

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



**U.S. Department of Education**

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

## Introduction

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

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

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

## Instructions

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

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

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

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

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

**Cover Page**

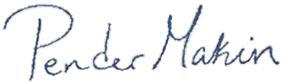
**Grantee and Contact Information**

**ARP ESSER PR Award Number (e.g., S425U2100XX):** S425U210004

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By signing this document, I agree to each of the assurances listed in Appendix C and further assure that: To the best of my knowledge and belief, all information and data included in this plan are true and correct.	
<b>Chief State School Officer or Authorized Representative (Printed Name)</b>  Commissioner Pender Makin	
<b>Signature of Authorized SEA Representative</b>  	<b>Date:</b>  8/20/2021

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

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

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

*Maine's Framework for Reopening Schools and Returning to In-Person Instruction* is intended to assist Maine School Administrative Units (SAU) in the work of reintegrating back to in-person, classroom instruction. Informed by the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), international models, and examples from across the United States, the framework includes six requirements for protecting health and safety and many additional ideas, recommendations, resources and strategies to support a successful return to in-person instruction. The framework's six parts are Part I: Physical Health and Safety Considerations, Part II: Social, Emotional, Behavioral, and Mental Health Considerations, Part III: Academic Programs and Student Learning Considerations, Part IV: Common Expectations for Hybrid and Remote Learning Models, and Part V: Additional considerations.

As part of Maine's framework, the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Maine CDC developed a system to categorize counties. The system, the *Maine Counties' Risk of COVID-19 Spread for Schools*, is designed to inform and support local SAU decisions about whether and how-to bring students back into the classroom. This categorization is based on a holistic assessment of quantitative and qualitative information. It includes, but is not limited to, recent data on case rates, positivity rates, and syndromic data (e.g., symptoms of influenza or COVID-19). The three-tiered health advisory system began on July 31, 2020 and continues to be updated on a two-week cycle. These recommendations are advisory.

Starting in May 2021, all schools have another COVID-19 risk mitigation strategy provided by the State of Maine at no cost: routine pooled COVID-19 PCR testing of unvaccinated students and staff. This will allow early identification and isolation of asymptomatic COVID-19 cases, making in-person education safer. As such, Maine is updating its six physical health and safety considerations requirements to change the three-foot distancing requirement in schools to a recommendation, provided that the school is participating in the State's pooled testing program. Participation is defined as having at least 30% of school staff and

students participating in the program. This program was available for the end of this school year and will continue to be available through the 2021-2022 school year. Although the Maine CDC continues to recommend a minimum three-foot distancing between and among all students, schools that are participating in the testing program may shift away from this as a requirement after achieving the minimum 30% participation. The requirement for six-foot distance when unmasked and eating or drinking continues to apply.

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.

The Maine Department of Education has identified needs and priorities through multiple widespread discussions with stakeholders and through the collection of ideas for investments that will create sustainable infrastructure in terms of professional capacities, educational practices, and operational systems. The themes that emerged through this work were unfinished learning, career exploration, workforce development, mental and social-emotional health, improvement to facilities and transportation that promote health and safety and enhancing the education workforce. The themes point to a Whole Student Approach and a statewide shift in educational practice. The Department will focus on social-emotional learning, mental and behavioral health programs, restorative alternatives to exclusionary discipline, trauma-informed practices, student-centered learning through interdisciplinary, project-based instruction, and related professional development for educators and school leaders.

To provide anytime, anywhere learning options and resources for educators, students and their families, the Department in collaboration with curriculum coordinators, Maine educational community organizations, museums, learning centers, and Maine educators, created a library of asynchronous learning modules that are aligned to Maine's Learning Results. Integrated across subject areas and project-based, these asynchronous modules ensure that learning is active, engaging, and continuous. Modules could be utilized for enhancing lessons, remediation, enrichment, credit recovery, or for use during remote learning – whenever a student cannot access in-person instruction. Each module is designed around the essential question and modules are organized by grade level. The Maine Online Opportunities for Sustained Education (MOOSE) was developed at the onset of the pandemic and additional modules will be added for the 2021-2022 school year that will focus on cultural awareness specific to Maine's demographics.

Maine is one of eleven States that received funding from the U.S. Department of Education's Rethink K-12 Education Models Funding. Maine's project,

Rethinking Remote Education Ventures (RREV) offers a multi-pronged solution with a primary goal of generating innovative remote learning models to provide equitable access to high quality remote learning opportunities for all students. RREV will provide statewide resources and supports through professional development, coursework, and guided engagement in effective use of design processes to empower educators and school leaders as authentic research and development professionals. As new remote learning models are designed and piloted, they will be made widely available through an open-source community of practice platform to support collegial sharing, ongoing critical feedback, and continual revision and improvement to sustain a culture of innovation and to foster statewide access to exciting remote learning models. The project design centers around the belief that by both building capacity for innovative mindsets in education and supporting the design and implementation of the innovative ideas that are generated, we can develop and support agile, effective, and resilient learning experiences that are responsive to local priorities and improve learning outcomes for all students.

The Maine Department of Education developed its first, state owned and free, PreK-12th grade Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Curriculum, referred to as SEL4ME. The SEL curriculum was intentionally developed by professionals who, combined, have over 50 years of experience in education. Lessons are aligned with industry established best practices, are leveraged through an equity lens, and includes over 450 modules that cover PreK-12 scaffolded by grade. Following research and findings from the Maine's Opioid Prevention Task Force and Task Force on Childhood Trauma incorporating SEL into educational practices both for primary prevention and to address trauma is supported by evidence and the Maine Department of Education is dedicated to meeting the social-emotional and mental health needs of our educators and students. The SEL4ME curriculum honors Maine's strong history of promoting social emotional learning and is flexible by design so that it can be used as an additional support for existing SEL, health or counseling programs, while also being a reliable and foundational way to enable schools to create brand new SEL programs across our State. The SEL4ME Team, consisting of diverse Maine experts and stakeholders, will continue to edit, add, and develop new SEL content, ensuring that our State's unique SEL needs are met. Moving forward, we expect the curriculum to expand from classroom supports to include school and district wide resources in the structured, best practice use of SEL throughout school culture. While this curriculum is not a requirement, research shows that the benefits of incorporating social-emotional learning into our schools are significant and the SEL Team will be providing free training and support to educators looking to use the SEL4ME curriculum.

3. Identifying Needs of Underserved Students: Describe your State’s 2-3 highest priority academic, social, emotional, and/or mental health needs for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year (if applicable) and for the 2021-2022 school year related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on each of the following student groups:
- i. Students from low-income families,
  - ii. Students from each racial or ethnic group (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by race or ethnicity),
  - iii. Gender (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by gender),
  - iv. English learners,
  - v. Children with disabilities (including infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (“IDEA”)),
  - vi. Students experiencing homelessness,
  - vii. Children and youth in foster care,
  - viii. Migratory students, and
  - ix. Other groups disproportionately impacted by the pandemic that have been identified by the SEA (e.g., youth involved in the criminal justice system, students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years, students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures, and LGBTQ+ students).

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

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

**Table A1.**

<b>Student group</b>	<b>Highest priority needs</b>
Students from low-income families	The need for universal connectivity was identified as the top priority of stakeholders across the state in terms of mitigating the impact from the COVID disruption. Teachers have been struggling to connect with the many students and families who do not have access to the internet.

<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.

<b>Student group</b>	<b>Highest priority needs</b>
<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>	<p>SAUs are still adjusting to having multi-cultural students, even after decades of changing demographics in Maine. The educational system that was designed before the New Mainers arrived has not adjusted accordingly to the changes in the school population.</p> <p>Additional educational support and interventions are needed as the pandemic has increased the achievement gap of students who need the educational opportunity and community of supportive, caring educators. Along with interventions, this is an opportunity for SAUs to rethink programming and assessments as students are graduating academically unprepared for post-secondary education. Engaging with families and communities could support the understanding of higher education expectations and availability.</p>
<p>English learners</p>	<p>The need to gauge the impact of remote and hybrid learning on language development and content acquisition was identified as a priority, especially for students who are at proficiency levels 1 and 2 and Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education.</p> <p>Also identified was the need to provide intensified supports to ensure that the impact is mitigated to the greatest extent possible while addressing the social-emotional needs that have arisen from remote and hybrid learning as well as the disproportionate effects of the pandemic on the English Learner population (in terms of</p>

Student group	Highest priority needs
	socioeconomic impact, illness, and lives lost).
Children with disabilities	<p data-bbox="930 306 1409 701">With 90 statewide early learning programs within the Child Development Services (CDS) closed due to the pandemic, many identified students were unable to access their IFSP (Individual Family Service Plan) and IEP (Individual Education Program) services creating a need to explore expanding public Pre-K classrooms to include more CDS children.</p> <p data-bbox="930 743 1414 1864">Challenges with remote education for children who have IEPs included engaging students consistently while in remote mode. Moreover, in some instances families elected remote education for their children even when in-person instruction that adhered to safety protocols was offered. Some schools offered hybrid instruction by educating separate cohorts of students on separate days of the week, yet offered their students who had IEPs the opportunity to attend schools when both cohorts were in attendance thus doubling the learning opportunity as compared to non-disabled peers. Nevertheless, not all eligible students with disabilities accepted the opportunity for full or near full time in-person instruction. In some isolated cases, school districts that had used Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF) to develop collaborative child care programs (called Day Programing) with community partners so that children had a safe place to be and to develop socially with academic support on non-school days were not equipped to provide for the individualize social and behavioral needs of all students</p>

<b>Student group</b>	<b>Highest priority needs</b>
	<p>who have disabilities. Thus, some children and families may have missed several days of programming until suitable arrangements and changes to the IEPs could be made. Completion of necessary evaluations and re-evaluations of students as required in a timely manner through IDEA was a challenge given remote instruction and sometimes uneven participation or attendance of children. Oftentimes, SAUs applied to use CARES Act ESSER and CRF program funds to contract for extra time with psychologists who completed the required evaluations as soon as possible when students and providers were able to work together. The Department anticipates that additional evaluations and services will be needed as some of the students who were not attending or participating in remote or in-person modes of instruction during the public health emergency return to in-person education as conditions improve.</p>
<p>Students experiencing homelessness</p>	<p>Coordinate with homeless advocates, housing coalitions, and homeless shelters to understand the needs and determine community solutions to address the need for safe and secure living conditions with access to basic items like food, clothing, and hygiene items.</p> <p>Social-emotional support that help students to manage emotions, be heard, feel, and show empathy for others, and be supported in making thoughtful, responsible decision is a priority.</p> <p>Additional support is needed for SAUs to increase the capacity of</p>

<b>Student group</b>	<b>Highest priority needs</b>
	<p>identifying students who are experiencing homelessness as many SAUs in Maine are rural and small with limited staff time dedicated to the identification process.</p> <p>Engage statewide McKinney-Vento Coordinators in meetings and professional learning to be able to establish a network of peers serving as resources but also supporting the development of statewide informational materials for schools, students, families and community members about available assistance and support.</p>
Children and youth in foster care	<p>The Department of Education’s Office of Student Supports and the Maine State Legislature have taken a renewed interest in the wellbeing of children and particularly youth in foster care. Legislation was proposed to support youths who experienced educational disruption due to foster placements during high school to ease their ability to earn credits to achieve a diploma. Additionally, Legislation was proposed that would support students who formerly were in foster care during their transition to higher education. The Legislation was drafted to support identified needs among Maine children and youth in foster care and exiting from foster care.</p> <p>The Department proposes to communicate broadly to SAUs via Priority Notices, ARP Office Hours, and during Stakeholder and Regional Superintendents’ Meetings that ARP ESSER may be used to support all students but especially under-served students, including youth in foster care, as they work toward completing</p>

