

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



U.S. Department of Education

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Paperwork Burden Statement According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1810-0754. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 100 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is required to obtain or retain benefit under Section 2001 of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP Act). If you have any comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimate, suggestions for improving this individual collection, or if you have comments or concerns regarding the status of your individual form, application or survey, please contact Britt Jung, Office of State and Grantee Relations, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20202-6450, email: SGR@ed.gov directly.

Introduction

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

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

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

Instructions

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

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

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

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

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

Cover Page

Grantee and Contact Information

ARP ESSER PR Award Number (e.g., S425U2100XX): S425U210027

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

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

Chief State School Officer or Authorized Representative (Printed Name)

Signature of Authorized SEA Representative

Date

A. Describing the State's Current Status and Needs

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

1. Progress and Promising Practices:

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

[begin response]

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the NJDOE has developed and implemented a series of coordinated policy strategies that dramatically expanded the State's and LEAs' efforts to identify and address the academic and mental health impacts of the pandemic on New Jersey students and educators. These efforts help pave the way forward for our education community, investing heavily in the recovery and resiliency of all our students, schools, and educators, particularly those most disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

Key strategies have included:

Strategy 1: Targeting federal COVID-19 relief funds to specific, high-impact programs and activities, including the following:

- ESSER I State set-aside funds were made available to:
 - Support formula grants to LEAs for the purchase of 1:1 instructional devices (e.g. Chromebooks, iPads) and connectivity;
 - Develop a Memorandum of Understanding with Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey to implement a program to address the social-emotional learning needs of students impacted by COVID-19;
 - Support competitive grants for LEAs prioritizing activities that address learning loss in students, the need for additional summer instruction, compensatory education for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), Social Emotional Learning, and support for students experiencing homelessness;

- Support grants for LEAs that were not eligible for an allocation from the formula portion of the grant as a result of not having received funds under Title I, Part A of the ESEA in the 2019-20 school year (see the NJDOE's formula grant allocation table here. Such LEAs are marked with an asterisk);
- Support grants for public educational institutions, in which public school students are educated, that were not eligible for an allocation from the formula portion of the grant as a result of not being an LEA. Specifically, these subgrants were provided to: Special Services School Districts (SSSDs); educational institutions run by State agencies including the Department of Children and Families (DCF), the Department of Corrections (DOC); the Juvenile Justice Centers; and Juvenile Detention Centers; and
- Districts that received funds under Title I, Part A of the ESEA in the 2019-2020 school year, if applicable, to fund the difference between (1) the portion of its ESSER allocation the district must actually dedicate to equitable services for nonpublic schools (based on a nonpublic school's share of total enrollment in the LEA, in accordance with guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Education), and (2) the portion of its ESSER allocation the district would have to dedicate to equitable services if equitable shares were based on a nonpublic school's share of Title I-eligible students residing in the LEA.
- ESSER II State set-aside funds supported:
 - Grants to LEAs to support research-based academic enrichment activities and strategies to support learning acceleration such as summer learning academies, school year learning acceleration academies, 1:1 tutoring, and professional learning for educators regarding the use of universal screening assessments and the use of extended day instructional time to effectively scaffold students' learning. These grants prioritized academic enrichment activities in content areas most impacted by COVID-19, such as STEM. Allocations of these funds were made in the same manner as the ESSER II allocations with a minimum allocation of \$25,000 per LEA. Both Title I, Part A and non-Title I LEAs received an allocation.
 - Grants to LEAs to support the provision of mental health services and supports. These funds will be used to increase access to school-based mental health services and supports for both students and educators. Allocations of these funds were based upon total LEA enrollment with a minimum of \$45,000 per LEA.
 - Grants to LEAs that were ineligible for an allocation from the formula portion of the grant as a result of not having received funds under Title I, Part A of the ESEA in the 2020-21 school year; and

- Grants to public educational institutions, in which public school students are educated, that were ineligible for an allocation from the formula portion of the grant as a result of not being an LEA. Specifically, these subgrants were provided to: SSSDs; educational institutions run by State agencies including the DCF and the DOC; the Juvenile Justice Centers; Juvenile Detention Centers; and County Jointure Commissions.
- New Jersey allocated \$100 million from the Coronavirus Relief Fund to assist LEAs with defraying costs associated with reopening schools for the 2020-2021 school year in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The NJDOE ensured that all LEAs had access to these funds by providing an allocation for each student, while targeting funds to low-income communities that have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, by determining LEA allocations with a supplemental per pupil amount for each low income pupil.

Strategy 2: Enhancing efforts to identify and collect data regarding student performance and access to learning opportunities that may be used to target resources and supports, including:

Digital Divide Data

In summer 2020, the NJDOE launched a grant program to support LEAs in purchasing digital learning devices and internet connectivity in order to ensure that all students had access to remote instruction as necessary. At that time, the NJDOE estimated that over 230,000 students were identified as in need of a device or connectivity. In October 2020, to better track the state of the digital divide and to provide more targeted supports to districts, the NJDOE released a weekly student device and connectivity survey and required LEAs to provide data to the NJDOE on the availability of devices and connectivity for every student. By March 2021, each LEA reported zero students currently needing a device and/or internet connection. Thus, the State was able to effectively use ESSER and CRF funds and close the digital divide for New Jersey's students.

Learning Environment Data

The NJDOE added new data fields to its existing student data collection to capture the learning environment of each public school student, and the attendance rate of each student in each learning environment. The new data fields allow the NJDOE to determine the number of students receiving instruction in-person, via a hybrid model, or in a remote environment, and whether the remote environment was in response to a parent request. This data collection provided the NJDOE with the insight necessary to assist LEAs with reopening and continuity of educational services. This summer, the new data fields will provide the NJDOE insight into the difference in attendance rates on days of in-person instruction compared to days of remote instruction.

The NJDOE also maintains a daily dashboard of operating status for all LEAs and approved private schools for students with disabilities. The dashboard provides a regularly updated listing of the instructional model being employed in each LEA, which are categorized as either hybrid, full in-person, remote, or a combination model.

Interim Assessment Data Collection

To fill data gaps caused by interrupted statewide assessment administration and to ensure that students are making meaningful growth toward grade-level standards, LEAs provided the NJDOE with a snapshot of student learning during this school year through the submission of district-level interim assessment data denoting whether students were performing below, on, or above grade level for mathematics, ELA, and science.

Screener Assessment

In fall 2020, the NJDOE made available an optional suite of beginning of year screener assessments known as Start Strong. Based on student performance on prior year standards, Start Strong determines the level of support that a student might need to master the current year's prerequisite skills and concepts. Start Strong data helped LEAs effectively target resources and supports and develop instruction and intervention plans. Pursuant to the U.S. Department of Education's April 6, 2021 correspondence, the NJDOE will administer Start Strong in fall 2021 to meet ESSA general assessment requirements.

Strategy 3: Promoting sharing of information and successful practices between LEAs:

Superintendent Advisory Groups

The NJDOE, in its ongoing efforts to learn from stakeholders, formed regional district superintendent advisory groups in January 2021. The goal of convening these groups is to provide the NJDOE and New Jersey superintendents with a platform for the open exchange of thoughts and concerns regarding LEAs' ongoing needs and challenges. LEA leads have been encouraged to share their current challenges and forecast potential problems. There is one Short-Term Group and one Long-Term Group in each region of the state that each meet approximately every 2-3 weeks. These exchanges have provided the NJDOE with real-time updates and insight on short and long-term needs from school district superintendents in the field.

Clearinghouse of Successful Practices

On February 19, 2021, the NJDOE launched its clearinghouse of successful practices that LEAs have identified as notable achievements in mitigating the challenges posed by COVID-19. District-reported successes are categorized by county, district size, and topic area to facilitate meaningful collaboration and learning opportunities between similarly-situated districts. These data provide

focused, tested, and context-specific practices to help LEAs develop strategies to address issues related to learning gaps, attendance, lack of access to nutrition, housing, other critical needs, and LEA operations.

