedicated to culturally-specific organizations that have experience working with student populations that were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

MDE will implement a data collection and evaluation system to evaluate the impact of ARP ESSER funds and community organizations' strategies locally and statewide on an ongoing basis. See Section G for more information on how MDE will continuously monitor progress and make adjustments to its strategies as well as support community organizations in collecting and

using data to determine the impact of summer learning and enrichment and to making adjustments to local strategies based on impact.

- 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.

MDE will use the funds it reserves under section 2001(f)(3) of the ARP Act to support implementation of effective, high-quality afterschool programs that address the academic, social-emotional and mental health needs of students (e.g., providing intensive or high-dosage tutoring, accelerating learning). Funding will be used to assist community organizations, including culturally specific organizations, to support historically underserved populations. These dollars are earmarked specifically for implementing interventions focused on supporting historically underserved students, especially those who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years and who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures.

Recipients will use these funds to offer effective, high-quality after-school programming designed to re-engage students whose schools have not been successful in engaging them during the COVID-19 pandemic. Community organizations will use indicators such as chronic absenteeism during in-person and/or remote instruction to identify students in need of these targeted interventions and services. These funds may be used by community organizations to engage in community outreach activities to identify, locate and evaluate students who are suspected of having disabilities and need special education and related services; to support activities that re-engage disconnected youth; to fund activities to increase community safety in places where the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequities and increased the number of disconnected youth; and to expand or supplement summer learning and enrichment programming for high school students most impacted.

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.

MDE does not plan to reserve funds for emergency needs. Funds will be used for identified priority needs.

## **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.

1. 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;

MDE will require LEAs to include all ARP ESSER requirements in a combination of the initial LEA application, annual plan amendment windows and required progress reports.

MDE is requiring LEAs receiving funds under ESSER III to make plans available to the public in two phases. First, each LEA was required to post its Safe Return to In-Person Learning plan (with required elements from the [Interim Final Rule](#)) on its website with a procedure for public comment by June 21, 2021. LEAs are required to submit the URL, along with a summary of public comments, as part of the application for ESSER III funds. In the second phase, MDE will provide a template to LEAs for a standardized description of planned uses of ESSER III funds. Due to the fact that this broader document will draw on various aspects of the full ESSER III application (due October 1, 2021) that describes the plan and planning process, each LEA will be required to post this document on its website with a procedure for public comment and provide the URL to MDE with a deadline of December 1, 2021.

MDE believes meaningful engagement with community is critical and requires LEAs to be intentional in their planning. LEAs will work with their tribal partners and conduct a variety of robust community engagement and feedback sessions over the summer of 2021. These sessions will inform the writing of their ARP ESSER spending plan and initial applications are due no later than October 1, 2021. LEAs are able to submit their initial applications prior to this date if they are able to successfully engage in meaningful consultation with their stakeholders and partners more rapidly. Amendments and progress reports will require summaries of the ongoing community engagement activities of the LEA.

LEAs may choose to use their ARP ESSER funds for implementing prevention and mitigation strategies in line with the most recent CDC guidance in order to continuously and safely operate schools for in-person learning. LEAs using ARP ESSER funds for these strategies will indicate these plans in their initial application, submitted proposed budgets, during amendment windows as appropriate, and in required progress reports.



- 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;

MDE will require LEAs to submit plans for their use of ARP Act funds, including a specific Learning Recovery Plan using at least 20% of the ARP ESSER award for addressing the academic impact of lost instructional time through the implementation of summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs or extended school year programs. The LEA ARP ESSER application is separated into two sections to ensure at least 20% of the award is used for these activities – one section describes the use of up to 80% of the award and the other section describes the minimum required spending of 20% of the award on these specific activities. In addition to a webinar series further described in the SEA support section below, MDE will offer ongoing guidance and technical assistance to LEAs to ensure their development of robust and equitable plans that meet their local needs.

