



# Pennsylvania ARP ESSER State Plan

American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School  
Emergency Relief Fund

July 2021



**Commonwealth of Pennsylvania**

Tom Wolf, Governor

**Department of Education**

Noe Ortega, Secretary

**Office of Elementary and Secondary Education**

Sherri L. Smith, Acting Deputy Secretary

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## Cover Page

### Grantee and Contact Information

**ARP ESSER PR Award Number (e.g., S425U2100XX): S425U210028**

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Email address: smccrone@pa.gov

By signing this document, I agree to each of the assurances listed in Appendix C and further assure that:

To the best of my knowledge and belief, all information and data included in this plan are true and correct.



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**Signature of Authorized SEA Representative**  
**Noe Ortega, Secretary of Education**

**Date: July 16, 2021**

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

The U.S. Department of Education (Department) recognizes the extraordinary efforts made by States, local education agencies (LEAs), and educators to support students during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this section, State education agencies (SEAs) will describe the progress they have made, the priorities and student needs guiding their American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (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 Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) has collected effective and promising strategies through stakeholder input to inform and develop this application. Conversations, focus groups, questionnaires, and written input have focused on both the issues that are of concern to stakeholders as well as the LEA practices that have been successful in supporting students, families, teachers, and communities during the pandemic. Three promising strategies emerging from this stakeholder engagement include the following:

1. Relationship-building between schools and families;
2. One-to-one, small-group, and personalized supports for learners; and
3. Focusing academic plans on relationship-building and caring for learners.

LEAs across Pennsylvania have worked diligently to meet the needs of their communities throughout the pandemic. Stakeholder groups identified schools and districts that were intentional about developing and maintaining engaged relationships with students as particularly effective during this time. Strategies that led to student success included providing activities that intentionally focused on engagement in academic and instructional processes for students, maintaining and supporting active Student Assistance Program (SAP) teams, and frequently using small group supports, one-on-one conferencing, and counselor check-ins for social and emotional well-being. Stakeholders found “inquiring about the student experience [with] learning” and more open conversations between teachers and students to be highly positive strategies.

Relationship-building activities aimed at supporting parents and community members, which included an increase in two-way communication between the school and home, phone calls, home visits, and regular updates on progress and process from LEA-level administrators, were appreciated by stakeholders and deemed helpful to families and students. Stakeholders who work with homeless students mentioned the benefit of providing assistance to the whole family, not just to students who attend the school. Stakeholders mentioned the benefits of

“positive engagement,” with school staff taking an approach of “How can I help?” instead of giving families directions. These proactive activities opened the possibilities of engaging school district homeless liaisons and community services to meet families’ holistic needs, positioning schools on the front line of homelessness prevention.

LEAs that put special focus on relationship-building activities in the development of their academic and instructional plans were seen as “caring for our learners,” which fostered a positive relationship with parents, caregivers, and families, and increased student engagement and success in remote learning situations. Connections with a caring adult were cited as especially critical for vulnerable youth, such as foster children.

What worked well did not work well universally, however, and some of the same strategies frequently identified as promising practices, such as school-family communication, also surfaced as obstacles from the perspective of some marginalized populations. This presents a critical lesson when considering ARP ESSER as an opportunity to transform education: effective strategies are only effective to the extent that they are accessible and designed with the intention of meeting students and families where they are. This means providing school communication in home languages, using technological platforms and apps that are free and accessible on low-cost devices, and providing opportunities for families to engage in ways and at times that suit the schedules and workday demands of essential, frontline workers.

As PDE collects additional success stories and feedback from stakeholders, and as these strategies are supported by ongoing data collection, LEAs are being encouraged 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.

**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.**

While students, families, and schools across Pennsylvania currently face many issues as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, PDE has identified the following three as most critical:

- 1. Student and teacher mental health supports:** Mental health and social-emotional well-being were by far the most mentioned priorities of stakeholders speaking to the needs of the most impacted students. This focus was often paired with recognition of trauma and the importance of student safety and belongingness at school. Teachers were said to both need instruction in providing mental health supports and trauma-informed approaches for students, as well as personal support for their own mental health and well-being in the face of burnout.
- 2. Connectivity and equity of access in remote learning, leading to instructional and learning inequities:** This issue includes equity of access to reliable, high-speed internet and access to adequate devices for participating fully in school. Another issue related to remote learning was a lack of teacher training and online resources to improve student engagement in remote learning situations.

3. **Staffing shortages and a lack of capacity in school and county supports:** These shortages include teachers and professional support staff, specialized staff (e.g., multilingual, sign and Braille capable, culturally responsive staff); school and county mental health professionals; substitute teachers; paraprofessionals; transportation staff; custodial staff; school nurses and health staff; and school administrators.
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.

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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.



**Table A1. Highest Priority Needs by Student Group.<sup>2</sup>**

Student Group	Highest Priority Needs for the 2021-22 School Year
Students from low-income families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social and emotional wellness</li> <li>• Lack of connectivity in remote learning, leading to loss of instruction and learning</li> <li>• Attendance and engagement with school and academics</li> <li>• Food insecurity of families</li> </ul>
<p>Students from each racial or ethnic background used by the state for reporting purposes</p> <p>(Stakeholders provided input on the needs of three student groups on the basis of race or ethnicity: Black, Asian, and Hispanic students. Analysis in the right-hand column reflects this feedback.)</p>	<p>Black or African American students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social and emotional wellness – including equity and trauma-informed services</li> <li>• Use of technology and lack of connectivity in remote learning, leading to loss of instruction and learning</li> <li>• Attendance and engagement with school and academics due to effectiveness of remote instruction and increased lack of connectivity to school and interventions</li> </ul> <p>Asian students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provisions for safety from hate, bullying, and harassment due to targeted hatred toward Asians during the pandemic</li> <li>• Trauma-informed practices and mental health supports due to increased harassment of Asian individuals during the pandemic</li> <li>• Understanding that Asian students are not a monolithic group and that the myth of a model minority is a myth: Asian students are in need of individual assessment of academic skills, academic tutoring, and social-emotional supports, as are other students</li> <li>• Promotion of acceptance, celebration of diversity</li> </ul> <p>Hispanic or Latinx students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance and engagement with academics</li> <li>• Lack of connectivity in remote learning</li> <li>• Social and emotional wellness</li> </ul>
Students by gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students need teachers who are “mirrors” of their gender in fields where certain genders are</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> Priorities identified in the right-hand column of this table reflect analysis of stakeholder input and other data and research. These include statewide administrative data, responses gathered through PDE’s ARP ESSER questionnaire and through focus groups, [an independent analysis of school district responses to school closures](#), results of regular feedback sessions with key informants including intermediate unit leadership and leaders of charter schools and cyber charter schools, and responses received during the plan’s public comment period.

Student Group	Highest Priority Needs for the 2021-22 School Year
	<p>underrepresented (e.g., science, math, history): according to one stakeholder, “representation matters.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusive school culture on the basis of gender</li> <li>• Staff training and awareness to mitigate gender bias and stereotyping</li> </ul>
English Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of language learning and proficiency, particularly in oral English development. A recent World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) study of language growth indicated speaking and listening were disproportionately impacted from March 2020 to May 2021</li> <li>• Social and emotional wellness</li> <li>• Equitable access to core content. ELs require higher levels of support to engage in academically rigorous instruction.</li> </ul>
Children with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social and emotional wellness, mental health</li> <li>• Transition support, as students return to in-person instruction</li> <li>• Lack of necessary technology and knowledge of how to operate the technology</li> <li>• COVID-19 Compensatory Services, including effective assessments and remediation strategies to target areas of regression and learning gaps</li> </ul>
Students experiencing homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased lack of identification due to remote learning</li> <li>• Lack of school engagement leading to poor academic progress</li> <li>• Increased need for mental health services</li> </ul>
Children and youth in foster care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interruption of academic services.</li> <li>• Lack of educational stability</li> <li>• Social and emotional wellness, mental health</li> </ul>
Migratory students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology: lack of necessary technology and knowledge of how to operate the technology, technology fatigue/burnout with language barriers exacerbating these challenges</li> <li>• Attendance and engagement with school and academics</li> <li>• Lack of social-emotional and academic supports</li> </ul>

Student Group	Highest Priority Needs for the 2021-22 School Year
<p>Other groups of students identified by the state (e.g., youth involved with the criminal justice system, students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019–20 and 2020–21 school years, students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures, LGBTQ+ students)</p>	<p>Adjudicated Youth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to technology at the state correctional and other adjudicated youth facilities</li> <li>• Safety – access to one-way delivery of digital content</li> <li>• Continuity of learning experience between facility and sending LEA</li> <li>• Social and emotional wellness, mental health, trauma-informed instruction</li> </ul> <p>LGBTQ+ students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety and belongingness in an inclusive, welcoming school environment</li> <li>• Safe spaces such as student organizations to express themselves</li> <li>• Social supports (acknowledging that fear of harassment is a barrier to socializing), emotional supports, and mental health supports</li> <li>• Counseling and mental health support staff</li> <li>• Relationships with trusted adults, and the need for training for staff to implement trauma-informed and inclusive practices in school</li> </ul> <p>Students enrolled in career and technical education (CTE) programs at area career and technical education schools (CTCs)<sup>3</sup>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of access to broadband</li> <li>• Social and emotional support</li> <li>• Need for in-person instruction to provide for hands-on academic and technical education</li> </ul>

Students experiencing homelessness prior to the pandemic experienced chronic absenteeism, decreased student engagement, and decreased social-emotional well-being due to housing instability. COVID-19 school shutdowns in the spring of 2020 in Pennsylvania left students already academically, socially, and emotionally vulnerable at even greater risk due to the immediate elimination of social contacts, services, extracurricular activities, and in-person engagement that allows educators and other paraprofessionals the ability to view signs of distress and neglect that are not as easy to view in online learning environments.

The pandemic also illuminated inequities in the provision and use of educational technology. Many families were overwhelmed because they did not know how to help their students

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<sup>3</sup> Forty-seven percent of CTC students are economically disadvantaged, and 31 percent of CTC learners are students with disabilities.

connect or how to monitor their progress. Students also experienced technology fatigue/burnout and did not want to participate in online supplemental programs, such as tutoring. Language barriers and parent/caregiver lack of English fluency exacerbated these challenges as parents/caregivers struggled to read and understand materials sent home.

Many families in particularly rural areas did not have access to internet services. [Currently, there are at least 53,000 households and over 500,000 Pennsylvanians \(students and teachers\) with no connectivity or limited connectivity to the internet.](#) In addition, Pennsylvania has approximately 650,000 learners under the age of five who could be living in homes or attending early learning centers with poor connectivity.

Where connectivity issues negatively influenced engagement, a lack of engagement in turn negatively influenced attendance. Repeated absences sent many families to truancy court, and fines were levied. Some students were frustrated with online learning and did not log on. Others had other responsibilities, such as working or providing childcare to younger siblings while parents worked. Many older students needed to work to assist their families and have essentially dropped out of school.

Many students felt isolated and experienced stress while learning online; they could not socialize or access peer-to-peer supports. This caused many students to begin to exhibit signs of depression or anxiety. In addition, students experienced familial illness or personal loss. On ARP ESSER questionnaires, 37 percent of respondents identified social, emotional, mental health, and student relationships as the top priority for support, and Pennsylvania Teachers Advisory Committee urban, suburban, and rural focus groups identified these areas as top priorities as well. Not being in a structured and safe learning environment created learning loss, particularly for ELs. ELs were not able to learn English as well as they would have through immersion in the language at school.

To serve adjudicated youth, Pennsylvania has six [diploma-bearing correctional facilities](#) with 259 learners; 37 percent of these learners have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Pennsylvania has an additional [11 private residential](#) rehabilitation institutions supported by nine Intermediate Units (IUs). As determined through focus group conversations with Adjudicated Youth Facility Educators, as well as [Remake Learning, KnowledgeWorks, and PDE-led statewide listening sessions](#), 75 percent of American Rescue Plan (ARP) questionnaire responses identified social, emotional, and trauma-informed learning and relationship building as either a top or second priority, and 21 percent identified academics or learning loss as the key issue for adjudicated youth.

- 4. Understanding the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Describe how the SEA will support its local education agencies (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.**

PDE will provide a variety of supports to its LEAs to aid their identification of the extent of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student learning and student well-being. Data are being collected, and LEAs are being supported through the following mechanisms:

**ARP ESSER Application – Needs Assessment:** As part of its application for ARP ESSER funds, each LEA is required to complete a needs assessment. That assessment will prompt the LEA to undertake a comprehensive accounting of the specific needs of its students and educators, including descriptions of the root causes of those needs, the qualitative and quantitative data sources used to determine the needs, and how ARP ESSER funds will be used to meet those needs.

**Accelerated Learning Through an Integrated System of Support:** Throughout the 2020-21 school year, PDE regularly provided technical assistance and guidance for LEAs in reflecting on their successes and challenges in providing instruction while managing the COVID-19 pandemic through the [Roadmap for Educational Leaders](#). Components and resources of this roadmap include establishing a comprehensive stakeholder group to establish thorough plans based on current needs and conditions, including instructional delivery models, social and emotional wellness, effective instruction, connectivity and communication, and professional development.

In preparation for the 2021-22 school year, PDE has created a new toolkit of resources and professional development offerings, the [Accelerated Learning through an Integrated System of Supports](#), which provides a systematic process and technical support for school communities to make key decisions for the start of the new academic year. The toolkit follows a Cycle of Continuous Improvement mindset that will lead to strategic vision, needs assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring, and adjusting, with each element integrated systemically. Key components within the associated Accelerated Learning framework include operational and system conditions, social and emotional wellness, academics, and scaffolded supports. Additionally, this toolkit includes an updated collection of lessons learned, research, critical resources, and simplified planning templates with probing questions to guide LEA decision-making.

**Local Assessments:** To assist LEAs in gaining early and important insights into the impact of COVID-19 on student learning, PDE is partnering with its vendor, Standards Aligned System – Education Value-Added Assessment System, to implement a system through which LEAs can voluntarily submit local assessment data and receive analytics similar to traditional Pennsylvania growth reports normed to Pennsylvania performance levels. Once LEA data are submitted, PDE and local IUs will provide data tools and comprehensive support to assist LEAs in:

- Increasing understanding of the impacts of COVID-19 in LEAs and schools;
- Assessing current learning trends among students;
- Evaluating whether different student groups experienced different learning outcomes during school interruptions; and

- Identifying the amount of learning needed to get students back on track to their pre-pandemic expected achievement levels.

**Future Ready Comprehensive Planning and School Improvement:** Title 22, [Chapter 4](#) of the Pennsylvania Code specifies planning requirements for LEAs. As a component of each LEA’s Comprehensive Plan, LEAs are to conduct a thorough needs assessment on student achievement, growth, and student programs. The state’s [Future Ready Comprehensive Planning Portal](#) (FRCPP) provides a consistent planning framework and collection tool for all LEAs. This platform is grounded in an outcomes-based approach focused on student achievement and encourages schools and districts to more effectively plan and lead school improvement practices. The core concepts are based on a simplified logic model, one that any LEA or school can effectively use for developing cohesive long-term goals and action plans, monitoring yearly progress, and providing transparency in communication with school personnel, state officials, parents and caregivers, and community members. Schools designated for support for accountability purposes under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), including Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI), Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (A-TSI), and Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI), also are provided technical assistance and guidance as they develop their school improvement plans in the FRCPP.

