

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



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

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

## Introduction

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

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

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

## Instructions

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

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

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

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

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

**Cover Page**

**Grantee and Contact Information**

**ARP ESSER PR Award Number (e.g., S425U2100XX): S425U210037**

**SEA Contact: Dr. LaTricia Townsend**

**Telephone: 984-236-2786**

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<p>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.</p>	
<p><b>Chief State School Officer or Authorized Representative (Printed Name)</b></p> <p><b>LaTricia Townsend</b></p>	
<p><b>Signature of Authorized SEA Representative</b></p> <p><b>(b) (6)</b></p>	<p>Date: 08/31/2021</p>

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

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

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

The North Carolina State Board of Education (SBE) and NC Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), in consultation with the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS), developed *Lighting Our Way Forward: North Carolina's Guidebook for Reopening Public Schools*<sup>1</sup> in response to the COVID-19 public health crisis. The purpose of this guidance document was to support NC public schools and communities in developing their plans and strategies for reopening schools in the 2020-2021 school year. *Lighting Our Way Forward: NC's Guidebook for Reopening Public Schools* provides considerations, recommendations, and best practices to ensure a safe and successful 2020-2021 school year.

Except for requirements designated by executive orders issued by the Governor's Office, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, North Carolina General Statutes, and North Carolina State Board of Education Policy, the guidance and recommendations provided in the *Lighting Our Way Forward* were not mandated. Public School Units (PSUs) have the authority and the flexibility to meet their local needs and be responsive to their communities. As impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic evolve, the SBE and NCDPI will continue to provide updated guidance and recommendations to PSUs and schools on navigating the academic, social, and emotional effects on students and employees.

Per North Carolina state law<sup>2</sup> (SL2020-3), each PSU was required to develop a Remote Instruction Plan<sup>3</sup> (Plan) for the 2020-2021 school year and submit its Plan to the SBE no later than July 20, 2020. The Plan was to provide a framework for delivering remote instruction to all students within a PSU. Utilizing these frameworks PSUs in North Carolina quickly prepared for and shifted to one of three phases of learning throughout the state, Plan A (minimal physical distancing), Plan B (moderate physical distancing), or Plan C (remote learning). To effectively ensure student access to learning opportunities PSUs developed their Plan and where needed delivered computers and devices to students and/or provided mobile WiFi for homes, communities, or via school buses. Additionally, PSUs, regardless of plan, focused on the social and emotional well-being for all students. PSUs provided mental health support and counseling,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1z5Mp2XzOOPkBYN4YvROz4YOyNIF2UoWq9EZfrjvN4x8/edit#heading=h.34h588posesy>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ncleg.gov/Sessions/2019/Bills/Senate/PDF/S704v6.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/districts-schools-support/digital-teaching-and-learning/remote-instruction-plan>

intentional SEL activities, and family learning sessions. NCDPI supported PSUs by developing SEL resources including an [SEL Crisis Response website](#)<sup>4</sup>.

Operating under federal waivers approved by the US Department of Agriculture, NC transitioned school-based nutrition programs to community-based programs. The flexibility not only reduced the administrative burden on PSUs but increased access to meals for all children in need. On average, NC's School Nutrition Programs provided 250,000 meals per day for students/children across the state.

Despite the large number of PSUs and students engaged in remote learning, less than 1% of students were unaccounted for in NC's public schools<sup>5</sup>.

**Please include, if applicable, how your State will submit and encourage its LEAs to submit lessons learned and best practices to the Department's [Safer Schools and Campuses Best Practices Clearinghouse](#) so that they can be shared with other States and LEAs.**

The NC Department of Public Instruction, through the Office of Learning Recovery and Acceleration (OLR), will conduct a systematic assessment of the various initiatives undertaken throughout the state and funded through ESSER. The ESSER allocations have provided North Carolina and states throughout the nation with an opportunity to directly address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic with targeted interventions. In looking broadly at the impact of the pandemic, we recognize that the impact extends beyond academic learning recovery and includes the social and emotional well-being of children throughout our state. PSU and state-level initiatives seek to address not only the broad array of impacts, but the disproportionate nature of the impact on students. As NCDPI identifies "promising practices" in our state, we will first seek to scale and replicate those programs in a proof-of-concept fashion. With additional testing and analysis, we intend to identify programs and practices with the greatest potential and impact and subsequently highlight those programs on our searchable dashboard of Promising Practices in North Carolina. As the Office of Learning Recovery and Acceleration identifies programs and practices for inclusion on our dashboard, we will encourage and support LEAs as they submit their programs to the Department's Safer Schools and Campuses Best Practices Clearinghouse.

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.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://sites.google.com/dpi.nc.gov/ncdpielremoteteaching/home>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ncleg.gov/documentsites/committees/JLEOC/Committee%20Meetings/2019-2020%20Committee%20Meetings/December%201,%202020/Remote%20Teaching%20and%20Learning.pdf>

The Office of Learning Recovery is working with units inside NCDPI and external stakeholders to determine the top issues currently facing students and schools across North Carolina. Based on our initial work, we have identified three primary issues, some of which are long-standing but exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. These top issues include:

1. Academic recovery in reading and math<sup>6</sup>
2. Addressing the social, emotional health and well-being of children throughout the state
3. Accountability reform

As a state North Carolina, through the State Board of Education and Superintendent of Public Instruction, have developed the following strategic goals and focus areas:

#### Strategic Goals

1. Eliminate opportunity gaps by 2025
  - a. Literacy
  - b. Student Services
2. Improve school and district performance by 2025
  - a. Accountability Reform
3. Increase educator preparedness to meet the needs of every student by 2025
  - a. Human Capital

Guided by our strategic goals and focus areas North Carolina will address our top issues as they are currently identified. Additional issues will be included and addressed as they are identified.

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

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<sup>6</sup> [https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/SB\\_Meetings/ViewMeeting.aspx?S=10399&MID=8681](https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/SB_Meetings/ViewMeeting.aspx?S=10399&MID=8681)

instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years, students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures, and LGBTQ+ students).

To the extent possible, this description should include data on indicators such as estimates of the academic impact of lost instructional time,<sup>7</sup> chronic absenteeism, student engagement, and social-emotional well-being.

i. Students from low-income families,

Students from low-income families were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, including access to high quality remote learning due to a lack of “last mile” broadband access. As a result, the two highest priorities are:

- Recovery from lost instructional time
- Addressing the social-emotional needs due to social isolation.

ii. Students from each racial or ethnic group (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by race or ethnicity),

Students from racial and ethnic groups in North Carolina have historically underperformed their white peers. These academic opportunity gaps have only widened due to the pandemic. As a result, the two highest priorities are:

- Recovery from lost instructional time
- Academic acceleration in math and reading

iii. Gender (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by gender),

The Office of Learning Recovery is currently working with the Accountability Division at NCDPI to determine the specific impact on student groups by gender. All students throughout North Carolina have been negatively impacted by COVID-19 and thus the two highest priorities for underserved student groups by gender are:

- Addressing the social-emotional needs due to social isolation
- Recovery from lost instructional time

iv. English learners,

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<sup>7</sup> For the purposes of the plan, “academic impact of lost instructional time” refers to “learning loss” experienced by students as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, as referenced in the ARP Act and the CRRSA Act.