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

The LEA application for ARP ESSER funds requires the LEA to identify the needs of their learners, including how they measured the need, desired outcomes and measurement of the outcomes. This includes identifying students most impacted by the pandemic. LEAs must highlight their specific spending plan, including submitting a detailed budget for cost objective review and approval.

- 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.

MDE will partner with school districts and charter schools on equitable educational practices and support the use of ARP ESSER funds in implementing these practices to support learning recovery for all students, and specifically for students from low-income families, students of color, English learners, students receiving special education services, students experiencing homelessness, students in foster care, and migratory students.

These strategies support inclusive in-person education and safe and nurturing learning

environments. The specific strategies include, but are not limited to: full-service community schools, community partnerships, high-quality tutoring, multi-tiered systems of support, student support personnel expansion, vocational or life skills programming, expanded pre-K, teacher mentoring programs, language access efforts, additional rigorous coursework and hands-on and out-of-school time learning opportunities.

MDE will build out supports – including collaboration with external partners – for needs assessments, strategy selection, and implementation of strategies focused on meeting the needs of students facing the greatest challenges because of the COVID-19 pandemic. These supports will emphasize increasing access, participation, representation and outcomes for every student group.

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.

MDE believes in the power of authentic and robust community engagement in the development of plan creation to positively impact student experiences and related outcomes. Both during ARP ESSER spending plan development and throughout the grant period, MDE will provide technical assistance for LEAs, including multiple learning sessions for LEA officials, to support their engagement in meaningful consultation with students, families, school and district administrators, special education administrators, teachers, principals, school leaders, other educators, school staff, and their unions. The LEA application for ARP ESSER funds must include a summary of key findings from stakeholder engagement, including participants and represented groups as listed above.

LEAs are required to consult with tribal nations if they are also required to tribally consult under the ESEA. MDE will partner directly with Tribal Leaders and the Minnesota Tribal Nations Education Committee to ensure tribal consultation that occurs in spending plan development is timely, meaningful, and culturally appropriate. LEAs will include key findings from these conversations, including consultation with civil rights organizations and those who represent the

interests of students receiving special education services, English learners, students experiencing homelessness, students in foster care, migratory students, students who are incarcerated, American Indian students, and other underserved students. Findings must be connected to their spending plan for ARP ESSER funds.

LEAs must submit to MDE, as part of the initial application for ARP ESSER funds and in progress reports throughout the grant period, how the LEA provided the public the opportunity to provide input in the development of the LEA's plan for the use of ARP ESSER funds. There is a requirement on the LEA application to highlight how the key themes and findings from community conversations are present in the spending plan.

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;

MDE will support and monitor LEA implementation of evidence-based interventions that respond to the academic, social-emotional, and mental health needs of students. The LEA initial application requires LEAs to indicate how they measure the student need (comprehensive needs assessment), how they surface student and community assets (asset mapping), and the plan to use the ARP ESSER funds to fill the space between assets and needs.

MDE divided the ARP ESSER award into two portions: An LEA may use up to 80% of its ARP ESSER formula funds for any allowable ARP ESSER activity and must use at least 20% of the funds to address the academic impact of lost instructional time through the implementation of evidence-based interventions, which may include summer learning and enrichment, extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs, or extended school year programs, but may also include any other evidence-based interventions selected by the LEA that address the academic impact of lost instructional time and otherwise meets the requirements of section 2001(e)(1) of the ARP. Intervention efficacy will be included in required progress reports.

- 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

MDE will support LEAs in developing high-quality plans for LEAs' use of ARP ESSER funds to achieve the objectives of a safe return to in-person instruction with a focus on meeting students' academic, social-emotional and mental health needs and addressing the persistent opportunity gaps in Minnesota. As part of plan development support, MDE is hosting a series of webinars in May and June 2021 for LEA officials to highlight: 1) the application requirements, 2) allowable uses of funds, and 3) the ways in which LEAs can invest these ESSER funds to reimagine education aligned with the State Education Priorities. MDE created cross-agency

support teams for LEAs to access experts in each of the State Education Priority areas.

