

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



**U.S. Department of Education**

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## 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):**

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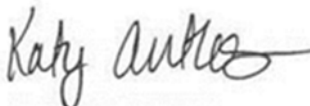
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|   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| By signing this document, I agree to each of the assurances listed in Appendix C and further assure that:<br>To the best of my knowledge and belief, all information and data included in this plan are true and correct. |                                     |
| <b>Chief State School Officer or Authorized Representative (Printed Name)</b><br><br><b>Katy Anthes, Ph.D., Commissioner of Education</b>   |                                     |
| <b>Signature of Authorized SEA Representative</b><br><br>  | <b>Date:</b><br><br>August 31, 2021 |

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

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

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

To ascertain the top 2-3 strategies that have been most effective in supporting students, CDE reviewed multiple data sources and engaged with stakeholders across the state of Colorado regarding education throughout the pandemic as well as the use of ESSER funding. In spring and fall of 2020, CDE worked with the Colorado Education Initiative (CEI) to conduct needs inventories with Colorado school districts. Additionally, CDE contracted with an external consultant in the summer of 2021 to execute the department's stakeholder engagement strategy with regards to ESSER III funding. The consultant conducted focus groups, administered a stakeholder survey, and summarized findings in a report to the department and State Board of Education to inform decision making for fund usage. The focus groups and survey solicited feedback on effective practices or innovations that have been effective.

Based on the data reviewed and the stakeholder consultation process, CDE notes that (1) increasing access to broadband Internet and devices as well as (2) providing increased nutrition support for students seemed to have been most effective in supporting students and their families throughout the pandemic.

**Connectivity and device initiatives:** In [spring 2020, CDE worked with the Colorado Education Initiative \(CEI\) to conduct a needs inventory](#) with Colorado school districts. This needs inventory informed CDE's uses of the initial Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act ESSER funding. Specifically, in spring 2020, 53% of survey respondents selected "internet connectivity" as a top community need (highest response of all community needs), and 22% noted the need for technology (computers, phones). Based on the responses from 184 districts and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), the estimated number of students without access to a Wi-Fi enabled device was 52,918 statewide, or approximately 6% of students in the represented districts/BOCES and the estimated number of students without access to internet at home was 65,860, or approximately 8% of students in represented districts/BOCES.

As a result of the needs inventory, Commissioner Katy Anthes directed \$1.3 million of ESSER I funding to increase access to broadband services for students, educators, and other staff who lack stable, reliable internet access for online learning. Additionally, the legislature continued these efforts through the Connecting Colorado Students Grant (CCSG) Program, providing an additional \$20 million for school districts to provide broadband access to low-income families and school staff. CDE collaborated with Governor Polis' Office, the Office of the Attorney General, and service providers to expand access to devices and internet connectivity through T-Mobile's Project 10Million, which made available up to 34,000 free Wi-Fi hotspots and 100GB of data per year for free, for low-income student households in Colorado.

In [fall 2020, CDE and CEI conducted another needs inventory](#) to gauge progress and determine where needs still existed. Overall, the reported number of outstanding devices needed for students was 29,8451 across 115 districts and two BOCES as of October 2020. Among the districts for which there is both spring and fall 2020 device data (n=107), device needs have decreased since the spring from 57,063 to 22,044 (14% of students lacking devices to 5%). The reported number of students still lacking sufficient access to the internet is 30,841 (or 4.1% of students) among all district respondents to this question (n=138). Among the districts for which CDE has both spring and fall 2020 connectivity data (n=128), the number of students without sufficient connectivity has been cut nearly in half since the spring data collections from 47,655 to 23,997 (8% to 4%).

**Nutrition support:** Due to flexibility afforded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), CDE and Colorado school districts were able to offer free meals to all students during the 2020-2021 school year through the Summer Food Service Program, with additional flexibilities to increase access including multiple days worth of meals at a time, parent/guardian pick up of meals, and non-congregate meals so students could eat meals at home. Districts were encouraged to adapt flexibilities and created innovative meal service options to meet the unique needs of their community. Districts set up meal sites throughout their communities including drive-thru options, set up multiple distribution times for working families, and others delivered meals directly to homes or bus stops.

In addition, in the student listening session conducted by the contractor, numerous students shared how helpful it was to have "free food" when they returned to school.

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.**

In order to identify the most critical and/or widespread issues facing schools and students, the department used three primary sources: (1) the Colorado Education Initiative (CEI) needs inventories, (2) extant student performance and enrollment data, and (3) information from the findings from the consultant stakeholder engagement process.

First, and as noted in the previous section, CDE worked in collaboration with CEI, to conduct two needs inventories in the spring and fall of 2020 to determine how to direct state set aside funds from ESSER I and ESSER II.

- In [March and April 2020](#), the top four education supports identified as the priorities across all regions of the state were: (1) student emotional support (52%), (2) technical support for delivering remote learning (46%), (3) online instructional support for teachers (41%), and (4) family engagement practices (38%).
- When the assessment was conducted again in [October 2020](#), the results indicated that device and connectivity needs had declined since spring 2020; however, workforce and staffing needs were a major concern for many districts throughout Colorado. Districts reported the following as their top priorities for students: (1) K-3 reading loss (56% selected), (2) high school student mental health (52%), (3) middle school mental health (41%), and (4) overall quality of virtual instruction (37%). In terms of teacher needs, districts reported priorities for teacher mental health (90%), teacher professional development (58%), and teacher and leader turnover (43%).

Second, CDE reviewed state required data collections, including enrollment changes and statewide assessment results.

- Colorado's school finance act provides subscriptions to K-3 reading assessments for school districts. Close to half of Colorado students participate in the program. Following the 2020-21 school year, CDE analyzed reading outcomes for participating schools, which revealed an overall increase of 9% in the number of students who were scoring below benchmark at the beginning of the year when compared to 2018-2019. These results improved only slightly throughout the school year with the end of year results showing an increase of 6% from 2018-2019.
- For the 2020-21 school year, Colorado required administrations of English language arts/literacy (ELA) in CMAS grades 3, 5, 7, and PSAT/SAT in grades 9 through 11. Math was required in CMAS grades 4, 6 and 8, and PSAT/SAT in grades 9 through 11.
- CDE considered CMAS statewide assessment results. Data indicated:
  - Drops in the percentage of students who scored at Met/Exceeded Expectations in grades 4 and 6 math fell to a level not previously seen on CMAS math scores (since 2015). Grade 8 has experienced a shift in testing population over the last couple of administrations which does not allow for comparisons to be made across years.

- Decreases in the percentage of students who scored at Met/Exceeded Expectations in English language arts (ELA) in grades 3, 5 and 7 that are consistent with levels from 3 to 5 years ago.
- Black and Hispanic student groups were disproportionately impacted compared to the White student group.
- English learners e.g., (non-English proficient and limited English proficient) were disproportionately impacted compared to counterparts. Significant decreases in English proficiency were also evident in ACCESS results (Colorado’s English language proficiency assessment) in elementary and middle school.
- Where reduction in gaps were identified between genders, it was due to the disproportionate impact on females compared to males.
- Additional information is provided in Table 1A.
- CDE considered PSAT/SAT statewide assessment results:
  - As a group, testers were higher achieving than non-testers based on their individual prior achievement on state assessments; however, data indicated a decrease in math achievement based on percent met/exceeded expectations (met College Board College and Career Readiness Benchmark) in grades 9 and 11.
- CDE analyzed student state assessment data using baseline growth data. In summary, baseline growth data indicated an overall decrease most significantly in mathematics, for English Learners, students with a disability, and both Black and Hispanic students.
- In terms of statewide enrollment, the October 2020 student enrollment count showed a 3.3% decrease in enrollment in Colorado K-12 public schools as compared to October 2019, the first decrease in year-to-year enrollment in over three decades. There were 30,024 fewer students in preschool through 12th grade, with total statewide enrollment for preschool to 12th grade at 883,199 students. The largest decreases were in the earlier grades with 8,009 fewer students in preschool for a 23.3% drop and 5,800 fewer kindergartners for a 9.1% decrease. An estimated 13,833 fewer first through fifth graders were counted in Colorado schools in 2020 compared to 2019—a 4.2% drop. Among races and ethnicities, white students had the highest number change with 19,759 fewer students in 2020 compared to 2019, a 4.1% decline. American Indian or Alaska native had the highest percent drop with 5.9% fewer students in 2020 than in 2019. The number of students reported as homeschooled doubled with 15,773 students counted in the fall of 2020 compared to 7,880 in 2019. A total of 32,034 students registered in formal online educational programs this year—9,586 more students than 2019 or a 43% increase. Approximately 140 of the state’s 178 school districts reported drops in enrollment with nearly 40 districts reporting increasing enrollment.

Third, to gather data regarding current needs of schools and districts, the department contracted with an external consultant to conduct Colorado’s

stakeholder consultation process for use of ESSER funding. The consultant conducted focus groups, administered a stakeholder survey, and summarized findings in a [report to the department and State Board of Education](#) to inform decision making for fund usage. The findings indicated five high-level priority areas for the state's districts, schools, teachers and students: (1) Focusing on the academic recovery from students including English language learners, students with special needs, and students who were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic; (2) Ensuring the physical, emotional and mental well-being of students; (3) Providing resources, training and professional development for the state's educator workforce; (4) Supporting the emotional and mental well-being of educators; and (5) ensuring schools and students have the technological resources and supports necessary for implementing and accessing hybrid/remote instruction.

Based on the data and the knowledge of other programs and funding streams already serving some of the needs indicated above, CDE has identified the following three priorities for supporting the state's education system in recovering from the pandemic:

- 1) **Accelerating learning** – As the 2021 student data described above indicates, the pandemic has adversely impacted student learning across the state. However, as described in Part 3 below, the impact has been amplified for students from underserved populations. CDE is focusing on developing programs and initiatives that will drive success for all students while accelerating learning for those most impacted by the pandemic to make up ground lost in the past two years and close the state's opportunity and achievement gaps.
- 2) **Increasing Student Engagement through Expanding Learning Opportunities** – Many students have felt disconnected from their schools or communities during the pandemic, and there have been fewer work-based learning opportunities. CDE is focusing on expanding the opportunities for students to access career and technical education (CTE) and workplace learning along with academically enriched learning that occurs before school, after school, on a 5th day (for districts on a 4-day week), during the summer, or when school is otherwise not in session.
- 3) **Strengthening State Capacity** – The pandemic and resulting move to hybrid/virtual learning and transition to remote working has highlighted the need for CDE to reconsider many of the data systems and supports currently in place. There is a need for more flexibility in data collections, such as student modality. CDE's current collection system, Data Pipeline, has limited frequency of collections, and requires a long lead time to add additional data elements. This results in resources being diverted from the critical work of providing pandemic assistance to support the state's schools and students. Modernization of this system will improve the customer interface for district users, making it less of a burden, and allow for more flexibility and resilience around data collections when more, or targeted, data sets are required. In addition to functionality, improving the security of Data Pipeline will take advantage of up-to-date information



security technology. The combination of these improvements will provide a solid foundation upon which CDE can collect, secure, process and report on data that will communicate the accurate story on educational improvements and continuous improvement.

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

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

*Complete the table below, adding rows as necessary, or provide a narrative description.*

**Table A1.**

Please note that a variety of factors should be considered when interpreting Colorado state assessment results from spring 2021, including lower than typical participation rates and disrupted learning experiences of many students because of the pandemic. When identifying academic priorities in the table

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

below, CDE has used spring 2021 assessment data while taking these factors into consideration.