ESSER Technical Assistance

In an effort to support the effective use of the ESSER funds the NJDOE has conducted multiple technical assistance sessions for LEAs. Sessions were conducted in partnership with stakeholder groups as well. Each session provides an opportunity for LEAs to ask questions and share information on how best to utilize the funding to address issues related to COVID-19. The NJDOE has also developed a series of webpages with guidance for LEAs and is in the process of finalizing an FAQ document that responds to common questions from the field.

[end response]

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.

[begin response]

Issue 1: Variation in Learning Models

As of May 18, 2021, of the 810 LEAs and receiving schools surveyed by the NJDOE: 367 (45%) were operating in a hybrid learning model, enrolling 682,448 (50%) students; 391 (48%) were operating in an in-person model, enrolling 469,743 (35%) students; 9 (1%) in a remote model, enrolling 44,272 (3%) students; and 43 (5%) employing a variety of models across school buildings, enrolling 156,937 (12%) students. This variation in learning models across the state raises concerns regarding the impact of school closures on academic and social emotional health of students and educators, as well as concerns regarding the ability of the NJDOE and LEAs to effectively share actionable, comparable strategies and data to target resources and supports.

Research has made clear that the more time that a student spends outside of the classroom, the greater the risk of missed learning opportunities and of negative social, emotional, and mental health impacts. Research has also suggested that these setbacks are not spread evenly amongst all students, with students with disabilities, English learners, low-income students, Black and Hispanic students, and students experiencing homelessness or in foster care hardest hit by the disruptions of school closures. Addressing the impact of reduced access to in-person learning is among the NJDOE's most urgent priorities. According to data collected by the NJDOE, in mid-October 2020, roughly half of the State's students were enrolled in school districts that offered some form of in-person

instruction (52.3% versus 47.7% in school districts that were remote-only). School districts that offered some form of in-person instruction in mid-October served a disproportionate share of the State's White students (70.4%). Similarly, school districts that were remote-only in mid-October served a disproportionate share of the State's Black or African American students (70.7%), English Learners (65.5%) and economically disadvantaged students (65.1%).

Beyond the impact on students and educators, variations in learning models across the State also complicate State and local efforts to share success stories and data regarding the impact of COVID-19, as the specific contexts in which strategies would be implemented and data extracted vary so considerably, hindering comparability.

Issue 2: Unfinished Learning

COVID-19 presented unprecedented challenges to PreK–12 public education. Among the most significant is unfinished learning as a result of students and educators struggling with different instructional models, shortened instructional days, and other effects of the public health emergency. When the crisis began, students across the State, particularly those in low-income communities, already lacked access to the computers and connectivity that would make remote learning possible. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated equity gaps that already existed. National research conducted by the NWEA (previously the Northwest Evaluation Association) has indicated that learning gaps resulting from COVID 19 pandemic may result in learning deficits of 30% in reading and up to 50% in math. It is also clear that learning gaps existed prior to the pandemic and that gaps are likely to grow without well-defined plans and execution of targeted interventions. According to a 2021 NAEP survey, 31% of fourth graders and 51% of eighth graders in New Jersey receive more than 5 hours of live instruction per day; 20% of fourth graders receive 1–2 hours of live instruction daily; and only 3% of eighth graders are receiving the same.

Issue 3: Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Needs

The NJDOE recognizes the events of the past 15 months have been severely stressful and traumatic for students. As of May 18, 2021, over 23,000 New Jerseyans have died as a result of COVID-19 and over 2 million New Jerseyans lost their employment as a result of the virus. The impact of these losses, of both life and financial security, have been deeply felt by students throughout the State.

The physical isolation required to combat the virus, especially in the early months of the pandemic, undoubtedly took a toll on the social emotional well-being of students, but it also presented an increased risk for child abuse or neglect. Unfortunately, the full extent of the increase in child abuse and neglect is unknown because students were not reporting to school and interacting with adults from outside of their household who could have intervened and/or reported

allegations or suspicions of abuse. Beginning in spring 2020, the New Jersey Department of Children and Families reported an approximate 60% decrease in the number of referrals to the State's child abuse hotline from the previous year. Since school district staff continue to be New Jersey's primary reporters of allegations of child abuse, the decline in cases likely correlates to schools being closed for in-person instruction. By March 2021, referrals of child abuse allegations were significantly closer to numbers seen before the pandemic, which suggests the increase of in-person instruction and interaction has helped to bring attention to concerns of abuse. The significant decrease in referrals is of great concern and the impact of any untreated abuses will require support from school districts and other providers.

The isolation of quarantining and social distancing, uncertainties, hardships, and decrease in typical support structures during the pandemic have impacted the mental health and well-being of students. In a survey conducted of New Jersey superintendents by the New Jersey School Boards Association from November 16, 2020 to January 8, 2021, 47.73% of those surveyed indicated that, "[w]e don't see more students in crisis, but in general students are more anxious and depressed." Even more alarming are anecdotal reports from our sister agencies and community partners that are in alignment with the CDC's national findings that mental health-related visits to hospital emergency departments increased sharply from mid-March 2020 and continued into October 2020. The CDC reported mental health-related visits to hospital emergency departments increased 24% among children aged 5–11 years and 31% among adolescents aged 12–17 years, compared with the same period in 2019. Data from the New Jersey Hospital Association's Center for Health Analytics, Research, and Transformation found that a higher percentage of youth presented with a mental, behavioral, or drug/substance use disorder diagnosis during the pandemic compared to prior years.

While it will take time before there is a comprehensive understanding of the pandemic's impact on the well-being of youth, the data above suggest that many students are likely to return to their classrooms in 2021-2022 burdened by stressors and trauma that shake the sense of safety and wellbeing necessary for academic learning. It is imperative, therefore, that educators recognize that social, emotional, and mental health supports are critical to reduce stressors, mitigate the impact of trauma, and develop coping and resiliency skills to support the well-being of students.

[end response]

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,¹ chronic absenteeism, student engagement, and social-emotional well-being.

[begin response]

The NJDOE prioritized the needs of the identified student groups through its targeted use of the ESSER Fund State set-aside funds as described throughout NJ’s ARP ESSER State Plan. To further inform this work, the NJDOE will utilize a variety of data sources to explore the impact of COVID-19 on the identified student groups. This review will be an extension of work already being conducted throughout the NJDOE in an attempt to identify and mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19 on New Jersey students, families and educators.

For example, the NJDOE will analyze chronic absenteeism and learning environment data. Early in the pandemic, the NJDOE recognized that student learning environment data would be critical in understanding how students were being impacted by school closures. As a result, learning environment fields were

¹ 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.

added to the NJDOE's student information data collections. Updated data will be available to the NJDOE in August and will be disaggregated by student group at the school, district and state level so that it can inform the NJDOE's initiatives. Additionally, the NJDOE will utilize graduation rate and retention data which will be available in fall 2021 to further analyze the impact of COVID-19 on the identified student groups. Another important data point will be the results of the 2020-2021 DLM and ACCESS for ELLs assessments, both of which were administered in spring 2021. This data will be available in the late fall and will play a critical role in informing instructional design and decision-making.

Additionally, earlier this year the NJDOE collected LEA-level interim assessment data denoting the percentage of students in the LEA performing below, on, or above grade level for mathematics, ELA, and science. These data provided a mid-year snapshot of student performance based on local, interim assessments administered by the LEA between November 16, 2020 and February 19, 2021. Districts reported assessment participation and performance, disaggregated by subgroup, for grades K–10 in ELA, K–8 and course-level performance in math, and K–11 and course-level performance in science.

While the types of assessments used to determine grade-level performance, the point in time at which those assessments were administered, and other important factors varied across LEAs, the below state-level snapshot may help identify performance trends, gaps, and opportunities.