MDE will support and monitor LEAs in specifically addressing the impact of COVID-19 on specific student groups, including students from low income families, students of color, English learners, students receiving special education services, students experiencing homelessness, students in foster care, migratory students, and other groups disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

LEAs will be required to submit progress reports to indicate the ways in which they are addressing the unique needs of these student groups and LEAs will report their measurement of effectiveness of those strategies and ways they will address the needs if their measurement indicates the strategies are not effective.

- 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.

Through technical assistance and progress reporting, MDE will support and monitor LEAs on the ways they are addressing the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on specific groups of students. MDE will be providing differentiated plan development and implementation support for LEAs based on their needs (cohorts of LEAs with similar planned interventions). The Regional Centers of Excellence will work to reinforce these activities as they align to the Minnesota World's Best Workforce plans, focusing on reengaging students who missed the most in-person instruction, those who did not fully participate in remote instruction, or those most at-risk of dropping out of school. The monitoring of these activities will be conducted through progress reports, desk reviews and limited site visits.

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.

While the 90% district and charter school allocation will use the federally-required formula, other funding made available will be specifically targeted for school districts and charters that enroll historically underserved students, with an emphasis on special education students, as well as culturally-specific community organizations that are well-positioned to meet student and family needs. MDE will offer technical assistance for LEAs to ensure LEA officials are

implementing strategies that are equitable. Stakeholder engagement has reiterated the need for ensuring that programs are targeted to serving students who are generating the federal funding used to provide the programming.

## **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.

In Minnesota, there are four state agencies directly tasked to support the educator workforce: the Board of School Administrators (BOSA), the Office of Higher Education (OHE), the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) and MDE. Broadly speaking, PELSB oversees the pre-service teaching experience (teacher preparation pathways, licensure standards, student teaching); BOSA does the same for K-12 principals, superintendents and special education directors; and MDE’s support largely focuses on currently serving educators, though there are overlapping responsibilities (e.g., mentoring experiences and programs) and the agencies contribute to work across an educator’s career continuum. OHE manages some loan forgiveness and scholarship programs for educators, along with a much broader portfolio of responsibilities not directly related to education careers.

PELSB operates the Staff Automated Reporting (STAR) system—the data system that tracks educator workforce data including but not limited to licensure, staff class/school/district assignment, and staff demographics—and shares that data with MDE under a data sharing agreement so that together (as an SEA), we can complete state activities as well as reporting requirements. LEAs are prompted to upload staff data annually, and there is significant work done with LEAs to ensure consistent, accurate data is uploaded correctly so that reporting can be done well.

While there are several good things about the STAR system, it has limitations that impact our ability to analyze workforce data such as supply of teacher candidates in teacher prep or teacher mobility or retention data. Since state-level data is generated at the local level and annually reported to the state, it is LEAs who will have a true sense of shortages going in to the next school year based on retirements and resignations, spring and summer hiring, and any remaining openings as school year 2021-22 approaches. It is also the LEAs who will have a stronger and earlier sense of the impact of COVID-19 on the educator workforce; the SEA data will be lagging and the data system is not sophisticated enough to truly study the impact. Though we do

not have strong data, Minnesota is concerned about teachers, paraprofessionals, school and district leaders, and other staff, especially considering the stress of operating during the pandemic while seeking to best serve student needs during an unprecedented time.

As of the 2019-20 academic year, statewide, the vast majority of licensure areas are considered a shortage area (3% or more individuals teaching in the assignment not holding a license for the assignment). We do not yet know the impact of school building closures and reopenings on the supply of licensed teachers based on a year lag of data. We do know that the shortages from 2019-2020 are reported evenly across economic development regions across the state. Rural areas in greater Minnesota do indicate more difficulty in filling positions based on a survey of districts. See the table below for specific data on shortages based on 2019-20 data.