<b>Student group</b>	<b>Highest priority needs</b>
	<p>high school and move on to post-secondary educational opportunities. For example, models of exemplary internship, job shadowing, or college application projects will be offered to SAUs for their consideration.</p>
<p>Migratory students</p>	<p>The need for universal connectivity was identified as the top priority in addition to family-school communication and home-based services to connect with families and gain a better understanding of the needs.</p> <p>Maine students who participate in the Migrant program include students whose parents work within the state but in seasonal industries such as holiday wreath-making and more traditional harvesting, as well as students whose parents come to the United States annually in the summer and fall to labor in moderate-to-large scale fruit groves and vegetable farms. Several families who have Spanish as their first language travel to “Down East” Maine each summer for work. The Maine Department of Education has established a short-term summer educational program in the Down East area during the summer harvest. The Department of Education proposes to encourage local SAUs in the area that operate summer programs for their regularly attending students to include the children of transient migrant workers in their programs. That way the children of the migrant laborers will have more extended and integrated learning opportunities. Program funds will support extended instructional time, integrate English learning, and develop culturally and individually responsive and critically oriented</p>

Student group	Highest priority needs
	learning opportunities for all participants in the SAUs' summer programs.
<p>Other groups of students identified by the State (e.g., youth involved in the criminal justice system, students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years, students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures, LGBTQ+ students)</p>	<p>Initiatives that impact culture and education in ways to promote more equitable, inclusive, productive, and a resilient society are needed and should focus on universally accessible, high quality early childhood programs, recruitment, preparation, and retention of high quality, diverse educator workforce, comprehensive curriculum and assessment guidelines focused on critical thinking, multiple perspectives throughout history, citizenship for a democratic society, and values a child's whole identity of social, emotional, spiritual, and mental well-being.</p> <p>In addition, maintaining accountability systems that align and minimize standardized testing while holding communities accountable for access to high quality education that is responsive to students' needs.</p> <p>School discipline reform that prioritizes supporting students to reach their full potential and be integrated into school communities is needed. Also needed is transparent data systems that are publicly accessible, and infrastructure to ensure equitable access to technology.</p> <p>The MOOSE program, which used previous emergency relief aid to develop model curricular activities for use in a variety of ways, will expand to develop lessons that include learning both implicitly as well as explicitly about the history of</p>

Student group	Highest priority needs
	<p>marginalized individuals who identify as LGBTQ+. Curricular units will also highlight pioneers in the struggle for acceptance of individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ as well as leaders in the struggle for civil rights for individuals who identify as LGBTQ+. Curricular materials that focus directly (i.e. learning about Harvey Milk) and indirectly (i.e. including stories of families that have same gender parents in routine classroom lessons) normalize individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ and make the learning environment more welcoming for students. In that way, students who identify as LGBTQ+ who were unengaged both before and during the public health emergency can be welcomed into an environment that is supportive.</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.

The Maine Department of Education has truly focused on the equity and excellence for Maine students and the health, safety and wellbeing of students, staff, and school communities throughout this public health emergency. The Department has been working nonstop to ensure that SAUs have the most updated information, medical science, and necessary resources to prepare facilities, staff, students, and their families served for what will be a very different back-to-school experience. The Department, Maine DHHS, and the Governor’s Office has been meeting with the Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) since the onset of the pandemic to develop communication and decision-making plans. This ongoing focus, conversations and resources has positioned the Department to be able to support our SAUs in identifying the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student learning and student wellbeing.

The Maine Department of Education has been meeting with traditional stakeholder groups that support SAU curriculum coordinators within Maine’s

Curriculum Leaders Association, special education directors through Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities, and teacher leaders along with superintendents in each region of the State, the Maine Principal Association, and the Maine School Management Association to engage in conversation about needs and concerns. In addition, the Maine Department of Education's Student Cabinet meets quarterly with the Commissioner of Education to discuss educational opportunities, improvements, and policy. The purpose of the Student Cabinet is to provide a forum for Maine students' voices from each county to be heard. Each of these platforms and meetings have been utilized to strengthen the Department's understanding of the needs of student statewide and will continue to be employed.

Furthermore, the Department will work with less traditional yet important organized groups who have asked to participate in plans for moving ahead with public education as we regroup and recover as the effects of the pandemic lessen. Representatives of these groups offer views of how under-represented groups have experienced the pandemic. For example, a group of educators for education equity offer perspectives that represent experiences of marginalized groups of students and also advocate for recruiting educators from under-represented groups who will reflect the student bodies of some of the schools in more urban and suburban areas in the state. Rural communities that accept migrant laborers seasonally also serve under-represented students in Maine. A coalition of leaders of immigrant groups in the state have informed officials in the Department of Education that students have shied away from some urban schools during the pandemic resulting in a high rate of absenteeism due to the lack of culturally responsive practices in the schools that have enrolled children of immigrant families largely from African countries for decades. Visual and performing arts educators offer a perspective of educators in programs that are often at risk of being cut due to budget shortfalls; these educators can document for the Department both the ways their programs have been marginalized, traditionally, and how the programs can address student social, emotion, expressive, and advocacy needs as school programs regroup in the wake of the public health emergency. Advocates of outdoor education – especially for young children – also document the ways in which natural environments promote positive physical and mental health, develop a sense of aesthetics, promote cognitive development and self-reflection, and also provide opportunities for learning about the environment and climate change. These outdoor programs for young children will provide optimal learning environments for children who did not enroll in school even when they were eligible to start Kindergarten or pre-Kindergarten due to the pandemic.

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

- i. A description of to what extent, and how frequently, the State collects now and will collect in the future data for all schools in your State on:
  - a. Mode of instruction: The number of schools in your State that are offering fully remote or online-only instruction; both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid model); and/or full-time in-person instruction;
  - b. Enrollment: Student enrollment for all students and disaggregated for each of the student groups described in A.3.i-viii for each mode of instruction; and
  - c. Attendance: Student attendance for all students and disaggregated for each of the student groups described in A.3.i-viii for each mode of instruction.

The Maine Department of Education collects data from schools for State and Federal reporting requirements, to determine equitable distribution of resources, and to inform program and policy analysis. Schools and SAUs report data to the Department throughout the school year through the following data collection systems: NEO for school and staff data and information, Synergy for student data and information, and Maine Educator Information System (MEIS) for educator credentialing. State level data collection is a very important factor in calculating State subsidy for districts, informing legislative policies, providing transparency to taxpayers, and helping the Department support schools and districts as they make decisions about program and curriculum needs.

The Operational Data Store (ODS) called NEO contains numerous data sets submitted by schools and districts related to facilities, financial, nutrition, staff, and student data. The student data collected in Synergy and reported out in NEO includes enrollment and attendance but not currently any data related to the mode of instruction. Through a data collection survey, the Maine Department of Education obtained mode of instruction, enrollment, and attendance data. The new layer of data, mode of instruction, was requested through a priority notice that was distributed to every superintendent statewide.

The Data Team Governance, which is led by the Education Data Manager and comprised of the Maine Department of Education staff members and SAU school leaders is defining and discussing the ongoing collection of learning modality. This student level data will be collected ongoingly in the individual SAU's Student Information System and reported to the Maine Department of Education through Synergy and reported out to SAUs through NEO by January 30 for July through September and October through December, by April 30

for January through March and by July 30 for April through June. For the 2022-2023 school year and beyond, Quarter 1 data (July through September) will be reported to the Department on October 30.

- 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.

The Maine Department of Education will be sharing the data that was collected on the ARP data collection survey on our website by June 21, 2021 as referenced in the requirements of section 2001(i). The link will be shared with the U.S. Department of Education. The website will help school administrators, school personal, educational staff, students, families, community members and the widespread of stakeholders to be able to visualize and understand the data that was collected and presented.

- iii. To the extent available, a description of the planned operational status and mode of instruction for the State and its LEAs for Summer 2021 and for the 2021-2022 school year.

In Maine, nearly every school has been open for some in-person instruction since Fall 2020. In most schools across the country, particularly in high poverty and underserved communities, partially or fully remote instruction has lasted for most of the 2020-2021 school year. Summer 2021 provides an immediate opportunity to address inequities.

As schools are developing and refining their plans for summer learning opportunities for students, and addressing unfinished learning caused by the impacts of COVID-19, the Maine Department of Education has compiled a guidance document filled with ideas and resources. The resources, guiding questions and suggestions may be useful as schools reconsider or redesign what summer learning looks like for students this year, and for future programming. The Maine's Summer Learning Guidance is Attachment A.

The Maine Department of Education will collect data on program enrollment and design at the end of the summer to have accurate information and data on the summer educational opportunities that were provided statewide.

Our content specialists, SEL and mental health specialists, early childhood specialists and innovation team are all here to help with additional resources or ideas. The Department also encourages the SAUs to submit lessons learned and best practices to the United States Department of Education’s Safer Schools and Campuses Best Practices Clearinghouse.

**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.*

**Table B1.**

<b>Mitigation strategy</b>	<b>SEA response</b>
Universal and correct wearing of masks	The Framework for Return to In-Person Instruction developed in consultation with the Department of Health and Human Services and the Maine Center for Disease Control includes recommendations for schools and six requirements, such as physical distancing, mask wearing and other measures, to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission within schools. The framework indicates that adults,

Mitigation strategy	SEA response
	<p>including educators and staff, and students age five and above are required to wear a mask/face covering that covers their nose and mouth when indoors. Masks are recommended for children ages two to four, when developmentally appropriate. Masks/face coverings must be worn by all students and staff on all modes of school transportation (i.e. Bus, vans). Face masks/coverings must be worn during voluntary indoor school sports. Face shields may be an alternative for those students and staff with documented medical or behavioral challenges who are unable to wear masks/face coverings. Face shields worn in place of a face covering must extend below the chin and back to the ears.</p>
<p>Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)</p>	<p>Under the framework requirements, adults must maintain six feet of distance from others to the extent possible while maintaining 3 feet of distance is acceptable between and among students when combined with the other safety requirements, including the wearing of masks.</p>
<p>Handwashing and respiratory etiquette</p>	<p>All students and staff in a school must receive training in proper hand hygiene. All students and staff must wash hands or use sanitizing gel upon entering the school, before and after eating, before and after donning or removing a face mask, after using the restroom, before and after use of playgrounds and shared equipment, and before and after riding school transportation.</p>
<p>Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation</p>	<p>Cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces is recommended as the virus can be spread if someone touches a surface contaminated with the virus and then touches their eyes, nose, or mouth. However, as COVID-19 is primarily spread through respiratory droplets, preventing person-to-person transmission is more important than frequent cleaning</p>

Mitigation strategy	SEA response
	<p>and disinfection. The following strategies and protocols are recommended: 1. Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces (e.g., door handles, sink handles, drinking fountains, keyboards, light switches) within the school and on school buses at least daily or between uses as practicable. 2. Develop a schedule for increased, routine cleaning and disinfection. 3. Ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaning and disinfection products, including storing products securely away from children. Use products that meet EPA disinfection criteria. 4. Have users wash their hands before and after using shared objects. Focus increased cleaning and disinfecting on high-touch items 5. Use only routine maintenance for outdoor playgrounds and other natural play areas, as hand hygiene will be emphasized before and after use of these spaces. Outdoor play equipment with high-touch surfaces such as railings and handles should be cleaned and disinfected regularly if used continuously. 6. Install signage and equipment to enable effective health and safety procedures. 7. Ensure organizations that share or use the school facilities follow the health and safety guidelines established in this guidance. Please note that classrooms and/or areas that have been used by an individual diagnosed with COVID-19 must be closed off until thorough cleaning and sanitization takes place.</p>
<p>Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments</p>	<p>The Maine Department of Education is currently employing over twenty retired nurses after receiving training through the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention to provide Maine schools with specialized supports throughout the contact tracing process. The Maine Department of Education contact tracers will support the work of school nurses and other school staff as they communicate with and</p>