**NJDOE's Interim Assessment Data Collection
ELA
Statewide Results**

Student Group	# Participant Scores Reported	% Below Grade Level	% At Grade Level	% Above Grade Level
All Students	945,969	37%	38%	25%
White	399,076	27%	44%	29%
Black or African American	137,804	51%	33%	16%
Hispanic	258,797	52%	31%	17%
Asian	104,514	18%	38%	44%
American Indian or Alaska Native	2,000	37%	42%	22%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	2,209	29%	43%	28%
Two or More Races	41,569	32%	40%	28%
Economically Disadvantaged	296,835	54%	30%	16%
English Learners	70,719	65%	22%	12%
Students with Disabilities	130,878	57%	31%	13%
Migrant Students	365	48%	35%	16%
Military-Connected Students	5,810	34%	47%	18%
Homeless Students	4,584	62%	27%	11%

**NJDOE's Interim Assessment Data Collection
Math
Statewide Results**

Student Group	# Participant Scores Reported	% Below Grade Level	% At Grade Level	% Above Grade Level
All Students	1,016,551	37%	38%	24%
White	434,095	28%	45%	27%
Black or African American	146,154	56%	30%	14%
Hispanic	279,335	52%	31%	17%
Asian	108,588	16%	37%	47%
American Indian or Alaska Native	2,130	36%	40%	24%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	2,456	31%	43%	26%
Two or More Races	43,793	34%	40%	26%
Economically Disadvantaged	317,875	55%	29%	16%
English Learners	77,560	60%	24%	16%
Students with Disabilities	142,572	55%	31%	14%
Migrant Students	400	54%	31%	15%
Military-Connected Students	6,221	33%	50%	17%
Homeless Students	4,902	61%	28%	11%

**NJDOE's Interim Assessment Data Collection
Science
Statewide Results**

Student Group	# Participant Scores Reported	% Below Grade Level	% At Grade Level	% Above Grade Level
All Students	793,852	21%	45%	33%
White	352,619	13%	51%	36%
Black or African American	99,191	37%	40%	23%
Hispanic	206,353	34%	41%	24%
Asian	97,951	8%	41%	52%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1,476	22%	47%	32%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	2,257	19%	45%	35%
Two or More Races	34,005	18%	48%	34%
Economically Disadvantaged	223,175	38%	38%	24%
English Learners	50,511	42%	35%	22%
Students with Disabilities	113,331	33%	45%	22%
Migrant Students	345	31%	43%	26%
Military-Connected Students	5,373	18%	60%	22%
Homeless Students	3,437	46%	37%	17%

[end response]

4. Understanding the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

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

[begin response]

The NJDOE 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.

ARP ESSER Needs Assessment

As part of its application for ARP ESSER funds, each LEA will be 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. The NJDOE regularly provides technical assistance and guidance for LEAs on conducting effective, thoughtful needs assessments, including data sources that might be considered, such as locally-administered assessments and statewide assessments. As part of the technical assistance sessions conducted for the ESSER II funds, the NJDOE provided examples and guiding questions for LEAs to utilize when planning for the effective use of the ESSER Funds, including considerations to support the social, emotional mental health of students and staff. The ARP ESSER technical assistance sessions will build on this work and encourage LEAs to view school improvement as a continuous, systemic and cyclical process.

Annual School Plan System (ASPS)

The NJDOE regularly conducts technical assistance sessions for schools required under the ESEA to complete annual school plans (i.e. schools identified for CSI, TSI, ATSI, and schools implementing Title I schoolwide programs). Those technical assistance sessions provide detailed guidance on how the ASPS may be

leveraged to identify and remediate the impact of COVID-19, including guidance on identifying data to fill gaps caused by the closure schools to in-person learning. Guidance, for example, might address the use of local assessment data to drive strategies to remediate learning gaps, and goals and action steps for implementing those strategies.

CARES Act ESSER Set-Aside Learning Loss Grant

In addition, the NJDOE utilized approximately \$2.5 million in CARES Act ESSER Funds to establish the *Addressing Student Learning Loss* grant. The goal of projects funded under this grant is to significantly reduce students' learning loss resulting from school closures due to COVID-19 through the implementation of evidence-based interventions that scale-up and enhance existing academic and/or non-academic programs and initiatives that mitigate further learning loss and accelerate academic progress. The application provided a comprehensive framework for LEAs to identify the extent of the impact of COVID-19 on student learning and student well-being. For example, successful applicants provided specific information regarding:

- 1) the achievement, performance, and/or non-academic data used to identify the specific student subgroups that will benefit most from programs and services funded under the NGO. The data must analyze performance for all student subgroups within the district and/or schools, targeted grade-levels, and content area(s) of the project; and
- 2) the data-based decision-making process used to analyze data, identify students, and match students to specific evidence-based interventions or strategies.

State Implementation and Scaling-up of Evidence-Based Practices (SISEP) Project

The NJDOE is currently partnering with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill through the State Implementation and Scaling-up of Evidence-Based Practices (SISEP) project. As part of this collaboration, the NJDOE participates in ongoing technical assistance sessions designed to improve implementation infrastructure to advance effective education practices. The SISEP State Liaison meets regularly with the NJDOE implementation team to provide professional learning and coaching, and virtual support for team development and implementation capacity efforts. This work will improve the NJDOE's ability to implement evidence-based interventions with fidelity which will, in turn, improve the impact of the selected intervention. By building its internal capacity, the NJDOE will be better situated to assist LEAs in identifying the extent of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student learning and student well-being.

Climate Assessment Tool

The NJDOE will provide LEAs with the opportunity to utilize a newly designed comprehensive school climate assessment tool to understand the perceptions of students, staff, and families in order to identify and respond to the emergent and ongoing school climate needs in fall 2021. LEAs will be granted access to a provisional online platform which collects and analyzes data that can be utilized to facilitate the development of safe and supportive learning environments.

School Health Assessment and Performance Evaluation

The NJDOE will encourage LEAs to utilize the free tool from the National Center for School Mental Health, School Health Assessment and Performance Evaluation (SHAPE). SHAPE allows LEAs to: map their mental health services and supports; assess system quality using national performance standards; receive custom reports and strategic planning, guidance and resources, including access to the Screening and Assessment Library and Trauma-Responsive Schools Assessment and Resources; and access other LEAs in order to support the development of communities of practices.

Screener Assessment

As described in section A.1, the NJDOE's Start Strong assessment will assist LEAs in identifying academic areas of support students may need as they begin the 2021-2022 school year and in effectively targeting resources and supports and developing instruction and intervention plans based on student needs.

[end response]

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.

[begin response]

Mode of Instruction

As described above, the NJDOE maintains a daily dashboard of operating status for all LEAs and approved private schools for students with disabilities. The dashboard provides a regularly updated listing of the instructional model being employed in each LEA, which are categorized as either hybrid, full in-person, remote, or a combination model, meaning that the LEA employs multiple instructional models across its school buildings. Additionally, it is worth noting that all LEAs, regardless of their operating status, are required to offer all students the [option to participate in fulltime remote learning](#) through the end of the 2020-2021 school year and during 2021 summer programming.

Enrollment

The NJDOE’s student data collection, which occurs twice each school year on October 15 and June 30, allows the NJDOE to disaggregate school- and LEA-level student enrollment data by subgroup. As described above, this fall, the NJDOE added data fields to this collection which require LEAs to report the learning environment of every public school student. The student learning environment field reflects the student’s learning environment over the course of the school year. Students can be fulltime in-person, hybrid, fulltime remote due to district or fulltime remote due to family choice. For example, students who are full-time remote due to district choice on October 15th but shift to a hybrid schedule in the winter and to fulltime on premises by spring would be marked as: “Fulltime remote—district” on October 15th and “Hybrid” on June 30th because they received instruction partially in person and partially remote over the course of their membership in the current school year. The attendance fields, described below, provide insight into the exact number of school days students spent in a remote learning environment.