Our school-based early learning settings [including Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK), School Readiness and School Readiness Plus (SRP), Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) and Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE)] also face workforce challenges. All early childhood programs experienced underenrollment ranging from a 15% drop in early childhood special education to 9% reduction in public kindergarten enrollment during the COVID-19 pandemic. School Readiness and ECFE are tuition-based programs and have been especially challenged during COVID-19. Some tuition based programs were unable to run classes with low enrollment, reducing the number of classes offered or no longer offering programming at all. Some of these staff were reassigned to other programs and it is unknown if they will return to their original early childhood positions. Governor Walz’s executive order that prohibited layoffs of school employees already budgeted for was extremely helpful in maintaining the early childhood workforce.

**Table F1.**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Data on shortages and needs</b>	<b>Narrative description</b>
<b>Special educators</b>	7.6%	This includes all special education licensure categories. It remains the highest number of teachers not fully licensed for the assignment - more than any other area.
<b>English as a second language educators</b>	5.18%	
<b>STEM educators</b>	3.7%	This number includes a significant number of licenses of individuals who hold a Tier 4 license, but without an assignment.
<b>CTE educators</b>	15.9%	While this number remains our highest percentage of individuals teaching without being fully licensed for the position, the majority of the permissions to teach in this area are given to individuals who hold a CTE license in one area and are given a permission to teach multiple other CTE areas.
<b>Early childhood educators</b>	1.9%	Most programs in Minnesota do not require an early childhood educator to hold a teaching license from PELSB. The majority of programs only require licensure through the Department of Health and Human Services.

Area	Data on shortages and needs	Narrative description
<b>School counselors</b>	1.2%	There are many restrictions around who can receive a permission to work as a school counselor. The data provided here includes mainly individuals working to become School Counselors and receive a Tier 2 license to complete their practicum experiences toward full licensure. In 2019, the ratio of school counselors to students in Minnesota was 1:792, compared to the average number of counselors per student for all U.S. states at 1:470.
<b>Social workers</b>	0%	State statute does not allow someone to practice social work without a full license from the Board of Social Work. The shortage could be calculated by number of licensed school social workers (2,503) compared to total number of students (872,083) for a 1:348 ratio.
<b>Nurses</b>	0%	State statute does not allow someone to practice school nursing without a full license from PELSB. Four school districts in the 2020-21 school year applied for and received MDE approval for an alternative health services arrangement. The shortage could be calculated by number of licensed school nurses (1,437) compared to total number of students (872,083) for a 1:607 ratio.
<b>School psychologists</b>	5.2%	There are many restrictions around who can receive a permission to work as a school psychologist. The data provided here includes mainly individuals working to become School Psychologists and receive a Tier 2 license to complete their practicum experiences toward full licensure.

- 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.

Minnesota has and continues to support LEAs to ensure every student benefits from diverse and excellent educators. Per executive order, schools were directed to maintain their staff and to utilize all staff (including bus drivers, custodians, etc.) to meet the emergency demands of the initial distance learning period in the spring of 2020. Minnesota also funds a statewide education job board called EdPost, where LEAs can post open positions.

As we planned for school year 2020-21, MDE also issued and regularly updated [Planning Guidance for Minnesota Public Schools](#), a collection of guidance seeking to help LEAs navigate changes in instructional models from in-person, distance and hybrid scenarios. One example of

Minnesota’s support for educators during this time is outlined in the Educator Support and Professional Learning (starting on page 107) section of the planning guidance. A key theme of the guidance encouraged LEAs to focus energy on supporting the staff mental health and well-being while they work to meet student and family needs in in-person, distance and hybrid learning scenarios. MDE staff built upon this guidance by providing regular professional learning and networking opportunities for local leadership teams to explore concepts and to problem-solve together during the 2020-21 school year. These types of activities will continue.

Professional learning support will also be a key strategy to retain the educator workforce. For example, we know that young children usually come to school with varying levels of ability, but there may be an even wider range this year as children have had limited access to pre-K programming and community experiences. Professional development has been offered and will be available on learning progressions to help teachers meet children where they are at in their development. In the next several months, professional development will also focus on outdoor learning as a way to enhance mental health and well-being of young children as well as trauma informed practices including self-care for staff.