<b>Mitigation strategy</b>	<b>SEA response</b>
	<p>monitor close contacts of positive cases. The contact tracing team assists in the notification to those who have been deemed a close contact to a staff member or student who has tested positive for COVID-19. This team will enroll “close contacts” into Sara Alert, an online platform that Maine CDC uses to notify, and monitor people exposed to the coronavirus. The Maine CDC will continue to investigate confirmed cases and outbreaks associated with schools.</p> <p>The Framework for Return to In-Person Instruction developed in consultation with the Department of Health and Human Services and the Maine Center for Disease Control includes recommendations for schools and six requirements, such as physical distancing, mask wearing and other measures, to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission within schools. Under these requirements, a “medical isolation space” (separate from the nurse’s office) must be designated for students/staff who exhibit COVID-19 symptoms during the school day. Adequate ventilation is required for classrooms, with schools having flexibility in implementation such as using properly working ventilation systems or outdoor air exchange using fans in open windows or doors.</p>
Diagnostic and screening testing	<p>Starting in May 2021, all schools have another risk mitigation strategy provided by the State at no cost: routine pooled COVID-19 PCR testing of unvaccinated students and staff. This will allow early identification and isolation of asymptomatic COVID-19 cases, making in-classroom education safer. As such, Maine is updating its six requirements to change the three-foot distancing requirement in schools to a recommendation, provided that the school</p>

<b>Mitigation strategy</b>	<b>SEA response</b>
	<p>is participating in the State’s pooled testing program. Participation is defined as having at least 30% of school staff and students participating in the program (see the School Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for details.) This program is available now and will continue to be available through the 2021-2022 school year. Although the Maine CDC continues to recommend a minimum three-foot distancing between and among all students, schools that are participating in the testing program may shift away from this as a requirement after achieving the minimum 30% participation. The requirement for six-foot distance when unmasked and eating or drinking continues to apply.</p>
<p>Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible</p>	<p>All Maine residents who are Pre-K through Grade 12 school staff/teachers, or who work at licensed childcare providers are eligible to be vaccinated, regardless of age. The State of Maine’s COVID-19 Response vaccination website provided hundreds of vaccination sites through health care centers, pharmacies, and mobile vaccination units. Several Maine School Administrative Units (SAUs) also serve as vaccination sites.</p>
<p>Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies</p>	<p>Nothing in the Framework for Return to In-Person Instruction developed in consultation with the Department of Health and Human Services and the Maine Center for Disease Control includes recommendations for schools and six requirements, such as physical distancing, mask wearing and other measures, to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission within schools should be interpreted as preventing a school from making accommodations on an individualized basis as required by state or federal disabilities laws.</p>

- ii. Any Statewide plans, policies, estimated timelines, and specific milestones related to reopening and operation of school facilities,

including any mechanisms the SEA will use to track, monitor, or enforce their implementation;

*Maine's Framework for Reopening Schools and Returning to In-Person Instruction* is intended to assist Maine school administrative unit (SAU) in the work of reintegrating back to in-person, classroom instruction. Informed by Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, international models, and examples from across the US, the framework includes six requirements for protecting health and safety and many additional ideas, recommendations, resources and strategies to support a successful return to in-person instruction. The framework's six parts are Part I: Physical Health and Safety Considerations, Part II: Social, Emotional, Behavioral, and Mental Health Considerations, Part III: Academic Programs and Student Learning Considerations, Part IV: Common Expectations for Hybrid and Remote Learning Models, and Part V: Additional considerations will continue to be updated as appropriate.

The Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC) will continue to provide updates to the *Maine Counties' Risk of COVID-19 Spread for Schools* to inform and support local SAU decisions about whether and how to bring students back into the classroom. These recommendations are advisory. The Maine CDC COVID-19 Response also provides a dashboard with COVID-19 cases by school.

The Maine Department of Education released requirements and guidance for school reopening that prioritizes returning as many students as possible to in-person learning—safely, following a comprehensive set of health and safety requirements. This guidance includes best practices developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and other states. Because COVID-19 is a novel disease, scientific literature is growing rapidly with new information emerging almost every day. Guidance will continue to evolve as the science develops. Official minimal requirements for schools are included as part of the Maine Department of Education's Framework for Returning to Classroom Instruction. No single action or set of actions will eliminate the risk of COVID-19 transmission, but taken together, the following health and safety measures can greatly reduce that risk. Schools should establish a culture of health and safety that focuses on regularly enforcing these important practices. The PK-12 and Adult Education Public Health Guidance can be found in Attachment B.

The Maine Department of Education also supports a COVID-19 Toolkit that provides the latest information about the Department's response to the public health emergency. See Attachment C for landing page of the COVID-19 Toolkit, which links browsers to multiple locations and resources.

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

The Commissioner or Deputy Commissioner of Maine Department of Education have participated in daily briefings with state emergency preparedness and Maine CDC officials during the pandemic. The Framework for Reopening Schools and Returning to In-Person Instruction, which is designed to inform SAUs decisions about whether and how to bring students back to the classroom was developed in collaboration with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services and the Maine CDC. The *Maine Counties' Risk of COVID-19 Spread for Schools* advisory continues to be updated on a two-two basis which aligns with the incubation period for COVID-19 and allows for greater stability in the trend data for small counties.

On April 30, 2021, the Maine Department of Health and Human Services and the Maine Department of Education announced the application for the Maine K-12 Schools Pooled Testing Program was opened. This program is open to all K-12 school administrative unit (SAU), public or private school and has an expected start date of May 10th. SAUs that have a public Pre-K may be included in pool testing. The program is accepting applications on a rolling basis through the Fall of 2021, and will be offered to public and approved private schools that wish to start this spring, use it for summer school programming, and/or the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year. This program is voluntary. Pooled PCR testing is an efficient way to test large groups of students and staff in schools on a weekly basis. Pooled PCR testing involves collecting swabs from small groups of students, (class cohort), placing the swabs in a common test tube together in a "batch" or "pool" with no Personal Identifiable Information (PII). The pooled sample is tested for the detection of SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19). If a pool tests positive, the individuals in that pool (class cohort) will be tested using BinaxNOW or PCR testing. Any positive individual(s) would be sent home to begin a ten-day isolation period.

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

The Maine Department of Education’s specialists offer regular and on-going virtual office hours and professional development in several content areas and specialties. During these meetings, Department specialists are available to provide support and guidance regarding distance, hybrid and in-person learning and school supports, as well as to facilitate networking and resource sharing between educators and school staff. Many learning and networking opportunities are posted on the Department’s Professional Development Calendar. The Department also offers an ever-growing library of recorded webinars and sessions to support educators, school staff, and administrators. The Professional Learning Webinar library is organized by topic area, see Attachment D with over a thousand videos and subscribers.

- 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

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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.

- iv. 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 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.

*The Maine Counties' Risk of COVID-19 Spread for Schools* developed by the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC) will continue to provide updates to inform and support local SAU decisions about whether and how to bring students back into the classroom. The tiered system that was implemented through the 2020-2021 school year, which is based on a holistic assessment of quantitative and qualitative information that includes but is not limited to recent data on case rates, positivity rates, and syndromic data, will break down into three-color based categorizations by county: red, yellow, and green.

- Categorization as “red” suggests that the county has a high risk of COVID-19 spread and that in-person instruction should not be conducted.

- Categorization as “yellow” suggests that that the county has an elevated risk of COVID-19 spread and that hybrid instruction models should be adopted.

- Categorization as “green” suggests that the county has a relatively low COVID-19 risk and that in-person instruction can be adopted, although an SAU may opt for hybrid instruction if its buildings or readiness make adhering to baseline requirements a challenge.

With this tiered system, SAUs across Maine developed three reopening plans for school year 2020-2021 that could be utilized depending on the Counties' Risk of COVID-19. Many reopening plans were linked on SAU websites and covered by local media outlets. See Attachment E for a media outlet example.

The Maine Department of Education has informed SAUs through priority notices sent directly to superintendents of the requirements in section 2001(i) of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARP) and the requirements relating to the APR Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds published in the Federal Register. In addition, the Maine Department of Education will provide technical assistance and support to SAUs related to the requirements through office hours, technical assistance, and detailed information

on our website. Website links and other publicly available information will be collected in the ARP ESSER application along with detailed information about the SAUs public comment period. The application will be reviewed by a team at the Department of Education who will verify that plans and public comment periods were observed. Safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services plans will be reviewed by the Office of Federal Emergency Relief Programs and departmental team members during the ARP ESSER application process to validate and confirm that plans have adopted policies and implemented CDC guidelines, been updated recently for school year 2021-2022, and ensured continuity of services. The assurances, included in part 1 of the ARP ESSER application illustrated that the SAU would comply with all reporting requirements, which includes the periodicity review of the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services plans.

### **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.

Through established partnerships and collaboration, Commissioner Makin and the Maine Department of Education were able to engage in extensive and ongoing consultation throughout the pandemic with a widespread variety of stakeholder groups. With the enactment of the American Rescue Plan (ARP), these established partnerships were leveraged to intentionally discuss the educational needs that exist so the Department could strategically maximize the impact of the federal emergency relief funding.

The Department quickly established a partnership with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at the onset of the pandemic to develop a system to categorize counties and serve as advisory partners for Maine's Framework for Reopening Schools and Returning to In-Person Instruction guidance. The Department, DHHS, and Maine CDC met weekly for approximately 14 months to discuss urgent matters as the health and safety of Maine's students was at the forefront of every conversation.

Commissioner Makin continues to meet frequently with many intergovernmental departments and had the opportunity to engage in consultation with DHHS and the Maine CDC about the ARP ESSER State Plan. The need for pooled PCR testing for SAUs providing any type of in-person instruction, such as full-in person or hybrid instructional models or in-person services for high needs students was identified as a priority to support SAUs for the remaining of the 2020-2021 school year and the upcoming 2021-2022 academic school year.

On March 30, 2021, the Maine Department of Education presented the following concepts to Governor Mill's office. The concepts presented had been collected through consultation with stakeholder groups throughout the pandemic. The following concepts were presented as priorities that could be incorporated into the ARP State Plan:

- Summer Enrichment Program:
  - Make available CTE, Adult Education, and K-12 programming statewide during Summer of 2021
  - Create a workforce development resource mapping directory which includes qualified educators statewide to provide coursework and provide professional learning to educators
  - Allow more opportunities to students by utilizing a regional approach
  - Extended Learning Experiences (ELE) to allow students to experience regional opportunities
  - Leverage community partnerships to provide summer programming and support for students and families statewide
  - Fingerprint college students/student teachers to have a summer school teaching experience under the mentorship of a certified Maine teacher
- Comprehensive Afterschool Program:

- Support extended learning opportunities for students by ensuring all students are provided exposure to trades and available careers and providing professional learning to teachers regarding Extended Learning Opportunities (ELO)
- Interventions to Address Learning Loss:
  - Provide resources and training to ensure that all classrooms are inclusively designed to meet the needs of students.
  - Focus efforts on general educators, content specialists, and educational technicians
  - Statewide commitment to creating college and career plans for all students in the classes of 2022 and 2023

In April, the Maine Department of Education gathered members from the stakeholder groups listed in the Interim Final Rule (IFR) to brainstorm and generate focused, intentional investments, projects and initiatives that align with the ARP federal requirements and support all students, especially those who are the furthest from opportunity. The April structured brainstorming event was open legislators and educational organizations highlighted below. This structured brainstorming activity began with an overview of the priority areas identified through consultation: learning loss, social and emotional learning, mental health and wellbeing, physical and health safety, workforce development and ‘real world’ skills, career exploration, facilities, equipment, transportation, and educational workforce development. The Department facilitated the April structured brainstorming event and separated attendees into small groups to provide the attendees the opportunity to:

- contribute new ideas for investments, projects and initiatives that align with the ARP federal requirements,
- gauge the level of support for each existing and new idea, and
- evaluate each existing and new ideas on a three-point Likert Scale in relation to expanding opportunities for Maine students, contributing to long-term or permanent infrastructure, and promoting equity.