**State System of Support with Pennsylvania IUs:** PDE will contract with the 29 IUs to provide professional learning, technical assistance, and supports to school leaders on the following essential content and systems components:

1. Systems Conditions;
2. Academics;
3. Social and Emotional Wellness; and
4. Scaffolded Supports and Strategies.

IUs will collaborate with LEAs in their assigned region to develop a detailed plan for instructional delivery that is grounded in evidence and informed by a comprehensive assessment of local needs, resources, and current health data; support LEAs in implementing effective progress-monitoring routines; convene LEAs as a networked learning community quarterly to share promising practices and collectively solve problems of practice; and assist in collecting anecdotal data from LEAs for periodic reports to PDE.

5. **School Operating Status: It is essential to have data on how students are learning in order to support the goals of access and equity, especially for student groups that have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Describe the current status of data collection on operational status and mode of instruction of all schools in your State. This description must include:**
  - i. **A description of to what extent, and how frequently, the State collects now and will collect in the future data for all schools in your State on:**

- a. Mode of instruction: The number of schools in your State that are offering fully remote or online-only instruction; both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid model); and/or full-time in-person instruction;**
- b. Enrollment: Student enrollment for all students and disaggregated for each of the student groups described in A.3.i-viii for each mode of instruction; and**
- c. Attendance: Student attendance for all students and disaggregated for each of the student groups described in A.3.i-viii for each mode of instruction.**

Prior to reopening schools in the fall of 2020, LEAs submitted Health and Safety Plans to PDE, which provided a point-in-time indicator of LEAs' intended mode of instruction at the beginning of the 2020-21 school year. LEAs updated their Health and Safety plans as necessary and posted those plans on their websites.

In December 2020, PDE required LEAs to submit forms attesting to health and safety precautions the LEA would take if it planned to provide any in-person instruction. If an LEA attested to providing no in-person instruction at that point in time, then PDE could assume all schools, and therefore all students, within that LEA were receiving fully remote instruction. This enabled PDE to estimate that approximately 40 percent of all LEAs, representing just under 40 percent of enrolled students (using the enrollment data of school year 2019–20), were offering fully remote instruction in December 2020.

Throughout the 2020–21 school year, PDE has relied on the weekly input from the 29 regional IUs to understand the current operational status and mode of instruction of LEAs. Each IU updated a spreadsheet of current modes of instruction for the LEAs within their geographic region on a weekly basis. However, since the data is at the level of the LEA, not each school within the LEA, it was impossible for PDE to accurately assess the mode of instruction provided to students at the school level.

To access information needed for this ARP ESSER application, PDE used data collected by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) to determine student eligibility for Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) benefits. To issue P-EBT benefits, DHS collects information at the individual student level, including the school where they are enrolled and their school's current instructional model (i.e., fully in-person, fully remote, or hybrid). This data collection will continue through the summer of 2021 or as long as P-EBT benefits are funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Since PDE assists DHS with the P-EBT program, DHS will continue to share the ongoing collections of student enrollment by mode of instruction in response to the requirements of ARP ESSER. This is PDE's most current data to understand the modes of instruction for LEAs, and PDE's only dataset to understand the modes of instruction for individual schools and for enrolled students by student group.

For enrollment and attendance, PDE typically collects school- and student-level data through the Pennsylvania Information Management System (PIMS), PDE's statewide longitudinal data system. Since LEAs do not submit student-level daily attendance data in PIMS, PDE's Data Quality Office follows an approved process for federal accountability that uses truancy data, days enrolled, and days present to calculate a student-level



indicator for chronic absenteeism. This indicator is used to determine risk factors for students at the individual, school, and student subgroup level.

**Future Plans:**

In the short term, PDE will continue to partner with DHS to share more up-to-date data on student enrollment by mode of instruction for the 2020-21 school year. PDE is exploring ways to collect information on students’ modes of instruction in the 2021-22 school year, to understand the continued impact of the pandemic on learning and teaching.

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

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

The tables below use October 2020 student enrollment data submitted by schools, which are the most recent and accurate available. The mode of instruction is as of October 2020 for schools in public school entities (including school districts, charter schools, cyber charter schools, and career and technical education centers). Student groups listed are those requested by the U.S. Department of Education. Both tables are provided on PDE’s [ARP ESSER Data and Reporting site](#).

**Table A2. Mode of Instruction by School as of October 2020.**

**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.**

<b>Mode of Instruction</b>	<b>Offered to All Students</b>	<b>Offered to Some Students</b>	<b>Not Offered to Students</b>	<b>Total Number of Public Schools</b>
Remote or online only	635 (21.8%)	1,977 (67.8%)	302 (10.4%)	2,914
School buildings open with both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)	182 (6.2%)	1,910 (65.6%)	822 (28.2%)	2,914
School buildings open with full-time in-person instruction	62 (2.1%)	950 (32.6%)	1,902 (65.3%)	2,914

**To the extent data are available, please complete the above table for 1) all schools in the State, and 2) separately for each instructional level (e.g., pre-kindergarten/elementary schools, middle schools, high schools).**



PDE does not have the data necessary to identify schools by instructional level because there are numerous grade configurations of schools across the state and no standard definition of categories such as elementary, middle, and high schools.

**Table A3. Mode of Instruction by Student Subgroup.**

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

<b>Student Subgroup</b>	<b>Total Statewide Enrollment (in Public Schools)</b>	<b>Students Who Are Remote or Online Only</b>	<b>Students in Both Remote/Online and In-Person Instruction (Hybrid)</b>	<b>Students in Full-Time In-Person Instruction</b>
Students from low-income families	715,065	402,135 (56.2%)	245,657 (34.4%)	67,273 (9.4%)
White, not Hispanic	977,031	297,696 (30.5%)	521,586 (53.4%)	157,749 (16.1%)
Black or African American, not Hispanic	214,138	173,840 (81.2%)	34,777 (16.2%)	5,521 (2.6%)
Hispanic, of any race	217,773	153,603 (70.5%)	53,474 (24.6%)	10,696 (4.9%)
Asian, not Hispanic	70,170	46,273 (65.9%)	20,528 (29.3%)	3,369 (4.8%)
American Indian or Alaskan Native, not Hispanic	2,355	1,210 (51.4%)	847 (36.0%)	298 (12.7%)
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, not Hispanic	1,287	685 (53.2%)	491 (38.2%)	111 (8.6%)
Two or more races, not Hispanic	70,845	35,654 (50.3%)	27,371 (38.6%)	7,820 (11.0%)
Race/Ethnicity information not available	0	0	0	0
Female	753,226	350,219 (46.5%)	314,903 (41.8%)	88,104 (11.7%)
Male	800,373	358,742 (44.8%)	344,171 (43.0%)	97,460 (12.2%)
English learners	72,788	54,079 (74.3%)	15,819 (21.7%)	2,890 (4.0%)
Children with disabilities	271,557	124,031 (45.7%)	116,218 (42.8%)	31,308 (11.5%)

Student Subgroup	Total Statewide Enrollment (in Public Schools)	Students Who Are Remote or Online Only	Students in Both Remote/Online and In-Person Instruction (Hybrid)	Students in Full-Time In-Person Instruction
Students experiencing homelessness <sup>4</sup>	19,691	11,909 (60.5%)	6,252 (31.8%)	1,530 (7.8%)
Children and youth in foster care <sup>4</sup>	9,790	5,549 (56.7%)	3,231 (33.0%)	1,010 (10.3%)
Migratory students <sup>4</sup>	3,353	2,450 (73.1%)	675 (20.1%)	228 (6.8%)

**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.**

In Pennsylvania, LEAs determine their school calendar and mode of instruction locally. As a result of communications with LEAs and stakeholders and regular coordination with regional intermediate units that liaise with LEAs, PDE expects that the vast majority of students will be able to resume access to in-person instruction at the start of the 2021–22 school year.

Through the summer of 2021 and into the 2021–22 school year, PDE will continue to partner with the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) to provide up-to-date information on community transmission of COVID-19. PDE recognizes that while schools across the commonwealth are planning for a return to in-person instruction five days per week in the 2021–22 school year, there may still be a need for short-term transitions to remote instruction in certain circumstances. To provide predictability for planning purposes, flexibility for schools mitigating the spread of COVID-19, and for families that request periods of remote instruction for their children as a result of the pandemic, PDE will follow the [same practice that was implemented during the 2020–21 school year](#), which is to consider the COVID-19 global pandemic an emergency as contemplated by [Section 520.1 of the Pennsylvania School Code](#). PDE has issued guidance to LEAs regarding how remote learning time can continue to satisfy the 180-day and 900/990-hour state statutory requirements in the 2021–22 school year.

The decision to enact temporary provisions under Section 520.1 of the Pennsylvania School Code remains a local one. PDE has cautioned LEAs that, when making decisions related to the provision of instructional time, all LEAs must be cognizant of issues such as the provision of planned instruction needed to attain the relevant academic standards set forth in Title 22, [Chapter 4 of the Pennsylvania Code](#); implementation of systems for tracking attendance and instructional time, especially related to students engaging in

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<sup>4</sup> Indicates students identified in the identified subgroup during the 2019-20 school year.

remote instruction; the provision of free, appropriate public education (FAPE); and equity in access to instruction for all students.

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

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

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

**Table B1. Mitigation Strategies.**

Mitigation Strategy	SEA Response
Universal and correct wearing of masks	The Secretary of the DOH lifted the <a href="#">commonwealth’s universal face covering order</a> on June 28, 2021. As such, LEAs have the authority to determine local masking policies. Schools have been advised to follow <a href="#">CDC recommendations</a> in making policy decisions.
Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)	Schools are advised to align distancing protocols with the recommendations for physical distancing outlined in the <a href="#">CDC’s Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools</a> . Given the benefits of in-person learning, when it is not possible for schools to maintain a physical distance of at least three feet, schools are advised to layer multiple prevention strategies, such as indoor masking and increased ventilation.
Handwashing and respiratory etiquette	Handwashing and respiratory etiquette are recommended mitigation strategies for all students and educators and will continue to be emphasized by PDE and DOH for as long as they are recommended by the CDC.
Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation	Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including through improved ventilation, is a recommended mitigation strategy for all students and educators and will continue to be emphasized by PDE and DOH for as long as it is recommended by the CDC.

Mitigation Strategy	SEA Response
<p>Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the state, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments</p>	<p>PDE and DOH have instructed schools to contact the DOH or County or Municipal Health Department (CMHD) before acting in response to a known or suspected communicable disease. When a case of COVID-19 is identified in a school setting, public health staff members from DOH or the CMHD work with school administrators to provide guidance and advice related to cleaning and disinfecting, contact tracing and quarantine recommendations, and closing certain areas of the school or entire school buildings if necessary. Schools within the jurisdiction of one of Pennsylvania’s 10 county and municipal health departments work with their local health department when responding to cases of COVID-19 in a school setting.</p> <p>At the start of the 2020–21 school year, PDE, in collaboration with the DOH, established a Joint Rapid Response Center for K-12 schools. Through this emergency call center, schools have access seven days a week to PDE and DOH staff who can advise school leaders on mitigation strategies and appropriate public health responses, such as the contact tracing process and steps for closing a facility if necessary. DOH will continue to provide this type of technical assistance to school leaders during the 2021–22 school year.</p> <p>In addition, PDE and DOH have guidance on contact tracing, isolation, and quarantining on their websites and provide updates on changes to guidance to school leaders and the public as needed.</p>
<p>Diagnostic and screening testing</p>	<p>During the 2021–22 school year, DOH will use CDC Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC) Reopening Schools grant funding to implement a free, voluntary COVID-19 testing program for all K-12 schools in the commonwealth, apart from schools in Philadelphia County. The Philadelphia Department of Public Health received its own federal ELC funding to implement a similar testing program. DOH is planning to offer pooled testing, individual diagnostic Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) testing, and rapid antigen testing at no cost to schools or families for the entire 2021–22 school year. DOH staff will be available to assist with the logistics, planning, and operations of this testing program, including a point of contact at each IU to assist with outreach and data collection for schools in their respective catchment areas.</p>
<p>Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible</p>	<p>In March 2021, public and non-public school teachers, administrators, bus drivers, and other school support and contracted staff were among the first to receive the single-dose Johnson &amp; Johnson COVID-19 vaccine in Pennsylvania. PDE, DOH, and the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) collaborated with the state’s 29 IUs and other education partners to equitably vaccinate all school employees and</p>

Mitigation Strategy	SEA Response
	<p>contracted staff as quickly as possible. Within three weeks, all PK-12 school staff were provided an opportunity to be vaccinated, with priority given to educators and school staff working with elementary education students, students with disabilities, and ELs. This effort resulted in nearly half of Pennsylvania’s 250,000 members of the educator workforce receiving vaccinations in less than a month.</p> <p>Through the IUs, PDE and DOH continue to connect schools with state and local vaccination providers as requested, with many schools offering vaccinations to educators and eligible students during the school day. PDE has also partnered with the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture to vaccinate migrant students and families during summer activities, in hopes of increasing vaccination rates before the start of the school year.</p>
<p>Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies</p>	<p>Pennsylvania’s Public Health Guidance for schools includes recommendations aligned to the CDC for <a href="#">students and staff with disabilities and other chronic conditions</a>. Teams are directed to determine a student’s ability to meet distancing guidelines on a case-by-case basis. If a student with a disability is unable to follow the distancing or other health and safety guidelines, schools should follow applicable federal and state law and work to collaborate with the student’s parent/caregiver, medical provider, certified school nurse, and school administrators to develop an appropriate educational plan of care for students (i.e., 504 Plan or IEP). Teams are also encouraged to consider CDC guidelines for people at risk of severe illness, people who need to take extra precautions, and other at-risk populations. Per the CDC guidance, medically-fragile and high-risk students and the staff assigned to their classrooms are advised to have a symptom screening performed at school daily, in addition to the symptom screening required prior to arriving at school.</p>

**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;**

Safely reopening schools and sustaining safe operations to maximize in-person instruction is essential for student learning and well-being, and especially for addressing the educational inequities exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In accordance with section 2001(i)(1) of the ARP Act, all LEAs receiving ARP ESSER funding must develop and make publicly available on the LEA’s website a Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan, hereinafter referred to as a Health and Safety Plan.

In May 2021, PDE provided LEAs with a [template](#) to revise their current Health and Safety Plans to meet ARP requirements and ensure all stakeholders are fully informed of the LEA's plan to safely resume instructional and non-instructional school activities, including in-person learning, for the current school year. [ARP ESSER Health and Safety Plan guidance](#) is available on PDE's website. The plan must be approved by the LEA's governing body and posted to the LEA's publicly available website. LEAs are required to submit their plans to PDE no later than July 30, 2021, regardless of when they submit their application to PDE for ARP ESSER funding. In addition, the LEA must provide PDE with the URL for the website where the plan is located. PDE will then post this information to the PDE website in a user-friendly format.

LEAs will not be able to receive ARP ESSER funding until a Health and Safety Plan is submitted.

Initial and revised Health and Safety Plans will be tracked via PDE's electronic eGrants application and reporting system and the FRCPP. While reporting requirements are not yet finalized, reporting will include how the LEA 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.

**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**

In Pennsylvania, LEA school calendars and modes of instruction are determined locally and will continue to be a local decision for Summer 2021 and the 2021-22 school year. As with the 2020-21 school year, PDE will not mandate operational status or modes of instruction for schools; rather, PDE, in cooperation with DOH and other state agencies, is focused on creating the conditions that allow for a safe return to in-person instruction as soon as possible.

Due to the size and diversity of the commonwealth, a return to in-person instruction will look different across every school, district, and county depending on a variety of factors, one of which is the spread of COVID-19. DOH updates its COVID-19 Early Warning Monitoring Dashboard weekly to reflect COVID metrics from the prior week.