At the time of this application, MDE does not have specific data on how Federal COVID-19 funding has been used to avoid layoffs. LEAs may consider the use of federal COVID-19 funding to avoid layoffs and ensure stability in the school staff workforce in an effort to meet the needs of students. One of Governor Walz’s executive orders directed LEAs to retain staff during this time, and we have provided guidance and technical assistance to LEAs about how to utilize funding sources to meet this and other requirements.

- 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).

Looking ahead to the 2021-22 school year and beyond, MDE launched our [Due North Education Plan](#) earlier this year. Though many of the strategies are cross-cutting and mutually supporting, the priority “Every student learns in a classroom with caring and qualified teachers” is specific to the educator workforce and includes goals to:

- Expand educator career pathway programs
- Launch statewide mentor program to support the retention of teachers
- Launch and expand programs to specifically recruit, retain and support teachers of color and Indigenous teachers.



Among Minnesota’s [Commitments to Equity](#) are “Prioritize equity: set and communicate a vision and targets for high outcomes for all students” and “Value people: focus on teachers and leaders. Develop the people you have. Ensure equitable access to the best teachers.” MDE has created a cross-agency team to operationalize actions in the Due North plan and to meet these equity commitments. That team operates with the vision, “Every student benefits from excellent and diverse educators” (see our [Equitable Access to Excellent and Diverse Educators](#) webpage for more information). Members of this team are committed to working alongside local partners to realize this vision.

One example of activities our state agencies lead is the management of several grants, scholarships, and other funded programs established by the Minnesota Legislature that seek to increase and diversify the educator workforce. The 2021 Legislature is currently considering continuing several programs and potentially adding more programs for this purpose. State agencies have also collaborated to produce an [Inventory of Funded Programs](#) that LEAs can use to increase and diversify their educator workforce. This and other resources will be updated to reflect ARP funds as well as policy and funding agreements that come out of the current legislative session.

A variety of educator workforce supports are also in development. For example, we are developing webinars for LEAs to leverage ARP funding by providing guidance and technical assistance to implement several strategies to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 by supporting educator workforce initiatives, such as creating Grow Your Own (GYO) programs. Many GYO programs create pathways for paraprofessionals, community liaisons and other adults affiliated with the school system to obtain an initial teacher license. Minnesota’s paraprofessional workforce is far more racially and linguistically diverse than our teacher workforce, so pathways for these caring adults are a high value in order to meet our shared goals to have an educator workforce that reflects the racial and linguistic diversity of our state. Other GYO approaches include pathways to move up Minnesota’s tiered licensure system or to obtain a license in another area. GYO programs also support students to learn about careers in education, to create “future teacher” clubs, as well as to provide dual enrollment opportunities for students to earn both high school and college credit.

MDE is also working to support early childhood transfer pathways so undergraduate students do not lose time or money transferring from a 2-year institute of higher education (IHE) to at 4-year IHE. MDE is supporting GYO programs for secondary students to participate in concurrent enrollment courses for education careers, including specific programs for obtaining a child development associate in family and consumer sciences classes.

LEAs are encouraged to develop GYO programs (and other pathways to the profession) with teacher preparation institutions around the state to address critical workforce shortage areas including, but not limited to teachers of color, American Indian teachers, special education teachers, school support personnel (counselors, nurses, social workers, psychologists), CTE teachers, and other areas most in need in their region.

2. 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).

A key partner in MDE's plan to support LEAs in increasing students' access to key support staff is the Minnesota Governor's Children's Cabinet. The Children's Cabinet is an interagency partnership the Governor has charged with making Minnesota the best place for each and every child to grow up. The Children's Cabinet has identified five priorities which they utilize to examine programs, policies, and practices to ensure equity for all children and to reduce the disparities experienced by children of color, Indigenous children, and children in greater Minnesota. One priority is children's mental health and well-being. MDE co-chairs the Children's Cabinet children's mental health and wellbeing action team. The action team has developed four goal areas and 38 strategies for improving children's mental health. Several strategies directly relate to supporting LEAs in increasing student access to key support staff within school buildings, including:

- GYO programs as referenced in the last section
- Expanding access to telemedicine for Comprehensive School Mental Health Services through partnerships to increase the provision of technology that enables students to connect to online applications.
- Adoption of CMS 1915(c) waiver to expand access to respite supports for students receiving special education services.
- Creating the Wrap Around MN Initiative and launching the "Stu211" push text messaging campaign in collaboration with Greater Twin Cities United Way 2-1-1 network.
- Designing mobile mental health crisis response units that enable the coordination of mental health, well-being, and other wrap-around services and supports for students and families with access barriers.
- Designing a full-service community resource hub, to connect students, their families and community members to social and basic needs resources, including mental and physical health services; academic and career services; housing and food resources.
- Developing a Juvenile Justice mental health continuum to support coordination of long-term mental health services through partnerships with local correctional facilities to ensure continuity of care after youth have transitioned out of correctional or in-patient treatment.
- Implementing Children's Therapeutic Services and Supports (CTSS) administrative simplification measures for the purposes of program expansion and increased federal Medicaid reimbursement for behavioral health services and supports.

- Sustaining investments in the state infrastructure grants to support school-linked mental health services throughout Minnesota. This initiative connects or co-locates effective mental health services with schools and students at the local level.
- Maintaining state investments in the Safe Schools Levy directly funding costs associated with licensed school counselors, school nurses, school social workers, school psychologists, and alcohol and chemical dependency counselors to help provide early responses to students' social-emotional and mental health problems.
- Continue implementing training and support to schools on implementing School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).
- Continue supporting districts through Collaborative Improvement & Innovation Networks to improve their comprehensive school mental health systems.
- Continue supporting districts through communities of practices devoted to implementing school-wide transformative social-emotional learning in service of educational equity.

### **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).

MDE will build on current capacity and strategies for collecting and reporting ESSER data. In addition, SEA staff will support the capacity of LEAs to develop and implement local data collection and reporting strategies. Throughout the process, MDE will continuously monitor progress and make adjustments to its strategies as well as support LEAs in making adjustments to local strategies based on impact.

MDE closely collaborates with external partners on public health issues when making decisions that impact schools. This includes consultation with MDH and local public health agencies, as well as the solicitation of feedback from organizations such as the Board of School Administrators (BOSA), principal associations and Education Minnesota. CDC guidance is followed to the extent possible and in conjunction with Minnesota-specific guidance from MDH with the goal of supporting schools to safely return students to full-time, in-person instruction. Regional support teams work closely with school districts to ensure effective two-way communication and to build capacity within schools for mitigating COVID-19, including strategies for testing, vaccinations, and contact tracing.

Multiple data systems already exist at the state level to collect student information. By next year, all public schools in Minnesota will utilize Ed-Fi as a data standard to transfer student information in real time to MDE. This provides immediate access to changes in student demographic information, as well as access to enrollment records and attendance data. New data elements will be collected through Ed-Fi in school year 2021-2022, including data on digital equity and course completion through the Minnesota Common Course Catalog (MCCC). In addition, MDE staff are working with MNIT and Student Information System (SIS) vendors to explore the inclusion of individual level learning model data for the 2021-2022 school year. As schools transition to Ed-Fi, ongoing training and support is provided to them from MDE and SIS vendors. Collectively, this information will be used at a state level to link student demographic data with other school and student-level measures. It will help identify trends in student experiences related to the COVID-19 pandemic and outcomes related to ARP ESSER funding.

MDE collects data in a variety of areas through multiple systems. The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs) and alternative assessment Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS) are annual statewide tests that help districts measure student progress toward Minnesota's academic standards. MCA and MTAS assessment data were not collected in 2020, but will be available for 2021 with lower than normal participation rates. ACCESS for English Language

Learners (ELL) assessments were completed in both 2020 and 2021, with extended testing windows. MDE will use assessment data as one measure of student learning to look at differences in academic progress across student groups before and after the pandemic. Assessment results viewed in conjunction with other student-level measures (e.g., attendance, discipline, coursework, access to technology) will provide a comprehensive view of student opportunities to learn, disaggregated by student groups. Collectively, these measures will reveal trends among students groups when comparing 2019 data with 2021 and 2022 measures and will be able to identify correlations between the COVID-19 pandemic and student learning.