Attendance

The NJDOE’s June 30th student data collection includes attendance data fields that allow the NJDOE to disaggregate student attendance by subgroup. As described above, this fall the NJDOE added new attendance data fields to this collection in order to determine student attendance on days of remote instruction versus days of in-person instruction. This

information will aid the NJDOE in addressing the extent of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student educational trajectories.

[end response]

- 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.

Response: NJDOE will provide the data to the extent available and post it to its website by June 21, 2021.

- 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.

[begin response]

In Summer 2021 and the 2021-2022 school year, the NJDOE expects that school districts will operate in a full in-person model to the greatest extent possible and consistent with applicable health and safety guidelines. On May 17, 2021, Governor Murphy announced that school districts will be required to fully open buildings beginning fall 2021, with remote learning permitted only in the event that there is a localized outbreak or other emergency. In the 2021-2022 school year, if buildings are open for in-person instruction, parents or guardians will not be able to opt their child out of in-person instruction. The NJDOE understands that in-person instruction provides the greatest opportunities for learning acceleration, therefore on-going support is being provided to school district leaders so they can address any foreseeable challenges. From the beginning of the pandemic, NJDOE guidance has encouraged districts to operate using an in-person model to the extent safe and feasible, while planning as needed to implement any shifts due to changes in COVID-19 risk level data.

[end response]

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;

[begin response]

Since the State’s health and safety requirements for re-opening schools in the 2020-2021 school year went into effect in summer 2020, the NJDOE has provided targeted, individualized supports to LEAs unable to fully reopen for in-person instruction. Supports were delivered based on the specific mitigation strategy that the LEA identifies as preventing the return to in-person instruction. Supports include identifying funding streams that may be used to help implement mitigation strategies, distributing face masks, providing technical assistance in adhering to relevant state and federal rules, and identifying and sharing successful practices among LEAs. The NJDOE also worked closely with the New Jersey Department of Health in their development of COVID-19 public health recommendations for local health departments for K–12 schools. That support has helped LEAs implement mitigation policies described above; as of April 26, 2021, nearly 90% of LEAs were offering at least some in-person instruction. To the extent that the State imposes requirements regarding implementation of health and safety protocol for the 2021-2022 school year, the NJDOE will continue to provide this level of individualized, LEA-specific supports.

Additionally, the NJDOE is in the process of hiring a State School Nurse Consultant, who will provide instrumental support for school nurses and other school health staff in understanding and implementing health and safety strategies for the return to in-person instruction. The NJDOE will also make clear in its ARP ESSER guidance that ESSER funds may be used to implement mitigation strategies in line with CDC guidance.

[end response]

- 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;

[begin response]

On May 17, 2021, Governor Murphy announced that school districts will be required to fully open buildings beginning fall 2021. In the 2021-2022 school year, parents or guardians will not be able to opt their child out of in-person instruction. The NJDOE understands that in-person instruction provides the greatest opportunities for learning acceleration, therefore on-going support is being provided to school district leaders so they can address any foreseeable challenges.

[end response]

- 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

[begin response]

The NJDOE has maintained regular, ongoing consultation with the New Jersey State Department of Health (NJDOH) since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. All state guidance regarding health and safety protocol for PK–12 education services are developed, implemented, and enforced collaboratively by NJDOH and NJDOE. This includes the State’s administration of funds awarded by the CDC to support screening testing in K–12 schools. The state of New Jersey received \$267.5 million in ELC Reopening Schools funds that will be used to support screening testing programs in K–12 schools.

At the local level, LEAs consult regularly with local health officials; all NJDOE and NJDOH guidance insists that all local decision-making regarding health and safety operations of K–12 schools be made by LEAs in close consultation with community members and local health officials.

[end response]

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

Response: As outlined above, the NJDOE will provide routine and comprehensive guidance and technical assistance to its LEAs in the form of guidance on the use of ESSER funds, direct supports provided by the

NJDOE's county offices, and technical assistance based on the specific mitigation strategies that LEAs identify as barriers to the return to in-person learning. As part of its ongoing support for LEAs on the effective use of the ESSER funds, the NJDOE created an interactive website that provides up to date information on all grant opportunities funded through the ESSER funds as well as links to relevant NJDOE and Federal guidance. The NJDOE has partnered with stakeholder organizations to conduct technical assistance sessions and collaborated on the development of a frequently asked questions document.

2. Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plans

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

- i. How the SEA will ensure that each LEA plan includes, or will be modified to include, the extent to which it has adopted policies and a description of any such policies on each of the strategies listed in table B1;
- 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),² 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

² 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.

- 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.

[begin response]

The NJDOE will require that, within 30 days of the NJDOE making ARP ESSER applications available to LEAs, each LEA submit to the NJDOE and post to the LEA's website the LEA's Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan. To ensure that each such plan meets the minimum statutory requirements, and the requirements described in this question, the NJDOE will provide a template that incorporates all required information. The NJDOE will further require that LEAs submit to the NJDOE and post to their websites any revisions of such plans at least every six months through the ARP ESSER grant period.

Regarding question B.2.iv - prior to reopening in the 2020-2021 school year, the NJDOE collected a checklist from each LEA assuring the LEA's compliance with the State's health and safety standards if the LEA was opening for in-person instruction. If any health and safety protocols are required for the 2021-2022 school year, the NJDOE will support LEAs providing in-person instruction in adherence to those protocols.

[end response]

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.

Response: This State Plan reflects the NJDOE's ongoing consultation with stakeholders across the State. The State Plan was posted to the NJDOE's website to give the public an opportunity to provide public comment.

{This section will be updated upon the conclusion of the NJDOE's stakeholder engagement and public comment period announced on May 24, 2021.}

2. Coordinating Funds

Describe to what extent the SEA has and will coordinate Federal COVID-19 pandemic funding and other Federal funding. This description must include:

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

Table C1.

Funding source	Prior/current SEA and LEA uses (including funding amounts, if applicable)	Planned SEA and LEA uses (including funding amounts, if applicable)
ESSER I (CARES Act)	Please see question A.1 for the uses of ESSER I State set-aside funds.	--
GEER I (CARES Act)	N/A – all GEER I funds were dedicated to higher education and allocated by New Jersey’s Office of the Secretary of Higher Education.	--
ESSER II (CRRSA Act)	Please see question A.1 for the uses of ESSER II State set-aside funds.	--
GEER II (CRRSA Act)	All CRRSA Act Section 312(b) GEER II funds were dedicated to higher education and allocated by New Jersey’s Office of the Secretary of Higher Education.	CRRSA Act Section 312(d) GEER funds allocated to EANS will be used in accordance with that statute for services for eligible nonpublic schools.

- 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.

[begin response]

As of 4/26/2021, for ESSER I, the following amounts have been made available to LEAs, or obligated but not expended by the SEA:

- Funds made available to LEAs: \$294,952,374
- SEA obligated but not expended: \$5,994,629.31

As of 4/26/2021, for ESSER II, the following has been made available to LEAs, or obligated but not expended by the SEA:

- Funds made available to LEAs: \$1,113,953,770.00
- SEA obligated but not expended: \$116,366,419.00

The NJDOE keeps track of reimbursements through the twice-monthly reimbursement opportunities. The NJDOE does not have information on LEA obligations and is not able to track LEA obligations.

[end response]

- 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.³

[begin response]

The NJDOE provided detailed guidance on how federal funds, including funds under ESEA, IDEA, and Perkins, can be used during the COVID-19 pandemic on specific student and educator needs related to reopening schools.

Additionally, the NJDOE has used or will use funds from the following programs:

ESEA

Building on grants funded by ESSER II State set-aside, and on grants that will be funded by ARP ESSER State set-aside, the NJDOE will use funds under Part A of Title II of the ESEA to provide professional learning opportunities for educators regarding digital literacy. This professional learning will be designed to help educators and school leaders make student data easier to understand for students, parents and families. The professional supports would directly help districts that choose to utilize their ESSER II funds to provide professional learning on data literacy, growth mindset, and student, parent and educator professional learning. Title II-A funds also supported recent NJDOE efforts to collaborate with educators to develop ELA and math instructional units, to help educators better

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

understand the ELA and math New Jersey Student Learning Standards. The products of that work, as well as the partnerships developed with key teacher leaders, will serve as the base to provide more professional learning around ways to accelerate learning in math, ELA and science. Additionally, in the coming year, Title II-A funds will be utilized to create educator “toolkits” for NJDOE’s recently update academic standards. These resources will be created by educators across various content areas to help educators make interdisciplinary connections and provide authentic, project-based lesson examples that connect the various content areas into one lesson or unit.