Emerging data suggests greater academic losses for English language learners. Additionally, initial data suggests English language learners are returning to live instruction at greater percentages than all students as a whole. Based on this initial data, the three highest priorities for English language learners are:

- Recovery from lost instructional time
- Acceleration in core academic areas
- Acceleration in English Language proficiency development

v. Children with disabilities (including infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (“IDEA”)),

Initial data suggest children with disabilities have seen decreasing rates of proficiency in mathematics and since the resumption of in-person learning, have returned to live instruction at rates greater than the population as a whole. At this time, the two highest priorities for children with disabilities are:

- Academic recovery and acceleration in math
- Addressing the social-emotional needs due to social isolation

vi. Students experiencing homelessness,

Students experiencing homelessness were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, the impact included a lack of access to high quality remote learning due to limited broadband access. Additionally, these students experienced increased social isolation due remote instruction, pandemic quarantine, and limited access to their classmates and teachers. As a result, the two highest priorities are:

- Recovery from lost instructional time
- Addressing the social-emotional needs due to social isolation.

vii. Children and youth in foster care,

Like many students throughout North Carolina were subject to primarily remote-based instruction for the majority of the academic year. Additionally, these students experienced the same levels of social isolation as their peers. As a result, the two highest priorities for children and youth in foster care are:

- Recovery from lost instructional time

- Addressing the social-emotional needs due to social isolation

viii. Migratory students, and

Migratory students suffered from disruptions in the academic year, losing instructional time, and managing the social emotional impacts of isolation. Emerging data suggests migratory students have returned to in-person learning at rates greater than the population as a whole. The two highest priorities for migratory students are:

- Recovery from lost instructional time
- Addressing the social-emotional needs due to social isolation

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).

North Carolina designates “at-risk” in its general statutes<sup>8</sup>. Current estimates suggest roughly 23% of the total population of students fall into the “at risk” category. These students are at-risk of academic failure, not successfully progressing, or in danger of not graduating. As a result, the three highest priorities for these students are:

- Recovery from lost instructional time
- Acceleration in core academic areas
- Addressing the social-emotional needs due to social isolation

**Table A1.**

Data Sources are derived from the following statewide assessment administered: Reading – 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Beginning of Year, English II, Math I and Math III

<b>Student group</b>	<b>Highest priority needs</b>
Students from low-income families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEL</li> <li>• Fall Tested NC Math 1 – 17 percentage point decrease in proficiency</li> <li>• Fall Tested NC Math 3 – 11 percentage point decrease in proficiency</li> <li>• Attendance</li> </ul>

<sup>8</sup> General Statue that defines at risk students:  
[https://www.ncleg.net/enactedlegislation/statutes/html/bysection/chapter\\_115c/gs\\_115c-105.41.html](https://www.ncleg.net/enactedlegislation/statutes/html/bysection/chapter_115c/gs_115c-105.41.html)

Student group	Highest priority needs	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discipline data</li> <li>• Youth Risk Behavior Survey<sup>9</sup></li> </ul>	
<p>Students from each racial or ethnic background used by the State for reporting purposes – please add a row for each racial or ethnic group (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by race/ethnicity)</p>	American Indian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEL</li> <li>• Fall Tested NC Math 1 – 22 percentage point decrease in proficiency</li> <li>• Fall Tested NC Math 3 – 12 percentage point decrease in proficiency</li> <li>• Fall Tested English II – 11 percentage point decrease in proficiency</li> <li>• Attendance</li> <li>• Discipline data</li> <li>• Youth Risk Behavior Survey</li> </ul>
	Asian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEL</li> <li>• Fall Tested NC Math 1 – 15 percentage point decrease in proficiency</li> <li>• Fall Tested NC Math 3 – 7 percentage point decrease in proficiency</li> <li>• Attendance</li> <li>• Discipline Data</li> <li>• Youth Risk Behavior Survey</li> </ul>
	Black	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEL</li> <li>• Fall Tested NC Math 1 – 16 percentage point decrease in proficiency</li> <li>• Fall Tested NC Math 3 – 10 percentage point decrease in proficiency</li> <li>• Attendance</li> <li>• Discipline Data</li> <li>• Youth Risk Behavior Survey</li> </ul>
	Hispanic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEL</li> <li>• Fall Tested NC Math 1 – 20 percentage point decrease in proficiency</li> <li>• Fall Tested NC Math 3 – 12 percentage point decrease in proficiency</li> <li>• Attendance</li> <li>• Discipline Data</li> <li>• Youth Risk Behavior Survey</li> </ul>
	Two or More Races	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEL</li> <li>• Fall Tested NC Math 1 – 18 percentage point decrease in proficiency</li> </ul>

<sup>9</sup> Youth Behavior Risk Survey Link: <https://sites.google.com/dpi.nc.gov/nchealthyschools/nc-healthy-schools-data/yrbs>

Student group	Highest priority needs	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fall Tested NC Math 3 – 13 percentage point decrease in proficiency</li> <li>• Attendance</li> <li>• Discipline Data</li> <li>• Youth Risk Behavior Survey</li> </ul>
Students by gender – please add a row for each gender (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by gender)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEL</li> <li>• Attendance</li> <li>• Academic Data is forthcoming</li> <li>• Discipline Data</li> <li>• Youth Risk Behavior Survey</li> </ul>	
English learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEL</li> <li>• ACCESS Assessment</li> <li>• Fall Tested NC Math 1 – 10 percentage point decrease in proficiency</li> <li>• Fall Tested NC Math 3 – 8 percentage point decrease in proficiency</li> <li>• Attendance</li> <li>• Discipline Data</li> <li>• Youth Risk Behavior Survey</li> </ul>	
Children with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEL</li> <li>• Fall Tested NC Math 1 – 7 percentage point decrease in proficiency (Include EXTEND Assessment)</li> <li>• Fall Tested NC Math 3 – 6 percentage point decrease in proficiency (Include EXTEND Assessment)</li> <li>• Attendance</li> <li>• Discipline Data</li> <li>• Youth Risk Behavior Survey</li> </ul>	
Students experiencing homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEL</li> <li>• Attendance</li> <li>• Academic Data is forthcoming</li> <li>• Discipline Data</li> <li>• Youth Risk Behavior Survey</li> </ul>	
Children and youth in foster care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEL</li> <li>• Attendance</li> <li>• Academic Data is forthcoming</li> <li>• Discipline Data</li> <li>• Youth Risk Behavior Survey</li> </ul>	
Migratory students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEL</li> <li>• Attendance</li> <li>• Academic Data is forthcoming</li> <li>• Discipline Data</li> <li>• Youth Risk Behavior Survey</li> </ul>	