CDE does not collect data on social, emotional, or mental health needs of students. In addition, data regarding attendance/absenteeism by student groups will not be available prior to the submission of this state plan. CDE will incorporate any subsequent data into the Department’s planning and adjust to continue meeting the needs of Colorado students. This section will focus on academic needs.

| <b>Student group</b>  | <b>Highest priority needs</b>  |
|---|--|
| Students from low-income families   | <p><b>1) Academic Acceleration and Reengagement</b> – Free and reduced lunch data are not as precise as in prior years. This is due to both students starting school remotely and the flexibility afforded by the USDA, CDE and Colorado school districts were able to offer free meals to all students during the 2020-2021 school year through the Summer Food Service Program. This allowance affected the number of families applying for school meal assistance. These data should be used cautiously. Any conclusions drawn from these data should take that consideration into account.</p> <p>That said, overall state assessment data from 2020-2021 shows that there is a need to accelerate learning for all student groups across the state and CDE believes this will hold true for the 2021-2022 school year.</p> <p><b>2) Food Insecurity</b> – Based on a recent statewide survey conducted by <a href="#">Hunger Free Colorado</a>, 44% of households with children are unable to consistently put healthy food on the table. The same survey has shown that 1 in 6 children in Colorado are not getting adequate nutrition because there is not enough money to purchase food.</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><b>1) Academic Acceleration and Reengagement</b> – In 2021, the percent of students who met or exceeded expectations decreased from 2019 for all race/ethnicity groups across all required tested grades in English language arts (ELA) and math.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● American Indian or Alaska Native students met or exceeded expectations on CMAS ELA at rates of 19.4% (grade 3); 28.7% (grade 5); and 22.2% (grade 7).</li> <li>● American Indian or Alaska Native students met or exceeded expectations on CMAS math at rates of 16.5% (grade 4); 11.5% (grade 6); and 13.6% (grade 8).</li> <li>● Asian students met or exceeded expectations on CMAS ELA at rates of 48.7% (grade 3); 61.3% (grade 5); and 63.7% (grade 7).</li> <li>● Asian students met or exceeded expectations on CMAS math at rates of 49.1% (grade 4); 48.3% (grade 6); and 57.0% (grade 8).</li> </ul>  |

- Black students met or exceeded expectations on CMAS ELA at rates of 24.3% (grade 3); 30.6% (grade 5); and 28% (grade 7).
- Black students met or exceeded expectations on CMAS math at rates of 12.8% (grade 4); 10.8% (grade 6); and 14.5% (grade 8).
- Hispanic students met or exceeded expectations on CMAS ELA at rates of 22.1% (grade 3); 27.2% (grade 5); and 25.0% (grade 7).
- Hispanic students met or exceeded expectations on CMAS math at rates of 12.0% (grade 4); 10.3% (grade 6); and 13.2% (grade 8).
- White students met or exceeded expectations on CMAS ELA at rates of 48.9% (grade 3); 59.7% (grade 5); and 53.3% (grade 7).
- White students met or exceeded expectations on CMAS math at rates of 38.0% (grade 4); 32.3% (grade 6); and 39.3% (grade 8).
- Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students met or exceeded expectations on CMAS ELA at rates 26.3% (grade 3); 26.7% (grade 5); and 37.2% (grade 7).
- Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students met or exceeded expectations on CMAS math at rates of 16.4% (grade 4); 17.0% (grade 6); and 22.6% (grade 8).
- Students of two or more races met or exceeded expectations on CMAS ELA at rates of 44.1% (grade 3); 54.0% (grade 5); and 49.3% (grade 7).
- Students of two or more races met or exceeded expectations on CMAS math at rates of 33.6% (grade 4); 29.0% (grade 6); and 33.9% (grade 8).

While the data above indicates the need for accelerated learning opportunities was true across all student groups, this was specifically true for black, Hispanic, and multiracial student groups.

- CMAS ELA: The estimated met/exceeded expectations percentage point gaps included in the following table were observed in spring 2021 with the white student group as the reference group.

|             | Grade 4 | Grade 6 | Grade 8 |
|-------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Asian       | 0.2     | 1.6*    | 10.4*   |
| Black       | 24.6    | 29.1    | 25.3    |
| Hispanic    | 26.8    | 32.5    | 28.3    |
| Two or more | 4.8     | 5.7     | 4.0     |

\*Comparison group out-performed reference group

- **CMAS Math:** The estimated met/exceeded expectations percentage point gaps included in the following table were observed in spring 2021 with the white student group as the reference group.

|             | Grade 4 | Grade 6 | Grade 8 |
|-------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Asian       | 11.1*   | 16.0^   | 17.7    |
| Black       | 25.2    | 21.5    | 24.8    |
| Hispanic    | 26.0    | 22.0    | 26.1    |
| Two or more | 4.4     | 3.3     | 5.4     |

\*Comparison group out-performed reference group

**2) Food Insecurity** – Based on a recent statewide survey conducted by [Hunger Free Colorado](#), “43% of non-white and Latinx households are now struggling to put food on the table compared to 29% of white Coloradans.”

Students by gender – please add a row for each gender (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by gender)

**1) Academic Acceleration and Reengagement** – Academic progress as measured through the 2021 assessment data shows that, for both female and male students, the proportion of students meeting or exceeding expectations fell when compared to the same grade in 2019.

- Females met or exceeded expectations on CMAS ELA in 2021 at rates of 44.2% (grade 3); 51.0% (grade 5); and 48.9% (grade 7). Females out-performed males in ELA with approximate gaps of 6 percentage points for met/exceeded expectations in grade 3; 7.5 percentage points in grade 5 and 11.9 percentage points in grade 7. However, the percentage of females meeting or exceeding expectations decreased from the last time students were tested in 2019 across all grades, with declines ranging from about 2.7 percentage points in grades 3 and 5 to about 6.2 percentage points in grade 7.
- Females met or exceeded expectations on CMAS Math in 2021 at rates of 25.8% (grade 4); 22.5% (grade 6); and 29.4% (grade 8). When compared with the percent of females who met or exceeded expectations in 2019, 2021 decreases ranged from 5.3 percentage points (grade 4) to 9.4 percentage points (grade 8).
- Males met or exceeded expectations on CMAS ELA in 2021 at rates of 36.2% (grade 3); 43.5% (grade 5); and 37.0% (grade 7). When compared with the percent of males who met or exceeded expectations in 2019, males in grade 5 performed consistently in 2021; however, the percent of males meeting or exceeding expectations decreased by about 1.5 percentage points in grades 3 and 7.

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
|                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Males met or exceeded expectations on CMAS math in 2021 at rates of 31.1% in grade 4; 25.6% in grade 6 and 29.7% in grade 8. When compared with the percent of males who met or exceeded expectations in 2019, decreases ranged from 4.8 to 5.5 percentage points in 2021. Males out-performed females in grades 4 and 6 with approximate gaps of 5.3 and 3.1 percentage points for met/exceeded expectations respectively. Males met/exceeded expectations at approximately the same rate as females in grade 8.</li> </ul>   |
| English learners           | <p><b>1) Focus on English Language Proficiency</b> – Preliminary English language proficiency (ELP) growth data for 2020-21 suggests significant declines in developing English at all grade spans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elementary: Shows the biggest declines with a baseline median growth percentile (MGP) of 32 in 2021, compared to the 51 in 2020.</li> <li>• Middle School: Shows a decline with a baseline MGP of 37 in 2021, compared to 51 in 2020.</li> <li>• High School: Shows little change with a baseline MGP of 50 in 2021, compared to 51 in 2020.</li> </ul> <p><b>2) Academic Acceleration and Reengagement</b> – Similar to other student groups described above, English language learners need supports to accelerate their learning as is identified in the following assessment results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ELA: Approximately 44% (grade 3) to 52% (grade 5) of Native English-speaking students met or exceeded expectations on CMAS English Language Arts. English learners met or exceeded expectations at rates of 10.3% (grade 3); 6.6% (grade 5); and 3.6% (grade 7) which was approximately 33.4 percentage points (grade 3) to 45.4 percentage points (grade 5) lower than their native English-speaking peers. When compared with the percent of English learners who met or exceeded expectations ELA in 2019, decreases in 2021 ranged from 2.9 percentage points (grade 5) to 4.0 percentage points (grade 7).</li> <li>• Math: Approximately 26% (grade 6) to 32% (grades 4 and 8) of native English-speaking students met or exceeded expectations on CMAS math in 2021. English learners met or exceeded expectations at rates of 4.2% (grade 4); 1.6% (grade 6) and 1.5% (grade 8) which was approximately 25 (grade 6) to 31 (grade 8) percentage points lower than their English-speaking peers. When compared with the percent of English learners who met or exceeded expectations in math in 2019, decreases in 2021 ranged from 1.7 percentage points (grade 6) to 4.6 percentage points (grade 4).</li> </ul> |
| Children with disabilities | <p><b>1) Academic Acceleration and Reengagement</b> – Historically, children and youth with disabilities have performed below their non-disabled peers on state assessments. Due to the disruptions created by the pandemic, students with disabilities have been disproportionately impacted as is evidenced by a decrease in</p>  |

|   |  |
|---|--|
|   | <p>participation in state assessments and a continuation of significant gaps between the number of students with disabilities meeting or exceeding expectations on the state assessment and students without disabilities.</p> <p><b>2) Continuity of supports</b> – Also, COVID related disruptions to in-person learning have significantly interfered with delivery of some IEP services, resulting in the need for compensatory services.</p> <p><b>3) Extending Transition Services</b> – For students with disabilities who would normally have “aged out” of the K-12 support system at the end of the 2020-2021 school year, the stakeholder engagement process indicated there is a need for additional and/or extended transition services due to the impacts of COVID.</p>  |
| <p>Students experiencing homelessness</p> | <p><b>1) Outreach, identification, expedited enrollment and re-engagement efforts</b> – Verified identification numbers of students experiencing homelessness from the 2020-21 school year are not available to date. However, based on estimates shared by local Colorado McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Liaisons, an estimated 35% fewer children and youth experiencing homelessness were identified and enrolled by Colorado public schools last school year. The primary reason cited for lower homeless student numbers at the start of the 2020-21 school year was the inability to identify families/youth due to distance learning and/or school building closures. Therefore, the pandemic seems to have significantly exacerbated the ongoing problem of under-identification and lack of services for homeless children and youth. Nationally, the School House Connections organization echoes this same concern. The organization estimates that prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, schools were failing to identify an estimated 1 million homeless children and youth. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased this number; as a result, as many as 1.4 million homeless K-12 children may be unidentified and unsupported by their schools. Of note, School House Connections also found that while overall homeless student identification and enrollment is down, the number of children and youth experiencing homelessness has likely increased due to the economic crisis.</p> <p>Identification, outreach, and re-engagement efforts for students experiencing homelessness are paramount in the coming school year.</p> <p><b>2) Food Insecurity</b> – As cited in the chart above, based on a recent statewide survey conducted by Hunger Free Colorado, 44% of households with children are unable to consistently put healthy food on the table. The same survey has shown that 1 in 6 children in Colorado are not getting adequate nutrition because there is not enough money to purchase food. It is estimated that this number is much higher for children and youth experiencing homelessness.</p> |