The feedback provided from the April structured brainstorming event emerged themes of unfinished learning, career exploration, workforce development, social-emotion and mental health, culturally responsive pedagogy, physical health and safety, facilities, transportation, equipment, and education workforce as priorities and needs. With the themes, the Maine Department of Education engaged in additional conversations to determine ways to align the ARP State Plan with the Department’s strategic plan and the 10-year state economic plan to leverage and sustain the investments committed in the ARP State Plan. With all the feedback and themes, the Maine Department of Education identified the most urgent needs for students, staff, educational leaders, and families was to feel supported and safe while being challenged and engaged. The ARP State Plan’s guiding commitments are diversity, equity, inclusion, access, and opportunity while focusing on the priorities.

The Department knew that to be swift and strategic it was critical to invite local non-profit organizations to discuss school-community partnerships to support students as SAUs plan for summer programming. An invitation, <https://mainedoenews.net/2021/04/09/maine-doe-inviting-local-non-profits-to-discuss-school-community-partnerships-for-supporting-students/>, was shared in the Maine Department of Education’s newsroom and social media outlets for local, non-profit organizations that had an interest in supporting SAUs in their planning, and possible programming, to join a conversation with Department on April 20, 2021.

In May, the Maine Department of Education’s Office of Innovation team conducted a listening tour with the nine superintendent regions in Maine to discuss concerns and ideas about remote learning. This platform served as an opportunity to field questions related to the ARP State Plan themes and initiatives. This work was supported in collaboration with the Reimagining Remote Education Ventures (RREV), federal relief aid funding.

Commissioner Makin and the Maine Department of Education were able utilize the existing partnerships illustrated below to engage in consultation and present the ARP State Plan.

students;	<p>The Maine Department of Education's Student Cabinet is a group of students grades 4 – 12 and first year of college representing all 16 counties in our State that meet quarterly with the Commissioner to discuss educational opportunities, improvements, and policy. The purpose of the Student Cabinet is to provide a forum for Maine students’ voices to be heard.</p> <p>The Children’s Cabinet, represented by the Commissioners of the Departments of Health and Human Services, Education, Labor, Public Safety, and Corrections, plays a vital role in convening and facilitating coordination across State agencies on initiatives and policies that will improve and promote the healthy development of children and youth in Maine.</p>
families;	<p>The Maine Department of Education’s Cultural Competency and Family Engagement Specialist supports families to ensure that widespread family engagement is</p>

	<p>successful and acknowledges that all families should receive different approaches.</p> <p>The Maine Department of Education’s Head Start State Collaboration Director lead the department’s efforts to create a Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework to support districts as they work with families in their schools and communities.</p>
<p>school and district administrators (including special education administrators);</p>	<p>The Maine Principals’ Association is a private, educational, nonprofit corporation with voluntary membership that is comprised of two distinct divisions: Division of Professional Activities (building administrators) and the Division of Interscholastic Activities (member high schools).</p> <p>The Maine Curriculum Leaders Association is a high-impact and supportive organization of professional educators and stakeholders focused on high-quality learning and teaching for all Maine students.</p> <p>The Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities (MADSEC) believes in, and advocates for, the right of all students to receive a free and appropriate public education. We provide support to our members, opportunities for professional growth to Maine educators, and leadership in shaping policies and practices which impact the quality of education for children with disabilities.</p>
<p>superintendents;</p>	<p>Maine School Management Association (MSMA), is a statewide, non-profit federation of local school boards and superintendents consisting of the Maine School Boards Association (MSBA) and the Maine School Superintendents Association (MSSA).</p> <p>Maine has nine school superintendent regions that met weekly with Commissioner Makin from the onset of the pandemic. In addition,</p>

	<p>the standards and instructional support specialist attend and present at the regional superintendent meetings monthly.</p>
<p>charter school leaders (if applicable);</p>	<p>The Maine Charter School Commission is authorized and oversees ten public charter schools in Maine.</p>
<p>teachers, principals, school leaders, other educators, school staff, and their unions;</p>	<p>The Maine Education Association is a member-driven professional union representing more than 23,000 educators statewide. MEA supports its members through professional growth opportunities which enhance their skills and knowledge, leading to improved student achievement. MEA also provides contract bargaining expertise to improve the financial security of members and to better the working conditions of members and the learning conditions of the students in our schools.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>The New Mainers Education Needs Collaborative is a cross-cultural organization of school personnel, families and community-based organizations that is education focused for underrepresented students.</p> <p>Mano en Mano helps farmworkers and New Mainers thrive in Downeast Maine, while building a stronger and more inclusive environment by providing educational and affordable housing opportunities and removing barriers to health and social services and advocating for social justice.</p> <p>The three Maine Department of Corrections (DOC) regions, Regional Community Care Team and the state Juvenile Justice Advisory Group (JJAG) help to support and inform individual system-involved youth and their families.</p>

With the ARP Act focused on mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on schools and students and to close long-standing gaps in educational opportunities, the Department

wanted to target stakeholder groups representing students furthest from the opportunity. More specifically:

- The statewide organization, Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities (MADSEC), was invited to the April structured brainstorming event where themes were presented and emerged for the ARP ESSER state plan. In addition, the Maine Department of Education's Director of Special Services meets with school leaders representing the interests of children with disabilities regularly to provide guidance, technical assistance and gather information. This existing partnership was utilized to engage in consultation and provide an opportunity to discuss the whole student approach the ARP ESSER state plan will support.
- The New Mainers Education Needs Collaborative, a stakeholder group representing and advocating for the educational needs of English Learners in Maine schools, met with the Department in May. The Collaborative is made up of family members, cross-cultural community-based organization personnel, school board members, and educational staff. The members present at the meeting represented more than five SAUs in Maine serving the highest proportion of English Learners. Members of the Collaborative discussed chronic absenteeism among EL students during the pandemic and remote instruction. They asked the Department to consider ways in which SAUs may be contributing to the problem of absenteeism and asked the Department to continue to collaborate with community partners who are of the new Mainer community in making state plans for ARP ESSER.
- In collaboration with the Department's Homeless Education Consultant and the Foster Care Point of Contact, the Department engaged in consultation with the McKinney-Vento and Foster Care Liaison groups. These groups are made up of statewide educational staff and school administrative leaders who serve our highly mobile students and serve as an advisory-like resource to the Maine Department of Education. The groups described the need to address basic needs like food, clothing, and secure living arrangements while providing social-emotional support as a critical priority for the ARP state plan.

The Maine Department of Education will continue to engage with stakeholders due to the fluidity and lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is imperative to develop new partnerships and sustain relationships with stakeholders who represent the interest of the students furthest from the opportunity such as 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 Department will be able to understand and respond to the needs of all students through the existing and new partnerships. Ongoing consultation will also provide an opportunity for the Department to review, analyze and share data that will continue to inform decisions made about the state-level priorities and ARP ESSER state reservation. The Department is in the process of creating a brochure highlighting the ARP initiatives, the whole student

approach, and the state’s investments. This brochure will be shared publicly on our website and will be updated through the ARP performance period. The Department will also host additional opportunities to share information with and gather feedback from our widespread variety of stakeholders.

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.*

**Table C1.**

Funding source	Prior/current SEA and LEA uses (including funding amounts, if applicable)	Planned SEA and LEA uses (including funding amounts, if applicable)
ESSER I (CARES Act)	MOOSE (Maine Opportunity for Online Sustained Education) Learning Module Library provides free access to a-synchronous, interdisciplinary, project-based learning modules aligned to the Maine Learning Results for all grades, PreK-12 developed by Maine educators, curriculum leaders, and educational community organizations. The	The Department requires that SAUs complete an application for use of the CARES ESSER funds. The application collects information about how the school determined the most important needs and provides project narratives with budgets. The major themes of the SAUs CARES ESSER application are summer learning (just under \$10 million),

Funding source	Prior/current SEA and LEA uses (including funding amounts, if applicable)	Planned SEA and LEA uses (including funding amounts, if applicable)
	<p>Maine Department of Education obligated just under \$2.8 million to provide anytime, anywhere learning options and resources for educators, students, and their families.</p> <p>Maine deployed a team of Department of Education Contact Tracers, retired nurses, to provide Maine schools with specialized supports throughout the contact tracing process and communicate with and monitor close contacts of positive cases within Maine schools. The Department obligated just under \$1 million to support Maine schools and keep all students actively engaged in learning while mitigating the spread and effects of this pandemic.</p> <p>Maine’s SAUs are required to complete an application illustrating projects that align to federal emergency relief funding</p>	<p>mental and social emotion health (just over \$1 million), and improvement in air quality and ventilation (just under \$3.8 million).</p>
GEER I (CARES Act)	The pandemic brought to the forefront the drastic	

<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>
	<p>inequities caused by lack of connectivity for many K-12 students in Maine, with nearly 15% of Maine students unable to connect with teachers and classmates through technology. Maine’s GEER application was submitted, articulating a plan to address the digital divide with their #ConnectKidsNow initiative. The Department GEER funding supported universal connectivity to ensure that all students had the opportunity to continue learning through online platforms regardless of geography or socio-economic status, and to receive instruction during the current suspension of classroom-based instruction. The Department obligated just under \$7.8 million to provide devices and connectivity for all students.</p> <p>In order to be responsive to critical staff shortages in Maine schools as a result of the pandemic, the Maine</p>	

<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>
	<p>Department of Education, in collaboration with Maine Community College System and Eastern Maine Community College, developed the Learning Facilitator Program, a fast-track training program for paraprofessional level educators to expand, strengthen and support a high quality educator workforce. The Department obligated just over \$1.8 million to support a week-long 3-credit course with foundational elements of classroom management and school culture and a combination of online work, professional learning community meetings, and a structured teaching apprenticeship (315 hours).</p>	
ESSER II (CRRSA Act)	<p>The Department continues to see the need for the team of Department of Education Contact Tracers to provide Maine schools with specialized supports throughout the contact tracing process and communicate with</p>	<p>The Department is planning to launch a subgrant opportunity for all Maine SAUs to identify and acquire a learning management system (LMS). SAUs will conduct a needs assessment to determine priority areas, identify student</p>

<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>
	<p>and monitor close contacts of positive cases within Maine schools. The Department obligated just under \$800,000 to continue supporting Maine schools while mitigating the spread and effects of this pandemic through summer 2021 and school year 2021-2022.</p>	<p>needs, and develop a plan of how to self-select the appropriate LMS. With professional development and an LMS that allows SAUs to plan, execute, and assess a specific learning process allowing for a personalized approach to education. The Department is planning to obligate approximately \$5 million to support SAUs implement an LMS starting in school year 2021-2022. The Department requires that SAUs complete an application for use of the CRRSA ESSER funds. The application collects information about how the school determined the most important needs and provides project narratives with budgets. The major themes of the SAUs CRRSA ESSER application are summer learning (just over \$34 million), mental, social emotion health (just over \$11 million and</p>

Funding source	Prior/current SEA and LEA uses (including funding amounts, if applicable)	Planned SEA and LEA uses (including funding amounts, if applicable)
		transportation (just over \$4.3 million).
GEER II (CRRSA Act)		The Department plans to continue to respond to the inequitable access to the human and internet connectivity that students face through continuing the universal connectively, the Learner Facilitator Program, and the MOOSE platform.

- 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.