Throughout the 2020-21 school year, PDE also published a Level of Community Transmission Table identifying the current level of community transmission of COVID-19 (low, moderate, substantial) for each of Pennsylvania's 67 counties. School leaders used this information to implement instructional model recommendations consistent with those of the CDC. The recommendations relied on two standard public health metrics recommended by the CDC: incidence rate and the percent positivity of diagnostic testing. Schools will continue to have access to data for monitoring community transmission levels in their communities and have been advised by PDE and DOH to implement

prevention and mitigation strategies accordingly based on the most recent CDC guidance for K-12 schools.

School entity decisions on instructional models are guided by school-specific factors such as mitigation strategies, classroom size, school resources, proportion of staff and students with special needs and underlying health conditions, and the ability to accommodate remote learning with equal access for all students. In May 2021, PDE and DOH updated Pennsylvania's Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools to include the CDC's recommendations for K-12 schools on social distancing in classrooms and handling COVID-19 cases in school buildings. PDE and DOH will continue to monitor evolving research and guidance closely and modify the commonwealth's guidance and operational strategies so that schools can make decisions at the local level consistent with best practices and with public health and safety at the forefront.

PDE recognizes that while schools across the commonwealth are planning for a return to in-person instruction five days per week in the 2021-22 school year, there may still be a need for remote instruction in certain circumstances. To provide schools with predictability for planning purposes and flexibility to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, and to accommodate families that request periods of remote instruction for their children due to the pandemic, PDE has issued guidance to LEAs regarding how remote learning time can continue to satisfy the 180-day and 900/990 hour statutory requirements for the 2021-22 school year.

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

PDE and DOH regularly post, update, and provide information and [resources for schools and communities](#) related to COVID-19. Resources for schools include [Family Supports and Services](#), [Mental Health and Well-Being](#), [School Community Guidance and Resources](#), a [Pennsylvania Resource Guide](#), links to CDC guidance, and much more. Every [message to school communities](#) is catalogued on the PDE website. PDE and DOH provide webinars and trainings and make recordings of these sessions available as needed. PDE and DOH will continue to provide LEAs with information on updated guidance from the CDC and any future state guidance or orders.

- 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 ([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;**
- 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;**
- 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>5</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**
- 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.**

In accordance with section 2001(i)(1) of the ARP Act, all LEAs receiving ARP ESSER funding must develop and make publicly available on the LEA's website a Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan, or Health and Safety Plan. In May of 2021, PDE provided LEAs with [guidance](#) and a [template](#) to revise their current Health and Safety Plans to meet ARP Act requirements and to ensure all stakeholders are fully informed of the LEA's plan to safely resume instructional and non-instructional school activities, including in-person learning. The Health and Safety Plan template includes all the strategies listed in Table B1.

In addition, in the ARP ESSER grant application, each LEA must agree to the following assurances:

- The LEA has a Plan for the Safe Return for In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Instruction that complies with section 2001(i) of the ARP Act. (In Pennsylvania, this will be the LEA's Health and Safety Plan.) The LEA will provide to PDE: (1) the URL(s) where the public can readily find data on school operating status; and (2) the URL(s) for the LEA websites where the public can find the LEA's (a) Health and Safety plan as required under section 2001(i) of the ARP Act; and (b) the LEA's plan for the use of ARP ESSER funds.
- The LEA will review its Health and Safety Plan at least every six months during the duration of the ARP ESSER grant period and make revisions as appropriate. When determining whether revisions are necessary, the LEA will take into consideration

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<sup>5</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.



significant changes to CDC guidance on reopening schools and will seek public input and take public input into account.

- The LEA’s Health and Safety Plan will be made publicly available on the LEA website and must be written in a language that parents/caregivers can understand and must be provided in alternate format upon request by a parent/caregiver who is an individual with a disability.

The Health and Safety plan must be approved by the LEA’s governing body and posted on the LEA’s publicly available website. In addition, the LEA must provide PDE with the URL for the website where the plan is located. PDE will post this information to its website in a user-friendly format.

LEAs must submit their Health and Safety plans electronically to PDE no later than July 30, 2021, regardless of when they submit their application to PDE for funding. LEAs will not be able to receive ARP ESSER funding until a Health and Safety Plan is submitted.

PDE’s Office of Federal Programs will review each ARP ESSER application and verify Health and Safety plans are published online and available to the public. Staff will also verify that the Health and Safety Plans address each recommended mitigation strategy in Table B1 and describe how the LEA plans to ensure continuity of services as required by federal statute.

Quarterly program reporting and audits will be used to monitor compliance throughout the grant period and to collect evidence of public input when the plan is revised. In addition, Health and Safety Plans will be tracked via PDE’s electronic eGrants application and reporting system.

PDE will continue working with DOH to monitor and inform LEAs of evolving federal and state requirements, public health mandates, current research, and guidance from the CDC. Data will be collected as described in Section E. The state will continue to post updates and communicate directly with LEAs as well as provide technical assistance when requested.

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

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

- 1. SEA Consultation: Consistent with the ARP ESSER requirements, describe how the SEA engaged in meaningful consultation with stakeholders, and incorporated input into its plan, including, but not limited to:**
  - i. students;**

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

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

PDE is committed to providing stakeholders at every level of the state education system an opportunity to help inform development of the state ARP ESSER plan.

PDE has consulted with stakeholders for the ARP ESSER plan in multiple ways.

- **Focus Groups.** PDE held focus groups with more than 90 school leaders, educators, students, community service providers, and adjudicated youth facility educators. Focus group participants included representatives of afterschool organizations; foster care experts including youth, educators, and service providers; representatives of Pennsylvania’s Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program; charter school administrators; migrant students; migrant education program specialists; educators of ELs; regional coordinators of Student Assistance Programs; and IU specialists in school climate and school safety.
- **Questionnaires.** PDE distributed online questionnaires related to the ARP ESSER plan to school leaders, educators (both in-school and out-of-school-time), postsecondary educators and researchers, community organizations, families of disproportionately impacted students, etc., targeted to the most impacted groups. One instrument was geared toward the [K-12 education community](#) and one toward the [postsecondary education community](#). PDE received 211 questionnaires between June 1 and July 8, 2021.
- **Professional Education Organizations.** PDE met with professional education organizations, including the Pennsylvania State Education Association, Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials, Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators, Pennsylvania School Boards Association, Pennsylvania Principals

Association, Pennsylvania Association of Career and Technical Administrators, Philadelphia Federation of Teachers, and American Federation of Teachers-Pennsylvania.

- **Policymakers.** PDE shared ideas and stakeholder feedback with Pennsylvania lawmakers and worked with Pennsylvania’s General Assembly to ensure timely appropriation of ARP ESSER funding.
- **Interviews.** The Department commissioned 22 formal interviews between May 7 and 19, 2021, to ensure that agency guidance reflected the highest priority concerns of diverse stakeholders. Stakeholders included State Board of Education members; district, charter, and IU administrators; local school board members; and representatives of the civil and disability rights community, education associations, and parent and advocacy organizations.
- **Online Public Comment Period.** PDE posted a draft ARP ESSER plan on the PDE website in English and Spanish for any member of the public to provide feedback from July 1-7, 2021 and received 31 comments. PDE sent a [message to school leaders](#) on the day the draft plan was posted for public feedback, and advertised the availability of the draft state plan for public feedback through nine social media posts on its Twitter and Facebook accounts over the course of the seven-day public comment period.

Additionally, PDE has taken into consideration previous input about the impact of the pandemic on teaching and learning that educators, families, advocacy groups and other stakeholders provided to PDE prior to the ARP Act. This includes emails sent to PDE’s designated pandemic-related resource account and the findings of [Remake Learning](#), [KnowledgeWorks](#), and [PDE-led statewide listening sessions](#) from the spring of 2021.<sup>6</sup>

**Table C1. Overview of Stakeholder Groups Engaged.**

Stakeholder Group	Outreach Related to ARP ESSER
Students	PDE staff designed and shared a questionnaire with stakeholder networks. PDE staff encouraged adult stakeholders to convene students to complete the questionnaire as a group and/or to incorporate students’ input in their responses. In one case, a student social justice advocacy group met and submitted a questionnaire response as a group; in others, PDE staff convened focus groups centered on migrant education, homeless students, or English learners, to address the questions as a group. Approximately 10 students participated in focus groups in this way and another two independently submitted questionnaires identifying themselves as students.

<sup>6</sup> Prior to the passage of the American Rescue Plan Act, the Pennsylvania Department of Education began a collaboration with education nonprofit organizations KnowledgeWorks and the Pittsburgh-area-based Remake Learning Network to gather stakeholder input about pandemic-era teaching and learning across Pennsylvania. From March through May 2021, through a statewide questionnaire and a series of 21 role-specific listening sessions, the collaborative engaged nearly 900 stakeholders including caregivers, students, educators, administrators, and out-of-school time providers across 41 counties to capture promising practices for teaching and learning, understand the conditions that exacerbated inequities, and elevate potential actions that could sustain or ignite positive change.

<b>Stakeholder Group</b>	<b>Outreach Related to ARP ESSER</b>
Families and caregivers	A public comment period from July 1 to July 7, 2021, provided an opportunity for any member of the public to give feedback on the draft state ARP ESSER plan, and PDE received 10 comments from families and caregivers during that period, in addition to approximately one dozen earlier questionnaire responses from families of disproportionately impacted student groups. PDE staff also convened focus groups with parents and caregivers of students with disabilities, migrant students, and students experiencing homelessness and used input from prior focus groups and questionnaires that specifically engaged families of students with disabilities.
Civil rights, disability rights, or other educational equity advocacy organizations	PDE primarily engaged with representatives of educational equity advocacy organizations through virtual meetings. PDE reached out to advocacy organizations for feedback as the draft state plan was taking shape, and for general input through a questionnaire. Four questionnaire responses were from respondents who identified as primarily representing an equity or disability rights advocacy organization.
School leaders (non-charter schools)	Fourteen questionnaire responses were from respondents who identified as primarily being a school leader, not of a charter school. This was the primary means of input from school leaders as a group, although school leaders also participated in focus groups that centered on disproportionately impacted student groups. For example, school leaders from schools with high migrant student populations participated in focus groups discussing the highest priority issues facing migrant students and most effective practices to address their needs because of inequities exacerbated by the pandemic.
School leaders (charter schools)	PDE staff conducted focus groups with charter school leaders from across Pennsylvania, and in addition, received three questionnaire responses from individual charter school leaders.
Superintendents and assistant superintendents	PDE shared a questionnaire for input with superintendents and received 18 responses from superintendents or assistant superintendents. Four more provided feedback on the draft plan during the public comment period. Additionally, PDE staff met with Grable Foundation fellows who support superintendents to learn about emerging themes of needs and priorities across this stakeholder group during the pandemic.
School or district administrators	PDE shared a questionnaire for input with school and district administrators and received 40 responses, the most of any stakeholder group.
Special education administrators, educators, or other staff	PDE staff in the Bureau of Special Education reached out to family advocates, educators, community organizations, and others to convene focus groups; additionally, PDE shared a questionnaire with educator networks in special education and received 23 responses.

<b>Stakeholder Group</b>	<b>Outreach Related to ARP ESSER</b>
School teachers, educators, or other in-school education staff	Teachers were represented in focus groups centered on disproportionately impacted student groups, and 22 additionally submitted input on students' greatest needs, schools' priority issues, and promising practices through a questionnaire. PDE staff also met with leaders of the Pennsylvania Teachers Advisory Committee and union representatives for input.
Out-of-school-time educators	Out-of-school-time educators, including afterschool and summer school educators and community organizations, provided input through a questionnaire (four responses), public comment (four responses) and through virtual meetings with PDE staff.
School counselors, psychologists, or social workers	PDE engaged social workers in convening focus groups centered on students experiencing homelessness, migrant students, and children and youth in foster care. PDE received one individual questionnaire response from a school counselor or psychologist and detailed feedback from the Pennsylvania School Counselors Association.
School nurses and health staff	PDE received one response from a school nurse or health staff member providing input on the state plan through a questionnaire.
Librarians (in schools and in communities)	PDE's Office of Commonwealth Libraries provided librarians in disproportionately impacted communities or serving disproportionately impacted youth with a questionnaire to give input on priority issues, greatest needs facing impacted student groups, and promising practices, and received five responses, one from a school librarian and four from community librarians.
Postsecondary faculty, staff, administrators, and educator preparation providers	PDE's Office of Postsecondary and Higher Education engaged postsecondary faculty and staff who are researchers and/or educator preparation providers to learn about needs and effective practices specific to impacted student groups and needs of educators and pre-service educators. PDE received 35 responses to a questionnaire from the postsecondary community. Together with several responses from professional learning providers and the responses of teachers and administrators, this input helped identify issues educators face in schools and ways to address those issues for effective teaching and learning.
Education consultants and researchers	PDE staff reached out to education consultants and researchers from not only postsecondary institutions but also IUs, nonprofit organizations, and others who have expertise in effective practices or needs of impacted student groups. In addition to the postsecondary staff mentioned above, PDE received input from five education consultants and researchers through a questionnaire and one through the public comment period.

**Table C2. Targeted Outreach, Based on Disproportionate Impact of the Pandemic.**

Stakeholder Group	<b>Outreach Related to ARP ESSER</b> <i>(For each respondent category, data reflect stakeholders who responded to the PDE questionnaire providing input into development of the draft state plan who said they were “responding primarily as a stakeholder representing the interests of” this group.)</i>
Children and youth with disabilities	118 stakeholders
English learners	72 stakeholders
Children experiencing homelessness	68 stakeholders
Children and youth in foster care	61 stakeholders
Migrant students	31 stakeholders
Justice-involved youth including incarcerated children	51 stakeholders
LGTBQ+ students	<p>No stakeholders responding to the questionnaire said they were “responding primarily as a stakeholder representing the interests of” this group.</p> <p>However, 52 respondents did choose to identify highest priority needs of this group when given the option to do so.</p>
Other students disproportionately impacted by the pandemic	<p>As part of the questionnaire to targeted stakeholder groups, respondents could identify a student group whose experience they wanted to highlight as being disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Respondents identified the following groups of students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• career and technical education students (2 mentions)</li> <li>• students in Alternative Education for Disruptive Youth settings (2)</li> <li>• students experiencing mental health concerns (2)</li> <li>• students who have suffered trauma (2)</li> <li>• cyber charter students (1)</li> <li>• families of charter students (1)</li> <li>• undocumented students (1)</li> <li>• immigrant students (1)</li> <li>• urban elementary and secondary students (1)</li> <li>• rural students (1)</li> <li>• language minoritized students (1)</li> <li>• dual enrolled (secondary and postsecondary) students (1)</li> </ul>
Educators and future educators impacted by the pandemic	Seventy-eight stakeholders who responded to the questionnaire providing input into the development of a draft state plan said they were “responding primarily as a stakeholder representing the interests of” this group.

Stakeholder Group	<b>Outreach Related to ARP ESSER</b> <i>(For each respondent category, data reflect stakeholders who responded to the PDE questionnaire providing input into development of the draft state plan who said they were “responding primarily as a stakeholder representing the interests of” this group.)</i>
	Stakeholders identified these groups of school staff who have been particularly impacted by the pandemic: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• school principals (2 mentions)</li> <li>• early childhood educators and childcare providers (2)</li> <li>• prospective educators, whose preparation for the field has been adversely affected by the pandemic (1)</li> <li>• professional school counselors (1)</li> <li>• state correctional educators (1)</li> </ul>

Initially, PDE used input received throughout the pandemic to inform development of a draft plan. PDE staff reached out to stakeholders representing the targeted groups listed above, through a questionnaire, presentations, and focus groups, and synthesized that input, and PDE leaders subsequently revised the state plan to address the priority issues and apply the promising practices that surfaced from stakeholders. PDE further revised plans in accordance with the finalization of the state budget and amendments to the Pennsylvania Fiscal Code on June 30, 2021. The public comment period from July 1 to July 7, 2021, provided an opportunity to gather feedback on the draft plan. PDE staff synthesized and incorporated that feedback into the draft submitted to the U.S. Department of Education on July 16, 2021. Input and feedback that could not be incorporated into the state plan continues to be discussed by PDE leaders and considered in ongoing guidance to LEAs and the work of PDE.