Student group	Highest priority needs
<p>Other groups of students identified by the State (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, LGBTQ+ students)</p> <p>Incarcerated Students</p>	<p>Students identified as “at-risk” for academic failure and who are not successfully progressing toward grade promotion and graduation, beginning in kindergarten. 2021 estimates provided by PSUs indicated roughly 23% of students in North Carolina were “at-risk”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● SEL</li> <li>● Attendance</li> <li>● Academic Data is forthcoming</li> <li>● Discipline Data</li> <li>● Youth Risk Behavior Survey</li> </ul>

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

To assist PSUs in identifying the extent of the impact of COVID-19 on student learning and wellbeing, NCDPI is currently working with a third-party contractor who will provide an impact analysis of COVID-19 on public school units, students and families of the State (“Impact Analysis”). The Impact Analysis will include a baseline analysis that leverages analytics provided as part of the current contract for district/school/teacher value-added reporting and student projections. The baseline analysis will assess student performance and learning loss by comparing students’ pre-pandemic expected performance with their post pandemic actual performance in the 2020-21 school year. More specifically, the baseline analysis uses student projections to the 2020-21 school year, which represents their pre-pandemic expected performance based on the average schooling experience, and then compares these projections to students’ actual performance on the 2020-21 statewide assessments. A negative difference indicates that students did not perform as expected based on their pre-pandemic learning trajectories, and this information will be aggregated by subject, grade, district, school and/or different student groups to identify whether certain student groups experienced bigger changes in expected performance than other student groups. The Impact Analysis will incorporate additional data variables to investigate student performance and learning loss by geographic region,

urbanicity and education delivery based on what is captured and provided by the State (in person, virtual, device access, internet connectivity, etc.). The Impact Analysis will also analyze group-level achievement trends over time to assess COVID's impact on student learning. More specifically, student-level reports will be updated so that it is easier for educators to see how students' trajectories changed since COVID-19 disrupted student learning and how students' recovery has progressed over time in future years. There will also be reports that summarize information about the extent to which students exceed or fall short of their pre-pandemic expectations and the proportion of students in different categories of learning loss.

Additionally, the SBE and NCDPI will strategically invest in a variety of diagnostic assessments beginning in Spring 2022. Prior to determining diagnostics NCDPI will conduct a needs assessment based on the results of available preexisting benchmark data. Recommendations for diagnostics will be made based on the needs assessment and pending appropriation of the agency's holdback funding.

The results of these diagnostic assessments will be used to determine academic and social-emotional needs of students and specifically those groups of students most impacted by the pandemic. The SBE and NCDPI will also invest in a competency-based education platform to support accountability reform, track student performance over time and develop remediation and acceleration strategies for students.

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.
  - 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.

- 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.

NCDPI will, on its website, provide disaggregated student enrollment data for each mode of instruction no later than June 21, 2021. This data will be date back to August 2020 and will be updated on a monthly basis until all PSUs return to full-time, in-person instruction or June 21, 2022, whichever date comes later.

Based on existing NC law, enacted on March 11, 2021, PSUs in North Carolina are required to offer in-person instruction.

## **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;

To support PSUs in safely returning to in-person instruction and sustaining safe operation, the NCDPI developed *Lighting Our Way Forward: North Carolina’s Guidebook for Reopening Public Schools*<sup>10</sup>. This guide is regularly updated as changes are made to the *Strong Schools NC Public Health Toolkit*<sup>11</sup>. The guide includes each of the following mitigation strategies:

1. Universal and correct wearing of masks (p.29)
2. Physical Distancing (p.24)
3. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette (p.32)
4. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation (p.63)
5. Contact tracing (Strong Schools NC Toolkit)
6. Diagnostic and screening testing (p.35; Strong Schools NC Toolkit)

<sup>10</sup> <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1z5Mp2XzOOPkBYN4YvROz4YOyNIF2UoWq9EZfrjvN4x8/edit#heading=h.e4zxmabnly>

<sup>11</sup> <https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/media/164/open>

7. Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies (p.167)
  - 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;

North Carolina [law](#)<sup>12</sup> enacted on May 4, 2020 required all PSUs to develop Remote Instruction Plans<sup>13</sup> with the intended purpose of providing a detailed framework for quality remote learning.

North Carolina [law](#)<sup>14</sup> enacted on March 11, 2021 required all PSUs to provide access to in-person learning for all students.

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

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services provides regular and ongoing updates to the NC State Board of Education.

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

Due to the ongoing and evolving nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, NCDPI will continue provide guidance, professional learning and technical assistance to PSUs as needed.

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

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.ncleg.gov/Sessions/2019/Bills/Senate/PDF/S704v6.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/districts-schools-support/digital-teaching-and-learning/remote-instruction-plan>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.ncleg.gov/Sessions/2021/Bills/Senate/PDF/S220v4.pdf>

- description of any such policies on each of the strategies listed in table B1;
- ii. How the SEA will ensure that each LEA plan describes how it will ensure continuity of services including but not limited to services to address the students' academic needs, and students' and staff social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services;
  - iii. How the SEA will ensure that the LEA periodically reviews, no less frequently than every six months for the duration of the ARP ESSER grant period (i.e., through September 30, 2023),<sup>15</sup> and revises as appropriate, its plan, and how the SEA will ensure that the LEA seeks public input, and takes such input into account on (1) whether revisions are necessary and, if so, (2) the revisions to the plan; and
  - iv. Describe, to the extent the SEA collects it, information about LEA implementation, to the greatest extent practicable, of each element of the most up-to-date CDC guidance listed in table B1 and its LEAs' needs for support and technical assistance to implement strategies consistent, to the greatest extent practicable, with relevant CDC guidance.

Each PSU must complete an assurance statement in their ARP ESSER application that they 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. The application and the appropriate notification must be completed no later than September 30, 2021. Also, PSUs must identify adopted policies and a description of any such policies; 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; periodically review the PSU plan, no less frequently than every six months for the duration of the ARP ESSER grant period (i.e., through September 30, 2023),<sup>16</sup> and revises as appropriate after seeking public input; and information about LEA implementation, to the greatest extent practicable, of each element of the most up-to-date CDC guidance listed in the narrative from B1.

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<sup>15</sup> ARP ESSER funds are subject to the Tydings amendment in section 421(b) of the General Education Provisions Act, 20 U.S.C. 1225(b), and are therefore available to SEAs and LEAs for obligation through September 30, 2024. Review and revisions of these plans, if necessary, are not required during the Tydings period.

<sup>16</sup> ARP ESSER funds are subject to the Tydings amendment in section 421(b) of the General Education Provisions Act, 20 U.S.C. 1225(b), and are therefore available to SEAs and LEAs for obligation through September 30, 2024. Review and revisions of these plans, if necessary, are not required during the Tydings period.

### 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.

NCDPI developed and presented the ARP ESSER draft template to the North Carolina State Board of Education, the body which represents North Carolina public education stakeholders. The draft template was posted for public comment for 30 days prior to the submission to the US Department of Education. Over the course of the 30-day period, we received 230 comments categorized as follows with the relative percentages of each:

1. Technical Correction (<1%)
2. Support (<1%)
3. Question (<1%)
4. Rejection of Funding (1%)
5. Third Party Solicitation (1%)
6. Social Emotional Learning (1.7%)
7. General Commentary (6.5%)
8. Critical Race Theory (88%)\*

\*It is important to note that Critical Race Theory is not mentioned in the ARP ESSER State Plan Template.