The Maine Department of Education first alerted SAUs to the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) through a news release on April 1, 2020. The Department wanted to inform SAUs that funding to mitigate some of the financial impacts of the pandemic were forth coming. In mid-April of 2020, a website was developed to begin collecting information and sharing relevant updates with SAUs. Shortly after the website launched SAUs received notification of their CARES ESSER allocations, based on the proportionate share of Title I. At the beginning of May 2020, the Maine Department of Education’s School Finance Team began hosting office hours to support SAUs’ federal programs coordinators and business managers by providing additional information around the CARES ESSER funding application preparations. The application was made available via the Maine Department of Education’s Consolidated Application and Grant Reimbursement website on Monday, May 18, 2020. As of June 1, 2021, the Maine Department of Education has received 175 CARES ESSER applications out of 179 SAUs. Within, our electronic grant management system the Maine Department of Education can track

SAU reimbursements. The Consolidated Application and Grant Reimbursement system indicates that \$9,899,784.14 of the CARES ESSER funds for SAUs has been invoiced while the remaining \$30,325,456.58 has been earmarked in the CARES ESSER application.

The Maine Department of Education first alerted SAUs to the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act through a news release on January 7, 2021. The Department wanted to urge SAUs to prioritize the use of funds for addressing student needs, ascertaining, and addressing learning loss, preparing schools for reopening, and repairing and upgrading air quality systems in school buildings. On January 22, 2021, SAUs were notified of the CRRSA ESSER allocations and the application was made available via the Maine Department of Education's Consolidated Application and Grant Reimbursement website on Monday, January 29, 2021. As of June 1, 2021, the Maine Department of Education has received 119 CRRSA ESSER applications out of 179 SAUs. Within our electronic grant management system, the Maine Department of Education can track SAU reimbursements. The Consolidated Application and Grant Reimbursement system indicates that \$2,410,205.27 of the CRRSA ESSER funds for SAUs has been invoiced while the remaining \$162,983,274.05 has been earmarked in the CRRSA ESSER application.

- 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>

The Maine Department of Education is supporting blending and braiding with other federal, state, and local funding sources to create a sustainable funding strategy and more effectively leverage

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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.

multiple funding streams toward a common goal. Our teams, which include the ESEA Federal Programs, the School Finance Team, Office of Special Services and the McKinney-Vento Coordinator have created opportunities to discuss overlapping concerns and ways to identified statewide needs that might be supported with multiple funding sources to maximize the investment. The Department also provides additional information to our SAUs about braiding and blending funding to avoid the financial COVID cliff.

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

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

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

The themes that emerged through the multiple widespread discussions with stakeholders are unfinished learning, career exploration, workforce development, culturally responsive pedagogy, mental and social emotional health, improvement to facilities and transportation that promote health and safety and enhancing the education workforce. The themes point to the development of a Whole Student approach and a statewide shift in educational practice.

In addition to addressing short-term recovery needs, the Maine Department of Education will consider leveraging the ARP ESSER funding for potential long-term infrastructure investments. These

investments can support systemic changes to ensure core resources needed to close opportunity gaps become more widely and routinely available.

Additional MOOSE modules will be developed to provide anytime, anywhere learning options and resources for educators, students, and their families. The asynchronous learning modules are aligned to Maine's Learning Results, provide clear goals, and allows a student flexibility in their learning and the time needed to engage in the learning.

In Maine, Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS) is defined as a comprehensive framework designed to address the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of each student in the most inclusive and equitable learning environment. MTSS is a whole-school framework that organizes the people, programs and policies into an integrated support system that begins with a base layer that includes strategic use of evidence-based practices, a consistent and effective implementation process, and available resources including people, time, and data. The Maine Department of Education will equip all schools with professional development and technical assistance in MTSS and the Whole Student practices.

The Maine Department of Education is in the developmental phase of establishing an Extended Learning Program to support the development of extended learning opportunities for students across the state and connect students to local industry employers. The goal is to develop and strengthen the statewide career exploration opportunities for students in grades 7-12. Program staff will design and provide professional development training to school personnel. They will also conduct focus group sessions to clearly identify the needs and opportunities in different regions of the state and enhance expanded learning opportunities and career exploration initiatives in all 16 counties in partnership with community organizations, businesses, and schools.

- 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

Models of aspirational programs for pursuing careers and/or enrollment in post-secondary education will particularly support students who are or were in foster care, who experienced homelessness, and who are from low-income families. Furthermore,

such models may be adapted into IEP transition plans for secondary students who have disabilities.

Models of early career and technical education summer experiences for middle level students will demonstrate how programs in career and technical education can address the ways in which gender stereotypes limit career aspirations for girls, boys, and students who identify as non-binary.

Models of curricular modules in MOOSE that address health and wellness, and career readiness, will embed learning about the ways gender stereotypes and expectations of conformity limit the social, emotional, and cognitive development of students of all genders and will provide needed models of education about healthy dating relationships, consent, harassment, and assault. Models of this kind will address needs of students who identify as LGBTQ+ as well as students for whom schools have traditionally been unwelcoming due to local norms (perhaps unsanctioned, but existing) about gendered roles and expectation as well as harassment based on gender expression of many kinds.

Models of curricular modules in MOOSE that relate to African American history and culture will address curricular shortcomings that existed prior to the pandemic and were exacerbated by the pandemic. For example, curricular units that address the history and experiences of African Americans who are primarily descendants of formerly enslaved people will benefit all students while also reflecting the experiences of several Maine students. Similarly, modules that address the history and experiences of families who are 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century immigrants from African countries will also have their experiences reflected in curricular materials and serve as one way to make schools more welcoming to these students who have experienced high rates of absenteeism during the pandemic.

During the winter of 2021, the Department of Education's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) team met on an on-going basis and a subgroup of that team – the education sub-committee – secured funding for evening Professional Development sessions that were open to any educator in the state. In total, 9 evening sessions on topics of anti-racist education, demystifying Islam (many recent immigrants to Maine are from countries in northern Africa and from Iraq), understanding the effects of micro-aggressions on student learning, and understanding the history and current day experiences of Wabanaki people in Maine. Responses from surveys of the participants in these evening voluntary workshops indicated a clear

desire to learn more about the topics in the series the DEI group had named Beyond the Movement. Educators who participated in these workshops revealed they learned new aspects about the needs and experiences of students of color in their schools, about how to sustain anti-oppressive work in schools even when few faculty members overtly participate in the work, and the importance of teaching empathy along with history and facts about the experiences of indigenous people. ARP ESSER funds will allow the DEI education team to contract with additional lecturers, national presenters, local trainers, and even with the original presenters in the Beyond the Movement series of 2021, to move beyond the beginning stages of anti-oppressive educational practices to support the learning of under-represented groups of students – especially students of indigenous descent, children of immigrant families, students of color, students who identify as LGBTQ+, and students from families with low-income. Furthermore, professional development from the DEI Education sub-committee will address the need for teachers and students to develop critical literacy and media skills so that students and teachers both can “read their worlds” to see clearly their place in it and to take action to improve their circumstances and those of others. Under-served students need and deserve access to the highest quality information and critical skills to evaluate messages and media; the pandemic has revealed the need to have residents and citizens aware of facts and evidence-based claims during a public health emergency.

- 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 Department’s MOOSE interdisciplinary curricular materials will be available for SAU educators to use to supplement and enhance their own curriculum for students who missed the most in-person instruction thus providing the students with engaging and skills-reinforcing supplemental learning experiences.

Guidance from the Maine Department of Education communication, ARP Office Hours, and regional superintendents’ meetings will highlight the Whole Student approach envisioned by the Commissioner of Education and will underscore ways that smaller class sizes supported by the grant will address the unfinished learning experienced by students who had the most interruptions to their learning.

2. Evidence-Based Summer Learning and Enrichment Programs: Describe how the SEA will use the funds it reserves under section 2001(f)(2) of the ARP Act (totaling not less than 1 percent of the State’s total allocation of ARP ESSER funds) for evidence-based summer learning and enrichment programs, including those that begin in Summer 2021, and ensure such programs respond to students’ academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. The description must include:
- i. A description of the evidence-based programs that address the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of students (e.g., providing intensive or high-dosage tutoring, accelerating learning) the SEA has selected, and the extent to which the SEA will evaluate the impact of those programs;

In Maine, nearly every school was open for some in-person instruction since Fall 2020. In most schools across the country, particularly in high-poverty and underserved communities, partially or fully remote instruction lasted most of the 2020-2021 school year. Summer 2021 provides an immediate opportunity to address inequities. A whole student approach that is based in the science of learning and development can help schools in addressing the conditions and needs for student growth.

The Maine Department of Education finds great value in the widespread, variety of summer learning and enrichment programs that are offered to all Maine students. Communication about the efficacy of summer learning and enrichment programs has been delivered to SAUs via priority notices and stakeholder meetings. Summer learning and enrichment programs should have a focus on providing developmentally appropriate learning experiences for all participants.

This summer, the Maine Department of Education is seeking partnering summer learning and enrichment programs through a request for response to support activities and interventions that respond to students’ academic, social, and emotional needs and address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on underrepresented student groups. In particular, the Department is looking for partners who have a memorandum of understanding with a SAUs and are committed or agree to commit to pooled PCR testing for COVID-19.

Through the request for response, the partner will be required to provide a high-level summary of their programming mission and goals, how the public health emergency impacted the mission and goals; include an estimate of the students to be impacted; explain how the programing will positively impact the underrepresented

students served; and provide a budget with a narrative that shows the cost considerations of the program.

The Department will also schedule individual meetings with each respondent that responds to this request. The purpose of these meetings will be to allow respondents to explain, and potentially expand upon their responses. It will also allow for the Department to ask questions regarding a respondent's submission and confirm funding will only be used for approved evidence-based summer learning and enrichment programs. SAUs and community-based organizations that provide summer learning and enrichment programs either as an extension of their own educational program or through contracts with community partners will report back to the Maine Department of Education data on the number of participants and goals of the program. Qualitative data in the form of quotes from participants, news stories about the summer programs, samples of students' projects, summary reports from site directors, or survey comments from parents will round out the individual SAU evaluation. On a larger scale, statewide and SAU specific data the Department collects about attendance, suspensions and expulsions, graduation rates, and educator turnover/persistence will be examined to note any positive trends both as a whole and by identified student and educator groups for which data are collected.

The Maine Department of Education is establishing an extended learning program to support the development of extended learning opportunities (ELO) for students across the state and connect students to local industry employers during the fall of 2021 and beyond. The extended learning program will allow students to gain knowledge and skills through learning and credit recovery in community-based and work-based organizations. Program staff and distinguished educators will coordinate and organize the development and strengthening of statewide career exploration opportunities for students in grades 7-12. Program staff will design and provide professional development training to school personnel. They will also conduct focus group sessions to clearly identify the needs and opportunities in different regions of the state and enhance expanded learning opportunities and career exploration initiatives in all 16 counties in partnership with community organizations, businesses, and SAUs.

Activities over the early fall and through the year include organizing and hosting a summit for ELO coordinators from districts across the state (potentially multiple summits at a variety of central locations); work with local coordinators and

intermediaries to expand access to and engagement in extended learning over the summer; reduce barriers to accessing opportunities by covering transportation costs; marketing and outreach to local employers and incentives for participation. Marketing materials will be important as the team designs and develops the ELO program for the state and seeks to generate energy across the state while supporting the implementation of ELOs statewide.