**Summary of input received:** Part A cites the highest priority issues, promising practices, and greatest student needs based on stakeholder input. The need for social-emotional learning, mental health supports, and the related need for teachers to receive training in social-emotional learning and trauma-informed instruction were the most frequent themes to emerge across all stakeholder groups providing input and across all student groups concerned.

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 Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (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);**

Pennsylvania's total ESSER I allocation under the CARES Act was \$523.8 million. Of this amount, \$471.4 million was directly allocated to school districts and charter schools based on the same formula used for Title I-A allocations in 2019. [LEA allocations are available on PDE's website](#). PDE reserved \$2.6 million for grant administration. The Pennsylvania General Assembly combined the remaining \$49.8 million in ESSER I funds with \$100 million in federal CARES Act funding to award COVID-19 Disaster Emergency School Health and Safety Grants to school districts, area career and technical education schools, IUs, charter schools, regional charter schools, and cyber charter schools for the 2020-21 school year. More than 770 eligible school entities received a total of \$150 million; funding was distributed using a formula set forth in Act 30 of 2020, a state law authorizing the state to use CARES Act funding for this purpose. School entities were permitted to use the funding for the purchase of cleaning and sanitizing products; training and professional development of staff on sanitation and minimizing the spread of infectious diseases; equipment purchases; modifications of existing areas to support appropriate social distancing of students and staff; the provision of mental health services and supports; educational technology for distance learning; and other health and safety programs, items, or services necessary to address the COVID-19 disaster emergency.

In March 2020, [Pennsylvania received \\$104.4 million in GEER I funding](#). In accordance with the CARES Act, Pennsylvania awarded GEER I funding to LEAs and institutions of higher education (IHEs) within the commonwealth that have been most significantly impacted by the pandemic to support their ability to continue to provide educational services and to support their ongoing functionality. GEER I funding was also granted to other LEAs, IHEs, and education-related entities within Pennsylvania deemed essential to carry out emergency educational services, provide childcare and early childhood education, provide social and emotional support, and protect education-related jobs.

At the direction of Governor Wolf, GEER I funding supported the following programs and initiatives:

- **[Preschool Early Intervention \(EI\) Programs](#)**: Pennsylvania's EI program provides support and services to families with children ages 3–5 with developmental delays and disabilities. Approximately 13,700 children are enrolled in EI classrooms across the commonwealth. PDE awarded \$3 million in subgrants to Preschool Early Intervention programs serving children ages 3–5 for staff training, policy development, personal protective equipment, sanitization, and disinfecting materials and supplies to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in Preschool Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) classrooms. Allocations were calculated based on the number/percentage of children served in ECSE classroom settings. Six school districts, 26 IUs, and a non-profit provider received grants. An additional \$5 million in GEER I grant funding was used to support Preschool EI programs with providing compensatory education services to eligible



young children who regressed or did not make meaningful progress because of their inability to access IEP services during the pandemic. Six school districts, 26 IUs, and a non-profit provider received grants. Grantees used the funding for contracted services, technology resources, assistive devices, personal protective equipment (PPE) to support in-home services, learning platforms, and other appropriate resources.

- **Emergency Continuity of Education Equity Grants:** In April 2020, 477 LEAs identified critical gaps in designing and deploying COVID-19–related continuity of education and requested nearly \$22 million in support from PDE. Due to limited state funding, PDE was able to distribute \$5.05 million through 96 awards, with priority being given to schools with the highest percentages of students unable to participate in continuity of education. Therefore, PDE used \$13.5 million of GEER I funding to award grants to an additional 271 LEAs that did not receive funding in April 2020 and continued to be significantly impacted by the pandemic. Approximately 179,000 students benefitted from these grants. LEAs used the funding to purchase computer equipment, such as laptops, tablets, and internet hot spots and to provide instructional materials, such as paper lessons and coursework.
- **Equity Grants for Career and Technical Education:** PDE awarded \$10.5 million in GEER I equity grants to 78 area CTCs, which includes 114 secondary schools, for effective continuity of education and industry credentialing for students enrolled in CTCs negatively impacted by COVID-19. Grants were calculated based on the Perkins secondary allocation formula and included consideration for buildings with 20 or more ELs. CTCs used this funding to offer summer programs, expanded career and technical education programming (including delivering programs online and staggering hands-on training for in-person instruction), and industry credential assessments, as well as to implement their Health and Safety Plans during the 2020–21 school year.
- **Technical Assistance and Support for A-TSI Schools:** PDE awarded nearly \$2 million in GEER I funds to the state’s 29 IUs to support schools that exhibit high-level student need based on poverty or significant disparities in student subgroup performance. Interdisciplinary teams of general and special education personnel provided on-site technical assistance and support to LEAs with schools designated for A-TSI based on the cycle of improvement and facilitated networked learning communities to foster collaborative learning and problem-solving across those LEAs and schools.
- **Continuity of Education Equity Grants for A-TSI Designated Schools:** In August 2020, PDE made available approximately \$17 million to help 193 LEAs improve education services to approximately 180,000 students in schools designated for A-TSI under ESSA. Schools used the funding to increase student access to effective remote instruction and accelerate learning for student groups most severely impacted by COVID-19 (i.e., students with disabilities, ELs, students of color, students who are economically disadvantaged). Grants were calculated based on elements of the

federal Title I-A formula, including the number of economically disadvantaged students, and other school enrollment data.

- **Compensatory Education Services for Students with Disabilities:** In the fall of 2020, PDE distributed \$15 million to 678 school districts and charter schools for remote services to students with complex needs who had the greatest difficulty accessing FAPE during COVID-19 mitigation efforts. The funding included \$10 million from GEER I and \$5 million from PDE's federal IDEA funding. Funds provided enhanced synchronous instruction to bolster remote services and supports for students with complex needs and provide services and supports to students with disabilities who experienced a loss in skills and behavior and/or a lack of progress due to mandatory school closures in the spring of 2020. LEAs used funds for contracted services, technology resources, assistive devices, personal protective equipment to support in-home services, learning platforms, and other appropriate resources. Grantees were also required to participate in mandatory teacher professional development on providing remote services to students with disabilities. Funds were not permitted to be used to support asynchronous services for students with disabilities.
- **Emergency Grants for Adult Basic Education:** PDE awarded \$500,000 of GEER I funding to 40 adult education providers to assist with implementing public health and safety plans and continuing operations through September 30, 2021. Each provider received a minimum award of \$2,000 plus a corresponding percentage of the remaining \$420,000. Providers were required to provide a portion of the GEER I funds to their subgrantees. Providers used the funding to purchase PPE, hand sanitizer and cleaning products/services, equipment and technology for virtual instruction, installation of barriers or other protective devices in building structures, and digital health applications to assist with contact tracing and monitoring of students.
- **Equity Grants for Postsecondary Institutions:** Through PDE's Office of Postsecondary and Higher Education, 179 Title IV postsecondary institutions received a total of \$24.3 million in GEER I funding to implement their Health and Safety Plans and resume instruction for the 2020–21 school year. Eligible expenses included, but were not limited to, safety and protective equipment, cleaning products, testing measures, equipment or technology for remote learning, installation of barriers or other protective devices in building structures, and digital health applications to monitor student symptoms. The list of [grant recipients](#) and respective allocations is available on the PDE website. Allocations were based on the shares of total enrollments by each postsecondary sector and the number of socio-economically disadvantaged students served by the institutions (i.e., Pell-eligible students).
- **Emergency Support for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs):** Pennsylvania has two HBCUs: Lincoln University of Pennsylvania and Cheyney University of Pennsylvania. Both universities are based in Chester County, one of the areas of the state with highest number of COVID-19 cases. These institutions received a total of \$3 million in GEER I funding to implement their health and safety plans for the 2020–21 school year. Cheyney received \$750,000; Lincoln received

\$2.25 million. Eligible expenses include, but are not limited to, securing safety and protective equipment, cleaning products, testing measures, equipment or technology for remote learning, installation of barriers or other protective devices in building structures, and digital health applications to monitor student symptoms.

- **Connectivity and Remote Learning:** \$15 million was used to resource broadband, mobile hot spots, and other platforms to increase equitable access to remote learning for students of all ages. Building on efforts implemented by PDE during the 2019–20 school year, the commonwealth employed a multi-pronged approach that expanded access through school and state library networks and other partnerships, including the Pennsylvania Technical Training and Assistance Network (PaTTAN) and the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) regional affiliates in the state. Funding was distributed as follows:
  1. \$1.4 million to expand the inventory of Wi-Fi hot spots and lendable technology through public libraries, increase connectivity to libraries, provide technology needed for library staff functioning, and enhance knowledge of what it takes to be a community anchor institution using a broadband toolkit;
  2. \$100,000 to strengthen and expand the state’s existing 24/7 online homework help through the POWER Library Chat with a Librarian service;
  3. \$500,000 to create and deploy Open Educational Resources and other zero-cost materials for postsecondary students;
  4. \$8.5 million to implement a statewide datacasting initiative with PBS;
  5. \$3 million to distribute devices to be used in conjunction with datacasting technology for households without a connection to the internet (e.g., Raspberry Pi devices, data casting antenna, laptops); and
  6. \$1.5 million to distribute accessible/assistive technology, including but not limited to software, tablets, tablet mounts, screens, smart pens, hotspots, and devices for K-12 students with exceptionalities in collaboration with the PaTTAN system.

GEER I funding was awarded by May 15, 2020. Grantees have until September 30, 2022, to expend the funds.

In December 2021, Pennsylvania received \$2.22 billion in ESSER II funds. Due to significant increases in the number of COVID-19 cases statewide and the subsequent shift to remote learning for nearly every LEA in the state, PDE allocated the full \$2.22 billion in emergency relief to LEAs. No funding was reserved or set-aside for the SEA. Pursuant to Sec. 313 of the CRRSA Act, ESSER II funding was allocated to 667 school districts and charter schools based on their proportionate share of the Title I-A (FY 2020) formula.

Uses of ESSER I and II funding have varied widely statewide, depending on the needs of each LEA's respective education community. At the beginning of the pandemic, LEAs primarily used funding to implement their Health and Safety Plans and to prepare for remote learning in the 2020–21 school year. Expenses included professional development for educators, technology and connectivity, sanitization and cleaning supplies, expanded social-emotional supports, and more. As the 2020–21 school year progressed, many LEAs' funding priorities shifted towards taking steps to reopen school facilities for in-person instruction and assessing the individualized academic impacts of lost instructional time.

Since ESSER I and ESSER II were both one-time emergency funds, LEAs were encouraged to consider how CARES Act funding might interact with other federal funding and the role of enhanced [funding flexibilities](#) to ensure strategic and sustainable use. PDE also urged recipients to keep equity at the forefront of planning by prioritizing investments for vulnerable students and families, including those living in the deepest poverty, students with disabilities, ELs, migrant students, students experiencing homelessness, and children in foster care.

- 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.**

All ESSER I and ESSER II funding has been made available to eligible LEAs. As of June 23, 2021, \$518.9M of ESSER I funds and \$879.9M of ESSER II funds have been obligated but not expended by the SEA or LEAs. PDE tracks LEA obligations through the SAP Accounting System and the PDE eGrants system.

- 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>7</sup>**

Pennsylvania has used and will continue to use a variety of funding sources to support the safe return to and continuity of in-person instruction and to assist schools with meeting the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of students and staff.

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<sup>7</sup> The needs of students experiencing homelessness must be addressed (along with the other groups disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic) using 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.

- In June 2021, DHS, in collaboration with PDE, IUs, and local schools, began distributing [P-EBT](#) federally funded benefits to the families of nearly 1 million Pennsylvania children who have attended school remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic and who otherwise would have had access to free-and-reduced-price meals during the 2020–21 school year. Originally created through the Families First Coronavirus Response Act to help families feed their children during the spring of 2020 when schools initially closed, the P-EBT program was re-authorized to cover the entire 2020–21 school year. P-EBT helps families cover the cost of breakfasts and lunches their children would have been eligible to receive for free or at reduced price through the National School Lunch Program. More than \$1 billion in P-EBT benefits will be distributed to eligible families in Pennsylvania.
- Following the Food and Drug Administration and CDC authorization of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine for emergency use in March, Pennsylvania used the commonwealth’s initial dose allocations for PK-12 teachers and other school staff. Federal funding provided to DOH and PEMA was used to set up and staff vaccination sites statewide for educators.
- Students experiencing homelessness tend to be chronically absent from school, to be less engaged, and to experience decreased social-emotional well-being due to housing instability. When COVID-19 closed schools in Spring 2020, the immediate elimination of social connections, services, meal programs, extracurricular activities, and in-person engagement exponentially impacted students experiencing homelessness, who were already vulnerable academically, socially, and emotionally. In addition, the shift to online and remote learning made it more difficult for educators to identify students in need and offer supports. PDE will use the \$32 million it receives under ARP ESSER – Homeless Children and Youth to assist the state’s regional Education for Homeless Children and Youths offices and other entities with identifying homeless children and youth, providing wraparound services in light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and providing assistance to enable homeless children and youth to attend school and participate fully in school activities, including in-person instruction during the school year as well as in summer enrichment and extended learning programs.
- During the 2021–22 school year, DOH will use the CDC ELC Reopening Schools Grant funding to implement a free, voluntary COVID-19 testing program to all K-12 schools in the commonwealth, apart from schools in Philadelphia County. The Philadelphia Department of Public Health received its own federal funding to implement a similar testing program. DOH is planning to offer pooled testing, individual diagnostic PCR testing, and rapid antigen testing at no cost to schools or families for the 2021–22 school year. DOH staff will be available to assist with the logistics, planning, and operations of this testing program, including a point of contact at each IU to assist with outreach and data collection for schools in their respective catchment areas.

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

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

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

The 2021–22 enacted Pennsylvania state budget fully allocated the three required SEA reserves under section 2001(f)(1), 2001(f)(2), and 2001(f)(3) of the ARP Act as subgrants to school districts, charter schools, and cyber charter schools eligible to receive Title I-A funding. Grant funds received under section 2001 of the ARP Act will be used by the school districts, charter schools, and cyber charter schools to implement evidence-based interventions to address learning loss and provide summer enrichment and comprehensive after-school programs in response to the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of students, particularly subgroups of students disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, in accordance with section 2001 of the ARP Act.

As it does with administration of school improvement plans and related grant programs, PDE plans to provide all LEAs with a list of evidence-based interventions through the PDE [Evidence Resource Center](#) (ERC)—a customized website designed by Pennsylvania educators and some of the nation's foremost education scholars. The ERC identifies strategies backed by research and allows educators to filter these strategies based on Federal evidence tiers, school type or grade level, specific student groups, and other factors. The LEAs receiving shares of the SEA reserve for learning loss, summer learning and enrichment, and after-school programs will be required to utilize subgrant funds to implement evidence-based interventions either chosen from the ERC or from another reputable source (e.g., What Works Clearinghouse).