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|-----------------------------------|--|
|                                   | <p><b>3) Increased educational resources, community supports and school stability</b> – Liaisons also describe significant unmet needs beyond access to education including lack of internet/insufficient access to internet, shelter/housing, school transportation, mental health supports and childcare. In order to benefit from targeted educational protections and services, and accelerated academic programs, children and youth experiencing homelessness must be expeditiously connected with the critically needed school and community supports listed above so they can participate in school with vital basic needs met so they can be ready to learn.</p> <p>Additionally, prior to the pandemic, Colorado students moved schools more than twice their housed peers. Liaisons report this number is increasing and expect it to continue to increase if federal and state housing supports are decreased. When it is in their best interest, it is imperative to keep children and youth in their school of origin. On average it takes a student 4-6 months to academically recover for each school move.</p>  |
| Children and youth in foster care | <p><b>1) Re-engagement and Academic Acceleration</b> – According to <a href="#"><i>The Impact of COVID-19 on Students in Foster Care</i></a> (by Children Now), prior to the pandemic, students in foster care fared worse than their peers on multiple measures of educational engagement and achievement due to the unique challenges they face. For example, students in foster care were more than twice as likely as students overall to be chronically absent from school during the 2018-19 school year, due to placement changes, school transfers, court hearings, school discipline, and parental visitation.</p> <p>In addition, students in foster care were more than four times as likely as students overall to have been suspended one or more times during the year. Further, these students were struggling to stay on track in school, as they were far less likely to perform at grade level in English and math compared to their peers. In the 2018-19 school year, only 56 percent of foster youth graduated high school, nearly 30 percentage points lower than students overall (85 percent)</p> <p>Unfortunately, recent studies predict that the pandemic will widen the significant achievement gaps that already existed between students in foster care and their peers. This means that, compared to students not in foster care, foster youth are at disproportionate risk of falling further behind in the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years. (Statistics above are from the Children Now report).</p> <p><b>2) Increased school services, community supports and school stability</b> – The pandemic has created new barriers while, at the same time, exacerbating the challenges students in foster care faced prior to COVID-19. During school closures this past school year, students in foster care faced additional obstacles, including a lack of technology, connectivity, and a supportive learning environment, that made it difficult for them to fully engage in distance learning. In</p> |

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|  | a recent survey of Transitional Housing Placement for Non-Minor Dependents (THPNMD) programs, a majority of providers reported serving foster youth, including some in high school, who did not have a laptop, internet, or access to tutoring during school closures.   |
| Migratory students   | <p><b>1) Identifying Migrant Students</b> – The biggest need for the migrant program is increasing its ability to identify and recruit eligible migrant students. The program cannot serve migrant students if CDE cannot find them. The number of eligible migrant kids has decreased every month since the pandemic hit in March 2020.</p> <p><b>2) Connectivity</b> – The second greatest need is high speed connectivity to their communities. Many students have a device or one can be provided to them but it is very hard to provide connectivity.</p> <p><b>3) Mental/Behavioral Health</b> – The Third need is in the area of mental and behavioral health supports that are culturally and linguistically appropriate for the highly mobile migrant students.</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><u>Students in Facility Schools</u><br/>The Facility Schools Board has provided information to CDE on the needs of facility school programs to provide safe learning environments for students as well as additional supports to address interruptions in learning.</p> <p><u>American Indian and Alaska Native Students</u><br/>Colorado has seen an increased gap in American Indian and Alaska Native students’ academic performance, growth, and graduation rate which can be seen in the data presented disaggregated by student racial and ethnic background.</p>   |

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.**

CDE has developed a [COVID-19 Learning Impacts Toolkit](#) to support LEAs in responding to the impact of lost instructional time, including a response planning section devoted to assessing students’ needs, using data-based problem solving, engaging parents and the community, and developing a comprehensive response plan including strategies, benchmarks, action steps, and program monitoring. The Toolkit includes resources for well-being and connectedness, expanded learning opportunities, and instruction/intervention. To assist LEAs in using the response planning guide, CDE developed and delivered the 2021 Equity and Excellence Learning Series and support to LEAs as they implement their COVID-19 impacts response plan using the COVID-19 Learning Impacts Toolkit. In addition, CDE



has created tools and resources to support LEAs in the continuous improvement cycle through CDE’s Unified Improvement Planning Process.

CDE will host school and district leadership learning cohorts during the 2021-2022 school year. The learning cohorts will be year-long opportunities for school and district leaders to investigate a particular topic and to engage with other leaders across the state of Colorado.

Furthermore, CDE has developed and delivered, in partnership with the Regional Educational Laboratory-Central at Marzano Research, a series of [program evaluation training modules](#) to support LEAs in evaluating the effectiveness of all federally-funded programs. Additionally, over the years, CDE has enhanced its tools and resources for LEAs on conducting [comprehensive needs assessments](#) and using data to identify root causes of the [improvement planning process](#).

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;**

Districts will be required to submit the Data Reporting Assurances to CDE that will identify which students are participating in, and thus which schools/districts are offering, fully remote instruction or in-person instruction.

Districts will be expected to identify and report those students who are participating in the district’s 100% remote learning option as a result of COVID-19 health concerns. This status will be included in the following data collections:

- 2021 Student October Count data collection; and
- 2021-22 End of Year data collection.

The district will provide data for each school that indicates the number of whole and partial days the entire school was forced to switch from in-person to remote learning as a result of responding to COVID health and safety concerns. These data will be provided through the Report Card March periodic collection within CDE’s data collection system (called Data Pipeline).

Furthermore, schools and districts offering more than 40% of a student’s schedule with blended learning courses and/or supplemental courses that are enrolled in a traditional, brick-and-mortar school and that are not related to COVID health reasons will be required to submit a [variance waiver](#) to CDE. The variance waiver requires districts to identify how many students would be impacted by the proposed learning model/activities, and provide the state assigned student identifiers (SASIDs) for students participating in the proposed learning model(s). The SASIDs for students participating in blended learning courses or supplemental courses will provide the department the ability to determine which schools are offering this mode of 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**

Districts will be required to submit the following Data Reporting Assurances to CDE through the mechanisms described below:

- Students who are participating in the district’s 100% remote learning option as a result of COVID-19 health concerns. This status will be included in the following data collections:
  - 2021 Student October Count data collection; and
  - 2021-2022 End of Year data collection.
- Data for each school indicating the number of whole and partial days the entire school was forced to switch from in-person to remote learning as a result of responding to COVID health and safety concerns through the Report Card March periodic collection within the Data Pipeline.
- Schools and districts offering more than 40% of a student’s schedule with blended learning courses and/or supplemental courses that are enrolled in a traditional, brick-and-mortar school and that are not related to COVID health reasons will be required to submit a [variance waiver](#) to CDE. The variance waiver requires districts to identify how many students would be impacted by the proposed learning model/activities, and provide SASIDs for students participating in the proposed learning model(s).

**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.**

The Department annually collects enrollment and attendance data as part of the Student October Count data collection. Because the state does not collect all of these data at the student level through legislatively mandated data collections, CDE periodically gathers information regarding modes of instruction using publicly available information posted on the websites of LEAs. The mode of operations is not currently included as part of the annual collection limiting CDE’s ability to disaggregate enrollment and attendance data by mode of operation.

- 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.**

CDE prepared and posted the required data, to the extent that such data were available, on its [website](#) by June 21, 2021. However, some of the disaggregated data is not currently available and will be added to the website as data become available.

- 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.**

Most Colorado schools have transitioned to in-person learning for the 2021-2022 school year. However, LEAs, in conjunction with state and local public health officials, continue to monitor the impacts of the pandemic on their communities and may adjust plans based on the developing circumstances. The mode of operation for the 2020-2021 school year, to the extent that such data is available, is attached in Table 1 of Appendix A.

## **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;**

Complete the table below, adding rows as necessary, or provide a narrative description.

Prior to the passage of the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA) and the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act, CDE partnered with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) to provide a grant opportunity for LEAs on “[Safe Schools Reopening Grant](#)” for any LEAs that faced challenges with reopening schools in fall of 2020.

CDE, in partnership with CDPHE and the Colorado Governor’s Office, developed the [Practical Guide for Operationalizing CDC’s School Guidance](#) to help LEAs ensure the safety and health of students as they transitioned back to in-person learning beginning in the fall of 2021. The health guidance provided LEAs with information and tools needed to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and safely resume in-person instruction in partnership with local public health agencies, including resources to [address learning impacts](#), guidance on viewing cases and outbreaks, and [Health and Safety Guidelines](#) for reopening schools. The impact of [policies](#) and [available funding](#) for reopening schools were also outlined in the [COVID-19 Learning Impacts Toolkit](#).

**Table B1.**

| Mitigation strategy   | SEA response  |
|---|---|
| Universal and correct wearing of masks  | As part of the ARP ESSER III application for funds, CDE collected the link to the LEAs’ Safe Return or Stay In-Person Plans and is checking to make sure such plans address the CDC requirements for masks, physical distancing, hand-washing, cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, and contact tracing.<br><br>CDE has developed a checklist for LEAs to use to assess their own plans against requirements, training has been and will continue to be offered on planning requirements, and CDE will be providing feedback to LEAs for how to amend or update plans to align with CDC requirements<br><br><a href="#">Practical Guide for Operationalizing CDC’s School Guidance</a>  |
| Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)  |   |
| Handwashing and respiratory etiquette   |   |
| Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation  |   |
| Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments |   |
| Diagnostic and screening testing  | CDE works in close collaboration with CDPHE to disseminate important health information to school districts. For the fall of 2021, CDPHE is working to partner with schools and districts to host vaccination clinics. Interest is being collected through an online <a href="#">Vaccination Event Request Form</a> . Furthermore, CDE is disseminating information from CDPHE to share <a href="#">resources</a> to support educators, staff, and students who are interested in learning where they can receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Schools also have access to digital tools to support COVID-19 vaccine messaging including <a href="#">social media graphics</a> , <a href="#">print materials</a> , and an <a href="#">adolescent</a> |
| Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible  |   |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <a href="#">COVID-19 vaccine toolkit</a> . Throughout the school year, CDPHE will monitor disease transmission, severity, and vaccine effectiveness trends as well as community feedback.   |
| Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies | CDE developed <a href="#">guidance</a> to address the individual needs of students with disabilities including the development of contingency learning plans which would allow for a smoother transition to remote instruction in the event that this was needed based on the individual needs of a student. In addition, disability specialists from CDE’s Office of Special Education work closely with school district staff to support teachers in accommodating the needs of students, including the development of appropriate accommodations to protect the health and safety of children with disabilities. |

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

In addition to the [Practical Guide for Operationalizing CDC’s School Guidance](#) and the [Safe School Reopening Grant](#), CDE has been tracking the LEAs mode of operation and providing guidance and support on using ESSER funds to resume or sustain in-person instruction. Many of Colorado’s LEAs, particularly in rural areas, provided in-person instruction throughout the 2020-2021 school year. Although CDE does not have any policies requiring return to in-person instruction, LEAs are encouraged to use ESSER funds to ensure the health and safety of students and staff. CDE will be monitoring LEA’s Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plans required under Section 2001(i)(1) of ARP, and the use of ESSER funds in support of such activities. CDE will continue to offer supports to LEAs in resuming/sustaining in-person instruction and progress monitor whether instruction is provided in-person or remotely by adding data elements to existing collections during the 2021-2022 school year.

**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**

CDE regularly partners with CDPHE in monitoring the current status of the pandemic as it relates to schools as well as developing and disseminating guidance and resources to support district and schools in developing policies and processes to ensure safe return to in person learning. In addition, through funding awarded by the CDC, CDPHE is providing a free [COVID-19 school screening testing program](#) to LEAs to ensure that LEAs have the option to offer COVID-19 screening testing to students and staff.