The NJDOE will also coordinate funds under the ESEA’s Title IV, Part A, Student Support and Academic Enrichment Program with ESSER-supported activities by exploring student-centered learning acceleration activities in STEM and the arts to help educators and school leaders ensure instructional emphasis on this interdisciplinary instructional approach.

In these ways, ESEA funds will work in tandem with ESSER funds to help level the playing field between educators and families so students, families and educators can better collaborate and partner to support a students’ growth mindset and agency and to find ways to personalize and target each student’s individual instructional needs.

IDEA

The NJDOE has leveraged IDEA funding to continue its support of students with disabilities, educators and families throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The NJDOE collaborated closely with its contracted state university partners, Montclair State University, Rutgers University, and Rowan University to support professional learning and instructional delivery statewide. The work focused on the redesign and reimagination of professional development, technical assistance, and resource development to facilitate the inclusion of students with disabilities in remote instruction environments (via the NJ Inclusive Education Technical Assistance Project); student engagement in remote and hybrid instructional settings utilizing NJ Positive Behavior Support in Schools (NJPBSIS); and support for our most severely disabled students and the educators who work with them to provide remote Community-Based Instruction (CBI) resources during community restrictions. In addition, specialists and consultants at New Jersey’s Learning Resource Center Network continue to provide webinars, workshops and technical assistance to LEAs and families of students with disabilities.

Perkins

NJDOE’s use of Perkins funds complements academic enrichment efforts funded by ESSER by, for example, supporting grant opportunities for LEAs to enhance career awareness in middle grades, supply chain management summer courses for students, and training for coordinators of CTE programs.

ARP-Homeless Children and Youth Fund

New Jersey received approximately \$4.5 million in ARP Homeless I Funds. In accordance with the legislation and with USED's April 22, 2021 correspondence, the NJDOE is considering using the funds to conduct a Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment; provide training for regional coordinators and LEA Homeless liaisons; build SEA capacity to track/monitor and provide technical assistance to LEAs to ensure identification of historically underserved populations such as rural children and youth, tribal children and youth, students of color, children and youth with disabilities, English learners, LGBTQ+ youth, and pregnant, or caregiving students experiencing homelessness; and increase awards to existing McKinney-Vento grantees.

[end response]

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;
- 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
- 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.

[begin response]

The NJDOE will use the funds it reserves under section 2001(f)(1) (totaling 5% of the State's total allocation of ARP ESSER funds) to establish an "Acceleration Coach and Educator Support" grant for LEAs. LEAs will use these grant funds to implement professional learning for educators in skills and topics that will empower them to better meet the needs of their students. Permitted topics of professional learning might include, but are not limited to:

- Support of Intervention and Referral Services and Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports and Response to Intervention, that expand the LEA's capacity to stand up effective, high-quality learning acceleration activities supported by the Learning Acceleration grant that NJDOE made available in March 2021;
- Development of positive school climates that promote the social, emotional, and well-being of students using universal tier I supports, strategies, and interventions;
- Implementation of social and emotional learning in classroom, schools, and communities;
- Culturally responsive teaching practices that acknowledge and affirm students' cultural identities and expand educators' understanding of the relationship between a student's cultural background and their academic, social, and emotional needs.
- Digital literacy and equitable access to high quality curriculum and instructional technology with a focus on understanding how access differs for students of poverty, of color, with special needs, and English learners;
- Use of local and state assessment data to improve instruction;
- Engaging educators and parents in the community to prioritize standards, providing scaffolding and personalized supports through extended learning and ensuring equitable access to grade level standards;
- Identifying the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on different student subgroups and based on differing levels of access to in-person learning since March 2020; and
- Other professional learning that will empower educators to better meet the needs of their students.

LEAs will be required to spend Acceleration Coach and Educator Support grants on professional learning opportunities tailored to students' academic as well as social, emotional, and mental health needs.

Additionally, the NJDOE will use these funds to support the costs of assessments designed to measure student readiness to engage with grade-level learning, including the Start Strong assessments and a Kindergarten Readiness Assessment. These assessments are important tools in the State and LEA's approach to developing evidence-based interventions to address the academic impact of lost instructional time. As outlined in section A.3, various data on the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of students will be available to NJDOE to help continuously evaluate the State's educational needs.

[end response]

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;
- 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
- 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.

Response: The NJDOE will use the funds it reserves under section 2001(f)(2) (totaling not less than 1 percent of the State's total allocation of ARP ESSER funds) to establish a Summer Enrichment Activities grant to LEAs. These grants will support research-based academic enrichment activities such as summer learning academies and 1:1 tutoring, as well as summer activities that support the broader learning ecosystem of students, staff, and families, such as cultivating a growth mindset in students, professional learning for educators regarding the use of universal screening assessments, and education and training programs for

parents and caregivers. LEAs will be required to target funds to content areas that have been most impacted by the disruptions of COVID-19, such as STEM.

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;
- 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
- 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.

Response: The NJDOE will use the funds it reserves under section 2001(f)(3) (totaling not less than 1 percent of the State's total allocation of ARP ESSER funds) to establish a Comprehensive Beyond the School Day Activities grant to LEAs. These grants will support research-based academic enrichment activities during out-of-school time (e.g. before-school, after-school, weekends, and holiday breaks) such as 1:1 tutoring, as well as activities that support the broader learning ecosystem of students, staff, and families, such as cultivating a growth mindset in students, professional learning for educators in the use of universal screening assessments, and education and training programs for parents and caregivers. LEAs will be required to target funds to content areas that have been most impacted by the disruptions of COVID-19, such as STEM.

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.

[begin response]

The NJDOE will use funds reserved under section 2001(f)(4) for the following activities:

Grants for Otherwise Unfunded Entities

As the NJDOE did with its ESSER I and ESSER II state set-aside, make ARP ESSER grants available to educational entities that did not receive funds under Title I, Part A of the ESEA in FY2020 (e.g. non-Title I LEAs, State Agencies, and public receiving schools).

MTSS Staff Grants to LEAs

Establish a grant to LEAs to support the hiring of staff to develop and implement Tier II (targeted, small group interventions) and Tier III (intensive interventions) services in accordance with a multi-tiered systems of supports framework that addresses students' and educators' mental health and social emotional needs.

Accelerated Learning Educator Response Team (A.L.E.R.T.)

The NJDOE will enter into MOUs with institutions of higher education (IHEs) and/or contracts with consultants, under which those IHEs or consultants serve as "accelerated learning educator response teams" by providing learning acceleration supports for districts. Specifically, the IHEs and/or consultants would develop and integrate within existing LEA systems (e.g. MTSS, I&RS, and RTI) a learning acceleration framework which includes:

- comprehensive professional learning opportunities;
- an accelerated learning toolkit;
- statewide access to standards-based K–12 digital content in all content areas to strengthen how technology can be used to empower learners; and
- other targeted supports.

The proposals detailed throughout Section D. of this State Plan are based on NJDOE's assessment of the most effective use of State-level funds as of the drafting of this plan. The NJDOE recognizes, however, that it must continue to evaluate the State's ever-evolving educational needs, and consistent with U.S. Department of Education guidance retains the flexibility to adjust its use of funds accordingly. To that end, these proposals are subject to revision as circumstances change, new health guidance is released, and additional information becomes available regarding the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of

New Jersey students and educators. The NJDOE will continue to ensure that, within the relevant federal requirements, activities funded by State-level ARP ESSER funds are aligned to the State's current needs and circumstances.