The Department is being intentional about each investment supported with the state reservation for summer learning and enrichment programs. Input continues to be collected and data evaluated to follow the continued impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has on student learning in particular students furthest from the opportunity. Informed decisions for investments are determined through data and ongoing conversations with the widespread stakeholders that the Department continues to engage with. It is the Department's goal to be sure that any investment leverages partnerships, with community-based organizations and SAUs, and is aligned to the Department's whole student approach which focuses on health, safety, engagement, support and being prepared. The Department's objective is to be sure that evidence-based summer learning and enrichment programs can be supported in future summers. The Maine Department of Education continues to develop our plan and to identify investments that will maximize the summer learning and enrichment state reservation

The Maine Department of Education will review the data collected from SAUs in the fall of 2021 to gauge the impact COVID-19 had on learning during school year 2020-2021. Evidence-based summer learning and enrichment programs will be determined during the spring of 2022. With each investment the Department aims to support high quality summer learning and enrichment programs. When developing additional funding opportunities for SAUs and community-based organizations for evidence-based summer learning and enrichment programs, the Department will review multiple sources of data and the Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) funding model. Data reviewed to guide the funding mechanism may include student attendance, interim assessment data, ACCESS data, student subgroup identification, high school graduation rate, teacher workforce, and COVID-19 community transmission. The Department will establish a funding mechanism that leverages existing partnerships and encourage participation of subgrantees

who support students furthest from the opportunity. Eligibility criteria and subgrantee parameters will be determined to maximize the summer learning and enrichment program state reservation. All subgrantees will be required to submit performance reports to confirm that the funding was only used for evidence-based summer learning and enrichment programs. In addition, the performance reports will provide qualitative and quantitative data used by the Department to adjust programming and investments to ensure students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs are being supported through summer learning and enrichment programming.

- 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

The Maine Department of Education will support summer learning and enrichment programs that focus on student groups that have faced disproportionate impact from COVID-19. The Department, community-based organizations and SAUs can utilize ARP ESSER funding for summer learning and enrichment programs for all students but can also utilize this funding blended with other Federal Funding to enhance programming for students furthest from opportunity.

This summer, the Department is partnering with summer learning and enrichment programs who have a memorandum of understanding with SAUs and are committed or agree to commit to pooled PCR testing for COVID-19. This project funded with a portion of the ARP state reservation provides subgrants to community-based organizations to increase staff, purchase personal protection equipment, and provide transportation. The intention of this investment is to be able to reduce the barriers, like transportation and limited enrollment, to be able to provide enrichment opportunities for vulnerable students.

The Department is also working collaboratively and leveraging our partnerships with interdepartmental agencies to reduce additional barriers, like food insecurity, for students furthest from the opportunity. For example, the Maine Department of Education Child Nutrition works to provide a Summer Food Service Program to ensure low-income children continue to receive nutritious meals during the summer months when school is not in session. Sponsoring

organizations, such as schools or recreation departments, manage meal sites that operate in areas where at least half of households qualify for free or reduced-price meal benefits. There are hundreds of sites operating throughout all sixteen counties in Maine. The Maine Department of Education is sharing this information with the partnering summer learning and enrichment programs to provide an additional support for our students furthest from the opportunity and reduces a barrier to engage students in the evidence-based summer learning and enrichment programs.

The Department will continue to utilize data collected to establish the specific groups of students disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 to identify support and provide targeted summer learning and enrichment programs. In the additional funding opportunities, the Department will encourage and/or prioritize summer learning and enrichment programs that can support students furthest from the opportunity.

- 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.

Guidance from the Maine Department of Education communication, ARP Office Hours, and regional superintendents' meetings will highlight the Whole Student approach envisioned by the Commissioner of Education and will promote interdisciplinary student-centered instruction and enrichment learning opportunities.

- 3. **Evidence-Based Comprehensive Afterschool Programs:** Describe how the SEA will use the funds it reserves under section 2001(f)(3) of the ARP Act (totaling not less than 1 percent of the State's total allocation of ARP ESSER funds) for evidence-based comprehensive afterschool programs (including, for example, before-school programming), and ensure such programs respond to students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. The description must include:
  - i. A description of the evidence-based programs (e.g., including partnerships with community-based organizations) the SEA has selected, and the extent to which the SEA will evaluate the impact of those programs;

In Maine, the Department of Education acknowledges the authority and responsibility local school districts may select local or regional partnerships. The Department will encourage partnerships with

community organizations that understand the needs of participating students well and who follow civil rights and non-discriminatory guidelines.

The Department is working collaboratively and leveraging our partnerships with interdepartmental agencies. In the upcoming academic year, the Office of Federal Emergency Relief Programs will collaborate with the State Coordinator of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program to identify overlapping opportunities for expanding afterschool opportunities statewide. The Department's objective is to be able to expand afterschool programs as well as provide additional subgrants to areas of Maine that are not currently served. Maine's 21st Century Learning Centers program currently provides approximately \$5.8 million in federal funding to support 35 different programs across the state. These programs provide afterschool programs for students in kindergarten through grade 12. Each of these programs has three overarching goals, which are:

- To improve student academic achievement, particularly that of students who are low-performing, to meet State and local Learning Results standards and performance indicators in core academic subjects, with a focus on reading and math;
- To offer students a broad array of services, programs, and activities to improve their health and well-being; and
- To offer families opportunities for literacy and other related educational development to assist their children with learning and health promotion.

Maine intends to further supplement and support this important work through resources afforded under the ARP state reservation for afterschool programming.

SAUs will report data on the number of participants and goals of the program. Qualitative data in the form of quotes from participants, news stories about the summer programs, summary reports from site directors, or survey comments from parents will round out the individual SAUs evaluation of the community partnership. On a larger scale, state-wide and SAU specific data the Department collects about attendance, suspensions and expulsions, graduation rates, and educator turnover/persistence will be examined to note any positive trends as a whole and by identified student groups for which data are collected.

The Department is being intentional about each investment supported with the state reservation for afterschool programs. Input continues to be collected and data evaluated to follow the continued impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has on student learning in particular students furthest from the opportunity. Informed decisions for investments are determined through data and ongoing conversations with the widespread stakeholders that the Department continues to engage with. It is the Department's goal to be sure that any investment leverages partnerships, with community-based organizations and SAUs, and is aligned to the Department's whole student approach which focuses on health, safety, engagement, support and being prepared. The Department's objective is to be sure that afterschool programs can be supported throughout the performance period of ARP. The Maine Department of Education continues to develop our plan and to identify investments that will maximize the afterschool program state reservation.

- 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

The Maine Department of Education will encourage SAUs to reduce the barriers for students furthest from the opportunity to participate in afterschool programming by helping SAUs to identify the challenges which might be delivery method, operational hours, and/or lack of transportation.

The Maine Department of Education will review the data collected from SAUs in the fall of 2021 to gauge the impact COVID-19 had on learning during school year 2020-2021. Afterschool programming will be determined during the spring of 2022. With each investment the Department aims to support high quality afterschool programs. When developing additional funding opportunities for afterschool programs, the Department will review multiple sources of data and the Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) funding model. Data reviewed to guide the funding mechanism may include student attendance, interim assessment data, ACCESS data, student subgroup identification, high school graduation rate, teacher workforce, and COVID-19 community transmission. The Department will establish a funding mechanism that leverages existing partnership and encourage participation of

subgrantees who support students furthest from the opportunity. Eligibility criteria and subgrantee parameters will be determined to maximize the afterschool programming state reservation. All subgrantees will be required to submit performance reports to confirm that the funding was only used for evidence-based afterschool programs. In addition, the performance reports will provide qualitative and quantitative data used by the Department to adjust programming and investments to ensure students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs are being supported through afterschool programming.

- 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.

Guidance from the Maine Department of Education communication, ARP Office Hours, and regional superintendents' meetings will highlight the Whole Student approach envisioned by the Commissioner of Education and will promote interdisciplinary student-centered instruction and enrichment learning opportunities.

- 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.

The Maine Department of Education has identified yearlong needs and priorities through meaningful dialogue with professionals in the field, advocacy organizations, interdepartmental committees, Department of Economic and Community Development, Maine Department of Labor, and Maine DHHS to unite the Department's initiatives with other statewide efforts that are aligned with national priorities and efforts. The funds that are being reserved for emergency needs will be earmarked for mental health support for educators, professional learning in trauma-informed practices, statewide diversity, equity and inclusion support, COVID pool testing, and the expansion of the school nutrition programs and supports. The themes that emerged as priorities through our conversations with the widespread stakeholders have encouraged the Department to be sure that students are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, challenged and prepared through investments in structures, human capital, systems and practices.

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

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

1. LEA Plans for the Use of ARP ESSER Funds: Describe what the SEA will require its LEAs to include in LEA plans consistent with the ARP ESSER requirements for the use of ARP ESSER funds, how the SEA will require such plans to be made available to the public, and the deadline by which the LEA must submit its ARP ESSER plan (which must be a reasonable timeline and should be within no later than 90 days after receiving its ARP ESSER allocation). The LEA plans must include, at a minimum:
  - i. The extent to which and how the funds will be used to implement prevention and mitigation strategies that are, to the greatest extent practicable, in line with the most recent CDC guidance, in order to continuously and safely operate schools for in-person learning;
  - ii. How the LEA will use the funds it reserves under section 2001(e)(1) of the ARP Act (totaling not less than 20 percent of the LEA's total allocation of ARP ESSER funds) to address the academic impact of lost instructional time through the implementation of evidence-based interventions, such as summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs, or extended school year programs;
  - iii. How the LEA will spend its remaining ARP ESSER funds consistent with section 2001(e)(2) of the ARP Act; and
  - iv. How the LEA will ensure that the interventions it implements, including but not limited to the interventions under section 2001(e)(1) of the ARP Act to address the academic impact of lost instructional time, will respond to the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of all students, and particularly those students disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, including students from low-income families, students of color, English learners, children with disabilities, students experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, and migratory students.

The Maine Department of Education uses an electronic grant management system for ESEA Federal Programs, IDEA, CTE Perkins, and all other Federal Emergency Relief Programs. The electronic grant management system allows the Department to collect detailed and specific information from the SAUs related to the uses of the ARP ESSER funds. The Department selected the existing electronic grant management system for the use of funds plan, referred to as the ARP ESSER Application, because

school personnel are familiar with the application and invoicing system and the urgency of ARP ESSER funding.

The ARP ESSER application will be administered as a two-part application process. Part 1 of the application, due on May 24, 2021 and accessed at [www.4pcamaine.org](http://www.4pcamaine.org), requires each SAU to certify terms, conditions, and assurances. Upon completion of part 1, the Department provided notification of substantial approval status consistent with 34 CFR §76.708 of Uniform Grants Guidance (UGG). This initial level of approval means that a SAU can begin obligating funds with a strong understanding of the ARP ESSER allowability. The Department highlighted that the SAU will only be reimbursed for approved projects and budgets that were deemed allowable, necessary, and reasonable within part 2 of the application.

The ARP ESSER application, Part 2 will be available on July 7, 2021 and due by Wednesday, September 29, 2021. This part will require detailed project and budgetary information related to preparing for, preventing, and responding to the pandemic, which will be reviewed by the programmatic and fiscal team in the Office of Federal Emergency Relief Programs. In addition, the ARP ESSER application, part 2 requires SAUs to provide detailed information about the required public comment period, the strategies utilized to address the academic impact of lost instructional time, and the evidence-based interventions. More specifically, the ARP ESSER Application, part 2 requires SAUs to:

1. Complete and certify an application cover sheet and assurances
  - a. The cover sheet collects information related to the SAU, contact information for the coordinator completing the ARP ESSER Application, and attests that the information in the ARP ESSER Application is true and correct.
  - b. Part 1 of the ARP ESSER Application listed terms, conditions, and assurances. Part 2 of the ARP ESSER Application has a section where the Superintendent or their authorized representative acknowledges and agrees that failure to comply with all assurances and certifications in this application, all relevant provisions and requirements of the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) funds under section 2001 of the ARP (March 11, 2021).
2. Identify and describe *SAU Overall Priorities and Consultation*
  - a. This section of the ARP ESSER Application focuses on the most critical and/or widespread needs experienced by students, staff, community members and educational personnel. The SAU must provide the data source(s) that supported the identification of the overall priorities and the

stakeholder groups engaged in consultation. Additional questions require the SAU to describe how the SAU provided the public the opportunity to give input in the development of the SAU's ARP ESSER Application and how such input was considered during the development of the ARP ESSER Application. In this section of the ARP ESSER Application, the Department requires that the SAU to provide the website link of the publicly available ARP ESSER Application (use of funds plan). This link will be verified by the review team to confirm that the information related to the use of ARP ESSER funds is publicly available.