PDE will provide technical assistance to support implementation and will monitor LEA progress in implementation efforts on an ongoing basis. Through the state system of support with Pennsylvania's 29 IUs, guidance and technical support will be provided to



LEAs toward the development of an Accelerated Learning Plan and identification and sharing of best practices. An example framework developed by PDE to support educators, schools, and LEAs is available on the [Accelerated Learning website](#), which provides a summary of PDE's critical components for consideration when addressing student learning and social and emotional gaps.

Based on PDE's review of data, community input, and research on evidence-based practices to address lost instructional time and close performance gaps, LEAs will be able to use their ARP ESSER funds under 2001(f)(1) in the following areas:

- **Social, emotional, and mental health supports:** Funds targeted for social and emotional wellness will provide fiscal support for either the hiring or contracting of school mental health staff or the implementation of programs targeted at mitigating social, emotional, and mental health impacts of COVID-19. School mental health staff (including counselors, social workers, psychologists, and other mental health professionals) have the necessary skills to build capacity within the school environment to meet the social, emotional, and mental health needs of students to support academic growth and prepare students to be career-ready adults. Allowable program expenses will include evidence-based programs that address building equitable, trauma-informed schools, enhancing the social-emotional skills of students, increasing resiliency of staff and students, and establishing and maintaining positive school learning environments.
- **Professional development and technical assistance to educators, school support staff, school leaders and school health professionals to address the social, emotional, and mental health needs of students:** Creating a safe and supportive environment for all students is the responsibility of all educators and school staff, and staff members need support in learning about and implementing trauma-informed approaches.
- **Reading support and improvement for students:** To mitigate student skill deficits in reading, teachers need to be equipped to facilitate high-quality reading instruction grounded in the science of reading and intervention services. Funds targeted for reading support will assist LEAs in providing professional development for selected teachers in foundational skills and instructional interventions based on the science of reading and in selecting LEA personnel to serve as reading coaches to support teachers as they deliver high-quality reading instruction. Professional learning will be targeted for kindergarten, first, second, third, and fourth grade teachers and other personnel, including reading specialists, special education teachers, speech/language pathologists, and EL instructors.

PDE will evaluate the impact of each of these interventions, with IUs collecting data to inform the evaluation. Specifically, PDE will collect the following data to evaluate the impact on the above listed interventions:

- **Social, emotional, and mental health supports:** Qualitative data, including stakeholder feedback, will assist school entities in determining next steps, measuring

stakeholder buy-in, and determining the success of collaborative work. Changes to LEA policy/procedures will also be examined as a qualitative data source. Quantitative metrics will include those that indicate changes to the learning environment and development of positive, equitable school systems, including data on number of staff dedicated to social-emotional learning (SEL) and mental health, results of school climate surveys, hours of mental health services provided, and percent of students receiving each tier of support. Schoolwide data on direct measures of student mental health, such as students in need of supports and chronic absenteeism rates, will also be collected.

- **Professional development of staff on social-emotional and mental health of students:** Staff feedback surveys in response to professional learning activities, as well as school climate surveys, will provide quantitative data, while qualitative data may be noted during teacher observations and other interactions where staff are observed implementing strategies they have learned.
- **Reading support and improvement for students:** Qualitative data will include observations of impact of professional learning and technical assistance on teacher practice and student performance. Quantitative data may include number of schools participating and students enrolled in the program, results of academic assessments, and usage reports.

**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**

As the LEAs select learning programs and/or other evidence-based interventions, PDE will provide guidance on best practices to LEAs to assist in the selection of students who have been most significantly impacted by COVID mitigation efforts. LEAs will also engage with local stakeholders (including parents/caregivers and students) to determine those students in greatest need of supplemental support and programs. In addition, LEAs will be required to report on what groups of students are to be served by their programs and interventions and rate the effectiveness of those initiatives in addressing student academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. Please see the response to A.4 for additional information on the data sources to be used to determine student need.

**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.**

Within the LEA-specific Accelerated Learning Plan, LEAs will be required to identify students who were most impacted during the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years based on lack of in-person instruction and difficulty engaging in remote learning. As part of the targeted state programs supported under 2001(f)(1), LEAs will determine how to support these students to ensure they feel physically and emotionally safe to return to in-person



instruction, address any social-emotional needs, and provide needed additional reading support through a variety of interventions, both in the classroom, and in afterschool and summer programs.

**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;**

PDE will use the funds under section 2001(f)(2) (1 percent of the state’s total allocation of ARP ESSER funds) to establish Summer Enrichment formula grants to LEAs. These grants will support evidence-based interventions to address learning loss and provide summer enrichment, such as academic learning academies and 1:1 tutoring, as well as activities that support re-socialization and the development of social-emotional skills and growth mindsets in students. LEAs will be required to target funds to student groups disproportionately impacted by the disruptions of COVID-19 at that LEA (e.g., homeless students, foster care students, migratory students, ELs, students with disabilities). PDE will evaluate the impact of each of these interventions, with IUs collecting data to inform the evaluation. Data collection will include number of students served and satisfaction of students and families.

- 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**

As the LEAs select summer learning programs and/or other evidence-based interventions, PDE will provide guidance on best practices to LEAs to assist in the selection of students that have been most significantly impacted by COVID mitigation efforts. LEAs will also engage with local stakeholders (including parents/caregivers and students) to determine those students in greatest need of these summer supplemental programs. In addition, LEAs will be required to report on which groups of students are to be served in their summer learning programs and interventions and rate the effectiveness of their initiatives in addressing student academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. Please see the response to A.4 for additional information on the data sources to be used to determine student need.

- 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.**

Within the LEA-specific Accelerated Learning Plan, LEAs will be required to identify students who were most impacted during the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years based on lack of in-person instruction and difficulty engaging in remote learning. LEAs will also determine how to use their supplemental summer learning programs and/or other evidence-based interventions to support this group of students.

**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;**

PDE will use the funds under section 2001(f)(3) (1 percent of the state’s total allocation of ARP ESSER funds) to establish Comprehensive Afterschool formula grants to LEAs. These grants will support evidence-based interventions to address learning loss and provide afterschool or extended day enrichment programs and interventions, such as academic enrichment collaborative sessions, small group extended learning, and 1:1 tutoring, as well as activities that support re-socialization and the development of social-emotional skills and growth mindsets in students. LEAs will be required to target funds to student groups disproportionately impacted by the disruptions of COVID-19 at that LEA (e.g., homeless students, foster care students, migratory students, ELs, students with disabilities, students who lack connectivity). PDE will evaluate the impact of each of these interventions, with IUs collecting data to inform the evaluation. Data collection will include number of students served and satisfaction of students and families.

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

As the LEAs select afterschool and extended day programs, PDE will provide guidance on best practices to LEAs to assist in the selection of students that have been most significantly impacted by COVID-19 mitigation efforts. LEAs will also engage with local stakeholders (including parents/caregivers and students) to determine those students in greatest need of these supplemental programs. In addition, LEAs will be required to report on what groups of students are to be served in their afterschool and extended day programs and interventions and rate the effectiveness of their initiatives in addressing student academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs.

- 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.**

Within the LEA-specific Accelerated Learning Plan, LEAs will be required to identify students who were most impacted during the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years based on lack of in-person instruction and difficulty engaging in remote learning. LEAs will also determine how to use their supplemental after school and extended day activities to support this group of students.

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.**

Pennsylvania is utilizing ARP ESSER SEA reserve funds for emergency needs under ARP section 2001(f)(4) to provide COVID-19 relief to other educational entities not included in the Title I-A distribution. Funds will be used to ensure the safe return to in-person instruction, meet students’ academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs, and address opportunity gaps that existed before—and were exacerbated by—the pandemic. The following educational entities will be supported with funding:

- \$43.5 million to area career and technology education centers;
- \$15 million to approved private schools, the chartered schools for the education of deaf or the blind, and private residential rehabilitative institutions;
- \$43.5 million to IUs to provide technical support and training to school entities;
- \$14 million to schools with an ESSA designation of A-TSI; and
- \$19.9 million to educational programs for neglected, delinquent, and at-risk youth.

## **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:**

As PDE advised the USDE on May 13, 2021, PDE requires all eligible LEAs to submit completed plans for the use of ARP ESSER funds through the state's [eGrants system](#); this process ensures consistency in administration across the three ESSER funds. Plans must be tailored to the specific needs faced by students and schools within the LEA, must reflect the perspectives of diverse stakeholders, and must address communities and student groups most impacted by the pandemic. The subrecipient application includes the following sections:

- Assessing Impacts and Needs;
- Engaging Stakeholders in Plan Development;
- Using ARP ESSER Funds to Plan for Safe, In-Person Instruction;
- Proposed Budget and Timeline;
- Monitoring and Measuring Progress; and
- ARP ESSER Fund Assurances.

PDE's [Division of Federal Programs staff](#) supports the application process by providing technical assistance to LEAs, reviewing grant applications, and overseeing grant implementation during the period of fund allowability.

An LEA's plan must be publicly available on its website, written in a language that parents/caregivers can understand, and provided in an alternate format upon request by a parent/caregiver who is an individual with a disability.

Eligible school districts and charter schools are encouraged to apply for ARP ESSER funds by September 1, 2021. Notably, LEAs must submit a Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan (Health and Safety Plan) to PDE by July 30, 2021, regardless of when the LEA submits its ARP ESSER application.

- 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;**

In question (8)(c) of the LEA ARP ESSER application, LEAs must describe plans for using ARP ESSER funds to support prevention and mitigation policies, in line with the most up-to-date guidance from the CDC.

In addition, the LEA ARP ESSER application assurances include the following:

- The LEA’s Health and Safety Plan includes (1) how the LEA will, to the greatest extent practicable, support prevention and mitigation policies in line with the most up-to-date guidance from the CDC for the reopening and operation of school facilities to effectively maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other staff; (2) how the LEA will ensure continuity of services, including but not limited to services to address the students’ academic needs, and students’ and staff members’ social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services; (3) how the LEA will maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other staff and the extent to which it has adopted policies, and a description of any such policy on each of the following safety recommendations established by the CDC: (a) universal and correct wearing of masks; (b) modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing (e.g., use of cohorts/podding); (c) handwashing and respiratory etiquette; (d) cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation; (e) contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State and local health departments; (f) diagnostic and screening testing; (g) efforts to provide vaccinations to school communities; (h) appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies; and (i) coordination with state and local health officials.
- The LEA will review its Health and Safety Plan at least every six months during the duration of the ARP ESSER grant period and make revisions as appropriate. When determining whether revisions are necessary, the LEA will take into consideration significant changes to CDC guidance on reopening schools and will seek public input and take public input into account.
- The LEA’s Health and Safety Plan will be made publicly available on the LEA website and must be written in a language that parents/caregivers can understand or be orally translated for parents/caregivers and must be provided in alternate format upon request by a parent/caregiver who is an individual with a disability.
- The LEA will provide to PDE: (1) the URL(s) where the public can readily find data on school operating status; and (2) the URL(s) for the LEA websites where the public can find the LEA’s Health and Safety plan as required under section 2001(i) of the ARP Act; and the LEA Plan for the Use of ARP ESSER Funds.

To support LEAs in this work, PDE issued health and safety guidance for the 2021-22 school year on June 4, 2021. This guidance, updated following issuance of new CDC guidance issued in July 2021, includes a crosswalk to key CDC resources, answers to frequently asked questions, and a sample template that allows LEAs to update local health and safety plans from the 2020-21 school year to align with CDC guidance and the ARP Act’s Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan requirements.

**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;**

PDE requires LEAs to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment, reflective of stakeholder engagement, in planning for the use of ARP ESSER funds, beginning with the minimum 20 percent reservation as required by section 2001(e)(1) of the ARP Act.

More specifically, LEAs must outline how funds reserved under section 2001(e)(1) will help address the academic impact of lost instructional time through the implementation of evidence-based interventions, such as tiered support systems, summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs, or extended school year programs. LEA plans must include:

- A description of the evidence-based interventions (e.g., providing intensive or high-dosage tutoring, accelerating learning) the LEA has selected, and how the LEA will evaluate the impact of those interventions on an ongoing basis to determine effectiveness;
- How the evidence-based interventions will specifically address the needs of student groups most disproportionately impacted; and
- The extent to which the LEA will use funds it reserves to identify, engage, and support (1) students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years; and (2) students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures.

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

Based on the needs assessment described above, PDE requires LEAs to outline how remaining ARP ESSER funds will be used to address the following, as applicable:

- **Continuity of Services:** How the LEA will use ARP ESSER funds to sustain services to address students' academic needs; students' and staff social, emotional, and mental health needs; and student nutrition and food services.
- **Access to Instruction:** How the LEA will use ARP ESSER funds to support the goals of increasing opportunity to learn and equity in instructional delivery. LEAs are directed to consider regular attendance/chronic absenteeism data from the 2020-21 school year, including data disaggregated by student groups, in developing their response.
- **Mitigation Strategies:** How the LEA will use ARP ESSER funds to support prevention and mitigation policies in line with the most up-to-date guidance from the CDC for the reopening and operation of school facilities and transportation services to effectively maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other staff.



- **Facilities Improvements:** How the LEA will use ARP ESSER funds to repair and improve school facilities to reduce risk of virus transmission, address environmental health hazards, and/or improve ventilation.

In addition, in its [Local Education Agency Guidebook](#), PDE provides LEAs with three pages of suggested areas for expenditure of ARP ESSER funds, under the categories of safe, in-person schooling and continuity of services; facilities and grounds upgrades; social-emotional learning, trauma-sensitive schools, and health and wellness; staff recruitment, support, and retention; academic recovery and acceleration; and family and community partnerships.

PDE continues to update information and guidance to assist LEAs in appropriate use of ARP ESSER funds. Webinars, networking meetings, individual technical support, and regularly posted FAQs are some of the methods used to support LEAs.

To support implementation of learning loss (both academic and social and emotional) plans under both sections 2001(e)(1) and (2), IUs will collaborate with LEAs in their assigned region to develop detailed plans for instructional delivery grounded in evidence; facilitate effective progress monitoring routines; convene networked learning communities quarterly to share promising practices and collectively problem-solve problems of practice; and assist in collecting data from LEAs for periodic reports to PDE.

In addition, PDE, IUs and PaTTAN have partnered in the development of [Accelerated Learning through an Integrated System of Supports](#), a systematic process and technical support bank for school communities to utilize as they make key decisions for the start of the new year. PDE will continue to build on these resources and provide networking sessions to support LEAs in the implementation phase of their plans during the 2021-22 school year.

- 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.**

Consultation of rigorous evidence is crucial to ensuring that ARP ESSER funds address the educational and other harms of the pandemic and related crises of the past year. In its initial round of ARP ESSER guidance to LEAs, PDE instructed subrecipients to evaluate prospective interventions against the state's online [Evidence Resource Center \(ERC\)](#) a customized website designed by Pennsylvania educators and some of the nation's foremost education scholars. The ERC identifies strategies backed by research and allows educators to filter these strategies based on Federal evidence tiers, school type or grade level, specific student groups, and other factors. Schools operating under Federal



accountability designations, [now extended through 2022](#), must assure that ARP ESSER plans reflect consultation of the ERC.