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

Monthly training is being offered to LEAs that includes information and updates on the recommendations and requirements for Safe Return to In-Person Plans, multilayered prevention, and mitigation strategies, and how to respond to cases and outbreaks in the school setting.

- 2. **Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plans:** Describe how the SEA will ensure that its LEAs that receive ARP ESSER funds meet the requirements in section 2001(i) of the ARP Act and the requirements relating to the ARP ESSER funds published in the Federal Register and available at <https://oese.ed.gov/offices/american-rescue-plan/american-rescue-plan-elementary-and-secondary-school-emergency-relief/> (ARP ESSER requirements) to either: (a) within 30 days of receipt of the funds, develop and make publicly available on the LEA’s website a plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services, or (b) have developed and made publicly available on the LEA’s website such a plan that meets statutory requirements before the enactment of the ARP Act, including:
  - i. **How the SEA will ensure that each LEA plan includes, or will be modified to include, the extent to which it has adopted policies and a description of any such policies on each of the strategies listed in table B1;**
  - 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>2</sup> and revises as appropriate, its plan, and how the SEA will ensure that the LEA seeks public input, and takes such input into account on (1) whether revisions are necessary and, if so, (2) the revisions to the plan; and**
  - 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.**

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

CDE’s LEA applications for funds include [assurances](#) that the LEA will continue to provide services to students and ensure that student needs are being met. As part of the ARP ESSER III application for funds, CDE is collecting the link to the LEAs’ Safe Return to or Maintain In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plans. CDE has developed a checklist for LEAs to use to assess their own plans against requirements, training has been and will continue to be offered on planning requirements, meaningful stakeholder engagement as part of the plan development, and CDE will be providing feedback to LEAs for how to amend or update plans to align with CDC requirements.

CDE reviews each submitted Safe Return to In-Person Plan during the monitoring process and provides feedback to LEAs when amendments or revisions to the plan are necessary. CDE will require that plans be updated every 6 months and will do random checks of plans to ensure plans are being updated as required. Training has been provided regarding the requirements for the plans to meet CDC requirements. These requirements will be revisited and trainings will continue during the award period, as will periodic monitoring of plans.

During monitoring, implementation of the planned activities are reviewed and feedback is provided to improve implementation, where appropriate.

### **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.**

Throughout the pandemic, CDE has focused on engaging with the Colorado education community as well as students and families to understand the needs facing students, families, schools, and districts around the state. This included two 2020 needs inventories conducted in conjunction with the Colorado Education Initiative (CEI), a 2019-20 COVID-19 stakeholder workgroup and a stakeholder engagement process conducted during July 2021, in addition to CDE's regular stakeholder consultations with superintendents, advocacy organizations, teacher's cabinet, education organization leaders, district leaders, school nurses, and legislators, among others.

First, and as noted earlier in this plan, CDE worked in collaboration with CEI, to conduct [two needs inventories](#) in the spring and fall of 2020 to determine how to direct state set aside funds from ESSER I and ESSER II.

In March and April 2020, the top four education supports identified as the priorities across all regions of the state were: (1) student emotional support (52%), (2) technical support for delivering remote learning (46%), (3) online instructional support for teachers (41%), and (4) family engagement practices (38%).

When the assessment was conducted again in October 2020, the results indicated that device and connectivity needs had declined since spring 2020; however, workforce and staffing needs were a major concern for many districts throughout Colorado. Districts reported the following as their top priorities for students: (1) K-3 reading loss (56% selected), (2) high school student mental health (52%), (3) middle school mental health (41%), and (4) overall quality of virtual instruction (37%). In terms of teacher needs, districts reported priorities for teacher mental health (90%), teacher professional development (58%), and teacher and leader turnover (43%).

Additionally, as part of an effort to best allocate ESSER III funding, CDE partnered with Keystone Policy Group to conduct a stakeholder engagement process to inform the usage of the state's set-aside. The process included focus groups with critical stakeholders (parents, teachers, community organizations, teachers, principals, superintendents, educator preparation programs, advocacy organizations, and CDE staff) as well as an online survey designed to allow other stakeholders unable to participate in the focus groups to share their input on the needs facing their communities and suggestions on how CDE might best use the ESSER III funds. Finally, additional feedback was submitted or provided by stakeholders (including from legislators, advocacy groups, and CDE staff)



through formal proposals or during conversations outside of but during the same timeframe as the formal stakeholder engagement process. Stakeholders were notified through a variety of channels including social media, newsletters, listservs, and, where feasible, direct email communication.

This entire stakeholder engagement process, including the proposals and conversations noted above, resulted in a formal report, [Colorado Department of Education ESSER Funds Listening Tour: Listening & Learning to Inform CDE Strategy](#), in which the consultant summarized findings while also providing the unedited notes from focus groups and the unedited proposals/suggestions provided outside the focus group and survey process. The findings indicated five high-level priority areas for the state’s districts, schools, teachers and students: (1) Focusing on the academic recovery from students including English language learners, students with special needs, and students who were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic; (2) Ensuring the physical, emotional and mental well-being of students; (3) Providing resources, training and professional development for the state’s educator workforce; (4) Supporting the emotional and mental well-being of educators; and (5) Ensuring schools and students have the technological resources and supports necessary for implementing and accessing hybrid/remote instruction.

CDE took the time to review all avenues of stakeholder engagement, consider the suggestions and priorities in light of the other work occurring in districts and communities across the state, and drafted considerations for review by and feedback from the State Board of Education (SBE). The draft considerations, along with the full report submitted by Keystone Policy Group, were submitted and presented to the SBE on August 12, 2021. The board discussed the considerations in light of the feedback members had received from their constituencies. CDE took the feedback provided by SBE during that meeting and revised the considerations which were then approved by the SBE on August 24, 2021.

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

***Complete the table below or provide a narrative description.***

ESSER I funds were prioritized for providing devices, infrastructure, staffing, and other resources needed to provide remote instruction, as well as providing meals during school closures. With ESSER II funds, the priorities shifted from addressing immediate needs associated with the pandemic to preparing for in-person instruction, providing summer programming, and creating safe learning environments for students. For example, although 18% of the ESSER I funds were used for providing remote supports, that percentage dropped to 12% under ESSER II. Conversely, spending funds on activities related to resuming in-person instruction rose from 10% under ESSER I to 18% of ESSER II funds.

With ESSER II, CDE's guidance and application review included a focus on addressing the disproportionate impact the pandemic has had on student groups. During weekly office hours, CDE has provided LEAs guidance on identifying the needs of students and groups and using ESSER funds to support the academic, social, and emotional needs of students as they recover from the effects of the pandemic. Separate trainings were provided on the types of activities that can be funded with ESSER I and II funds in support of English Learners, students with disabilities, students experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, and migratory students.

Additionally, ESSER I and II state reserve funds have been set aside and targeted for supporting and addressing the needs of students with disabilities and Native American students who have been significantly impacted by the pandemic. Funding was provided to districts that serve Native American students and directly to Tribal Nations. BOCES also received funding to provide direct services to students with disabilities. A portion of the state reserve funds were earmarked for providing online courses so that students in rural and remote areas could benefit from online options to supplement in-person learning. For a complete distribution of state reserve funds for specific student groups, please visit CDE's [ESSER I](#) and [ESSER II](#) webpages.

Colorado was awarded approximately \$44 million in funding under the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER I) under the CARES Act. Governor Jared Polis created the Response, Innovation, and Student Equity (RISE) Education Fund to provide nearly \$33 million in grants to education organizations to support regional partnerships and initiatives that drove equity and innovation in response to the pandemic. Additionally, the Governor provided funding to support the integration of technology in education and educator recruitment and retention efforts. CDE has worked closely with Governor Polis and his staff to determine the usage of GEER II funding under the CRRSA Act. Due to the success of the first round of the Response, Innovation, and Student Equity (RISE) program, approximately \$9 million of GEER II funds was used to conduct a second round of competitive RISE grants, with a focus on equity, innovation, and statewide representation. Approximately \$9.4 million of GEER II funds was directed to building extended learning opportunities and addressing

expanded learning gaps through the creation of the Colorado Tutoring Corps, a program within AmeriCorps. This program will provide high-impact tutoring services to K-12 students across the state. CDE continues to work closely with Governor Polis to ensure a strategic use of any remaining GEER funds.

**Table C1.**

| <b>Funding source</b> | <b>Prior/current SEA and LEA uses (including funding amounts, if applicable)</b> | <b>Planned SEA and LEA uses (including funding amounts, if applicable)</b> |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| ESSER I (CARES Act)   | <i>Please see the narrative above.</i>   |  |
| GEER I (CARES Act)    |  |  |
| ESSER II (CRRSA Act)  |  |  |
| GEER II (CRRSA Act)   |  |  |

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

**ESSER I**

| <b>Grantee</b>   | <b>Award Amount</b> | <b>Awarded By</b> | <b>Amount Obligated by June 7, 2021</b>       |
|--|---------------------|-------------------|---|
| 90% allocations to LEAs  | \$108,894,404       | 12/31/20          | CDE does not track LEAs' obligation of funds. |
| BOCES for supporting students with disabilities                            | \$750,000           | 12/31/20          | CDE does not track LEAs' obligation of funds. |
| Colorado Tribes  | \$70,000            | 12/31/20          | CDE does not track LEAs' obligation of funds. |
| Districts with Native American students                                    | \$320,000           | 12/31/20          | CDE does not track LEAs' obligation of funds. |
| Districts that did not receive or received a small allocation from the 90% | \$1,500,000         | 12/31/20          | CDE does not track LEAs' obligation of funds. |
| Districts, BOCES, and Tribes for connectivity to broadband                 | \$1,300,000         | 12/31/20          | CDE does not track LEAs' obligation of funds. |
| BOCES for online courses to supplement in-person instruction               | \$3,000,000         | 5/7/21            | CDE does not track LEAs' obligation of funds. |

|                  |           |        |   |
|------------------|-----------|--------|---|
| Facility Schools | \$584,400 | 5/7/21 | CDE does not track LEAs' obligation of funds. |
|------------------|-----------|--------|---|

**ESSER II**

| Grantee  | Award Amount  | Awarded By | Amount Obligated by June 7, 2021              |
|--|---------------|------------|---|
| 90% allocations to LEAs  | \$467,391,880 | 9/30/21    | CDE does not track LEAs' obligation of funds. |
| Districts and BOCES for supporting students with disabilities              | \$7,697,837   | 9/30/21    | CDE does not track LEAs' obligation of funds. |
| Colorado Tribes  | \$280,000     | 9/30/21    | CDE does not track LEAs' obligation of funds. |
| Districts with Native American students                                    | \$1,286,800   | 9/30/21    | CDE does not track LEAs' obligation of funds. |
| Districts that did not receive or received a small allocation from the 90% | \$5,723,543   | 9/30/21    | CDE does not track LEAs' obligation of funds. |
| BOCES for operation and supporting brick and mortar schools                | \$1,767,000   | 9/30/21    | CDE does not track LEAs' obligation of funds. |

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

CDE assigns a department staff member to serve as an ESEA Regional Contact and a Support Coordinator for each LEA. These staff support the LEAs’ plan

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

development and leveraging of various funding streams to best meet local needs based on the results of a comprehensive needs assessment. CDE has devoted several Regional Networking Meetings and weekly office hours to support LEAs in planning and leveraging the use of funds to best meet identified needs. CDE encourages LEAs to first identify and prioritize needs, and then determine which funding source can be used to effectively address the identified needs. Resources, such as the [Funding Matrix](#), have been used to guide these conversations. ESEA Regional Contacts provide expertise on allowable and intended uses of funds under ESSA and Support Coordinators facilitate conversations with various units at CDE who oversee IDEA, WIOA, McKinney-Vento, and other available funding streams that might be able to help meet identified needs.