3. Provide information related to the *SAU Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services*
  - a. The SAU will be required to provide the website link to their Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services along with a description of the process to obtain public comment. In addition, the ARP ESSER Application will require SAUs to confirm review and revise, no less frequently than every six months, and describe the process. The ARP ESSER Application will also require SAU representatives to attest that all requirements stated in the ARP law and Interim Final Rule are adhered to.
4. Select evidence-based intervention(s) that will be used as part of the required *20% Reservation to Address the Academic Impact of Lost Instructional Time*
  - a. In the ARP ESSER Application, SAUs will be required to create projects for the required reservation to address the academic impact of lost instructional time. In this section of the application, there will be several questions related to the evidence-based intervention used. The questions include the grades that will participate in the evidence-based programs, the student group(s) that will be targeted with the evidence-based program, a project description, the formative assessment plan to evaluate the student progress, and the impact of the intervention. This series of questions will also be reported out on the annual performance report that will be submitted by the SAUs.
5. Develop project(s) to utilize the *Remaining ARP ESSER Funds*
  - a. In this section of the ARP ESSER Application, the SAUs will be required to provide a project description, alignment to an allowable use, the narrative to justify the necessity, and document a reasonable budget.

The Department is supporting Maine’s SAUs and providing additional information related to the ARP ESSER funding and application through webinars, application trainings, phone calls, emails, and notifications to superintendents, application coordinators and business managers. The Department has hired staff dedicated to implementing ARP ESSER.

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.

The Maine Department of Education will host office hours and technical assistance that will provide SAUs with the requirements and obligations within the ARP Act. The Department will support SAUs to identify ways and groups that should be consulted with. In addition, the ARP ESSER application will require that the SAUs describe their consultation process and the stakeholders for which they engaged in meaningful consultation with. The Department will also be collecting information related to the timeframe, method, and advertisement of the public comment period along with the type of feedback that was provided.

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;

The Maine Department of Education will support SAUs through professional learning that focuses on ensuring all students have equal opportunities and that every student will achieve and be challenged by rigorous curricula. The Office of Federal Emergency Relief Programs will also partner with the Office of Innovation, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center Program Coordinator, the Standards and Instructional Support teams to provide multiple widespread occasions to support evidence-based interventions that respond to students' academic needs.

The Maine Department of Education will utilize the electronic grant management system which will contain the ARP ESSER application but also an ARP ESSER performance report. On part 1 of the ARP ESSER application, the Department required to attest that the SAU will comply with all reporting requirements at such time, in such manner, and containing such information as the Maine Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Education, Inspector General and/or any other agency, commission, or department may reasonably require. On the APR ESSER performance report, SAUs will need to provide follow up related to goals, objectives, and outcomes.

- 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

The Office of Federal Emergency Relief Programs will collaborate with the Office of Schools and Student Support, the Office of Special Services and Child Developmental Services to ensure that all students have equitable opportunities through additional programing. It will also be important to provide opportunities for school leaders to have the space and time to work on tasks collaboratively that are directly connected to school and SAU goals. In addition, it will be important to have school leaders involved in opportunities to learn from and be supported by a diverse network of peers, which the Department has created with our office hours, working groups, and associations.

- iii. How the SEA will support and monitor its LEAs in using ARP ESSER funds to identify, reengage, and support students most likely to have experienced the impact of lost instructional time on student learning, such as:

- a. Students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years;
- b. Students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures; and
- c. Students most at-risk of dropping out of school.

The Maine Department of Education’s Office of Federal Emergency Relief Programs with work with the Educational Data Team to collect information about student enrollment and attendance, so the Department can provide additional support to SAUs with students who have missed in-person instruction and remote instruction. The Department will utilize the data collected through surveys and required reporting to continuously inform the needs of students and SAUs while adapting to be sure those needs are addressed.

- 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.

The Maine Department of Education will continue to communicate with Maine school superintendents, principals, special education administrators, curriculum leaders, and unionized teachers the importance of educational equity when utilizing the ARP ESSER funds. The Office of Federal Emergency Relief Programs will also be reviewing the ARP ESSER application to confirm that districtwide and school projects are based on student needs identified in the comprehensive needs’ assessment.

## **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.

Each year, states are required to submit proposals for teacher shortage areas to the United States Department of Education. The Maine Department of Education uses one of the approved methodologies from the United States Department of Education to determine designated shortage areas. The Maine Department of Education compares the number and percentage of positions in each discipline filled by teachers who are not fully certified in the field they are teaching to the total number of full time equivalent (FTE) working in those that discipline/content area. This number is not to exceed 5% of the total FTE’s for the state of Maine. From there, the proposed shortage areas are shared for public comment. Stakeholders from across the state are asked to provide input on the proposed shortage areas and submit additional shortage areas for consideration. Over the past two years, feedback from the public comment period has primarily been focused on the shortage in Special Education. While the teacher shortage report is one source of data, it does not specifically address the gaps in specific content areas or geographic regions. In addition, this report does not include administrative position classifications (e.g., counselor, media specialist, principal, and other roles).” Maine’s Teacher Shortage report is Attachment F.

Based on the methodology used, the identified shortage areas in Maine for 2020-2021 are:

- Science: General Science 5-8; Science Physical Science 7-12; Life Sciences 7-12
- Mathematics 7-12
- Career and Technical Education: Food Production Manager; Carpentry; Welding, Brazing and Soldering; Agricultural Business and Production Technology; Business administration and Management; Computer technology; Machine Tool/Machine shop; Child Care and Guidance; Plumbing; Public Safety/Protective Services; Forestry Products and Processing; Emergency Medical Services and Technology; Transportation Careers; Auto

Body Repair/Collision Repair Technician; Diesel Mechanic; Marine Maintenance/Occupations; Health and Medical Occupations; Building Maintenance; Electrical Occupations

- Health and Physical Sciences Pre-K-12
- Academically Advanced Gifted Education Pre-K-12
- Early Childhood - Pre-K Age below
- English as a Second Language Pre-K-12
- Art and Music Education Theatre Pre-K-12; Art Pre-K-12; and
- World Languages: French Pre-K; Spanish Pre-K-12; Italian Pre-K-12; Latin Pre-K-12.

To better support the needs of conditionally certified special educators, the Maine Department of Education implemented Maine's Alternative Certification and Mentoring Program in collaboration with the University of Maine. This program connects new special educators with mentorship and job-embedded coursework and have the following goals: Support conditionally certified special educators during their first year of practice, Work with SAUs Educational collaboratives to develop special educator mentoring capacity across the state, and Develop and make available mentor training and professional development resources for SAUs and educational collaboratives. The Office of Special Services also offered office hours and professional learning opportunities to special educators throughout the pandemic to provide timely support.

The Department will collaborate with Maine's teacher educators who work in both public and private institutions of higher education to discuss ways and develop models to encourage teacher certification candidates to remain in the state to teach and to encourage and support candidates from under-represented groups to persist with teacher preparation programs and eventually teach in Maine's schools. Teachers who reflect the diversity of Maine's student body will effectively support the recovery of unfinished learning of students of color, students who identify as LGBTQ+, and English learners into the next several years.

- 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.

In the past, the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs within the Maine State Legislature has requested that the Maine Education Policy Institute (MEPRI) conducted various studies to investigate teacher shortages and retention in Maine. The MEPRI study along with the Maine Department of Education's Office of Certification & Credentialing, the Educator Preparation Program, and Educator Excellence, Recruitment and Retention Program will continue to assist in identifying teacher shortages and support SAUs through the emergency teacher certification and alternative pathways to certification.

The Maine Department of Education continues provide meaningful, job-embedded and responsive professional learning and to evaluate the education profession through Recognizing Inspirational School Employees (RISE) Award which honors and promotes the excellence exhibited by classified school employees who provide exemplary service to students in pre-kindergarten through high school, and Maine Teacher of the Year Award (TOY) to honor and recognize excellence in teaching, and highlight the importance and impact of the profession.

The Maine Department of Education supports teachers' professional learning by providing scholarships for teachers to achieve certification through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). Scholarships are prioritized for teachers who are employed in a school in which at least 50% or more students qualify for free or reduced lunch, or who work in an identified shortage area. In order to support retention of highly effective educators, the Maine Department of Education provides an annual \$3,000 Salary Supplement to National Board Certified Teachers who are employed in a school in which less than 50% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch, and an annual \$5,000 Salary Supplement for National Board Certified Teachers who are employed in a school in which 50% or more students qualify for free or reduced lunch.

Many SAUs' CARES ESSER and CRRSA ESSER application included salaries for additional services related to cleaning and custodial support, increase in transportation and drivers need to follow spacing guidelines, supplementary support for health screening and monitoring, and educational support to engage in academic instructional practice and inventions such as summer learning and after school programming.

- 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 Maine Department of Education will continue to take use the additional flexibility for educator certification detailed by Executive Order # 7 FY 20/21 entitled “An Order Regarding Pre-K-12 Education,” signed by Governor Mills. As some school organizations across the state work to employ enough educators to meet the additional demands on education because of COVID-19, this executive order extends the Department’s support of those SAUs. The new certificates shall be employed only as necessary to meet an identified staffing shortage and shall not be used to supplant persons who meet the underlying standards and are available and willing to work. The emergency teacher certification is effective through September 1, 2021. A holder of this certificate must have a cleared background check (CHRC) and participate in a mentoring program.

2. Staffing to Support Student Needs: Describe the extent to which the SEA has developed or will develop strategies and will support its LEAs in increasing student access to key support staff within school buildings, including school counselors, special education personnel, nurses, social workers, and psychologists (e.g. hiring additional personnel or freeing up these staff to focus on providing services to students).

The Maine Department of Education, in partnership with the Maine Community College system, launched the Learning Facilitator Program in the fall of 2020 supported with funding from the Governor's Emergency Education Relief fund. The purpose of the program was to address an immediate need for support staff in schools across Maine. The program is provided at no cost to participants and includes a boot camp, micro-credentialing, communities of practice, and school placements. Participants who successfully complete the programming are eligible for educational technician certifications. Federal funding was leveraged to support the coursework and placements of over 100 educator support. The Department intends to build upon the success of the first cohort and offer additional programming for the 2021-2022 school year.

In addition, the Maine Department of Education’s Office of Federal Emergency Relief Programs and the School Finance Team will work to support SAUs through the maintenance of effort and the maintenance of equity. The Office of Federal Emergency Relief Programs will highlight the array of allowable uses of

the ARP ESSER funding and providing SAUs will information related to positions and services that can take advantage of the ARP ESSER funding.

### **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 adjust 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).

The Department collects data from schools and SAUs for State and Federal reporting requirements, to determine equitable distribution of

resources, and to inform program and policy analysis. Schools and SAUs report data to the Department throughout the school year through the following data collection systems: NEO for school and staff data and information, Synergy for student data and information, and Maine Educator Information System (MEIS) for educator credentialing. State level data collection is a very important factor in calculating State subsidy for SAUs, informing legislative policies, providing transparency to taxpayers, and helping the Department support schools and SAUs as they make decisions about program and curriculum needs.