In addition, Pennsylvania's enacted fiscal year 2021-22 budget allocates the three required SEA reserves under 2001(f)(1), 2001(f)(2), and 2001(f)(3) of the ARP Act as subgrants that may be used by LEAs to implement evidence-based interventions to address learning loss, provide summer learning and enrichment, and implement comprehensive after-school programs in response to the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of students, particularly student groups disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Each LEA receiving a share of the SEA reserve for learning loss, summer learning and enrichment, or after-school programs will be required to utilize subgrant funds to implement evidence-based interventions, either chosen from the PDE ERC or from another reputable source (e.g., What Works Clearinghouse). The LEA also must submit to PDE a three-part plan that includes a description of each program and activity to be offered, the benefits for each program and activity, how the program or activity will provide equitable supports for all students, and a budget for each program and activity. Through both interim and final reporting, PDE will collect data on funding uses and outcomes.

Finally, to ensure LEAs implement interventions focused on the social, emotional, and mental health needs of students, particularly those disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, LEAs must use their respective shares of the five percent SEA reserve for learning loss as follows: at least 30 percent to address social, emotional, and mental health needs of students; at least 10 percent to provide professional development and technical assistance to educators, school support staff including school counselors and other pupil services support staff, school leaders, and school health professionals; and at least eight percent to address remediation and improvement in reading for students.

- 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.**

PDE requires LEAs to detail stakeholder engagement efforts in the course of plan development. Specifically, PDE’s subrecipient application asks LEAs to provide information on how stakeholders will be engaged in planning for the use of ARP ESSER funds, how stakeholder input will be utilized, and how the LEA will make its LEA Plan for the Use of ARP ESSER Funds transparent to the public—all critical components in developing, implementing, and adjusting plans based on the differential impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Specifically, LEAs are required to provide the following information:

- **Stakeholder Engagement:** How the LEA, in planning for the use of ARP ESSER funds, has engaged or will engage in meaningful consultation with stakeholders, including each of the groups identified above.
- **Use of Stakeholder Input:** How the LEA has taken or will take stakeholder and public input into account in the development of the LEA Plan for the Use of ARP ESSER Funds.
- **Public Access to LEA Plan for the Use of ARP ESSER Funds:** The process for development, approval, and making public the LEA Plan for the Use of ARP ESSER Funds. LEAs have been informed that the LEA Plan must be made publicly available on the LEA website, must be written in a language that parents/caregivers can understand, and must be provided in alternate format upon request by a parent/caregiver who is an individual with a disability.

To support LEAs in this work, PDE commissioned its own stakeholder engagement activities at the state level, resulting in a [Local Education Agency Guidebook](#) that outlines best practices for authentic and equitable consultation with stakeholders and specific suggestions for how to manage these efforts in an era of social distancing as certain mitigation efforts continue.

**3. Supporting and Monitoring LEAs. Describe how the SEA will support and monitor its LEAs in using ARP ESSER funds. The description must include:**

In the fourth section of the LEA ARP ESSER application, LEAs must describe efforts to build local capacity to ensure high-quality data collection and reporting to safeguard funds for their intended purposes. Specifically, LEAs must describe their data collection and analysis plan, including their plan to disaggregate data, for the following measures:

- Student learning, including the academic impact of lost instructional time during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Opportunity to learn measures (e.g., student engagement; access to technology, including educator access to professional development on the effective use of technology; and results from student, family, and/or educator surveys);
- Jobs created and retained (by number of full-time equivalents [FTEs] and position type); and
- Participation in programs funded by ARP ESSER resources (e.g., summer and afterschool programs).

PDE will utilize these responses to determine which LEAs need additional supports to meet reporting requirements of ARP ESSER.

**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;**

As outlined above, PDE supports implementation of evidence-based interventions through its ERC and its Statewide System of District and School Improvement which partners with any LEA in which one or more schools is designated for Federal accountability under the Every Student Succeeds Act. Further, Appendix 1 of PDE's ARP ESSER Guidebook includes additional sources for evidence-based reviews, including the What Works Clearinghouse, Evidence for ESSA, and other health- and safety-focused review resources.

PDE will monitor the implementation of evidence-based interventions through risk and cyclical-based program monitoring as described in Section G.2. PDE will evaluate the impact of each intervention, and LEAs will need to indicate which of the four evidence-based tiers their selected intervention meets, as well as provide evidence of implementing the intervention effectively.

PDE will coordinate efforts with LEAs and their respective Student Information System (SIS) vendors to ensure the necessary collection of data and to allow seamless reporting. PDE will work with SIS and other LEA system vendors to ensure they understand reporting requirements necessary to upgrade systems to meet LEA needs. ARP ESSER monitoring and reporting topics will be incorporated into monthly Data Quality Network (DQN) meetings, and sessions will be included in the 2022 through 2024 Annual PDE Data Summit (as well as other opportunities to assist LEAs in meeting all ARP ESSER requirements).

PDE will collect an array of administrative, program evaluation data, and regional reports via IUs to understand the impact of interventions. Data may include:

- Stakeholder feedback, including satisfaction surveys of students, families, and staff;
- District data including changes to LEA policy/procedures and number of schools participating in each intervention;
- School data including results of school climate surveys and changes to the learning environment;
- Staffing data including number of staff dedicated to SEL and mental health, teacher vacancies, educator diversity, and observations of teacher practice;
- Program implementation data, such as program operations (i.e., days, weeks, hours of operation/services provided); activities offered; events held; trainings and professional learning opportunities for staff; guidance issued; curriculum used and content areas addressed; service delivery descriptions; provision of or access to technology and other resources; and usage reports;
- Student data related to number of students served, program attendance; demographics; need; completion of activities; outcomes such as needs-service alignment; school attendance (attendance rate and/or chronic absenteeism); credit recovery; and percent of students receiving each tier of support; and
- Effectiveness data including effectiveness of interventions in addressing student academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs; observations of student performance; and results of academic assessments.

**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**

**Data Analytics:** To assist LEAs in gaining early and important insights into the impact of COVID-19 on student learning, PDE is partnering with its vendor, Standards Aligned System – Education Value-Added Assessment System, to implement a system through which LEAs can voluntarily submit local assessment data and receive analytics similar to traditional Pennsylvania growth reports normed to Pennsylvania performance levels. Once LEA data are submitted, PDE and local IUs will provide data tools and comprehensive support to assist LEAs in:

- Increasing understanding of the impacts of COVID-19 in LEAs and schools;
- Assessing current learning trends among students;
- Evaluating whether different student groups experienced different learning outcomes during school interruptions; and

- Identifying the amount of learning needed to get students back on track to their pre-pandemic expected achievement levels.

**Future Ready Comprehensive Planning and School Improvement:** Title 22, [Chapter 4](#) of the Pennsylvania Code specifies planning requirements for LEAs. As a component of each LEA’s Comprehensive Plan, LEAs are to conduct a thorough needs assessment on student achievement, growth, and student programs. The state’s [FRCPP](#) provides a consistent planning framework and collection tool for all LEAs. This platform is grounded in an outcomes-based approach focused on student achievement and encourages schools and districts to more effectively plan and lead school improvement practices. The core concepts are based on a simplified logic model, one that any LEA or school can effectively use for developing cohesive long-term goals and action plans, monitoring yearly progress, and providing transparency in communication with school personnel, state officials, parents and caregivers, and community members. Schools designated for support for accountability purposes under ESSA also are provided technical assistance and guidance as they develop their school improvement plans in the FRCPP.

**State System of Support with Pennsylvania IUs:** PDE will contract with the 29 IUs to provide professional learning, technical assistance, and supports to school leaders in their assigned region to develop a detailed plan for instructional delivery that is grounded in evidence and informed by a comprehensive assessment of local needs, resources, and current health data; support LEAs in implementing effective progress monitoring routines; convene LEAs as a networked learning community quarterly to share promising practices and collectively problem-solve problems of practice; and assist in collecting anecdotal data from LEAs for periodic reports to PDE.

**Guidebook:** PDE’s [Local Education Agency Guidebook](#) includes specific guidance on centering equity in LEA plans to address learning loss and explains the state’s rationale for focusing such efforts on acceleration rather than remediation. Increasing opportunity and access to programs that address learning loss and providing accelerated learning in an equitable way will enable schools to meet the needs of students disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

**Monitoring:** PDE will monitor the implementation of evidence-based interventions through risk and cyclical based program monitoring as described in Section G.2.

- 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.**

In applying for ARP ESSER funds, LEAs are required to outline specific plans for serving student groups that have experienced disproportionate impacts from the pandemic. LEA responses, alongside information collected through the state's administrative data system, will inform the agency's efforts to deploy targeted supports through IUs, Pennsylvania's Statewide System of District and School Improvement, and technical assistance partners. In addition, early evidence suggests that social and emotional factors are a key area of risk for students who missed substantial amounts of instruction over the past two school years, students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction during statewide and local school closures, and students at risk of dropping out of school. Accordingly, Pennsylvania is investing a substantial portion of its state reservation to expanding social-emotional learning supports and resources in schools.

To ensure LEAs implement interventions focused on the social, emotional, and mental health needs of students, particularly students disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, LEAs must use their respective shares of the five percent SEA reserve for learning loss as follows: at least 30 percent to address social, emotional, and mental health needs of students; at least 10 percent to provide professional development and technical assistance to educators, school support staff, school leaders, and school health professionals to address the social, emotional, and mental health needs of students; and at least eight percent to address remediation and improvement in reading for students.

Allowable expenses will include evidence-based programs that address building equitable, trauma-informed schools; enhancing the social-emotional skills of students; increasing resiliency of staff and students; and establishing and maintaining positive school learning environments. In addition to program development and implementation, funding may also be used to hire additional personnel and provide professional development and technical assistance to existing staff to address the social, emotional, and mental health needs of students. Reserve funds targeted for reading support will assist LEAs in providing professional development for selected teachers in foundational skills and instructional interventions and selecting district personnel to serve as reading coaches to support teachers in delivering high-quality reading instruction. These resources will be prioritized at the pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, first, second, third, and fourth grade levels as well as reading specialists, special education teachers, speech/language pathologists, and EL instructors.

These plans build on lessons learned from the 2020-21 school year, when PDE regularly provided technical assistance and guidance for LEAs in reflecting on their successes and challenges in providing instruction while managing the COVID-19 pandemic through the [Roadmap for Educational Leaders](#). Components and resources of this roadmap include establishing a comprehensive stakeholder group to establish thorough plans based on current needs and conditions, including instructional delivery models, social and emotional wellness, effective instruction, connectivity and communication, and professional development.

In preparation for the 2021-22 school year, PDE has created a new toolkit of resources and professional development series, [Accelerated Learning through an Integrated System](#)



[of Supports](#), that provides a systematic process and technical support for school communities to make key decisions for the start of the new academic year. The toolkit follows a Cycle of Continuous Improvement mindset that will lead to strategic vision, needs assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring, and adjusting, with each element integrated systemically. Key components within the associated Accelerated Learning framework include operational and system conditions, social and emotional wellness, academics, and scaffolded supports. Additionally, this toolkit includes an updated collection of lessons learned, research, critical resources, and simplified planning templates with probing questions to guide LEA decision-making.

PDE will monitor the implementation of LEA plans, and especially those that address student groups that have experienced disproportionate impacts from the pandemic through risk and cyclical-based program monitoring. LEAs will provide samples of program implementation that successfully prioritize supports for designated student groups.

**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**

In addition to the LEA portion of ARP ESSER funding that is distributed according to Title I-A allocations, Pennsylvania’s enacted fiscal year 2021-22 budget allocates the three required SEA reserves to LEAs using an array of equity-focused formulae that account for student poverty, depth of poverty, and historically underserved student groups. Further, through every round of ESSER funding, and with particular emphasis in implementing ARP ESSER, PDE issued guidance urging LEAs to prioritize services and supports for historically underserved populations and populations disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in developing, implementing, and evaluating local plans.

Longer term, PDE is conducting [Understanding Pennsylvania’s Educational Inequities in the Time of COVID-19](#), an Institute of Education Sciences-supported study designed to develop a statewide picture of how districts and charter schools responded to the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2020-21 school year. The findings from this research will help policymakers and educators in Pennsylvania understand the challenges faced by students most harmed by COVID-19, identify ways to respond to possible future epidemics, assess whether some remote-learning strategies are more effective than others, consider recruitment and retention strategies for teachers who may be most effective for disadvantaged students, and better identify students at risk of dropping out. Information from this study as well as stakeholder engagement at the SEA and LEA levels is expected to inform LEA allocations of funding across schools and at the district level.

**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.**

The PDE LEA application includes several questions in which LEAs describe how they intend to implement an equitable and inclusive return to in-person instruction.

For both (a) the 20 percent reservation to address the impact of lost instructional time and (b) remaining funds, LEAs must describe their principles for emphasizing educational equity in expending ARP ESSER funds, including but not limited to:

- Responding to students’ academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs, and addressing opportunity gaps that existed before—and were exacerbated by—the pandemic;
- Allocating funding to individual schools and for LEA-wide activities based on student need;
- Implementing an equitable and inclusive return to in-person instruction. LEAs are reminded that 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;
- Taking steps to permit students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries to overcome barriers (including barriers based on gender, race, color, national origin, disability, and age) that impede equal access to, or participation in, the ARP ESSER-supported program, in compliance with the requirements of section 427 of GEPA (20 U.S.C. 1228a); and
- Attending to sustainability of plans supported by non-recurring ARP ESSER funds beyond the ARP ESSER funding period.

In addition, the LEA application requires all LEAs to provide the following information:

**Access to Instruction:** How the LEA will use ARP ESSER funds to support the goals of increasing opportunity to learn and equity in instructional delivery. LEAs are asked to consider regular attendance/chronic absenteeism data and disciplinary removals from the 2020-21 school year, including data disaggregated by student groups, in developing their response.

## **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.**

Pennsylvania’s educator workforce is comprised of more than 147,000 teachers, principals, superintendents, and other school staff tasked with providing more than 1.7 million public school students with a rigorous, well-rounded education that prepares them for college and career success. The commonwealth has 119 educator preparation programs—including 99 institutions of higher education and 20 alternative program providers—that offer 3,261 certification programs, making Pennsylvania’s educator preparation system one of the largest in the country.

Despite these strengths, Pennsylvania faces significant challenges, including a steep decline in the number of qualified teaching candidates, especially in rural and urban school districts and for hard-to-staff areas like special education, English Language instruction, and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). A national survey in 2021 found that because of the COVID-19 pandemic, more than half of K-12 educators experienced stress (63 percent), burnout (54 percent), and high levels of anxiety (47 percent). The same survey also found that almost 4 in 10 educators are considering leaving their careers due to pandemic working conditions.

Of equal concern to the supply and retention of qualified teachers and school leaders is the lack of racial and ethnic diversity within Pennsylvania’s educator workforce. In 2017–18, only 6.1 percent of Pennsylvania’s classroom teachers were persons of color, compared to 33.5 percent of students of color enrolled in public schools. Declining enrollments and graduation rates of Black or African American and Hispanic/Latinx teaching candidates in Pennsylvania’s postsecondary education majors over the past two decades create significant challenges for schools trying to increase and maintain racial and ethnic diversity among their professional staff.

To support the educator workforce, Pennsylvania must strengthen the ways in which it identifies, recruits, enrolls, prepares, certifies, inducts, and provides continuing professional development to its educator workforce. Educators encompass a wide range of professions, such as early childhood professionals, teachers, school and district leaders, and other school support staff professionals (e.g., counselors, social workers, psychologists, mental health professionals, speech pathologists, health professionals, and others).

**Five key strategies are guiding PDE’s efforts to improve its educator workforce:**

1. Prioritizing the identification, recruitment, and postsecondary enrollment of individuals—from high school students to adult learners pursuing career changes—to become educators;
2. Promoting the identification, recruitment, and postsecondary enrollment of persons of color—from high school students to adult learners pursuing career changes—to build a more racially and ethnically diverse educator pipeline;
3. Lengthening clinical preparation of educator candidates so educators receive more clinical experience and retention is improved early in their careers;
4. Developing new or updating existing educator programs that are aligned with school staffing needs; and
5. Updating curricula to incorporate culturally relevant and sustaining education competencies in educator preparation programs, educator induction programs, and continuing professional development programs for current and future educators.