LEAs will be responsible for collecting and reporting various data related to the use of ARP ESSER funds. This may include attendance data that identifies students who missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 school years and who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures. In addition, the plan may consider parent, student, and/or staff engagement survey data as well as other LEA-level data that identify students disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. LEAs that receive ARP ESSER funding will be required to submit a report on the use of funds to meet students' social-emotional and academic needs and how they advance equity for historically underserved students. Reports will include a description of funded interventions (e.g., summer and afterschool programs or early childhood education programs), as well as outcomes associated with use of the funds (e.g., student learning, staffing, and funding). MDE staff will provide training and support on reporting procedures to ensure consistent and high-quality data are collected.

Staffing data will draw from both state and LEA data. MDE may use information in the Staff Automated Reporting (STAR) system to identify employment changes prior to, during, and after the pandemic. This is achieved through a partnership with the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) to access both licensed and non-licensed staffing data. LEAs will be best situated to report on jobs created and retained as a direct result of ARP ESSER funds, which will be included in their report to MDE. They will disaggregate staffing information by position type in order to further delineate the impact of funds.

Related to fiscal data, MDE publishes the Financial Profiles Report and the Expenditure—District/Site Level Report that provide financial information that is comparable across the state. Both reports categorize general fund expenditures into the same categories, including regular instruction, instructional support services, pupil support services, and more. These fiscal data may be used to determine per-pupil expenditures at the LEA and school level. They also ensure that requirements are met under the Federal Financial Accountability Transparency Act (FFATA), since these reports are available on the MDE public website.

As MDE supports LEAs in identifying the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student learning and student well-being, it is important to support the meaningful use of data by building data literacy. Data are provided to districts, schools, educators, community members and

families, including explanations, graphs, charts, and visual resources. It is essential that these audiences understand the data so that they are interpreted and used appropriately. Therefore, MDE is committed to educating all stakeholders in the proper comprehension and use of data and information. MDE is building agency-wide data literacy to ensure that the agency has a strong, dependable voice across the state with regard to outcome data, program evaluation, and meaningful implementation of educational policies.

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.

MDE has taken steps to ensure there is adequate capacity to monitor the ARP ESSER funds. Up to four new, temporary positions have been approved to be filled as needed to complete the work necessary. Although the work will focus heavily on the monitoring process, these positions will be charged with completing other tasks as well. Monitoring will inevitably create corrective action plans, or CAPs. CAPs are one primary avenue where education and training can be provided to subrecipients. More formal training will be considered as well in larger group (and likely online) settings. The fiscal monitors will look for opportunities to plan trainings with programmatic counterparts in order to provide a more well-rounded training experience.

Fiscal monitoring will use a multi-tool approach, meaning MDE will use a risk based approach, a cyclical approach, and a random approach all at varying times for varying reasons. Primarily, a combined cyclical and risk based approach will be used. This means that all subrecipients will be on a schedule that ends within one year after the end of the use of funds period. By doing this, MDE will ensure that all subrecipients have an opportunity to be monitored. Additionally, to better focus our resources, a risk based approach will be used within this cycle to ensure the highest risk subrecipients are monitored. Elements on the risk assessment may include, but are not limited to, items such as: size of the award, issues identified in the application or reimbursement processes, and time since last monitored. Lastly, a random approach may be implemented as needed. This random approach will be triggered primarily by unexpected forces, likely originating outside the fiscal monitoring team. This may include items such as complaints lodged against subrecipients regarding their use of these funds.