Those comments were reviewed and taken into consideration prior to the presentation of the final draft version of the ARP ESSER plan to the NC State Board of Education. The posting of draft plan to the NCDPI website was advertised via press release. In addition to the public posting of the plan, the opportunity to comment on the plan was offered to the following groups the ESSA - required Committee of Practitioners (COP) which contains a wide range of stakeholders from across the state (parents, teachers, school-, and district-level administrators), NC LEA Federal Programs Directors, NC Superintendents, the NC Accountability Advisory Group, and State Advisory Council on American Indian Education.

A series of stakeholder engagement sessions were held in July and August to gather insights and suggestions to ensure the needs of all students were being met. Most of the suggestions will be able to be addressed during the implementation phase. Information from each of stakeholder listening sessions is provided by group:

- **Students experiencing homelessness** [Session attendees were in agreement with the priorities set forth in the plan. The group is working to create and vet the ARP Homeless Plan for ARP HCY-I and II which will provide much needed support these students.]
- **Students in foster care** [Session attendees highlight SEL support as the top priority. During implementation, a focus must be on intentionally ensuring these students have access to credit recovery and credit by demonstrated mastery. There was also a request to explore data systems as it relates DHHS and County DSS agencies to allow for more concise tracking.]
- **Incarcerated students** [Session attendees highlighted their disappointment with students from this category not receiving ESSER I and II as they only receive Title I, D. Consultation with NC State Board of Education will ensue to determine if unbudgeted SEA reserve funds can be used to ensure students within this population have a share of the funds. Stakeholders suggested support for technology, professional development for staff for academic and social-emotional support, remediation, competency-based assessment tool, and additional personnel to support the socio-emotional well-being of students.]
- **Exceptional Children** [This stakeholder group raised the fact that some our EC students who are served on the EXTENDED Curriculum often cannot access academic or SEL content because of their cognitive abilities. We will need to ensure that we remediation and acceleration support offered from the state level accommodates EC children with varying needs. The final point raised was about the focus on literacy and not on math. The group recommend exploring the use of Math Foundations.]

- **English Language Learners** [This group suggested the addition of a priority area- Acceleration in English Language Development and the use of the ACCESS assessment be paired with other statewide assessment to measure progress. Additionally, there should be consideration in the development of credit recovery and credit by demonstrated mastery options. They recommended a series of best practices such as clear barrier methods (sneeze guards, clear masks) so that students can see mouth formation during language instruction, high dosage tutoring, and increasing the number of staff supporting students.]
- **Migratory Students** [Those supporting Migrant Education suggested the addition of resources for transportation, tutoring, SEL modules, internet connectivity, and additional compensation to staff. Additionally, it was suggested that support be provided for older migratory students in the area of college applications and FAFSA completion as well as job and life-skill development for those in the Out-of-School Youth (OSY) category.]
- **Students** (NC Superintendent’s Advisory Council Representative) [The student representative highlighted the need to have SEL support and an adequate number of teachers for face-to-face and online instruction so that both students and teachers feel supported.]
- **Civil Rights: NC National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)** [The representative for the NC NAACP suggested resources and supports be provided to parents to assist students’ learning and socio-emotional recovery, support for students and staff who must quarantine due to Covid-19, and hiring additional staff (e.g., teachers, social workers, psychologists, school nurses, and community liaisons). The organization provided a written resolution that outlined a series of suggestions including ensuring all students would be provided with digital tools (e.g., devices and hotspots for broadband connectivity) in the event virtual learning becomes necessary in the future.]
- **Teacher Advocacy Group: North Carolina Association for Educators (NCAE)** [The stakeholders in this session were in support of focusing on academic recovery due to loss instructional time and increased support for mental health services. They strongly suggested gathering additional feedback during the implementation phase of ARP ESSER. They provided a model of how sessions can be conducted.]

Information from the sessions is included as an attachment and has been used to update this plan. Some suggestions will be used in the development of a wider Learning Recovery Plan mentioned below. Going forward, additional sessions will be held to garner information about ARP implementation progress from a wider audience during a series of Town Hall meetings as recommend by NCAE and NAACP.

Additionally, the development of a formal ARP ESSER Advisory Group has been recommended to the NC State Board of Education. The charter for the group has been placed on the September Board Meeting. The ARP ESSER Advisory Group will convene on regular intervals and provide

suggestions to improve to the implementation and further development of the ARP ESSER State Plan. Members will be appointed and will represent each of the aforementioned stakeholder groups.

After initially approval of the ARP ESSER State Plan, NCDPI will develop a Learning Recovery State Plan (most recent version included as an attachment). This plan includes initiatives developed with ESSER I and ESSER II funds, how those funds were spent and the results of the programs. Additionally, the Office of Learning Recovery will provide recommended programs and status updates on each of those initiatives as they become available.

In North Carolina, all funds are appropriated by the NC General Assembly. NCDPI maintains its ARP ESSER plan as a draft, as we await the appropriation of the state agency reserve from the NC General Assembly. When the funds are appropriated, NCDPI will further convene stakeholder groups and maintain a representative advisory group managed by the Office of Learning Recovery. Upon review of relevant benchmark data on student achievement and social-emotional learning, initiatives will be proposed to the advisory group and vetted with additional stakeholders.

NCDPI proposed the following categories and programs to the NC State Board of Education and the NC General Assembly.

District Support

<b>Funding Category</b>	<b>2 Year Projection</b>	<b>Total ESSER III</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<p>Low Performing District/Regional Support</p> <p>Current as of June 2021</p>	<p>\$19,000,000</p>	<p>\$38,000,000</p>	<p>Coaching support and professional development to Districts, Principals and School Improvement Leadership Teams. Design and implementation of a leadership institute for current principals in Low Performing Schools.</p> <p>Development of a grant opportunity for Low Performing Districts to apply for funding for creative and flexible improvement options (much like the Renewal District).</p>

<p>Extended Learning Recovery After - School Enrichment Support</p> <p>Fulfills required 5% on learning loss mitigation</p> <p>1% on after school programs</p> <p>Current as of June 2021</p>	<p>\$50,000,000</p>	<p>\$60,000,000</p>	<p>To be held in reserve by the Department to be allocated to public school units to support COVID-19 related needs, including in-person instruction programs to address learning loss and provide enrichment activities during the traditional academic year afterschool.</p> <p>LEAs will be required to apply for funds to support evidence-based interventions for students in an identified subgroup to address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on their academic and/or social, emotional, and mental health.</p>
<p>High Impact Tutoring Initiative</p> <p>Fulfills required 5% on learning loss mitigation</p> <p>Current as of June 2021</p>	<p>\$30,000,000</p>	<p>\$30,000,000</p>	<p>Support for high-dosage and other evidence-based tutoring initiatives. Funding to include the development of online modules for tutor training in curriculum and pedagogy.</p> <p>LEAs or a consortia of LEAs with an external partner will be required to apply for funds to support evidence-based tutoring for students in an identified subgroup to address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 and lost instructional time on their academic outcomes.</p>