#### **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;**

CDE is currently in the process of determining the specific mechanisms for funding (i.e., competitive grants to LEAs, state contracts) on evidence-based interventions to address the academic impact of lost instructional time as provided for under sections 2001(f)(1) of the ARP Act. However, to ensure that funding is made available as quickly as possible, CDE will prioritize the usage of existing funding and programming mechanisms while considering any potential barriers that exist for reaching prioritized student populations.

Potential programs include, but are not limited to, providing funding for:

- **High-dosage tutoring** – An intervention strategy backed by a significant body of evidence, Colorado [House Bill 21-1234](#) established a new program within CDE to provide funding for high-dosage tutoring programs within Colorado schools. CDE will use ESSER set-aside funding under the ARP Act to expand the program beyond the funding provided in the state program and ensure that such tutoring is available to a larger contingent of students across the state. This could include partnering with districts, institutions of higher education, and community organizations in the development of a tutoring corp that would bring the tutoring services into schools.
- **High-quality curricular and instructional materials** – Having access to high-quality, standards-aligned curricular materials and the instructional resources necessary for implementing them are key components for student success. CDE is aware that many schools and districts around the state have not had the capacity to purchase those for their students. As such, CDE will use a portion of ESSER set-aside funding to ensure that districts have access to such curricular and instructional materials to accelerate student learning.
- **Professional learning** – High-quality instructional practice, especially when aligned with the high-quality curricular and instructional materials identified above, is another key component in student success. As the field of education continues to evolve, it is essential that the educator workforce is provided with professional learning opportunities that will support their professional growth and prepare them with skills and knowledge necessary to support the academic, social, emotional, and mental health of Colorado’s students. For this reason, CDE will use a portion of ESSER set-aside funding to establish targeted professional learning modules available to districts, schools, and teachers.
- **Recruitment and retention of the educator workforce** – No amount of student growth would occur without the presence, expertise, and efforts of educators and school support staff. However, as noted in Table F1 below, recruitment and retention of the educator workforce is a concern that, while present in Colorado prior to the pandemic, has only been exacerbated throughout the past school year. In an effort to help bring high-quality educators into schools most impacted by this shortage and retain educators in those same schools, CDE will use a portion of ESSER set-aside funding to create opportunities that encourage preservice educators to enter the workforce, recruit high-quality educators to Colorado schools, and establish mentoring retention programs that provide support to new-to-service educators while also providing professional growth opportunities for experienced educators. Other retention strategies currently being piloted in the state may also be supported. For instance, and as described in more detail in Section F, Part 1(iii), CDE is working in partnership with the Lt. Governor’s office on expanding the AmeriCorps program in Colorado as both a tutor and future teacher pipeline.

- **Empowering Action for School Improvement (EASI) Grants** – The best evidence-based pathway(s) for improving schools requires a thoughtful analysis of the needs of the school, the causes precipitating those needs, and connecting funding to the right evidence-based practice(s) for addressing those causes. With the impact of the pandemic on student learning, CDE is anticipating that schools with performance challenges prior to the pandemic have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Already in place, the EASI grant program allows CDE to support eligible schools in exploring potential supports to meet their schoolwide improvement needs, applying for an existing CDE service for school improvement, funding the implementation of a program operated by the district, and/or piloting new school improvement support programs. CDE will use a portion of the ESSER set-aside funding to expand the monies available through this program and/or the schools eligible for applying to address the impact of the pandemic on student academic achievement, well-being, and health.
- **Supplemental Funding for Districts, BOCES, Special Education, Tribal Nations, and other High-Risk Populations** – Some Colorado school districts, BOCES and Tribal Nations received little or no ESSER III LEA relief funding based on Title I allocations, but still have high proportions of at-risk students. CDE has determined that a portion of ESSER III funding set aside for state-level activities will go to these entities to, among others, support Native American students and students with special needs. This will help to ensure that the intent behind the 90% of ESSER funds dedicated to high-need students to address the pandemic impacts is met in Colorado.
- **Career Connected Learning** – The creation of career-connected learning pathways and opportunities is a resource-intensive endeavor that Colorado districts have not always had the capacity to undertake. Stakeholders from across the state have indicated this as a critical need for student engagement and success, given the impacts of the pandemic. As such, CDE may use a portion of the ESSER set-aside funds to support the creation of new career and technical education (CTE) programs including the creation of collaborative partnerships among Colorado’s rural districts.
- **Technical Assistance and Communication** – Many of the bright spots of the pandemic related to the collaboration across districts and/or with community partners. CDE’s plan builds upon the growing collaboration with two key activities:
  - First, creating partnerships and collaboration takes time and space. CDE may use a portion of the ESSER set-aside funding to provide technical assistance to LEAs for developing and sustaining effective partnerships.
  - Second, as the work funded by ESSER evolves over the funding period, collaborating through learning will be critical for impactful implementation of recovery strategies. If LEAs, CDE, and the rest of the education community can learn from each other during

implementation, there will be a greater return on investment of ESSER funds. Thus, CDE may use funds for sharing best practices and the expansion of evidence-based interventions that are working in Colorado schools.

To aid schools, districts, and BOCES in finding a start point for responding to the unprecedented challenges raised by the pandemic, recovering from the considerable loss of learning opportunities, and supporting them in strengthening collaboration with students and families, CDE launched the [Learning Impacts Toolkit](#). This set of resources provides guidance to local leaders in establishing response plans, identifying potential evidence-based interventions, and considering how to approach funding identified programs. CDE intends to continue evaluating this toolkit, exploring opportunities for expansion, and encouraging LEAs to use this when applying for any of the funding opportunities offered by CDE through the ESSER set-aside funding.

CDE will be using a portion of the state reserve to create a Data & Evaluation Office that will review the final funding opportunities offered by CDE. In addition, CDE will ensure that funded programs report on outcomes, as required by the USDE. Finally, this new office will work to disseminate promising practices to the Colorado education community and support CDE in leveraging evaluations in future planning initiatives.

**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**

CDE is initiating a planning process to review the most recent data to identify the student populations most impacted by the pandemic. The data to be considered includes:

- Colorado READ Act Assessments – Grades K through 3;
- Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) – Grades 3, 5, and 7 for English Language Arts/Literacy and Grades 4, 6, and 8 for Mathematics;
- Colorado Alternate Assessment (CoAlt) – Grades 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, and 11 for English Language Arts and Grades 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 11 for Mathematics;
- PSAT and SAT – Grades 9 through 11; and
- Attendance data (when it is available).

Through this planning process, CDE staff and, as appropriate, community stakeholders will focus on which students were most impacted over the past 18 months, consider what programs would best meet the needs of those students in accelerating learning and increasing engagement for them, and focus



programming accordingly. For funding opportunities, applications will strongly encourage that programs focus on the students identified as being most in need and describe how the program is specifically designed to meet their needs. In addition, the process for reviewing and approving programs under these funding opportunities will prioritize programs that address the needs of student groups identified in the process above.

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

The specific program mechanisms have not yet been determined by CDE. However, specific funding opportunities defined for addressing the academic impact of lost instructional time through evidence-based initiatives may (1) be required to demonstrate how they will identify students who missed the most in-person instruction over the past two school years and/or did not consistently participate in remote instruction and (2) identify how they will ensure that the programs they are offering will be focused on supporting those students in accelerating learning and engagement. Applicants could use LEA attendance data, local and statewide assessments, as well as other data maintained locally.

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:**

In an effort to streamline and simplify the processes for applicants, CDE is aligning the requirements for summer learning and enrichment (as described in Section D, Part 2, of this plan) with the requirements for comprehensive afterschool programming (as described in Section D, Part 3, of this plan). This is done in alignment with [Colorado House Bill 21-1259](#) requiring that CDE “create a streamlined process for local education providers to access funding for extended learning opportunities based on the specific needs of the local education provider.” For this reason, the content is replicated in both sections.

- 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;**

CDE is currently in the process of determining the specific mechanisms for funding evidence-based summer learning and enrichment programs and comprehensive afterschool programming as provided for under sections 2001(f)(2) and 2001(f)(3) of the ARP Act. The Department's intention is to leverage these programs to address the first two goals as outlined in Section A, Part 1: (1) supporting academic acceleration for students most impacted by the pandemic with a focus on math and literacy for students in grades K-8, and (2) expanding learning opportunities to strengthen student engagement in learning in both the traditional school day and beyond. To ensure that funding is made available as quickly as possible, CDE will prioritize the usage of existing funding and programming mechanisms while considering any potential barriers that exist for reaching prioritized student populations.

Potential uses include, but are not limited to, funding:

- Extending [high-dosage tutoring programs](#) as described in Section D, Part 1, beyond the confines of the traditional school day.
- Expanded opportunities for the [Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers](#) which provide opportunities for academic enrichment; offer students a broad array of additional service, programs, and activities; and offer families of students opportunities for active and meaningful engagement in their children's education. (Colorado has invested ESSER I and II funds into this program already.)
- Additional partnerships between districts and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) to provide academically enriching programming outside the traditional school day to foster increased student engagement in school.
- School-based summer academies or similar programming designed to accelerate learning and avoid summer learning loss.

As referenced earlier, CDE created a suite of resources within the [Learning Impacts Toolkit](#) to support schools, districts, and BOCES in finding a start point for responding to the pandemic. This set of resources includes specific supports for expanded learning opportunities including resources for restructuring the school day (scheduling core and intervention time), extending the school day, week and/or year, and summer learning. CDE intends to continue evaluating this toolkit, exploring opportunities for expansion, and encouraging LEAs to use this when applying for any of the funding opportunities offered by CDE through the ESSER set-aside funding.

CDE will be using a portion of the state reserve to create a Data & Evaluation Office that will review the final funding opportunities offered by CDE. In addition, CDE will ensure that funded programs report on outcomes, as required by the USDE. Finally, this new office will work to disseminate promising practices to the Colorado education community and support CDE in leveraging evaluations in future planning initiatives.

- 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**

CDE is initiating a planning process to review the most recent data to identify the student populations most impacted by the pandemic. The data to be considered includes:

- Colorado READ Act Assessments – Grades K through 3;
- Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) – Grades 3, 5, and 7 for English Language Arts/Literacy and Grades 4, 6, and 8 for Mathematics;
- Colorado Alternate Assessment (CoAlt) – Grades 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, and 11 for English Language Arts and Grades 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 11 for Mathematics;
- PSAT and SAT – Grades 9 through 11; and
- Attendance data (when it is available).

Through this planning process, CDE staff and, as appropriate, community stakeholders will focus on which students were most impacted over the past 18 months, consider what programs would best meet the needs of those students in accelerating learning and increasing engagement for them, and focus programming accordingly. For funding opportunities, applications will strongly encourage that programs focus on the students identified as being most in need and describe how the program is specifically designed to meet their needs. In addition, the process for reviewing and approving programs under these funding opportunities will prioritize programs that address the needs of student groups identified in the process above.

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

The specific program mechanisms have not yet been determined by CDE. However, specific funding opportunities defined for summer learning and enrichment programs and comprehensive after school programs may (1) be required to demonstrate how they will identify students who missed the most in-person instruction over the past two school years and/or did not consistently participate in remote instruction and (2) identify how they will ensure that the programs they are offering will be focused on supporting those students in accelerating learning and engagement. Applicants could use LEA attendance data, local and statewide assessments, as well as other data maintained locally.