The actual fiscal monitoring will rely heavily on elements related to internal control processes, procurement, and time and effort. The regulation followed is primarily related to Uniform Grant Guidance, but in some isolated cases follows the more restrictive state law. Testing grids utilized by other federal grant monitoring teams will be borrowed and built on or changed as necessary to

be specific to these funds. Additional testing grids will be developed as necessary if MDE finds elements that are considered high risk or places funds that seem to be commonly mismanaged or used, that are not already covered in the earlier mentioned testing. Expected CAPs include actions such as, but not limited to: updating or creating processes that include adequate internal controls, updates to forms or what documentation is maintained, adjusting expenditures so only eligible expenses are included, reclaiming funds if adequate adjustments cannot be made, and required training either by MDE or created for the subrecipient staff. Following internal procedures, if evidence of fraud is found it will be shared with the internal risk manager, who provides it to the appropriate federal contacts.

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

Indicate the date or time period represented by the following data.

Learning model data by school changed throughout the school year as schools shifted learning models; however, the data reported in the tables 1a-1d are effective May 18, 2021. Per executive order, all public schools in Minnesota were required to offer distance learning to students during the 2020-21 school year. As a result, all students had the option of following the school learning model or electing distance learning in cases where the school learning model was hybrid or in-person.

**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.**

**Table 1a: All public schools**

<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>
<b>Remote or online only</b>	1707	1707	0	0
<b>School buildings open with both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)</b>	1707	360	88	1259
<b>School buildings open with full-time in-person instruction</b>	1707	1208	90	409



**Table 1b: All public elementary schools (school classification 10)**

<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>
<b>Remote or online only</b>	999	999	0	0
<b>School buildings open with both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)</b>	999	72	69	858
<b>School buildings open with full-time in-person instruction</b>	999	832	71	96

**Table 1c: All public middle and junior high schools (school classification 20 and 31)**

<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>
<b>Remote or online only</b>	258	258	0	0
<b>School buildings open with both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)</b>	258	116	10	132
<b>School buildings open with full-time in-person instruction</b>	258	127	10	121

**Table 1d: All public secondary and high schools (school classification 32 and 33)**

<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>
<b>Remote or online only</b>	450	450	0	0
<b>School buildings open with both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)</b>	450	172	9	269
<b>School buildings open with full-time in-person instruction</b>	450	249	9	192

## **Table 2**

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

Learning model data by school changed throughout the school year as schools shifted learning models; however, the data reported in the following table are effective May 18, 2021. Data in table 2 show demographics using the assumption that all students in Minnesota followed the school learning model. As a result, data are highly skewed toward hybrid learning and in-person learning. Students who elected distance learning as allowed by executive order are severely under-represented in the data. Much caution should be used when using this information.

<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</b>
<b>Students from low-income families</b>	280,939	15,612	91,602	173,548
<b>White, not Hispanic</b>	555,586	13,341	165,483	376,361
<b>Black or African American, not Hispanic</b>	101,446	7,126	40,272	53,996
<b>Hispanic, of any race</b>	88,235	2,900	30,484	54,808
<b>Asian, not Hispanic</b>	61,042	6,709	22,495	31,837
<b>American Indian or Alaskan Native, not Hispanic</b>	15,715	811	5,377	9,486
<b>Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, not Hispanic</b>	825	21	240	564
<b>Two or more races, not Hispanic</b>	49,910	1,783	15,486	32,630
<b>Race/Ethnicity information not available</b>	NA	NA	NA	NA
<b>English learners</b>	73,442	5,378	21,965	46,098
<b>Children with disabilities</b>	145,363	4,493	42,143	98,196
<b>Students experiencing homelessness</b>	6,290	282	2,413	3,594
<b>Children and youth in foster care</b>	NA	NA	NA	NA
<b>Migratory students</b>	NA	NA	NA	NA

## **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/COVID plan).

## 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.

The following is an example of the steps the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) is taking to ensure equitable access to, and participation in, ARP ESSER funded activities for students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries with special needs, in partnership with local educational agencies (LEAs) and community organizations.

MDE will provide webinars to grantees that will incorporate technical assistance on ensuring equitable access to programming in ways such as: language access; family awareness, including proactive communication to beneficiary students and families; and indigenous curriculum resources.

### **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.**