Agency/Statewide Capacity

Proposed Funding Category	2 Year Projection	Total ESSER III	Notes
<p>Mastery Based Programs and Assessments</p> <p>Current as of June 2021</p>	\$19,000,000	\$19,000,000	<p>Deployment of a Competency-Based Education Platform. NCDPI will deploy a competency-based education platform for statewide use to enable personalized pathways for mastery learning. This system will allow us to better identify areas of academic need for students throughout North Carolina, discover disproportionate impact, and develop pathways for remediation and acceleration.</p> <p>Development of Credit by Demonstrated Mastery for grades 7-12 for credit recovery or acceleration.</p>
<p>Social-Emotional Learning Programming and Resource Support</p> <p>Current as of June 2021</p>	\$10,000,000	\$10,000,000	<p>Development and deployment of an online repository of online programs and resources for PSUs. Toolkits may include Social and Emotional Health and well-being for Teachers (goal setting, self care etc. for teachers), SEL for Students (practices for teachers as they work with students), SEL for Caregivers (tools and practices for caregivers as they support their children).</p> <p>Also includes professional development funds for teachers and school leaders as they address the social-emotional health and well-being of students.</p>

Diagnostic Assessment Pilot Programs  Current as of June 2021	\$12,000,000	\$9,500,000	Development and/or deployment of learning recovery diagnostics and assessments. In an effort to expand out from annual standardized student assessments, NCDPI intends to employ a series of diagnostic assessments in academic and social-emotional health and well-being to inform recovery practices.
K-5 Learning  Current as of June 2021	\$22,000,000	\$47,500,000	Support for a common Learning Management System (LMS) to be utilized for in-person and remote instruction. Continued funding source for Science of Reading implementation and a Kindergarten Readiness program (based in the science of reading). Teacher and principal professional development for the LMS.

Learning Recovery and Acceleration

<b>Funding Category</b>	<b>2 Year Projection</b>	<b>Total ESSER III</b>	<b>Notes</b>
ESSER I/III/III & School Extension Lessons Learned Expansion Fund  Fulfills required 5% on learning loss mitigation	\$20,000,000	\$35,000,000	Competitive grant program designed to treat ESSER I, II, and/or III as well as PSU developed initiatives as pilot programs.  The Office of Learning Recovery’s Director of Innovation will identify promising practices throughout the state that directly impact student learning and achievement.

Current as of June 2021			Funding will be used to scale interventions within a PSU or for other PSUs to implement and test the initiative.
Research Partners	\$2,500,000	\$2,500,000	Support for external research partners to assess the impact of learning recovery interventions
Current as of June 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);
  - ii.

**ESSER I (CARES Act)**

- ***District and Regional Support Leadership/Instructional Coaches (LC/IC)*** Coaches will provide support to school leaders and teachers as they implement remote learning. ICs will provide support regionally as part of the Regional Support Structure and focus on teachers at the 64 low- performing schools that are located in the 8 low-performing districts and also assist in the development of regional professional development. These coaches will partner with the Curriculum & Instruction division to aid in the implementation of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study at NCDPI.

- ***Learning Management Platform Standardization*** NCDPI will provide infrastructure support for digital content delivery by assisting districts with the cost of attaining a Learning Management System (LMS). (\$3,500,000)
- ***Instructional Support Partnership*** Expand partnerships to provide broadcast/passive educational content for home consumption and to provide non-digital instructional support. DPI and UNC-TV, the local affiliate of Public Broadcast Service (PBS) piloted a partnership beginning March 30, with positive response. Funds would be needed to continue the programming. (\$1,000,000)
- ***Connectivity Exploration*** This pilot will explore how to expand internet connectivity in remote areas of the state. This will enable digital remote learning in the future to areas that do not have the necessary broadband access. This "proof of concept" project will be led in the hopes of finding innovative ways to close the connectivity gap. (\$250,000)
- ***Video Lessons*** NCDPI will contract with regional/state teachers of the year, English language learner (ELL) teacher representatives, and exceptional children (EC) teacher representatives to record video lessons for use by other schools/teachers and for possible inclusion into digital curricula platforms. (\$100,000)
- ***Blended Learning Support*** The Friday Institute will provide online teacher professional development that addresses research-based approaches to blended learning. (\$75,000)
- ***External Evaluation*** An external evaluation will be conducted to provide an overview of the implementation and impact of the NC CARES Act Funding. A contract will be put in place with one of our external partners from NC State Friday Institute or UNC Greensboro SERVE Center. (\$200,000)
- ***Digital Curriculum Resources*** Funding will be used to improve access to quality K-8 packaged curricula to enhance the ability of schools to offer blended learning. Funding to PSUs to purchase a 1-year subscription to high quality, standards aligned digital curriculum packages selected by PSUs. (\$10,800,000)
- ***Instructional Support Reserve Funding for Exceptional Children*** Funding will provide instructional support to students and provide ongoing growth toward learning targets. A standards aligned diagnostic tool which is adaptive with individualized learning pathways to promote growth for K-12 grade students will be created. (\$10,000,000)

- ***Grant Program for Childcare During Remote Instruction*** Public school units may partner with community organizations to provide supervised care for K-8 students without at-home supervision available on remote learning days. (\$4,471,200)
- ***Funds for Charter Schools*** Allotments will be made to the ineligible, waived, and underfunded charter schools to ensure all PSUs in NC have access to CARES Act funds. (\$2,226,662)
- ***Professional Development for K-12 Teachers*** Funding will provide professional development for NC Educators as they build their capacity for high-quality culturally relevant virtual and remote teaching and learning. Specifically, a four-week asynchronous, facilitated course focused on teaching online and creating content for online instruction. (\$325,000)
- ***Professional Development for K-12 school Leaders*** Funding will provide professional development for NC leaders as they build their capacity for high-quality culturally relevant instruction to navigate remote instruction and teacher support. Specifically, a series of professional development opportunities (four weeks total) will be created to provide leader-specific training on supporting teachers in remote instruction. (\$322,941)

### **GEER I (CARES Act)**

- ***Specialized Instructional Support Personnel for COVID-19 Response for Student Health*** Funding will allow for employing or contracting with specialized instructional support personnel to provide physical and mental health support services for students in response to COVID-19, including remote and in-person services. For this allotment, the term “specialized instructional support personnel” shall refer to school counselors, school nurses, school psychologists, school social workers, and “school nurse extenders,” such as a licensed practical nurse (LPN) or certified nurse assistant (CNA) working under the direction of a registered nurse (RN), as defined by the NC Department of Health and Human Services. (\$40,000,000)
- ***Supplemental Instructional Services for Academic Needs*** Funds will be provide to allow supplemental instructional services to support the academic needs of at-risk students, students in poverty and students with disabilities through additional in-school instructional support. Services may include employing or contracting with instructional personnel, such as certified teachers or teacher assistants; paying stipends for NC Education Corps members; providing tutoring services or after school programming; or purchasing instructional resources, curriculum materials, or devices. No more than 10 percent of allotted funds may be used for purchasing instructional resources, curriculum materials, or devices. (\$20,000,000)