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:

In an effort to streamline and simplify the processes for applicants, CDE is aligning the requirements for summer learning and enrichment (as described in Section D, Part 2, of this plan) with the requirements for comprehensive afterschool programming (as described in Section D, Part 3, of this plan). This is done in alignment with [Colorado House Bill 21-1259](#) requiring that CDE “create a streamlined process for local education providers to access funding for extended learning opportunities based on the specific needs of the local education provider.” For this reason, the content is replicated in both sections.

- 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;**

CDE is currently in the process of determining the specific mechanisms for funding evidence-based summer learning and enrichment programs and comprehensive afterschool programming as provided for under sections 2001(f)(2) and 2001(f)(3) of the ARP Act. The Department’s intention is to leverage these programs to address the first two goals as outlined in Section A, Part 1: (1) supporting academic acceleration for students most impacted by the pandemic with a focus on math and literacy for students in grades K-8, and (2) expanding learning opportunities to strengthen student engagement in learning in both the traditional school day and beyond. To ensure that funding is made available as quickly as possible, CDE will prioritize the usage of existing funding and programming mechanisms while considering any potential barriers that exist for reaching prioritized student populations.

Potential uses include, but are not limited to, funding:

- Extending [high-dosage tutoring programs](#) as described in Section D, Part 1, beyond the confines of the traditional school day.
- Expanded opportunities for the [Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers](#) which provide opportunities for academic enrichment; offer students a broad array of additional service, programs, and activities; and offer families of students opportunities for active and meaningful engagement in their children’s education. (Colorado has invested ESSER I and II funds into this program already.)

- Additional partnerships between districts and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) to provide academically enriching programming outside the traditional school day to foster increased student engagement in school.
- School-based summer academies or similar programming designed to accelerate learning and avoid summer learning loss.

As referenced earlier, CDE created a suite of resources within the [Learning Impacts Toolkit](#) to support schools, districts, and BOCES in finding a start point for responding to the pandemic. This set of resources includes specific supports for expanded learning opportunities including resources for restructuring the school day (scheduling core and intervention time), extending the school day, week and/or year, and summer learning. CDE intends to continue evaluating this toolkit, exploring opportunities for expansion, and encouraging LEAs to use this when applying for any of the funding opportunities offered by CDE through the ESSER set-aside funding.

CDE will be using a portion of the state reserve to create a Data & Evaluation Office that will review the final funding opportunities offered by CDE. In addition, CDE will ensure that funded programs report on outcomes, as required by the USDE. Finally, this new office will work to disseminate promising practices to the Colorado education community and support CDE in leveraging evaluations in future planning initiatives.

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

CDE is initiating a planning process to review the most recent data to identify the student populations most impacted by the pandemic. The data to be considered includes:

- Colorado READ Act Assessments – Grades K through 3;
- Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) – Grades 3, 5, and 7 for English Language Arts/Literacy and Grades 4, 6, and 8 for Mathematics;
- Colorado Alternate Assessment (CoAlt) – Grades 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, and 11 for English Language Arts and Grades 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 11 for Mathematics;
- PSAT and SAT – Grades 9 through 11; and
- Attendance data (when it is available).

Through this planning process, CDE staff and, as appropriate, community stakeholders will focus on which students were most impacted over the past 18 months, consider what programs would best meet the needs of those students in

accelerating learning and increasing engagement for them, and focus programming accordingly. For funding opportunities, applications will strongly encourage that programs focus on the students identified as being most in need and describe how the program is specifically designed to meet their needs. In addition, the process for reviewing and approving programs under these funding opportunities will prioritize programs that address the needs of student groups identified in the process above.

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

The specific program mechanisms have not yet been determined by CDE. However, specific funding opportunities defined for summer learning and enrichment programs and comprehensive after school programs may (1) be required to demonstrate how they will identify students who missed the most in-person instruction over the past two school years and/or did not consistently participate in remote instruction and (2) identify how they will ensure that the programs they are offering will be focused on supporting those students in accelerating learning and engagement. Applicants could use LEA attendance data, local and statewide assessments, as well as other data maintained locally.

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.**

CDE continues to consider potential needs that will be addressed with the state reserve including a portion that will be identified to address the evolving needs of the state's districts, schools, and students. This will continue throughout the 2021-2022 school year and will focus on meeting the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of Colorado students.

#### **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.

In order to meet timelines, make funds available to LEAs as quickly as possible, but still allow for developing an LEA plan with meaningful stakeholder input, CDE has created a two-step application/LEA plan process. All LEAs with an allocation from the 90% distribution funds have already submitted a preliminary application and have been awarded substantial approval by May 23, 2021, for the use of ARP ESSER III funds so that they can obligate and use funds as necessary, including for implementation of summer and afterschool programs. LEAs will be submitting their plans and budgets for use of funds as soon as they have determined local needs, gathered meaningful stakeholder input, and developed plans that are responsive to the needs of their students.

The second component, or LEA plans, are due by December 16, 2021. The ARP ESSER III LEA application for funds already requires a description of how at

least 20% of the funds will be used for evidence-based interventions to address the academic impact of lost instructional time, an indication of which student groups will be served, and how the remainder of the funds will be used for other allowable, reasonable, and necessary activities to respond to, prepare for, or prevent the spread of COVID-19. Assurances have been updated to include implementation of evidence-based interventions and other specified requirements under ARP. Narrative questions require the LEAs to address how they will ensure that the interventions, activities, and strategies they are implementing are effective in addressing the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of all students, with particular attention to identifying and addressing any disproportionate impact that the pandemic has had on specified student groups. Monitoring of the LEA's use of funds (see monitoring plans below) will allow CDE to provide oversight and feedback on implementation of proposed LEA plans.

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.**

CDE is developing tools and resources for LEA plan development, which will include guidance on engaging stakeholders as part of the process. The ARP ESSER III application for funds/LEA Plans will include questions pertaining to the stakeholders engaged in the development process, input received, and how the input was used in plan development. The department is beginning to support discussion of these important issues, as evidenced by providing training to



districts from experts in Family, School, and Community Partnership (FSCP) on how to meaningfully engage all key stakeholders, particularly those specified for this process at the June 24, 2021, office hours.

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;**

This process will begin with review of applications for use of funds/LEA plans. CDE will be checking to ensure that at least 20% of the funds are used for implementing evidence-based interventions to address academic impact of lost instructional time. Training, guidance, and support have been and will continue to be offered regarding identification, design, and implementation of [evidence-based interventions that meet ESEA, Section 8101 requirements](#).

CDE is developing tools and resources for ensuring that ESSER-funded evidence-based interventions also meet the ESEA evidence-based interventions (EBI) definitions and requirements, which have historically been relevant for improvement activities funded with ESEA Title I Improvement (Section 1003) funds. The resources will be expanded to apply to ESSER-funded activities. Monitoring of the improvement plans from schools includes review of the evidence-based strategies that have been identified and are being implemented. CDE has also developed an [allowable uses of funds table](#), which is being updated to include evidence-based interventions allowable under ARP ESSER III. CDE is offering training and support through the [weekly office hours](#), [Equity and Excellence Conference Series](#), and the [COVID-19 Learning Impacts Toolkit, which includes a section on Extended Learning Opportunities](#).

- 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**

In addition to the above, CDE's application for funds and improvement planning requirements include identifying and addressing the needs of all students, with particular attention to students from specified student groups. Through assurances and description of the use of funds, CDE reviews, provides feedback, and approves the use of funds for meeting the identified needs of student groups. Resources for [addressing the unique needs of student groups](#) have been provided

via the CDE website and office hours for supporting [English learners](#), [students experiencing homelessness](#), and [other student groups](#).

- 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.**

As described in part ii above, CDE’s application for funds and improvement planning requirements include identifying and addressing the needs of all students, with particular attention to students from specified student groups. Through assurances and description of the use of funds, CDE reviews, provides feedback, and approves the use of funds for meeting the identified needs of student groups. Resources for [addressing the unique needs of student groups](#) have been provided via the CDE website and office hours for supporting [English learners](#), [students experiencing homelessness](#), and [other student groups](#).

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

As previously stated, CDE has developed a COVID-19 Learning Impacts Toolkit, which includes topics such as addressing the needs of students through Equity and Cultural Responsiveness when planning and delivering [extended learning opportunities](#) and using data to assess local needs and [problem-solve appropriate and responsive solutions](#). The toolkit is being disseminated through the [Equity and Excellence Conference Series](#), with a focus on applying lessons learned from across the state on how best to identify and strategize to address the impact that the pandemic has had on all students, but particularly those who have experienced a disproportionate impact.

**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.**

*Complete the table below, changing or adding additional rows as needed, or provide a narrative description.*

**Table F1.**

| Area  | Data on shortages and needs   | Narrative description  |
|---|---|--|
| Special educators and related service personnel and paraprofessionals | All data pulled from the CDE Educator Talent Research and Impact, Teacher Shortage website: <a href="https://www.cde.state.co.us/educatortalent/coloeducatorshortagesurveyresultsdashboard">https://www.cde.state.co.us/educatortalent/coloeducatorshortagesurveyresultsdashboard</a> | <p>In the 2020-21 year, of the 1,061 total Special Service Personnel (SSP) positions to hire, 75 (7%) remained unfilled for the school year and 49 (5%) were filled through a shortage mechanism, such as alternative licensure. The percentage of SSP positions going unfilled remained relatively stable in comparison to the prior year.</p> <p>Just under 3% of Colorado’s special education generalist positions were filled through a shortage mechanism, and less than .82% were left unfilled during the 2020-21 school year.</p> <p>Of the 1,228 total paraprofessional positions to hire, 92 (7%) remained unfilled for the entire school year and 15 (1%) were filled through a shortage mechanism. Though the percentage of paraprofessional positions filled through a shortage mechanism was stable in comparison to the prior year, there was an increase in the percentage of paraprofessional positions that remained unfilled.</p> |