To be successful, greater collaboration between PDE, postsecondary institutions, and LEAs will be necessary. PDE encourages LEAs to think creatively about how to utilize ARP ESSER funds to advance these strategies. Ideas that emerged through stakeholder input include:

- Prioritizing the recruitment of teachers and educators of color;
- Identifying, coaching, and mentoring students of color to consider entering the teaching profession;
- Expanding LEA-provided employer benefits to include the development of loan forgiveness programs for educators and providing financial incentives during recruitment, hiring, and promotion to educator to improve employment and retention; and
- Creating mentorship programs where seasoned educators mentor and support new educators.

This work builds on the commonwealth’s ESSA Consolidated State Plan, which is centered on developing and promoting the educator preparation pipeline to ensure that the most talented and diverse individuals are prepared to enter and persevere in the teaching profession.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated systemic inequities across the state and in almost all public sectors. To diminish these systemic inequities, Pennsylvania’s educator workforce pipeline must be improved so that teachers and leaders are more racially and ethnically representative of the communities in which they work. Educator diversity will go a long way toward growing PK-12 talent to ensure that all racial and ethnic groups have access to high quality educational programs regardless of income, family background, and zip code.

The educator workforce not only represents a critical sector of Pennsylvania’s labor force, but educators also play a doubly important role in preparing young people to participate in the state’s economy. This again calls for strong relationships between the K-12 and postsecondary sectors. Current and future educators, as well as the state, stand to gain from colleges that are responsive to the needs and issues of schools and districts. Incorporating advice and counsel from current educators will be critically important for colleges to update and create new educator preparation programs in the 21st century and beyond. By the same token, future and new educators emerging from their respective preparation programs need the support of LEAs and school leaders so they may put into practice the pedagogical competencies that they worked hard to acquire in their preparation programs.

## **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; STEM educators; CTE educators; early childhood educators). Cite specific data on shortages and needs where available.**

Taken together, the number of educators requesting emergency permits, the number of educators already certified who are at least 55 years old, those who have been educators for 30 or more years, and the number of newly certified educators all signal the health of the educator workforce in each school district and charter school.

**Emergency Permits:** During the 2019-20 school year, PDE issued 18,208 emergency permits. With the exception of Sullivan County, at least one educator in every single school district in the remaining 66 counties across the commonwealth applied for an emergency permit to allow them to continue working. Almost a third of the educators who applied for emergency permits are in three geographic areas: School District of Philadelphia (SDP), with 3,298 educators (18 percent), followed by 1,427 educators in the Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13 (8 percent), and 689 educators in the Lincoln Intermediate Unit 12 (4 percent).

**Educators Ages 55+:** As of the 2019-20 school year, over 24,000 educators are at least 55 years old, representing 16 percent of the total educator workforce who are approaching, at, or past retirement age. Of these educators, there are 13,719 ages 55 to 59 (57 percent); 7,914 educators ages 60 to 64 (33 percent); 2,215 educators ages 65 to 69 (9 percent); and 353 educators who are between 70 and 87 years old (1 percent).

**Educators with 30+ Years of Service:** As of the 2019-20 school year, about 7,965 educators have at least 30 years of service. Among them, 1,587 (20 percent) have served 30 years; 6,037 (76 percent) have served between 31 and 40 years; 327 (4 percent) have served between 41 and 50 years; and 14 (0.2 percent) have served between 51 and 59 years.

**Newly Certified Educators:** PDE issued 5,683 new certifications during the 2019-20 school year. About 80 percent, or 4,593 were issued to classroom teachers; another 11 percent, or 642, were for support staff involved in coordination of services; 6 percent, or 348, were in the other student support services staff category; and 3 percent, or 165, were for administrative/supervisory roles.

While a small proportion of newly certified educators are ages 55 and older, overall, the number of educators with emergency permits, those who are both 55 and older and have at least 30 years of service, and the number of newly certified educators points to a startling scenario that is not unique to Pennsylvania. In short, the commonwealth's significant demand for educators largely outweighs its supply.

Using SDP for illustrative purposes, among the 284 educators certified to teach kindergarten for the 2019–20 school year, almost a third are at least 55 years old or above, have served in these roles for at least 30 years, or a combination thereof. On the other hand, only 4 percent were newly certified to teach kindergarten.

A similar pattern emerges when examining the 17,993 educators certified to teach Grades 1-3 in SDP. About a quarter of these educators are either at least 55 years old or above, have served in these roles for at least 30 years, or are a combination thereof, while only 3 percent are newly certified in this subject area.

Pennsylvania's data on teacher shortage areas and needs comes from PIMS and the Teacher Information Management System (TIMS). While PIMS is used to collect and report state- and federally mandated data, TIMS is the data system that PDE uses to process educator certification applications. Educators who received a new certificate during the most recent school year for which data are available are represented as "new members" of the educator workforce in Table F1.

In the table, data on existing and new certificate holders do not add up to 100 percent because they exclude educators who fall somewhere between those who were newly certified during the most recent school year for which data are available as well as those who are 55 years of age or younger and/or have less than 30 years of service. Data on emergency permits are based on the total number of permits that PDE issued in the most recent school year available. LEAs request emergency certificates for a variety of reasons, some of which take into account anticipated openings or an inability to fill a vacant position with a certified individual. While LEAs may not end up employing all individuals with emergency permits, the number of permits issued serves as an indicator of critical staffing needs.

**Table F1. Data on educator shortages and needs, 2019-2020.**

Educator Workforce Approaching or at Retirement Age, 2019-20

Area	Number of Educators <sup>1</sup>	Number 55 Years Old and Above	Percent 55 Years Old and Above	Number with 30 or More Years of Service	Percent with 30 or More Years of Service	Number 55 Years Old and Above and 30 or More Years of Service	Percent 55 Years Old and Above and 30 or More Years of Service
Administrators	5,834	950	16.3%	532	9.1%	411	7.0%
Bilingual educators	3,115	496	15.9%	149	4.8%	114	3.7%
Coordinators/ Support staff	4,268	1,037	24.3%	390	9.1%	315	7.4%
CTE educators	3,103	865	27.9%	231	7.4%	194	6.3%
Early childhood educators	526	70	13.3%	22	4.2%	18	3.4%
Elementary teachers (K-6)	39,627	5,412	13.7%	2,016	5.1%	1,593	4.0%
English 7-12	8,202	1,001	12.2%	287	3.5%	233	2.8%
English as a second language educators	1,958	417	21.3%	50	2.6%	38	1.9%
Family consumer science PK-12	1,030	288	28.0%	55	5.3%	52	5.0%
Fine and performing arts	4,142	673	16.2%	364	8.8%	308	7.4%
Gifted education	1,004	225	22.4%	82	8.2%	60	6.0%
Health and physical education PK-12	6,058	951	15.7%	413	6.8%	362	6.0%
School librarians	1,611	405	25.1%	126	7.8%	103	6.4%
School nurses and Health staff	2,123	963	45.4%	58	2.7%	56	2.6%
Social-emotional support staff: School counselors	4,818	655	13.6%	214	4.4%	178	3.7%
Social-emotional support staff: School psychologists	1,609	238	14.8%	45	2.8%	42	2.6%
Social-emotional support staff: Social workers	663	116	17.5%	8	1.2%	7	1.1%
Social studies	6,774	865	12.8%	241	3.6%	197	2.9%
Special education educators	21,022	2,816	13.4%	871	4.1%	736	3.5%
STEM educators: Computer science	820	161	19.6%	54	6.6%	42	5.1%
STEM educators: Environmental education	99	14	14.1%	1	1.0%	1	1.0%
STEM educators: Life and physical sciences	7,302	1,186	16.2%	389	5.3%	300	4.1%
STEM educators: Mathematics	8,560	1,189	13.9%	437	5.1%	326	3.8%
STEM educators: Technology education	834	116	13.9%	54	6.5%	45	5.4%

<sup>1</sup> The number of educators represents the size of that workforce. The columns to the right reflect a cross-section of these educators, focusing on those who are approaching or at retirement age.

New Members of Educator Workforce, 2019-20

Area	Number of Educators <sup>2</sup>	Number Newly Certified	Percent Newly Certified	Number Newly Certified and 55 Years Old and Above	Percent Newly Certified and 55 Years Old and Above
Administrators	5,834	120	2.1%	16	0.3%
Bilingual educators	3,115	132	4.2%	7	0.2%
Coordinators/ Support staff	4,268	90	2.1%	9	0.2%
CTE educators	3,103	122	3.9%	15	0.5%
Early childhood educators	526	32	6.1%	0	0.0%
Elementary teachers (K-6)	39,627	1,375	3.5%	17	<0.1%
English 7-12	8,202	322	3.9%	3	<0.1%
English as a second language educators	1,958	83	4.2%	3	0.2%
Family consumer science PK-12	1,030	33	3.2%	4	0.4%
Fine and performing arts	4,142	185	4.5%	1	<0.1%
Gifted education	1,004	11	1.1%	0	0.0%
Health and physical education PK-12	6,058	211	3.5%	2	<0.1%
School librarians	1,611	25	1.6%	2	0.1%
School nurses and Health staff	2,123	113	5.3%	11	0.5%
Social-emotional support staff: School counselors	4,818	200	4.2%	2	<0.1%
Social-emotional support staff: School psychologists	1,609	97	6.0%	6	0.4%
Social-emotional support staff: Social workers	663	42	6.3%	0	0.0%
Social studies	6,774	194	2.9%	5	0.1%
Special education educators	21,022	1,018	4.8%	30	0.1%
STEM educators: Computer science	820	20	2.4%	1	0.1%
STEM educators: Environmental education	99	2	2.0%	0	0.0%
STEM educators: Life and physical sciences	7,302	270	3.7%	13	0.2%
STEM educators: Mathematics	8,560	266	3.1%	10	0.1%
STEM educators: Technology education	834	25	3.0%	1	0.1%

<sup>2</sup> The number of educators represents the size of that workforce. The columns to the right reflect a cross-section of these educators, focusing on those who are new members.



Critical Staffing Areas, 2019-20

Area	Number of Emergency Permits Issued	Percent of Permits Issued <sup>3</sup>
Administrators	83	0.4%
Bilingual educators	178	1.0%
Coordinators/ Support staff	16	0.1%
CTE educators	512	2.8%
Early childhood educators	n/a	
Elementary teachers (K-6)	1,248	6.7%
English 7-12	249	1.3%
English as a second language educators	141	0.8%
Family consumer science PK-12	60	0.3%
Fine and performing arts	41	0.2%
Gifted education	n/a	
Health and physical education PK-12	122	0.7%
School librarians	34	0.2%
School nurses and Health staff	473	2.6%
Social-emotional support staff: School counselors	35	0.2%
Social-emotional support staff: School psychologists	9	<0.1%
Social-emotional support staff: Social workers	n/a	
Social studies	130	0.7%
Special education educators	1,135	6.1%
STEM educators: Computer science	74	0.4%
STEM educators: Environmental education	n/a	
STEM educators: Life and physical sciences	146	0.8%
STEM educators: Mathematics	191	1.0%
STEM educators: Technology education	33	0.2%

<sup>3</sup> During the 2019-20 school year, PDE issued 18,208 emergency permits. This column shows the percent of the total number of emergency permits by certification shortage area.

- ii. **Describe how the SEA will assist its LEAs in identifying the most urgent areas of shortages or potential shortages, with 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.**

PDE plans to upgrade both PIMS and TIMS to anticipate educator staffing needs at LEAs across Pennsylvania. These necessary upgrades will enable PDE to: (1) help LEAs anticipate and plan for staffing needs; (2) share these data with colleges and universities with educator preparation programs to better align the postsecondary sector to LEA staffing needs; and (3) produce additional, more detailed educator diversity reports by school entity and educator preparation program.

Since ESSER I and II and GEER I and II funds continue to be expended by school entities to implement COVID-19 mitigation efforts, it is too soon to know how funding was used locally to avoid layoffs. However, throughout the pandemic, Pennsylvania has taken steps to minimize the impact to school staffing and the educator workforce.

Enacted in March 2020, Act 13 of 2020 (Act 13) allowed school employees to continue to receive compensation and benefits through the end of the 2019-20 school year and for PDE to continue to provide 2019-20 subsidy payments, reimbursements, allocations, and other payments that the schools would have received had the pandemic of 2020 not occurred. Act 13 also permitted school entities to request that the Secretary of Education waive specific statutory requirements related to a school entity's staffing needs or instructional program or operations for the 2019-20 school year as a result of the pandemic. In total, PDE processed 53 extensions and waivers, meaning educators could continue working and have additional time to complete the requirements of their teaching certificates or emergency permits. Act 13 also granted all Pennsylvania educators an additional year to earn their required continuing professional education credits.

To further assist school entities with mitigating potential staffing shortages, Pennsylvania enacted Act 136 of 2020 in November. Under this state law, students entering an educator preparation program between November 25, 2020, and June 30, 2021, were not required to complete the basic skills requirements for entrance into the program, and PDE was permitted to do the following:

- Issue a temporary provisional certificate to an educator who completed all requirements for Level I certification except for the certification assessments when the assessment was not available;

- Issue an exceptional case permit for an educator who was in their final year of Level I in the 2019-20 and could not convert to a Level II because an assessment was not available;
- Issue a temporary certificate through June 30, 2021, to an instructional certified educator seeking certification through an add-on test, but the relevant assessment was not available; and
- Extend an emergency permit issued during the 2020-21 school year when the educator could not meet the credit requirements or schedule and complete a required assessment because it had been canceled.

**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).**

In preparation for the 2021–22 school year, PDE has already been processing emergency permits to help LEAs fill the critical staffing needs arising from the pandemic.

Going forward, PDE plans to build on the early work of its Aspiring to Educate (A2E) pilot program, which identifies and works with high school students of color to mentor and prepare them to go to college and enter teacher preparation programs. The first A2E pilot focused on the Southeastern Pennsylvania region to support the staffing needs of the largest LEA in the commonwealth, the School District of Philadelphia.

By August 2021, PDE is expecting an evaluation of the A2E pilot that will help inform and shape future pilots. PDE plans to focus the next A2E pilot on diversifying the STEM teacher pipeline across the commonwealth.

**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).**

PDE is aware of the need to both update existing and develop new educator preparation programs to meet school staffing needs for mental health professionals. These professionals are necessary not only to support the mental health and well-being of students, but also to provide direction on ways to improve school climate and equitable practice, support teacher mental health, and provide support to teachers and other personnel as they implement trauma-informed practices and SEL instruction. Through stakeholder engagement, educators have underscored the importance of learning and preparation about trauma, equity, and social-emotional skill development, but most do not feel they were adequately prepared to address these issues when they entered the profession. When asked about the top issues currently facing K-12 students and schools because of or in response to the COVID-19

pandemic, roughly one third of postsecondary stakeholders representing the interests of educators or future educators identified social-emotional learning and mental health as top priority areas.

PDE’s Office for Safe Schools has developed [Pennsylvania Career Ready Skills](#) progressions, which underscore the connection between SEL and development of career-ready adults who are able to successfully navigate relationships within their family, school, college, career, and the global community. School-based mental health professionals, including school counselors, school psychologists, and social workers have an important role to play in the development of healthy students and schools. These educators can benefit from more structured postsecondary programs of study that incorporate not only SEL and equitable, trauma-informed competencies into their programs, but also the practical application of these competencies toward development of positive learning environments in schools and consultation with staff and students.