## **ESSER II (CRRSA Act)**

- ***Funds for Charter Schools*** To provide a minimum allocation of \$180 to each PSU in the State Aid. (\$10,000,000)
- ***School Health Support Personnel*** Funding for contracted services for school health support personnel to provide additional physical and mental health support services for students. school counselors, school nurses, school psychologists, and school social workers. (\$10,000,000)
- ***Child Nutrition Grants*** Funding to provide grants to PSUs to expand child nutrition services. (\$10,000,000)
- ***Extended Learning and Integrated Student Supports (ELISS)*** Funding for high-quality, independently validated extended learning and integrated student support service programs for at-risk students whose learning has been negatively affected by COVID-19 impacts. (\$15,000,000)
- ***In-Person Summer Instructional Programming*** Funding to support in-person instructional programs to address learning loss and provide enrichment activities in the summer. (\$66,046,144)
- ***Summer Competency Based Assessment (CBA)*** Funding for Competency Based Assessments for Pre and Post Summer Extension programs. (\$8,200,000)
- ***North Carolina New Teacher Support Program*** Funding will be used to expand the North Carolina New Teacher Support Program administered by the UNC Board of Governors (1,000,000)
- ***NC Kids Digital Library Project*** Funding will support the NC State Library for the Children through the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (\$500,000)
- ***Support for the NC School of the Deaf and Blind*** Funding will provide expanded opportunities to support school nutrition, cleaning and sanitizing, learning resources for students in these residential schools. (\$500,000)
- ***COVID-19 Impacts Research*** NCDPI will contract with a third-party research group to collect, analyze, and report data related to the overall impacts of COVID-19. (\$500,000)
- ***Analysis of COVID-19 Infection Metrics*** NCDPI will contract with Duke University to collect and analyze data related to COVID-19 spread among students and staff participating in in-person learning. (\$500,000)

- ***Go Outside Grant*** NCDPI will partner with the NC Wildlife Resources Commission to expand the Outdoor Heritage Advisory Council's NC Schools Go Outside grant program to expand experiential learning opportunities. Field trips and outdoor experiences will enable students the opportunity to explore and learn in hands-on environments. (\$1,200,000)
- ***Cybersecurity Enhancement for PSUs*** Funding will be used to contract with a third-party entity to implement a statewide cybersecurity program to improve the cybersecurity infrastructure of the public schools. (\$9,000,00)
- ***Statewide Assessment System Cybersecurity Improvement*** NCDPI will contract with Accenture to expand the cybersecurity capabilities within the state's assessment system. (\$1,000,000)
- ***Expanding the Teacher Literacy Instruction Capacity*** Funding will be used to contract with Voyager Sopris Learning to provide Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) training for teachers (\$12,000,000)

### **GEER II (CRRSA Act)**

- Emergency Assistance to Non-public Schools (EANS) Program (Governor's Office) (\$84,000,000)
  - iii. To what extent ESSER I and ESSER II funds have been awarded to LEAs and, if funds have not yet been made available to LEAs, when they will be. In addition, please provide any available information on the total dollar amounts of ESSER I and ESSER II funds that have been obligated but not expended by the SEA and its LEAs, including whether the SEA is able to track LEA obligations.

All ESSER I funds have been awarded to LEAs. ESSER II LEA applications are being processed at this time with all applications and awards to occur prior to September 30, 2021. The SEA will track all obligated expenditures through the SEA's financial reporting system.

- iv. In supporting LEAs as they plan for the safe return to and continuity of in-person instruction and for meeting the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of students resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the extent to which the SEA is also using other Federal funding sources including but not limited to under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 ("ESEA"), IDEA, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act ("WIOA"), funding for child nutrition services, and McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance

Act, and the funds to support the needs of students experiencing homelessness provided by section 2001(b)(1) of the ARP Act.<sup>17</sup>

Funds from ESSER I and II SEA reserve were earmarked to support all students' SEL needs. The special fund source allows PSUs to secure contracted services for school health support personnel to provide additional physical and mental health support services for students. Allowable personnel include school counselors, school nurses, school psychologists, and school social workers.

Additionally, McKinney-Vento funds have been disseminated to PSUs through a Summer 2021 Mini Grant program.

Mandatory summer in-person learning opportunities will be provided for students who are at-risk academically. ESSER II funding was made available to each LEA to purchase competency-based assessment tools to gauge students' initial skill level and track their progress.

#### **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;

NCDPI proposed the following initiatives to the NC State Board of Education to address lost instructional time for our most disproportionately impacted students. NCDPI will begin with

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<sup>17</sup> Please note that the needs of students experiencing homelessness must be addressed (along with the other groups disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic) through the use of the ARP ESSER SEA reservations and the required LEA reservation for the academic impact of lost instructional time; the funding provided to support the needs of students experiencing homelessness by section 2001(b)(1) of the ARP Act is in addition to the supports and services provided with ARP ESSER funds.

annual assessment data until such time as more granular student level data become available. The Office of Learning Recovery and Acceleration is in the process of hiring a research director and two additional researchers in order to establish an overall research and analysis program as well as evaluate the impact of particular initiatives.

<p>High Impact Tutoring Initiative</p> <p>Fulfills required 5% on learning loss mitigation</p> <p>Current as of June 2021</p>	<p>\$30,000,000</p>	<p>\$30,000,000</p>	<p>Support for high-dosage and other evidence-based tutoring initiatives. Funding to include the development of online modules for tutor training in curriculum and pedagogy.</p> <p>LEAs or a consortium of LEAs with an external partner will be required to apply for funds to support evidence-based tutoring for students in an identified subgroup to address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 and lost instructional time on their academic outcomes.</p>
<p>Mastery Based Programs and Assessments</p> <p>Current as of June 2021</p>	<p>\$19,000,000</p>	<p>\$19,000,000</p>	<p>Deployment of a Competency-Based Education Platform. NCDPI will deploy a competency-based education platform for statewide use to enable personalized pathways for mastery learning. This system will allow us to better identify areas of academic need for students throughout North Carolina, discover disproportionate impact, and develop pathways for remediation and acceleration.</p> <p>Development of Credit by Demonstrated Mastery for grades 7-12 for credit recovery or acceleration.</p>

<p>ESSER I/III/III &amp; School Extension Lessons Learned Expansion Fund</p> <p>Fulfills required 5% on learning loss mitigation</p> <p>Current as of June 2021</p>	<p>\$20,000,000</p>	<p>\$35,000,000</p>	<p>Competitive grant program designed to treat ESSER I, II, and/or III as well as PSU developed initiatives as pilot programs.</p> <p>The Office of Learning Recovery’s Director of Innovation will identify promising practices throughout the state that directly impact student learning and achievement.</p> <p>Funding will be used to scale interventions within a PSU or for other PSUs to implement and test the initiative.</p>
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- ii. How the evidence-based interventions will specifically address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on certain groups of students, including each of the student groups listed in question A.3.i.-viii. When possible, please indicate which data sources the SEA will use to determine the impact of lost instructional time; and

As grant programs are developed NCDPI will establish priorities for inclusion including the expectation that interventions be utilized for students identified as having been most significantly impacted by COVID-19. Data sources will include annual value-added achievement data as well as locally sourced data.