[end response]

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

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

1. LEA Plans for the Use of ARP ESSER Funds

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

- i. The extent to which and how the funds will be used to implement prevention and mitigation strategies that are, to the greatest extent practicable, in line with the most recent CDC guidance, in order to continuously and safely operate schools for in-person learning;
- 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;
- iii. How the LEA will spend its remaining ARP ESSER funds consistent with section 2001(e)(2) of the ARP Act; and
- 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.

Response: The NJDOE will require that, within a reasonable timeframe of the NJDOE making ARP ESSER applications available to LEAs, each LEA submit its plan for the use of ARP ESSER Funds to the NJDOE. To ensure that each such plan meets the minimum statutory requirements and the requirements described in this question, the NJDOE will provide a template that incorporates all required information, including LEA consultation requirements.

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.

Response: See response to [question E.1](#) above.

3. Describe how the SEA will support and monitor its LEAs in using ARP ESSER funds.

The description must include:

- i. How the SEA will support and monitor its LEAs' implementation of evidence-based interventions that respond to students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs, such as through summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs, or extended school year programs – including the extent to which the SEA will collect evidence of the effectiveness of interventions employed;
- 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
- 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.

[begin response]

ARP ESSER funds will be monitored as part of the NJDOE Collaborative Monitoring process. The NJDOE utilizes a Subrecipient Risk Assessment Tool which is designed to meet the requirements set forth in 2 CFR § 200.331 for pass-through entities of federal grant awards. Specifically, the tool determines the LEA's risk of noncompliance with the terms and conditions of the federal award, and the level of support the LEA will receive through monitoring activities conducted by the State. In the current NJDOE process, all LEAs are ranked according to a weighted and scaled score for each indicator. LEAs then are placed into one of three "tiers" which determines their level of support. LEAs that are placed in the "intensive tier" participate in the onsite collaborative monitoring process. LEAs placed in the "targeted support" tier will undergo a desk monitoring for the ESSER funds, as well as fiscal desk audits and targeted data reviews. A specific desk monitoring protocol will be used to supplement the existing desk monitoring protocols. The remaining LEAs are placed in the "universal support" tier, which includes supports provided to all LEAs such as webinars, guidance documents, training, and technical assistance.

The NJDOE revises its Risk Assessment Tool on an annual basis, and for the 2021-2022 school year, an interdepartmental working group will be convened to

review and update the tool as necessary. For the 2021-2022 school year, the tool will be revised to include indicators relevant to LEAs' use of ARP ESSER funds.

In addition to revising the Risk Assessment Tool, the NJDOE will update the monitoring protocols to ensure the SEA is monitoring LEA 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;
- interventions employed to specifically address 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
- how the LEA used 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:
 - 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
 - Students most at-risk of dropping out of school.

[end response]

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

Response: NJDOE will provide guidance and technical assistance on the use of ESSER funds that highlights how allowable activities may be used to advance educational equity. As part of their application, LEAs will be required to provide information on their plans to use ARP ESSER funds to implement an equitable and inclusive return to in-person instruction.

F. Supporting the Educator Workforce

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

1. Supporting and Stabilizing the Educator Workforce

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

[begin response]

The NJDOE 2021-2022 Teacher Shortage Area report submitted to the U.S. Department of Education designated the following subject matters as teacher shortage areas:

- English as a Second Language—Bilingual Education discipline;
- English as a Second Language—English as a Second Language discipline;
- World Languages;
- Mathematics;
- Science;
- Special Education; and
- Career and Technical Education.

The "Educator Workforce Data" table below displays the number of FTEs in each of these subject areas employed in NJ public schools in the 2019-2020 school year.

Educator Workforce Data

Area	Data on shortages and needs
Bilingual educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unduplicated Total FTE Teachers in all Certification Areas, 1,840; • Percent of Unduplicated Total FTE Teachers in all Certification Areas, 1.55%; • Unduplicated Total Out of Field Teachers, 82; • Unduplicated Total Out of Field Teachers, 0.07%

Area	Data on shortages and needs
Special Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unduplicated Total FTE Teachers in all Certification Areas, 23,041; • Percent of Unduplicated Total FTE Teachers in all Certification Areas, 19.37%; • Unduplicated Total Out of Field Teachers, 455; • Unduplicated Total Out of Field Teachers, 0.38%
World Languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unduplicated Total FTE Teachers in all Certification Areas, 4,764; • Percent of Unduplicated Total FTE Teachers in all Certification Areas, 4.00%; • Unduplicated Total Out of Field Teachers, 154
English as a second language educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unduplicated Total FTE Teachers in all Certification Areas, 2,318; • Percent of Unduplicated Total FTE Teachers in all Certification Areas, 1.95%; • Unduplicated Total Out of Field Teachers, 40; • Unduplicated Total Out of Field Teachers, 0.03%
Math	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unduplicated Total FTE Teachers in all Certification Areas, 10,039; • Percent of Unduplicated Total FTE Teachers in all Certification Areas, 8.44%; • Unduplicated Total Out of Field Teachers, 236; • Unduplicated Total Out of Field Teachers, 0.20%
Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unduplicated Total FTE Teachers in all Certification Areas, 7,250; • Percent of Unduplicated Total FTE Teachers in all Certification Areas, 6.09%; • Unduplicated Total Out of Field Teachers, 177; • Unduplicated Total Out of Field Teachers, 0.15%
CTE educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unduplicated Total FTE Teachers in all Certification Areas, 2,202; • Percent of Unduplicated Total FTE Teachers in all Certification Areas, 1.85%; • Unduplicated Total Out of Field Teachers, 363; • Unduplicated Total Out of Field Teachers, 0.31%
Early Childhood educators	<p>As indicated in the NJDOE’s Teacher Shortage Area report submitted to USED, the NJDOE has not determined early childhood to be a teacher shortage area. Of the 346 traditional route candidates prepared in the 15-16 school year by New Jersey Educator Preparation Programs, 189 (54.6%) of them were hired. This is consistent with data from years prior.</p>

Additionally, the "Student to Staff Ratios" table below shows ratios of students and staff members in the State for the 2019-2020 school year:

Student to Staff Ratios

Ratio	State Ratio
Students to Teachers	12:1
Students to Administrators	148:1
Teachers to Administrators	12:1
Students to Librarians/Media Specialists	1113:1
Students to Nurses	519:1
Students to Counselors	351:1
Students to Child Study Team Members	240:1

[end response]

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

[begin response]

The NJDOE has used and will continue to use federal funds to support a variety of initiatives for meeting LEA staffing needs:

- As detailed in question D.1.iii, the NJDOE will use the funds it reserves under section 2001(f)(1) (totaling 5% of the State's total allocation of ARP ESSER funds) to establish a grant for LEAs to support high-quality professional learning opportunities. These opportunities may cover a range of topics that will empower educators to better meet the academic and social emotional needs of their students.
- The NJDOE also designated \$30 million from its ESSER II State set-aside for the provision of mental health services and supports for students and educators, including through contracted service providers to support LEA students and staff, as outlined in question A.1.
- The NJDOE allocated \$100 million from the Coronavirus Relief Fund to assist LEAs with defraying costs associated with reopening schools for the 2020-2021 school year, including payroll and benefit costs of those

employees whose services are substantially dedicated to mitigating or responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

[end response]

- 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).

[begin response]

The NJDOE has taken several actions to help fill staffing shortages throughout the 2020-2021 school year, and will continue to evaluate whether it will be possible and beneficial to extend these flexibilities into 2021-2022:

- Temporarily extended the number of days that certificated individuals serving in an instructional area outside of their credentials may fill vacant teaching positions;
- Temporarily extended the time limitation in which a substitute non-instructional school nurse can serve in a single position within a single district;
- Recognizing that teacher candidates had inequitable test access and/or fewer opportunities to test due to COVID-19, authorized the issuance of temporary initial certifications to teacher candidates who were unable to take the assessments required for certification; and
- Provided temporary flexibility for teacher candidates who were not able to complete the NJDOE's required performance assessment in the usual manner with national scoring.