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| English as a second language educators | All data pulled from the CDE Educator Talent Research and Impact, Teacher Shortage website:<br><a href="https://www.cde.state.co.us/educatortalent/coloeducatorshortagesurveyresultsdashboard">https://www.cde.state.co.us/educatortalent/coloeducatorshortagesurveyresultsdashboard</a> | Colorado employs culturally and linguistically diverse-endorsed educators. The 2020-21 data indicated that 22.5 FTE were still needed in this arena at the beginning of the year. All other CLD positions had been filled by qualified candidates. However, 11.5 positions remained unfilled over the course of the year due to supply.   |
| STEM educators                         | All data pulled from the CDE Educator Talent Research and Impact, Teacher Shortage website:<br><a href="https://www.cde.state.co.us/educatortalent/coloeducatorshortagesurveyresultsdashboard">https://www.cde.state.co.us/educatortalent/coloeducatorshortagesurveyresultsdashboard</a> | Colorado does not have a specific STEM educator endorsement. However, for <b>math</b> , the 2020-21 educator shortage data collection indicated that 80 positions still needed to be filled at the beginning of the school year, with 51.7 positions being filled by direct hires after the start of the year or a shortage mechanism and 28.33 positions remaining unfilled the entire year.<br><br>For <b>science</b> , the 2020-21 educator shortage data collection indicated that 43.3 positions still needed to be filled at the beginning of the school year, with 29 positions being filled by direct hires after the start of the year or a shortage mechanism and 14.8 positions remaining unfilled the entire year |
| CTE educators                          | CDE issues educator licensure certificates for CTE on behalf of the Colorado Community College System (CCCS). However, CTE data specific to educator shortages is not collected by CDE as that reporting runs through the CCCS.  | CDE issues educator licensure certificates for CTE on behalf of the Colorado Community College System (CCCS). However, CTE data specific to educator shortages is not collected by CDE as that reporting runs through the CCCS.   |
| Early childhood educators              | All data pulled from the CDE Educator Talent Research and Impact, Teacher Shortage website:<br><a href="https://www.cde.state.co.us/educatortalent/coloeducatorshortagesurveyresultsdashboard">https://www.cde.state.co.us/educatortalent/coloeducatorshortagesurveyresultsdashboard</a> | The 2020-21 educator shortage data collection indicated that 27 positions still needed to be filled at the beginning of the school year, with 21 of those positions being filled by direct hires or shortage mechanisms and 2 positions remaining unfilled the entire year.   |
| School counselors                      | All data pulled from the CDE Educator Talent Research and Impact, Teacher Shortage website:<br><a href="https://www.cde.state.co.us/educatortalent/coloeducatorshortagesurveyresultsdashboard">https://www.cde.state.co.us/educatortalent/coloeducatorshortagesurveyresultsdashboard</a> | The 2020-21 educator shortage data collection indicated that 32 positions still needed to be filled at the beginning of the school year, with 20.5 positions being filled by direct hires after the start of the year or a shortage mechanism and 11.5 positions remaining unfilled the entire year.  |

|                      |  |  |
|----------------------|--|--|
| Social workers       | All data pulled from the CDE Educator Talent Research and Impact, Teacher Shortage website:<br><a href="https://www.cde.state.co.us/educatortalent/coloeducatorshortagesurveyresultsdashboard">https://www.cde.state.co.us/educatortalent/coloeducatorshortagesurveyresultsdashboard</a> | The 2020-21 educator shortage data collection indicated that 47.2 positions still needed to be filled at the beginning of the school year, with 36.7 positions being filled by direct hires or a shortage mechanism and 10.5 positions remaining unfilled the entire year.   |
| Nurses               | All data pulled from the CDE Educator Talent Research and Impact, Teacher Shortage website:<br><a href="https://www.cde.state.co.us/educatortalent/coloeducatorshortagesurveyresultsdashboard">https://www.cde.state.co.us/educatortalent/coloeducatorshortagesurveyresultsdashboard</a> | The 2020-21 educator shortage data collection indicated that 51.7 positions still needed to be filled at the beginning of the school year, with 39.7 positions being filled by direct hires or a shortage mechanism and 12 positions remaining unfilled the entire year, predominantly in the nonrural areas of the state. |
| School psychologists | All data pulled from the CDE Educator Talent Research and Impact, Teacher Shortage website:<br><a href="https://www.cde.state.co.us/educatortalent/coloeducatorshortagesurveyresultsdashboard">https://www.cde.state.co.us/educatortalent/coloeducatorshortagesurveyresultsdashboard</a> | The 2020-21 educator shortage data collection indicated that 44.4 positions still needed to be filled at the beginning of the school year, with 26.4 positions being filled by shortage mechanisms and 18 positions remaining unfilled the entire year.  |

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

As part of the CDE Strategic Plan, CDE annually surveys the state’s school districts and BOCES about the employment of teachers, special services providers (SSPs), and starting with the 2019-20 survey, principals/assistant principals and paraprofessionals. The Educator Shortage Survey Results include the facts about the number of vacant educator positions and the ways those vacancies were filled, if they were filled at all. These shortage data allow CDE, LEAs and BOCES to identify educator shortage areas across the state and report to the Colorado Legislature to inform decisions regarding support for recruiting and retaining educators. Information regarding 2020-21 Educator Shortage Survey results, including the survey results summary, highlights, and additional details is available on the CDE website, and widely distributed for all LEAs and BOCES to utilize.

During the 2020-21 school year, ESSER I and ESSER II funds were allocated at the SEA level to support professional development for new teachers through a new educator boot camp where educators new to the profession learned critical skills in supporting students in online and blended environments. Having this resource available through the SEA has allowed districts to ramp up new to the profession educators more quickly to meet the needs of students. GEER funds were allocated to alternative educator preparation programs to immediately place alternative educators in the classroom while providing those educators with wrap-around support for learning pedagogy to support student learning needs.

One of the many issues continuing to face schools is a shortage of available substitute educators to fill the classrooms and ensure continuity of teaching in the event of pandemic-driven quarantine or illness as a result of COVID variants. In response to the implications of COVID, CDE partnered with the Colorado Center for Rural Education at the University of Northern Colorado, to offer stipends that can be used to reimburse a variety of costs associated with obtaining a substitute authorization and preparing for their first days as a substitute in the classroom. CDE offered free virtual Substitute Boot Camp that focuses on the critical learning substitutes need to enter school as guest educators and continued to offer coaching and mentoring supports through the Troops to Teachers program and TEACHColorado.org.

- 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).**

The Colorado Department of Education has partnered with all 43 Colorado educator preparation programs in the state to increase the number of pre-service educators being prepared for Colorado classrooms. State and federal funds have been used to support the recruitment and preparation of alternative educators who immediately enter the classroom or support team teaching through a residency-based program. State-funded initiatives allocate tuition assistance and stipends directly to alternative educators. The SEA has seen an increase of 800 educators entering into the alternative educator pathways, particularly in hard to fill content areas such as math and science in the last year and over this summer. The alternative educator pathways have a clear focus on community “grow your own” programs which includes a lens on ensuring community-based diverse educators enter the field of education and are supported by mentorship and coaching programs through [TEACHColorado.org](https://teachcolorado.org) (a digital recruitment and support platform used extensively in Colorado to bring in new teachers and support them through their educator preparation).

During the 2020-21 school year, CDE partnered with the Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC) to implement local recruitment initiatives for substitutes and alternative educators through workforce development centers. This program led to an increase in locally-based substitutes and alternative educators in hard to fill geographic areas. To further this program, CDE and CWDC also partnered with the AmeriCorps program through the Lt. Governor's office. The program supported employment of just under 100 Corp members in schools full-time to serve as substitutes and/or mentors and tutors in after school programs. Through additional GEER funding and as proposed in ESSER III funding, this program will further expand into the 2021-22 school year, through a partnership with AmeriCorps and CDE, AmeriCorps members holding a bachelor's degree or higher will enter into the Educator Preparation Residency Corp and serve two years with the first year being focused on in-school, full-time supports as substitute or paraprofessional educators and/or after school tutors through the state funded GEER Reading or Math Tutoring Corp program. Members will serve their second year as full-time alternative educator preparation educators enrolled in a full-time residency educator preparation program with a Colorado-licensed educator/mentor. Over 100 Reading and Math Corp members serving in the school district in the 2020-21 year and just under 400 more members serving in the Corp for the 2021-22 school year will be eligible for the optional educator preparation program.

- 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).**

From an educator talent recruitment perspective, CDE has altered educator licensing rules to support faster entry of key support personnel, such as counselors and school nurses, into the school system. The Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA) and CDE have partnered to expedite DORA licensure of counselors, social workers, and psychologists to earn an educator license on an interim basis. These professionals then complete induction and mentoring activities that support their transition to an educational environment while still acquiring the skills needed to be highly effective and safe in an educational setting. By doing this, Colorado's professionals can enter the educational system more quickly and therefore support students faster.

For counselors, state funds through the Colorado School Counselor Corps Grant Program (SCCGP) allows districts to hire more counselors to support Colorado students. To ensure services are assisted, CDE offers monthly webinars for school counselors who are part of the SCCGP, and welcome any other school counselor

who might want to attend. Additionally, three annual trainings for school counselors are offered (and required for SCCGP participants) on topics of interest.

Additionally, CDE has extended the ability of key personnel such as counselors by supporting virtual connections. For example, the Keynote session in one training last year focused on how school counselors can connect with students and perform their roles in a virtual space.

Last year, CDE also held monthly postsecondary workforce readiness (PWR) Town Halls focused on areas of concern, including virtual school counseling, how to re-engage students in the virtual space, how to create meaningful work-based learning opportunities virtually, and other related topics. Planned for 2021-2022 school year, CDE will host monthly Town Halls focused on re-engaging students who lacked engagement in COVID times, how flexibilities within Colorado's Graduation Guidelines can support student re-engagement and increase graduation rates, etc.

With regard to school nurses, CDE responded quickly to the need for school nurses to be informed quickly and often about the changing needs brought on by COVID. CDE encouraged districts to use ARP ESSER funds to increase the number of school nurses and mental health professionals available in their district. To support the increase, CDE offered, and will continue to offer, a school nurse orientation program for new school nurses and experienced school nurses who want a refresher, a 3-day Virtual Orientation Program, monthly Virtual New Nurse Webinars, and monthly Virtual New Nurse "Huddles" which are similar to office hours where new nurses can get updates, ask questions, and establish peer connections. For many school nurses in Colorado, the CDE orientation program helps nurses satisfy their organization's induction requirements. The department also offers mentoring for new school nurses who did not have access to a qualified professional, which also helps them satisfy a portion of their induction requirement. Further, the department offers a monthly "School Nurse Update" virtual webinar to all nurses in Colorado and a "School Nurse Leadership" virtual webinar to all school nurses in Colorado.

## **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).**

CDE’s ESSER applications under CARES, CRRSA, and now ARP have been developed to allow the SEA to collect data on uses of funds, the number of FTE/positions created with the funds, the number of technology equipment purchased for students and staff, and other supports provided in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, CDE has several other existing student-, school-, and district-level collections that can be used to address the data required in the GAN. For example, CDE collects annual chronic absenteeism and discipline data. CDE also collects teacher-level data that is used to ensure that students from major races and students of poverty are not taught at a disproportionate rate by teachers who are inexperienced, ineffective, or teaching out of field. CDE is also in the process of assessing existing collections to determine if any additional data fields need to be added in order to further analyze the impact that the pandemic has had on Colorado students.

CDE’s Grants Fiscal Management Unit manages and reports data through FFATA on a quarterly basis. Lastly, CDE’s [School Finance Unit](#) collects and makes publicly available [financial transparency data for the state, districts, and schools](#).

Finally, as described earlier, the pandemic has laid bare a significant need within CDE's data infrastructure. The systems used by the Department for transmitting data between the LEAs and CDE for accountability and reporting purposes are outdated and lack the flexibility necessary for nimble adaptation in this dynamic environment. This has resulted in significant frustration and unnecessary resources being diverted from other critical functions to ensure that CDE has the necessary data.

As such, CDE will be committing a portion of the state's set-aside funds to strengthen the state's capacity to support the districts and schools across the state – both now and in the future. CDE will modernize the Data Pipeline by which districts share data with the Department in an effort to improve the customer interface for district users, and modernize the technology to make it more flexible and less of a burden for users. Input from districts will be used to identify necessary functional improvements and the technology will be brought up to today's standards. This, combined with other internal system improvements at CDE, will standardize data storage and security methods, making reporting more uniform and consistent. Specifically, CDE will reduce the number of different data collection mechanisms across the Department so that all collected data will be contained in the same datastore or ones similar enough to easily integrate and transfer data. This will streamline both the look and feel of data reported to the public and back to districts, and will also make the maintenance of and enhancements to the systems easier for CDE staff. This will save time and money in the long run, freeing up funds for direct district support. These enhancements will also result in a more flexible system of data collection, to accommodate changes as needed in the data collected.