- 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.

To assist PSUs in identifying the extent of the impact of COVID-19 on student learning and wellbeing, NCDPI is currently working with a third-party contractor who will provide an impact analysis of COVID-19 on public school units, students and families of the State (“Impact Analysis”). The Impact Analysis will include a baseline analysis that leverages analytics provided as part of the current contract for district/school/teacher value-added reporting and student projections. The baseline analysis will assess student performance and learning loss by comparing students’ pre-pandemic expected performance with their post pandemic actual performance in the 2020-21 school year. More specifically, the baseline analysis uses student projections to the 2020-21 school year, which represents their pre-pandemic expected performance based on the average schooling experience, and then compares these projections to students’ actual performance on the 2020-21 statewide assessments. A negative difference indicates that students did not perform as expected based on their pre-pandemic learning trajectories, and this information will be aggregated by subject, grade, district, school and/or different student groups to identify whether certain student groups experienced bigger changes in expected performance than other student groups. The Impact Analysis will incorporate additional data variables to investigate student performance and learning loss by geographic region, urbanicity and education delivery based on what is captured and provided by the State (in person, virtual, device access, internet connectivity, etc.). The Impact Analysis will also analyze group-level achievement trends over time to assess COVID’s impact on student learning. More specifically, student-level reports will be updated so that it is easier for educators to see how students’ trajectories changed since COVID-19 disrupted student learning and how students’ recovery has progressed over time in future years. There will also be reports that summarize information about the extent to which students exceed or fall short of their pre-pandemic expectations and the proportion of students in different categories of learning loss.

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

On April 29, 2021 the North Carolina General Assembly passed [SL2021-7<sup>18</sup>](#) School Extension and Recovery. The law required LEAs to implement a school extension and enrichment program for at-risk students as defined in NC General Statute<sup>19</sup>. The law requires the NC DPI to develop a report on the outcomes of the program to be presented to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee. The Office of Learning Recovery and Acceleration will develop and deliver the report in January 2022. In addition to the student performance outcomes, the OLR will also identify best practices and programs implemented that address academic, social, emotional and mental health needs of students. These practices and programs will be included in a set of recommended guidelines to direct future school extension and enrichment programs. NCDPI will also develop a grant program to expand and/or scale initiatives developed as part of the school extension program.

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.

<sup>18</sup> <https://ncleg.gov/EnactedLegislation/SessionLaws/HTML/2021-2022/SL2021-7.html>

<sup>19</sup> [https://www.ncleg.net/enactedlegislation/statutes/html/bysection/chapter\\_115c\\_gs\\_115c-105.41.html](https://www.ncleg.net/enactedlegislation/statutes/html/bysection/chapter_115c_gs_115c-105.41.html)

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.

NCDPI intends to deliver this program in a manner similar to our proposed program addressing lost instructional time. At this time, NCDPI has not determined that it will directly fund community agencies and other third-party providers, but rather will fund partnerships between these entities and PSUs. The Office of Learning Recovery and Acceleration will review grant proposals to ensure the use of evidence-based programs.

Data will be made available to PSUs, including student performance and lost instructional time as it becomes available to ensure programs are directed at students most in need of additional programming.

Extended Learning Recovery After - School Enrichment Support	\$50,000,000	\$60,000,000	To be held in reserve by the Department to be allocated to public school units to support COVID-19 related needs, including in-person instruction programs to address learning loss and provide enrichment activities during the traditional academic year afterschool.
Fulfills required 5% on learning loss mitigation 1% on after school programs			LEAs will be required to apply for funds to support evidence-based interventions for students in an identified subgroup to address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on their academic and/or social, emotional, and mental health.

Current as of June 2021			
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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.

NCDPI has proposed the development of a flexible spending account to address the needs of the department, in consultation with the State Board of Education, and PSUs as needs arise that might be identified as an emergency need.

**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.

The NCDPI application process requires PSUs to complete a needs assessment (Part A) and data (Part B) analysis to determine the potential areas to which funds from ARP ESSER should be directed. After the completion of the required needs assessment, PSUs outline the appropriate strategies to implement and determine outcome measures. PSUs indicate how they will utilize funds in accordance to allowable uses including COVID-19 prevention strategies as well as academic and socio-emotional support. The ARP ESSER application (Part C) was configured to require PSUs to allocate a minimum of 20% to learning recovery efforts. Using funds in this manner continues initiatives begun with ESSER II aimed at addressing learning loss.

A NC legislative mandate required LEAs (charter participation was optional) to provide a 2021 summer learning program to address learning loss. The ESSER II application captured basic information about the summer program to be implemented and was further elaborated upon in a required summer learning plan provided to the Office of Early Learning for approval before the implementation of programming in summer 2021.

For ARP ESSER, PSUs must provide information about how they will implement strategies to mitigate learning loss (Part C). Subgrantees must detail how they will meet the needs of students who have been disproportionately impacted due to COVID-19 including low-income students, children with disabilities, English Learners, racial and ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness, and children and youth in foster care.

NCDPI staff members evaluate plans provided in applications as part of the official review process and offer feedback to strengthen plans as necessary. As part of the application process, one of the assurances that LEAs must sign is that they will provide their plan to public by posting it on their website within 30 days of receiving funds. All applications must be received no later than September 30, 2021. Fiscal and programmatic monitoring conducted by NCDPI will ensure LEAs meet the timeline for posting their plans, spend according to allowable use categories, implement specified strategies for all students especially those disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, and meet or exceed LEA-determined outcomes as specified in their plans. The SEA will also provide technical assistance as needed.

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.

PSUs were required to post their ESSER II plans for a minimum 30-day comment period. PSUs will be provided Technical Assistance as requested about best practices for seeking public engagement.

Technical Assistance was provided to LEAs during the application process to ensure there was a clear understanding about the need to solicit and allow feedback on the ARP ESSER LEA Plan. During LEA programmatic monitoring, evidence for compliance with the requirement of a feedback loop with stakeholders will be assessed.

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.

The Office of Learning Recovery will work with District and Regional Support Teams<sup>20</sup> to support and monitor implementation of evidence-based interventions. The OLR will be responsible for data collection and analysis of PSU-based interventions and in conjunction with the Associate Superintendent of Innovation at NCDPI will identify the most effective interventions employed. The OLR research team will work with existing data collection and analysis units within NCDPI support and monitor PSUs as they work to mitigate the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on students. Data collection and analysis will include academic indicators, social-emotional indicators, and instructional time indicators including chronic absenteeism.

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.