Additionally, in May 2021 Governor Murphy signed legislation designed to help alleviate staffing shortages by reducing the number of semester-hour credits required to receive a substitute credential for certain candidates applying for the credential between May 11, 2021 and June 30, 2023. Pursuant to that legislation, the NJDOE will examine issues and develop recommendations as to whether that application window should be extended.

Building on robust and longstanding efforts to diversify the educator workforce, this year:

- In the 2020-2021 school year, the NJDOE made \$750,000 in state grant funding available to eligible entities to recruit, train, and place new teachers, with special emphasis on minority teachers;

- Governor Murphy's proposed FY22 budget includes \$750,000 for Minority Teacher Development Grants and \$550,000 to encourage retention and diversification within the teaching profession.

[end response]

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).

[begin response]

The NJDOE has developed and will continue to develop a number of strategies to support LEAs in increasing access to student support staff.

ESSER II State Set-Aside Mental Health Grant

The NJDOE designated \$30 million from the State set-aside for grants to LEAs to provide mental health services and supports for students and educators. Among the allowable uses of these grant funds was contracting with community-based providers to increase LEA capacity to provide mental health services and supports based on student and staff needs.

ARP ESSER State Set-Aside

The NJDOE will use a portion of its ARP ESSER State set-aside to establish a grant to LEAs to support the hiring of staff to develop and implement Tier II and Tier III services in accordance with an MTSS framework that address students' and educators' mental health and social emotional needs.

Nursing Service Limitation Flexibility

The NJDOE temporarily modified its regulations to extend, for the 2020-2021 school year, the time limitation in which a substitute non-instructional school nurse can serve in a single position within a single district.

Clayton Model MOU

As part of the State set-aside from the CARES Act ESSER funds, the NJDOE entered into an MOU with Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey its Senator Walter Rand Institute for Public Affairs (WRI) for expansion of The Clayton Model, a universal, school-based social emotional learning (SEL) program that

serves all students within the school. The Clayton Model uses two educational strategies that help to enhance positive youth development and academic achievement. The first strategy teaches students about processing, integrating, and selectively applying social and emotional skills. Social and emotional skills include identifying emotions from social cues, goal-setting, conflict resolution, and decision-making. Students are taught to apply these skills in developmentally, contextually, and culturally appropriate ways. Students also learn to apply SEL skills in order to prevent the occurrence of specific problem behaviors, such as interpersonal violence, bullying, and school failure. The second strategy involves fostering students' social-emotional development by creating safe and caring learning environments using tiered supports that incorporate peer and family activities, improved classroom management and teaching practices, and whole-school community-building activities. Safe and supportive school communities allow students to feel valued, experience a greater motivation to achieve, and develop a set of social-emotional competencies in a supportive setting that can lead to positive outcomes.

Collaborators in this work will build capacity to train SEL coordinators and specialists, ensure this shared services model is implemented with fidelity, and identify systemic and structural challenges when implementing the Clayton Model in new sites. Funding will also be used to build the capacity of collaborating organizations to expand the Clayton Model.

Trauma Informed Training MOA

In addition, the State used \$1.1 million in CARES Act ESSER Funds to enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (NJDCF) to provide trauma informed training for school districts using several approaches in a program called "Developing Resiliency with Engaging Approaches to Maximize Success (DREAMS)." Educators and providers throughout New Jersey have noted that, due to the pandemic, families are identifying challenges in managing anxiety, fear, and/or stress. Those challenges affect their ability to help their youth manage their own feelings of anxiety, fear, and lack of connectedness. Stakeholders identify these challenges as a high priority need, exacerbated by social distancing and reduced access to mental/behavioral and substance use disorder supports for youth and families. This funding opportunity will provide access to new and innovative approaches for educators to support youth and families during the public health crisis and in the aftermath to help youth through the recovery and resiliency process. DREAMS will promote healthy and healing school environments by reducing restraints and disciplinary actions and providing teachers with resources and support to ensure job satisfaction and classrooms that are conducive for youth/student learning.

Comprehensive Mental Health and SEL Guidance

To support the social and emotional competencies of educators, the NJDOE developed a series of professional learning modules on social and emotional learning (SEL). Module 1 provides participants with an overview of SEL. Modules 2–6 provide a deeper understanding of each SEL competency: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills. The modules provide LEAs with all materials necessary to conduct professional development sessions and facilitate professional learning communities.

As part of the NJDOE's ongoing efforts to support LEAs in addressing mental health concerns, the NJDOE, as part of its interagency Mental Health Working Group, partnered with Northeast and Caribbean Mental Health Technology Transfer Center to develop a school mental health resource guide. The resource guide focuses on the practical application of implementing a comprehensive school-based mental health framework. In addition, through this partnership, the NJDOE will provide three regional meetings with LEAs during the summer of 2021 which will provide an overview of comprehensive school mental health services, strategies for identifying needs, and ideas for how to target funds to specific tiers and gaps in existing services. The regional meetings will be followed by a series of webinars in the fall. The NJDOE will also provide opportunities for LEAs to apply for and receive individual district coaching sessions. Individual coaching sessions are designed to provide more intensive supports to district level teams on an as needed basis. These sessions will be available to all schools and districts on a first come first serve basis.

[end response]

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).

[begin response]

The NJDOE collects nearly all of the elements described in G.1.i-vi above through existing, ongoing data collections. Relevant data elements collected by NJDOE include:

- Student attendance;
- Use of exclusionary discipline;
- Access to and participation in advanced coursework;
- Student access to technology;
- Access to high-quality educators;
- Access to school counselors, nurses, and other support staff; and
- Fiscal data that is comparable across the state, including per-pupil expenditures.

In addition to the data elements identified above, the NJDOE developed a CARES Act Performance Report which collected LEA data on ESSER fund expenditures.

The NJDOE will revise this report, as necessary, to include additional data elements required by CRRSA and ARP ESSER.

[end response]

2. Monitoring and Internal Controls

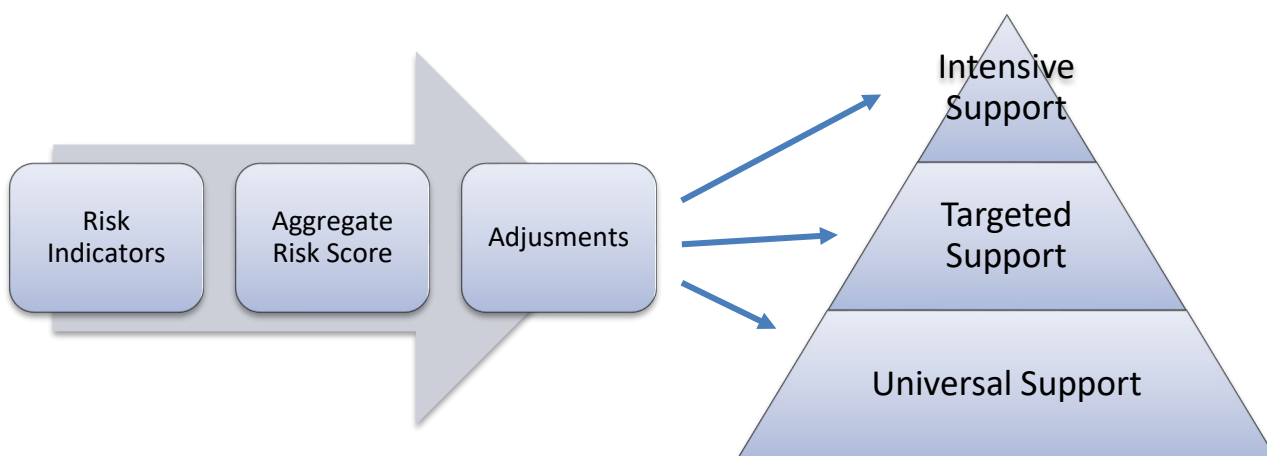
Describe how the SEA will implement appropriate fiscal monitoring of and internal controls for the ARP ESSER funds (e.g., by updating the SEA's plan for monitoring funds and internal controls under the CARES and CRRSA Acts; addressing potential sources of waste, fraud, and abuse; conducting random audits; 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.