Additionally, CDE's efforts to improve state capacity with the goal of improving service to districts includes the implementation of customer and grant management tools. Currently, CDE does not have enterprise-level grants or customer management tools. Small single-unit tools are used for these purposes. The grants management system will streamline requests and processes for districts, strengthen their strategic usage of grant funding, and reduce the burden of data and information requests. Both internal enterprise-level productivity tools will increase CDE's ability to understand the greatest needs in our state and target resources where students are most in need. Additionally, CDE staff productivity and effectiveness will increase significantly by allowing greater visibility into information necessary for school support personnel in the course of their provision of educational services to the field to accelerate student learning. The time saved by having information at their fingertips, including (but not limited to) who visited the school/district last and for what purpose, what grant funds has the school/district received or applied for, what commitments have been made by CDE personnel, will save valuable time for CDE support specialists and technical assistance providers to focus on accelerating academics rather than administrative recordkeeping.

- 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.**

CDE’s Office of ESEA Programs has an extensive, three-tiered approach to monitoring that begins with an annual assessment of risk. The tiered approach allows for an intensive review of the most at-risk LEAs, a targeted review of mid-risk LEAs, and a universal review of low risk districts, with every district participating in one of the tiers at least every 6 years. The same approach has been applied to the monitoring of ESSER grantees, with a shortened cycle to occur over the next 3 years. The monitoring of the use of ESSER funds includes a review of the LEA’s practices against fiscal indicators to assess internal controls, waste, fraud, and management of funds. In partnership with key stakeholders, the ESEA monitoring indicators, which include assessing internal controls and concerns with fraud, waste, abuse, or conflict of interest, were used as the foundation for developing ESSER indicators and were expanded to also assess compliance with CARES, CRRSA, and ARP requirements.

Monitoring activities under both ESEA and ESSER begin with a comprehensive review and approval process of the LEA’s plans and proposed uses of funds. The department provides feedback and requires changes if the proposed uses of funds do not meet statutory and regulatory requirements, with an emphasis on allowability, reasonableness, and allocability. The second step of CDE’s monitoring process includes providing training and guidance to LEAs on statutory and regulatory requirements. CDE has developed and published resources such as a [table of allowable expenses](#), a [COVID-19 Education Funding website](#) which was created when CARES Act passed and has been updated with CRRSA Act and ARP Act information, [ESSER FAQ documents](#), [guidelines on timelines and due dates](#), and [planning tools](#).

Since May of 2020, CDE has been hosting weekly office hours for ESSER grantees to provide training and guidance on the appropriate uses of funds, requirements under CARES, CRRSA, and ARP Acts, and the documentation necessary to be able to demonstrate compliance. Several office hours and trainings have been focused on going beyond compliance and using funds to effectively meet the needs of students, particularly students from historically underserved populations or students who may have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Lessons learned and best practices have also been

shared through the [Resources webpage](#) and office hours to help prepare LEAs for the ESSER monitoring activities that have begun for the 2021-2022 school year.

All ESSER grantees will be monitored between 2021-2022 and 2023-2024 to ensure the LEAs' plans and proposed budgets are implemented as approved by the SEA. Prior to initiating monitoring activities in the fall of 2021, CDE published the [ESSER Monitoring webpage](#) which delineates the monitoring schedule for all LEAs, the monitoring indicators, and protocols and processes. During the fall of 2021, CDE will provide training to LEAs on each monitoring indicator to ensure that LEAs have a thorough understanding of the monitoring plans and expectations.

Two CDE offices will be jointly responsible for conducting ESSER monitoring: the ESEA Programs Office and the Grants Fiscal Management Unit. At this time, CDE has hired one FTE to support the program monitoring and one to support the fiscal monitoring under ESSER I. Each office (Grants Fiscal Management and the ESEA Office) are in the process of hiring 3 additional FTE to implement the monitoring plans under all 3 ESSER programs, including the additional requirements under ARP ESSER III, such as reviewing the implementation of evidence-based interventions to address academic impact of lost instructional time. The additional FTE will allow for full implementation of the monitoring activities, as well as the planned trainings and follow up support for any LEAs that are not able to demonstrate compliance with CARES, CRRSA, or ARP requirements.

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

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

The 2020-2021 school year is represented in the data tables below, which are available on the CDE website: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/caresact/esser-reports>.

The data presented at this time reflects the data available to the Colorado Department of Education (CDE). CDE will be working with stakeholders, including district representatives and legislators, to develop processes for collecting and reporting any missing data. This site will be updated regularly as new data become available.

**Table 1**

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

*Add or change rows as needed*

The following table represents the number of schools in Colorado during the 2020-2021 school year that offered fully remote or online-only instruction, both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid model), and/or full-time in-person instruction. CDE currently gathers the primary mode of instruction from local educational agency (LEA) websites. As a result, there are a few caveats and limitations to this data.

| Number of schools  | All schools | Offered to all students | Offered to some students | Not offered |
|--|-------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|
| Remote or online only  | 1,858       | 36                      | TBD**                    | 1,822       |
| School buildings open with both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid) | 1,858       | 323                     | 115                      | 1,420       |
| School buildings open with full-time in-person instruction                       | 1,858       | 1,384                   | 115                      | 359         |

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

**Table 2****In the most recent time period available, what was the enrollment and mode of instruction for the schools in your State?**

The following table represents estimated student enrollment counts (for all students and disaggregated for each student group) for each mode of instruction. As noted in the previous section, CDE gathered the primary mode of instruction, as of May 2021, from LEA websites. Currently, CDE is not able to report on student-level modes of instruction. Student enrollment counts, therefore, reflect approximations based on each district’s primary mode of instruction and each district’s 2020-21 pupil membership counts (based upon the Student October Count). If a school was listed on the LEA’s website as being remote or online, for example, the students for that school were counted towards the remote totals. In addition to the caveats and data limitations related to mode of instruction, there are additional limitations associated with the student enrollment counts reported.

| <b>Number of students</b>               | <b>Total enrollment</b> | <b>Remote or online only (approximate)</b> | <b>Both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid) (approximate)</b> | <b>Full-time in-person instruction (approximate)</b> |
|---|-------------------------|--|--|--|
| Students from low-income families       | 347,436                 | 12,314                                     | 100,921  | 234,201  |
| White, not Hispanic                     | 451,324                 | 15,659                                     | 131,543  | 304,122  |
| Black or African American, not Hispanic | 39,641                  | 1,266                                      | 16,706   | 21,699   |
| Hispanic, of any race                   | 294,135                 | 9,582                                      | 92,405   | 192,148  |
| Asian, not Hispanic                     | 27,771                  | 356  | 10,018   | 17,397   |
| American Indian or Alaskan              | 5,745                   | 212  | 1,462  | 4,071  |

|   |         |       |        |        |
|---|---------|-------|--------|--------|
| Native, not Hispanic                              |         |       |        |        |
| Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, not Hispanic | 2,418   | 105   | 908    | 1,405  |
| Two or more races, not Hispanic                   | 40,090  | 1,244 | 12,870 | 25,976 |
| Race/Ethnicity information not available          | NA      | NA    | NA     | NA     |
| English learners                                  | 87,800  | 1,329 | 24,188 | 62,283 |
| Children with disabilities                        | 102,920 | 2,402 | 30,497 | 70,021 |
| Students experiencing homelessness                | 10,866  | 362   | 2,842  | 7,662  |
| Children and youth in foster care                 | 901     | 27    | 254    | 620    |
| Migratory students                                | 2,782   | 45    | 402    | 2,335  |

## **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 groups) 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 groups) 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.

## 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.**

### GEPA STATEMENT

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) has facilitated and participated in extensive stakeholder engagement prior to and during the development of the ESSER Application and plan for the use of ARP ESSER III funds, which has resulted in the refinement of systems in place prior to this application being submitted today, as well as improved or new activities. These systems, as well as the stakeholder engagement that supported their development, are described in greater detail in the body of Colorado's ESSA state plan approved by the U.S. Department of Education. Below is a brief listing of just a few of the activities and systems CDE has in place in support of equitable access to a quality education for all children in Colorado. The implementation of the following systems and activities, together with ongoing stakeholder engagement, enables CDE to directly, or indirectly through the Local Education Agency's (LEA's) actions, reduce barriers that may prevent the engagement of students, teachers, and others, in federally funded programs based on gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age.

- CDE hosts weekly ESEA and ESSER Office Hours to provide up-to-date guidance and information for LEAs regarding use of federal funds in support of all students, based on identified needs and in an equitable manner. The Federal Programs Unit, in partnership with other CDE units, provides timely responses to LEAs regarding effective use of federal funds to best meet the needs of students.
- CDE hosts ongoing stakeholder engagement with the ESEA Committee of Practitioners (CoP), composed of regional superintendent representatives, school and district leaders, charter school leaders, nonpublic school representatives, and Board of Cooperative Education Services representatives. The purpose of the CoP is to provide input and insight regarding ESEA and ESSER decision points. In partnership with the CoP, CDE facilitates exploration, consideration, discussion, and resolution of any potential barriers for participation in federally-funded programs and opportunities.
- The CDE Federal Programs Unit and the Exceptional Student Services Unit (ESSU) host an annual Equity and Excellence Conference for special education directors, federal program administrators, superintendents, principals, and fiscal managers. The conference provides an opportunity for those supporting educators and students to collaborate and make connections within their districts and across districts, both in an effort to increase their tools and resources for putting equity into action in their schools. The topic of this year's conference was responding to the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on learning opportunities. Through this conference, CDE is reducing barriers for student populations that may prevent their equitable

access or participation. Specifically, this conference reduces barriers that may exist related to a student's disability, age, or national origin.

- Together with other units in the Department, the CDE Federal Programs Unit has developed a risk-based, tiered approach in the monitoring of school districts for federal program compliance and program quality. The system is designed to enable LEAs to self-assess against the requirements (and indicators) of federal programs and may also be used as the basis for onsite program reviews and monitoring. Many of the federal program requirements directly pertain to the equitable access of student groups to the benefits of the federal programs included in the system. The monitoring protocols and processes have been updated to include ESSER requirements.
- CDE has developed a Unified Improvement Planning (UIP) template and processes to support schools and districts in their performance management efforts. The UIP template was introduced to streamline the improvement planning components of state and federal accountability requirements. The common UIP template and planning processes used represent a shift from planning as a singular event to planning as a critical component of continuous improvement. This process reduces the total number of separate plans that schools and districts are required to complete with the intent of creating a single plan that has true meaning for its stakeholders, while also providing a mechanism for external stakeholders to learn about schools' and districts' improvement efforts. Through the ongoing training and implementation of the UIP, CDE facilitates school and district review of student performance through the intentional trend analysis of disaggregated student data. CDE indirectly reduces barriers for student populations that may prevent their equitable access or participation by requiring schools and districts to engage in a continuous improvement cycle through the UIP template. Specifically, the UIP template enables schools and districts to identify and remove barriers that may be related to a student's disability, national origin, or age.
- The Title IX State Coordinator works in the CDE Federal Programs Unit and provides ongoing technical assistance to the field throughout the year. In addition to the Coordinator's requisite duties under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Coordinator also participates in the Equity and Excellence Conference, hosted by the CDE Federal Programs Unit and the Exceptional Student Services Unit (ESSU), provides best practices to the field regarding issues arising or related to gender inequity, and provides guidance related to the overlap of federal and state law related to gender inequity. The Coordinator enables LEAs to more effectively reduce barriers for student populations that may prevent their equitable access or participation. Specifically, the Coordinator reduces barriers that may exist related to a student's gender.