NCDPI and the SBE are committed to educational equity in North Carolina<sup>21</sup>. The North Carolina SBE has defined educational equity as follows:

*“Educational Equity” is the belief and practice of ensuring that every student is treated in a fair and just manner, providing the necessary allocation of resources for the success of every student, and eliminating discriminatory barriers to full participation and opportunities for every student.*

The OLR will work directly with the Deputy Superintendent of Equity at NCDPI and the SBE to ensure initiatives funded with ARP ESSER funds are allocated based on student need.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/districts-schools-support/district-and-regional-support>

<sup>21</sup> <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1sZISKF0AkOtY1WJDDJJHuNJ61h4pa11t>

Additionally, ESSER funds will be included as we address equitable and inclusive return to in-person instruction. These strategies and initiatives are directly linked to the SBE Strategic Plan Goal I<sup>22</sup>.

## **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.

NCDPI provides an annual report on the “State of the Teaching Profession in North Carolina”<sup>23</sup>. The report provides attrition and mobility data to the SBE and PSUs. Some of the key findings of the report are as follows:

- Generally, NC teachers remain in the classroom, the overall state attrition rate for 2019-2020 was 7.53%
- Prior year reports have consistently shown, those who remain teaching in NC public schools demonstrate greater effectiveness (as measured by EVAAS index scores) than those who leave
- Hard to staff subjects (teacher shortages) include:
  - K-5 – Core Subjects
  - 6-8 – Math, Exceptional Children, Science
  - 9-12 – Exceptional Children, Math, CTE

- 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

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<sup>22</sup> <https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/StrategicPlan/PlanDetail.aspx?S=10399&PID=487%20>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/media/10536/download>

CRRSA Act) have already been used to avoid layoffs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Each PSU completed a local needs assessment identifying the most urgent shortages. PSUs have the flexibility to identify and add positions as necessary. NCDPI will continue to provide an analysis of the shortage and potential shortage areas in the annual state of the profession report.

NCDPI provides regular and ongoing professional development to PSUs including online options such as research-based approaches to blended learning, provided by The Friday Institute. Additionally, NCDPI will offer coaching support and professional development to Districts, Principals and School Improvement Leadership Teams. To design and implement a leadership institute for current principals in LPS. To support a grant opportunity for Low Performing Districts to apply for funding for creative and flexible improvement options (much like the Renewal District).

- 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).

There are several initiatives in North Carolina to address gaps in certified teachers statewide. These initiatives include the work of the North Carolina Human Capital Roundtable, the Drive Task Force, NC Stride Task Force and a new recruitment website.

In 2018 the North Carolina Human Capital Roundtable was established<sup>24</sup>. The purpose of the Roundtable is “to develop recommendations to help increase the quality, quantity and diversity of teacher candidates and prepare them to be licensed, hired, supported and retained as highly effective educators in North Carolina schools”. In 2021, the vision and principals were sent from the SBE to the Professional Educator Preparation and Standards Commission (PEPSC) for review and the establishment of a formal recommendation<sup>25</sup>.

The Drive Task Force was established in 2019 by executive order and is focused on recruitment, retention, development and support of educators of color in NC<sup>26</sup>. The NC Stride Task Force brought together a wide-ranging group of stakeholders to address recruitment and retention of educators through a series of policy recommendations<sup>27</sup>.

Finally, North Carolina developed a new teacher recruitment website <https://northcarolina.teach.org/> and a proposal is in place to coordinate recruitment efforts within the NCDPI.

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.sreb.org/north-carolina-education-human-capital-roundtable>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/educators/educator-preparation/professional-educator-preparation-and-standards-commission>

<sup>26</sup> <https://governor.nc.gov/issues/education/drive-task-force>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.bestnc.org/ncstride/>

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).

Several PSU – local health agency partnerships exist throughout North Carolina. In these programs health care institutions are providing nursing and mental health support to students in schools via telemedicine. NCDPI will assist with coordinating services, assisting in the development of a statewide model and assessment of the impact on students and families.

### **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).
- vii.

Data will be collected from existing data sources where possible. Academic achievement will be measured through our statewide assessment system. Additional information will be garnered through ESSER-funded competency-based assessment tools. Where metrics do not exist, we plan to create systems to collect the necessary data. Funding has been earmarked to contract with a research firm to collect and analyze data about COVID-19 impacts. Fiscal data will be pulled from our existing financial systems. Data will be analyzed by fund source and use. Maintenance of Employment and Equity metrics will be provided through the NC Office of Budget Management. Lastly, student outcomes (e.g., attendance, behavior, achievement, etc.) will be tracked for students who participate in extended learning opportunities (e.g., summer and afterschool).

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

The monitoring and internal controls processes outlined in the ESSER I Monitoring and Internal Controls Plan created for ESSER I will be updated to reflect ESSER as a whole (I, II, and III). Our Federal Program Monitoring and Support is tasked with conducting programmatic monitoring; while the Monitoring and Compliance Section is tasked with completing fiscal monitoring. NCDPI has incorporated ESSER monitoring into its existing structures and is in the process of hiring additional staff to support monitoring efforts.

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

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

NCDPI has prepared a data dashboard to offer metrics about school operating status and mode of instruction. This information may be found at:

<https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/federal-program-monitoring/elementary-and-secondary-schools-emergency-relief-esser#esser-compliance>

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

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

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

## Appendix C: Assurances

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

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

youth in foster care, and migratory students), as required by section 2001(e)(1) of the ARP Act; and

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

## Appendix D

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

### NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS

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

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

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

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

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

Section 427 requires each applicant for funds (other than an individual person) to include in its application a description of the steps the applicant proposes to take to ensure equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally-assisted program for students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries with special needs. This provision allows applicants discretion in developing the required description. The statute highlights six types of barriers that can impede equitable access or participation: gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age. Based on local circumstances, you should determine whether these or other barriers may prevent your students, teachers, etc. from such access to, or participation in, the Federally-funded project or activity. The description in your application of steps to be taken to overcome these barriers need not be lengthy; you may provide a clear and succinct description of how you plan to address those barriers that are applicable to your circumstances. In addition, the information may be provided in a single narrative, or, if appropriate, may be discussed in connection with related topics in the application.

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

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

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

- (1) An applicant that proposes to carry out an adult literacy project serving, among others, adults with limited English proficiency, might describe in its application how it intends to distribute a brochure about the proposed project to such potential participants in their native language.
- (2) An applicant that proposes to develop instructional materials for classroom use might describe how it will make the materials available on audio tape or in braille for students who are blind.
- (3) An applicant that proposes to carry out a model science program for secondary students and is concerned that girls may be less likely than boys to enroll in the course, might indicate how it intends to conduct "outreach" efforts to girls, to encourage their enrollment.
- (4) An applicant that proposes a project to increase school safety might describe the special efforts it will take to address concerns of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students, and efforts to reach out to and involve the families of LGBT students.

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

NCDPI LEA ESSER grant application contains an assurance about General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) Section 427 compliance. Applicants must attest that they will adhere to the requirement outlined in GEPA. The assurance reads, "Comply with the requirements of section 442 (20 U.S.C. 1232e) and section 427 (20 U.S.C. 1228a) of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)."

### **Estimated Burden Statement for GEPA Requirements**

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