As shown in Table F1, Pennsylvania’s educators who support student SEL are nearing retirement age, and supply has not caught up with demand. The pandemic only served to heighten these critical staffing shortages at LEAs.

In 2020–21, PDE introduced several new educator certifications, including one for School Social Workers, the first of its kind in Pennsylvania. The availability of this new certification, which complements the certifications for school counselors, school psychologists, and home and school visitors, will help equip LEAs with the student support staff they need, especially post-pandemic. Many colleges have been developing new programs of study for school social workers in anticipation of this new certification.

## **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).**

PDE has developed a reputation as a model for other states regarding collecting and reporting data from the PIMS State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS), as evidenced by the frequency of requests to present at national data and SLDS conferences. PDE will modify data collections, as needed, to ensure sufficient data are being collected from LEAs to meet all federal reporting requirements. PDE will also establish PIMS trainings, documentation, supports, practices, and procedures to support ARP ESSER data collections.

Current supports include:

- Manuals;
- Data collection calendar;
- Data collection type “how-to guides”;
- Virtual, live, recorded, and online trainings;
- Access to SEA staff subject matter expert support for data review;
- Information technology application support service help staff; and
- Access to an LEA Sandbox test environment.

The documentation provided to LEAs also offers guidance related to PIMS business rules/edits and data validations. PDE’s systems feature robust reports for LEAs and the SEA, including Accuracy Certification Statements signed by the Superintendent for each collection. PDE routinely convenes stakeholder groups to offer feedback on the data

collections performed through PIMS, such as the Data Quality Network (DQN), biweekly PIMS Pilot Group, monthly PIMS vendors group, and weekly Q&A webinars for all data stewards.

PDE will coordinate efforts with LEAs and their respective SIS vendors to ensure the necessary collection of data and to allow seamless reporting during annual PIMS collections. PDE will work with SIS and other LEA system vendors to ensure they understand reporting requirements necessary to upgrade systems to meet LEA needs. ARP ESSER monitoring and reporting topics will be incorporated into monthly DQN meetings, and sessions will be included in the 2022 through 2024 Annual PDE Data Summit (as well as other opportunities to assist LEAs in meeting all ARP ESSER requirements). PDE will work with its software vendors and in-house information technology department to ensure its systems are prepared to receive additional data for ARP ESSER collection and reporting.

**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.**

PDE will follow established internal controls and monitoring procedures in accordance with the Uniform Guidance, 2 CFR Part 200, and Federal Relief Funding requirements in accordance with the CARES Act, CRRSA, and the ARP Act.

**Application Submission and Payment:** PDE is using its eGrants system to collect all LEA required records under CARES, CRRSA, and ARP. The eGrants system is designed to allow licensed educational agencies and certain community-based programs within the commonwealth access to PDE grants. Through this system, the LEA can submit applications for funding, e-sign contracting documents, upload back-up documentation, submit program quarterly reports, and file final expenditure reports.

The eGrants system makes it possible for records pertaining to the ARP ESSER award under 2 C.F.R. § 200.334 and 34 C.F.R. § 76.730, including financial records related to the use of grant funds, to be retained separately from other grant funds, including funds that an SEA or LEA receives under the CARES Act and CRRSA.

Only an eGrants authorized user that is associated with an Agency or LEA that has an active Program/Project and the role of Agency Project Writer can upload documents to the project. The SEA staff then reviews and investigates the documents. Projects advance if the documents are complete and correct.

The grant process is as follows:

- PDE announces and releases grant application in eGrants;



- LEA completes application in eGrants;
- Prior to submission, LEA's board-approved designee signs off electronically on application (typically Superintendent or Chief Executive Officer);
- The program area reviews the grant application and returns it for corrections (if necessary). Otherwise, an approvable application goes to the division chief for electronic signature;
- Chief Counsel reviews and approves application for form and legality;
- The Office of Comptroller Operations completes the review of the application and fully executes the contract; and
- LEA receives its first monthly payment.

Payments for grants processed through eGrants are made monthly through PDE's Financial Accounting Information (FAI) System. The FAI system interfaces with PDE's financial accounting records system, SAP.

Monthly payments to LEAs are continuous and automatic based on quarterly financial reports collected through the FAI System. Through quarterly financial reporting, LEAs are required to report the amount of cash received, expended, and on hand. If the amount of cash-on-hand reported is determined to be too high, or the quarterly report is not submitted, monthly payments will be suspended until the next quarterly report is due.

**Maintenance of Records:** As part of the agreement and application for ARP ESSER Funding, LEAs agree and attest to cooperate with any examination of records with respect to such funds by making records available for inspection, production, and examination, and making authorized individuals available for interview and examination, upon the request of PDE and/or its Inspector General or any other federal agency, commission, or department in the lawful exercise of its jurisdiction and authority.

PDE maintains and retains types of records based on commonwealth Management Directive 210.5, Manuals 210.7 and 210.8, and its Agency Records Management Program. Contracts, applications, and quarterly program reports are stored in the eGrants System for six years after the term of the contract ends. PDE is also required to publicly release fully executed contracts via the e-Contract portal developed by the Pennsylvania Treasury Department.

**SEA Monitoring:** PDE will monitor funds and award payments through the FAI and the SAP Accounting System. PDE uses a system of sub fund and Internal Order Number tracking to identify and separately track each set-aside.

Procurement contracts, grants, and other documents supporting expenditures within PDE work through a tracking system with multiple levels of review to ensure the expenditures are allowable, reasonable, allocable, and necessary.

These funds will be subject to the annual commonwealth Single Audit conducted in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Auditor General's Office. In accordance with 2 CFR 200,

Subpart F, PDE has established a process, led by PDE’s Audit Coordinator, to review LEA Single Audit Reports that includes follow-up with the LEA on audit findings, collection of corrective action plans, and recovery of questioned costs.

**LEA Monitoring and Risk Assessment:** Monitoring to ensure compliance with existing federal guidelines typically occurs from January through May annually. LEAs complete an online self-assessment available within Pennsylvania’s federal monitoring online system, Fedmonitor. All LEAs receive a unique username and password to access Fedmonitor.

LEAs are monitored cyclically or as needed based on risk. Beginning in 2021–22, all LEAs will be placed on a four-year monitoring cycle and will be monitored once between 2021–22 and 2024–25. Additionally, all LEAs are annually assessed for risk to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse. Those deemed to be medium or high risk on the LEA Risk Assessment will be monitored every year. Points range from 1–20, and most LEAs fall in the low-risk category, with a score of nine and under. Annually, the categories and points are evaluated to determine compliance with Uniform Grant Guidance.

LEAs are assigned points for the following factors to determine risk:

- Failure to submit federal grant applications by established deadlines;
- Failure to submit reports/plans by established deadlines which include:
  - Pennsylvania Information Management System data collection;
  - Performance Goal Output Reports; and
  - Schoolwide plan(s);
- Previous year monitor/audit findings;
- Excessive federal program carryover Title I allocation. All LEAs receive at least one point for allocation; the higher the allocation, the higher the points;
- New entity;
- New federal program coordinators, business managers, and/or superintendent/chief executive officer; and
- New accounting software at the LEA.

**SEA Internal Controls and Risk Mitigation:**

**Current Practices.** PDE’s Compliance Office manages its internal control and risk management policies. In 2020, this office conducted a baseline enterprise risk management assessment in cooperation with a department-wide committee. This assessment allowed PDE to gain a high level and holistic view of risks and internal control weaknesses that have the potential to impact PDE.

The committee’s activities included:

1. Conducting enterprise risk management (ERM) surveys and strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT) analyses;
2. Utilizing ERM tools to determine and rank risks;
3. Identifying risks to be reduced; and
4. Developing or identifying internal controls to address them.

PDE has an internal practice that encourages employees to report deficiencies through the chain of command. If the deficiency involves the employee's direct supervisor, the employee may report to the next level or report the deficiency to the PDE Human Resources Liaison. This practice is communicated to new employees during PDE's onboarding process.

PDE has also undergone a process to implement standards for internal controls issued by the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

***Future Practices.*** PDE is in the process of hiring a contractor to perform a thorough assessment of its current internal control environment and risk mitigations. The statement of work for the project requires a report that identifies areas where PDE has internal control gaps, weak policies, and ineffective processes. It will also ask the contractor to evaluate PDE's compliance with Uniform Guidance. The report will provide recommendations for improvement based on best practices and approaches in other states.

Using the administrative set-aside allocated in the 2021–22 enacted Pennsylvania state budget, PDE will use the report from the contractor to inform the executive team on what areas present the greatest risks and hire personnel to increase support for mitigating those risks. Potential hiring may include:

- Additional personnel in the Division of Federal Programs (responsible for at least 90 percent of the ARP ESSER Funds); and
- Additional personnel in the Office of Administration to monitor internal controls, review grant contracts for compliance with state and federal requirements, monitor expenditures, and assist with reporting requirements.

In addition, PDE will create a Coronavirus Emergency Response Monitoring Center to coordinate PDE's response to inquiries, federal reporting requirements, and to ensure that PDE is following all federal rules and regulations, including 2 CFR 200.

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

Template components prescribed under Appendix A have been included in question A.5.ii (Tables A2 and A3).

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

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

- How the State is developing strategies and implementing public health protocols including, to the greatest extent practicable, policies and plans in line with the CDC guidance related to mitigating COVID-19 in schools;
- Overall plans and policies related to State support for return to in-person instruction and maximizing in-person instruction time, including how funds will support a return to and maximize in-person instruction time, and advance equity and inclusivity in participation in in-person instruction;
- Data on each school's mode of instruction (fully in-person, hybrid, and fully remote) and conditions;
- SEA and LEA uses of funds to meet students' social, emotional, and academic needs, including through summer enrichment programming and other evidence-based interventions, and how they advance equity for underserved students;
- SEA and LEA uses of funds to sustain and support access to early childhood education programs;
- Impacts and outcomes (disaggregated by student subgroup) through use of ARP ESSER funding (e.g., quantitative and qualitative results of ARP ESSER funding, including on personnel, student learning, and budgeting at the school and district level);
- Student data (disaggregated by student subgroup) related to how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected instruction and learning;
- Requirements under the Federal Financial Accountability Transparency Act (FFATA); and
- Additional reporting requirements as may be necessary to ensure accountability and transparency of ARP ESSER funds.

## Appendix C: Assurances

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

- The SEA will conduct all its operations so that no person shall be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under the ARP ESSER program or activity based on race, color, national origin, which includes a person's limited English proficiency or English learner status and a person's actual or perceived shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics; sex; age; or disability. These non-discrimination obligations arise under Federal civil rights laws, including but not limited to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975. In addition, the SEA must comply with all regulations, guidelines, and standards issued by the Department under any of these statutes;
- The SEA will comply with all ARP Act and other ARP ESSER requirements and all requirements of its Grant Award Notification, including but not limited to:
  - Complying with the maintenance of effort provision in section 2004(a)(1) of the ARP Act, absent a waiver by the Secretary pursuant to section 2004(a)(2) of the ARP Act; and
  - Complying with the maintenance of equity provisions in section 2004(b) of the ARP Act, and ensuring its LEAs comply with the maintenance of equity provision in section 2004(c) of the ARP Act (please note that the Department will provide additional guidance on maintenance of equity shortly);
- The SEA will allocate ARP ESSER funds to LEAs in an expedited and timely manner and, to the extent practicable, not later than 60 days after the SEA receives ARP ESSER funds (i.e., 60 days from the date the SEA receives each portion of its ARP ESSER funds). An SEA that is not able to allocate such funds within 60 days because it is not practicable (e.g., because of pre-existing State board approval requirements) will provide an explanation to the Department within 30 days of receiving each portion of its ARP ESSER funds (submitted via email to your Program Officer at [State].OESE@ed.gov (e.g., Alabama.OESE@ed.gov)), including a description of specific actions the SEA is taking to provide ARP ESSER funds to LEAs in an expedited and timely manner and the SEA's expected timeline for doing so;
- The SEA will implement evidence-based interventions as required under section 2001(f) of the ARP Act and ensure its LEAs implement evidence-based interventions, as required by section 2001(e)(1) of the ARP Act;
- The SEA will address the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on underserved students (i.e., students from low-income families, students from racial or ethnic groups (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by race or ethnicity), gender (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by gender), English learners, children with disabilities, students

experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, and migratory students), as required under section 2001(f) of the ARP Act, and ensure its LEAs address the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on underserved students (i.e., students from low-income families, students from racial or ethnic groups, gender, English learners, children with disabilities, students experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, and migratory students), as required by section 2001(e)(1) of the ARP Act; and

- The SEA will provide to the Department: (1) the URL(s) where the public can readily find data on school operating status and (2) the URL(s) for the SEA and/or LEA websites where the public can find the LEA plans for a) the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services required under section 2001(i) of the ARP Act, and b) use of ARP ESSER funds. SEAs should consider ensuring a standardized URL format in all cases (e.g., xxx.gov/COVIDplan).



## Appendix D: GEPA Statement

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.

PDE’s formula grants for LEAs, schools, career and technology centers, IUs, and other educational entities under sections 2001(f)(1), 2001(f)(2), 2001(f)(3), and 2001(f)(4) of the ARP Act require awardees to provide GEPA 427 statements in their applications to the state for funding.

In addition, PDE adheres to GEPA, section 427. PDE ensures equal access and participation to all persons regardless of their gender, race, color, national origin, age, or disability in its education programs, services, and/or activities. PDE will enforce all federal and state laws/regulations designed to ensure equitable access to all program beneficiaries and to overcome barriers to equitable participation. Steps taken to ensure equitable access and to eliminate access barriers based on gender, race, national origin, color, disability, and age include but are not limited to:

- Providing accessible instructional materials, which are specialized formats of core instructional materials, from national, state, and local sources; including the National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC), Bookshare, Learning Ally, and American Printing House for the Blind;
- Providing instructional materials to blind persons or other persons with print disabilities in a timely manner, including specialized formats such as Braille, Audio, enlarged print, and Electronic Text as well as require publishers to submit National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS) compliant source files to the NIMAC repository;
- Utilizing key features of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a planning tool that seeks to infuse typical barrier-laden curricula with multiple, flexible strategies and tools; UDL assumes that there are opportunities for access and engagement for all learners;
- Providing professional development opportunities with the goal of empowering LEAs in culturally responsive practices, including personalized learning environments, positive approaches to discipline, welcoming school environments, and collaboration with outside agencies and school communities to support all students;

- Providing an equity toolkit based upon prevention, response, and recovery – aimed at helping to address and eliminate bias, discrimination, and harassment and promote equity and inclusion in schools;
- Offering interpretation services for language and communication needs, including translation, transliteration, and cued speech;
- Utilizing a broad range of assistive technology which includes a variety of tools that range from no- to low- to high-tech options;
- Providing reasonable accommodations for state assessment based on disability;
- Utilizing technologies to convey content of program and curricular materials;
- Providing professional development activities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Section 504, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to educational resource agencies and local educational agencies on an ongoing basis;
- Posting informational materials on the PDE website, which comply with ADA requirements;
- Providing individualized resources designed to support diverse students to be college, career, and community ready, including integrated employment experiences, access to STEM-related curricula, and enrollment in Career and Technical Centers;
- Hiring, recruiting, and involving individuals from diverse social and ethnic minority groups to the greatest extent possible – in particular, those in underserved geographical regions across the commonwealth; and
- Providing a Title IX Coordinator at PDE.

### **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.**