[begin response]

Risk Assessment

The NJDOE utilizes a Risk Assessment Tool to identify districts selected for monitoring. The Collaborative Monitoring Risk Assessment Tool is designed to meet the requirements set forth in 2 CFR § 200.331 for pass-through entities of federal grant awards. Specifically, the tool is used to evaluate each LEA's aggregate risk of noncompliance with federal and state fiscal regulations and requirements, and to determine the level of support the LEA will receive through monitoring activities conducted by the NJDOE. The current process is reflected in Figure 1, below:

Figure 1



LEAs with the highest Aggregate Risk Scores based on all applicable Risk Indicators are placed in the Intensive Support Tier, unless they have undergone

onsite monitoring in the last two years or are scheduled to undergo monitoring via the NJDOE's district accountability system in the current year. LEAs with the next highest Aggregate Risk Scores based on all applicable Risk Indicators are placed in the Targeted Support Tier. All other LEAs are placed in the Universal Support Tier.

The 2020-2021 Risk Assessment Tool included 12 Risk Indicators. Each indicator has between two and seven categories for evaluating the risk level of LEA performance. Higher numbered categories are associated with higher risk levels. Indicators 1 through 3 are related to academic performance; the highest possible risk level is 5 for these indicators. Indicators 4 through 12 focus on fiscal performance. The highest possible risk level for each fiscal-related indicator is 10. LEAs receive an Assessed Risk Level on each applicable Risk Indicator. Some LEAs are not assessed on all risk indicators. For example, LEAs serving grades K-8 are not assessed on Indicator 3, four- and five-year graduation rates. When an LEA cannot be assessed on an indicator, the highest possible risk level for that indicator is zero. To be placed in the Intensive or Targeted Support Tiers, LEAs must be assessed on eight or more indicators.

With regard to internal controls, the NJDOE first identifies a Grantee's risks, such as possible misuse of funds by the subrecipients, lack of required documentation to support costs, lack of LEA internal controls, and lack of NJDOE capacity to complete subrecipient monitoring and application review. The NJDOE has identified solutions for mitigating the identified risks: All LEA applications are reviewed prior to approval, including a review of required assurances; technical assistance will be provided to all eligible LEAs; the NJDOE Subrecipient monitoring plan will include the use of a risk assessment tool designed to identify the LEAs with the greatest risk. Identified LEAs will be monitored either onsite or through a desk monitoring. Corrective Action Plans (CAPs) will be developed for LEAs with monitoring findings. The CAPs may include, among other actions, the revision of policies/procedures or recovery of funds if appropriate.

Primary Documentation to Prevent Improper Payments

All LEAs are awarded funds via the Electronic Web Enabled Grant System (EWEG). The list of allowable uses in the application is linked to the budget detail pages, so LEAs must budget funds for all selected allowable uses. LEA draw downs of grant funds are approved by the Office of Grants Management through EWEG. In order to receive funds, an LEA, in the ESSER Application, must agree to the assurances outlined by USED Guidance. EWEG Internal controls are built into the ESSER Application to assist LEAs in accurately completing the budget process. LEAs are required to check one or more of the allowable uses (provided by USED guidance). For each selected allowable use, a comment box opens in which the LEA provides an explanation of the identified need for which funds will be used. The LEA will not be able to move forward without providing an explanation in the comment box for each selected allowable use. The allowable uses are linked directly to the budget detail section of the

ESSER Application. The LEA is required to budget funds for each selected allowable use. The ESSER Application cannot be submitted for review and approval until the budget matches all selected allowable uses. Applications are reviewed and approved by staff in the Office of Grants Management. Reimbursement requests are reviewed and approved by staff in the Office of Grants Management.

Oversight Integrity Monitors:

In addition to the process outlined above, NJDOE also will engage the services of a COVID-19 Oversight Integrity Monitors (“Integrity Monitors”) in relation to these funds. The purpose of the Integrity Monitors is to identify any fraud, waste or abuse that maybe occurring with these funds. Integrity Monitors will monitor between 40 and 60 LEAs receiving ARP ESSER funds based on risk. Additionally, Integrity Monitors will also be monitoring the SEA funds.

On July 17, 2020, Governor Murphy signed Executive Order 166 (“EO 166”), which, among other things, established the COVID-19 Compliance and Oversight Task Force (the “Taskforce”) and the Governor’s Disaster Recovery Office (GDRO). The purpose of the Taskforce is to advise each principal department and agency of this State, as well as each independent State authority COVID-19 Recovery Program participant, that receive or administer COVID-19 Recovery Funds regarding compliance with federal and State law and direction as to how to mitigate the risks of waste, fraud, and abuse.

Pursuant to EO 166, the Taskforce has issued guidelines regarding the appointment and responsibilities of Integrity Monitors. State Agencies may retain and appoint Integrity Monitors to oversee the disbursement of COVID-19 Recovery Funds and the administration of a COVID-19 Recovery Program. Integrity Monitors are intended to serve as important parts of the State’s accountability infrastructure while working with NJDOE in developing measures to prevent, detect, and remediate inefficiency and malfeasance in the expenditure of COVID-19 Recovery Funds.

EO 166 requires State Agencies to identify an Accountability Officer to serve as central point of contact for tracking COVID-19 funds within each agency or authority and is responsible for working with and serving as a direct point of contact for the GDRO and the Taskforce.

The Integrity Monitors support monitoring and oversight and ensure that NJDOE administers COVID-19 Recovery Funds in compliance with program, financial, and administrative requirements set forth in the federal-state grant agreement, the State-Recovery Program Participant sub-grant agreement, and applicable federal and state laws, regulations, and guidelines.

[end response]

Appendix A: School Operating Status and Instructional Mode Data Template

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

Response: Note: This data is forthcoming. The NJDOE will submit it to the U.S. Department of Education and post it to the NJDOE’s website by June 21, 2020.

Table 1

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

Add or change rows as needed

Number of schools	All schools	Offered to all students	Offered to some students	Not offered
Remote or online only	#	#	#	#
School buildings open with both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)	#	#	#	#
School buildings open with full-time in-person instruction	#	#	#	#

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).

Table 2

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

Add or change rows as needed

Number of students	Total enrollment	Remote or online only	Both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)	Full-time in-person instruction
Students from low-income families	#	#	#	#
White, not Hispanic	#	#	#	#
Black or African American, not Hispanic	#	#	#	#
Hispanic, of any race	#	#	#	#
Asian, not Hispanic	#	#	#	#
American Indian or Alaskan Native, not Hispanic	#	#	#	#
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, not Hispanic	#	#	#	#
Two or more races, not Hispanic	#	#	#	#
Race/Ethnicity information not available	#	#	#	#

Number of students	Total enrollment	Remote or online only	Both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)	Full-time in-person instruction
English learners	#	#	#	#
Children with disabilities	#	#	#	#
Students experiencing homelessness	#	#	#	#
Children and youth in foster care	#	#	#	#
Migratory students	#	#	#	#

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

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

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

Appendix C: Assurances

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

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

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

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

Appendix D

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

Notice to All Applicants

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

To Whom Does This Provision Apply?

Section 427 of GEPA affects applicants for new grant awards under this program. **All applicants for new awards must include information in their applications to address this new provision in order to receive funding under this program.**

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

What Does This Provision Require?

Section 427 requires each applicant for funds (other than an individual person) to include in its application a description of the steps the applicant proposes to take to ensure equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally-assisted program for students, teachers, and other program

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

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

Draft: New Jersey 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.

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 and reference the OMB Control Number 1894-0005.