The Operational Data Store (ODS) called NEO contains numerous data sets submitted by schools and SAUs related to facilities, financial, nutrition, staff, and student data. The student data collected in Synergy and reported out in NEO includes enrollment and attendance but not currently any data related to the mode of instruction. Through a data collection survey, the Maine Department of Education obtained mode of instruction, enrollment, and attendance data. The new layer of data, mode of instruction, was requested through a priority notice that was distributed to every superintendent statewide.

Information from these existing Departmental data sets will be used to minimize additional reporting that SAUs must complete. When data needed that is neither in the grant management system or in the data department of the Department, the Department has the capacity to send surveys directly to SAUs and request that they complete the surveys within a minimal timeframe.

The Maine Department of Education has the capability to collect information through the electronic grant management that the SAUs will use for the ARP ESSER Application. The application will be set up to identify activities supported by the 20% reservation funds, for example. Furthermore, key word searches will be able to identify and collect projects related to air quality projects in schools, or outdoor classroom spaces, for example.

The Office of Federal Emergency Relief Programs will work with the School Finance Team's Fiscal Review and Compliance Team, which is responsible for developing and coordinating fiscal compliance with federal, state, and local regulatory requirements to support our SAUs with records management and auditing requirements. Through the reimbursed process the Office of Federal Emergency Relief Programs will be able to determine the amount of funds that have been invoiced by SAUs, by project in the budgetary categories used throughout the Department, in addition will be able to quantify the ARP ESSER funding that has been used by each evidence-based intervention. All these queries will be

embedded within our grant management system to be able to retrieve 'real-time' data upon request.

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

The Office of Federal Emergency Relief Programs will work with the Office of School Finance's Fiscal Review and Compliance Team, which is responsible for developing and coordinating fiscal compliance with federal, state, and local regulatory requirements to support our SAUs with records management and auditing requirements. The Maine Department of Education has recently updated the Federal Grant Management Handbook, Fiscal Guidance for Federal Grant Programs which is provided to all SAUs engaging with federal funding.

In addition to Federal Grant Management Handbook, the Maine Department of Education and the sub-recipients, SAUS, are bound by Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR), and the Federal Uniform Grant Guidance (2 CFR, Part 200). The sub-recipient is required to permit the Maine Department of Education and auditors to have access to records and financial statements as necessary for the Maine Department of Education requirements per 2 CFR §200.331. Sub-recipients must comply with all reporting requirements including those in Section 15011(b)(2) of Division B of the CARES Act, Performance and Financial Monitoring and Reporting in 2 C.F.R. §§ 200.327-329, and submit required quarterly reports, at such time and in such manner and containing such information as the U.S. Secretary of Education may reasonably require in the future.

The Maine Department of Education's Office of Federal Emergency Relief Programs is responsible for the oversight and monitoring of programs and activities carried out under the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER). The General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) requires that each state "adopt and use proper methods of administering each applicable program, including monitoring of agencies, institutions, and organizations responsible for carrying out each program." Monitoring procedures must be designed to promote the recipient's progress in achieving program goals and objectives; adherence to laws, regulations and

assurances governing the program and conformity to the approved ARP ESSER application, performance reports or other relevant documents. Likewise, Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) requires the Maine Department of Education to monitor grants to assure compliance with applicable Federal requirements and that performance goals are being achieved.

The Office of Federal Emergency Relief Programs will continue to annually monitor SAUs for effective implementation of ARP ESSER programs and compliance with applicable statutory requirements. Additionally, the office will utilize this process to provide meaningful technical assistance to those SAUs in need of additional supports. This structure will allow the office to build relationships with SAU and school leaders; ensure accountability to federal statute requirements; and to maximize the use of all federal resources to increase student achievement. Monitoring will cover requirements specific to CARES ESSER, CRRSA ESSER and ARP ESSER. The process will include questions and conversation of a more systemic nature, as it is expected that decisions on how ARP ESSER funds are expended are made within the framework of the SAUs for identify student needs, especially those who are the furthest from opportunity.

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

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

The Maine Department of Education currently asks schools to submit and have superintendents certify their April Enrollment Count Report. The April Enrollment Count Report is utilized by the Maine Department of Education for the purpose of calculating public school tuition rates. Please note that, new for 2021, the April Enrollment Count Report will consist of two sets of counts, one for attending counts and one for enrollment counts. The attending counts will be utilized for calculating tuition rates in accordance with Title 20-A, §5805, subsection 1.B and the enrollment counts will be used for all other April 1st reporting requirements. Each of these count sets are as of April 1st, 2021. Since the Department is already collecting April 1, 2021 data, the data collected for the ARP ESSER funds also reflected the April 1, 2021 timeframe.

### 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*

#### *Required Data Collection for Maine to Receive ARP ESSER III Funds*

The Maine Department of Education (DOE) is working quickly to get the vital resources from the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (“ARP ESSER III”) Fund, authorized under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 to Maine’s School Administrative Units (SAUs). We are taking the required steps of meeting with stakeholders, attending informational sessions, awaiting guidance from the U.S. Department of Education, and developing the State’s application materials. The ARP ESSER III funding will enable SAUs to promote safe school operations and equity-driven, sustainable, evidence-based programs to serve students – especially those who have been most significantly impacted by the pandemic.

In order to receive the ARP ESSER III funds, the DOE is required to collect the following data. For ease of reporting, we will ask SAUs to report the data that reflects their April 1, 2021 status through a Qualtrics survey that will be distributed on Friday, May 7, 2021. Given the tight timeline and to assist SAUs in preparation for reporting, the following data will be needed:

1. **Mode of instruction:** The number of schools, at each instructional level (elementary, middle, high), in the SAU 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, and
2. **Enrollment:** Student enrollment for all students and disaggregated for each of the student groups\* **for each mode of instruction;** and
3. **Attendance:** Student attendance for all students and disaggregated for each of the student groups\* for each mode of instruction.

We recognize the extraordinary amount of work during this especially challenging year and we deeply appreciate your best effort to gather the data requested and your attention to this matter. The completed survey will need to be submitted by Wednesday, May 19.

Additional information about this survey, and ARP ESSER III in general, is forthcoming. Please contact [Shelly Chasse-Johndro](#), Director, Office of Federal Relief Programs, with any questions.

*\*Student groups include: Students from low-income families; students from each racial or ethnic group; students from each racial or ethnic group; students from low-income families; gender; English learners; children with disabilities; children in foster care; migratory students.*

### ***Elementary School Level***

Mode of instruction for Elementary Schools: Count schools as elementary schools if the majority of the grades in the school are PK-5.

PLEASE NOTE: Each row should account for all elementary schools in your SAU, so that, for Page 3 of 11 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 “total” column.

The number of elementary schools statewide that are offering fully remote or online-only instruction; both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid model); and/or full-time in-person instruction:

<b>Number of schools</b>	<b>All schools</b>	<b>Offered to all students</b>	<b>Offered to some students</b>	<b>Not offered</b>
Remote or online only		221 schools	34 schools	6 schools
School buildings open with both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)		216 schools	3 schools	41 schools
School buildings open with full-time in-person instruction		150 schools	35 schools	40 schools

In Maine, there are 380 elementary schools in our state.

### ***Middle School Level***

Mode of instruction for Middle Schools: Count schools as middle schools if the majority of the grades in the school are 6-8.

PLEASE NOTE: Each row should account for all middle schools in your SAU, so that, for Page 3 of 11 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 “total” column.

The number of middle schools statewide that are offering fully remote or online-only instruction; both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid model); and/or full-time in-person instruction:

<b>Number of schools</b>	<b>All schools</b>	<b>Offered to all students</b>	<b>Offered to some students</b>	<b>Not offered</b>
Remote or online only		91 schools	8 schools	3 schools
School buildings open with both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)		98 schools	5 schools	9 schools
School buildings open with full-time in-person instruction		60 schools	13 schools	21 schools

In Maine, there are 80 middle schools in our state.

### *High School Level*

Mode of instruction for High Schools: Count schools as high schools if the majority of the grades in the school are 9-12.

PLEASE NOTE: Each row should account for all high schools in your SAU, so that, for Page 3 of 11 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 “total” column.

The number of high schools statewide that are offering fully remote or online-only instruction; both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid model); and/or full-time in-person instruction:

<b>Number of schools</b>	<b>All schools</b>	<b>Offered to all students</b>	<b>Offered to some students</b>	<b>Not offered</b>
Remote or online only		78 schools	10 schools	4 schools
School buildings open with both remote/online		102 schools	6 schools	8 schools

and in-person instruction (hybrid)				
School buildings open with full-time in-person instruction		42 schools	12 schools	21 schools

In Maine, there are 119 high schools in our state.

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

**Table 2**

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

*Add or change rows as needed*

**ENROLLMENT**

On April 1, 2021, what was the student enrollment count and mode of instruction for the student groups below? PLEASE NOTE: Each row should account for all students in your SAU, so that, for each row, the sum of the numbers in the “remote or online only,” “both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)” and “full-time in-person instruction” columns is equal to the number in the “total” column.

Statewide Student Enrollment Counts by Mode of Instruction as of April 1, 2021

Number of students	Total enrollment	Remote or online only	Both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)	Full-time in-person instruction
Students from low-income families	59,754 students	9,792 students	29,054 students	20,908 students
White, not Hispanic	134,752 students	19,228 students	71,118 students	44,406 students
Black or African American, not Hispanic	7,096 students	972 students	5,072 students	1,052 students
Hispanic, of any race	4,090 students	761 students	2,386 students	943 students

<b>Number of students</b>	<b>Total enrollment</b>	<b>Remote or online only</b>	<b>Both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)</b>	<b>Full-time in-person instruction</b>
Asian, not Hispanic	2,349 students	550 students	1,335 students	464 students
American Indian or Alaskan Native, not Hispanic	1,077 students	161 students	389 students	527 students
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, not Hispanic	194 students	31 students	90 students	73 students
Two or more races, not Hispanic	4,356 students	769 students	2,454 students	1,133 students
Race/Ethnicity information not available	228 students	37 students	149 students	42 students
English learners	5,581 students	746 students	4,079 students	756 students
Children with disabilities	27,821 students	3,966 students	13,885 students	9,970 students
Students experiencing homelessness	1,586 students	261 students	993 students	332 students
Children and youth in foster care	585 students	81 students	234 students	270 students
Migratory students	43 students	5 students	36 students	2 students

## ATTENDANCE ON APRIL 1, 2021

On April 1, 2021, what was the student attendance rate by mode of instruction for the student groups below? PLEASE NOTE: Each row should account for all students in your SAU, so that, for each row, the sum of the numbers in the “remote or online only,” “both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)” and “full-time in-person instruction” columns is equal to the number in the “total” column.

Statewide Student Attendance Rate\* by Mode of Instruction on April 1, 2021

\*Attendance rate is represented by a percent

<b>Percentage of Attendance</b>	<b>Average Percentage</b>	<b>Remote or online only</b>	<b>Both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)</b>	<b>Full-time in-person instruction</b>
Students from low-income families	87.03%	86.02%	86.79%	88.27%
White, not Hispanic	90.02%	89.19%	90.85%	90.03%
Black or African American, not Hispanic	87.49%	86.19%	88.36%	87.94%
Hispanic, of any race	87.35%	87.79%	87.12%	87.14%
Asian, not Hispanic	90.82%	89.68%	92.21%	90.57%
American Indian or Alaskan Native, not Hispanic	86.71%	86.57%	87.54%	86.02%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, not Hispanic	89.70%	90.20%	89.87%	89.01%
Two or more races, not Hispanic	89.34%	90.42%	89.16%	88.45%
Race/Ethnicity information not available	87.16%	74.75%	92.60%	94.14%
English learners	92.40%	91.42%	91.77%	94.02%
Children with disabilities	86.91%	86.38%	86.92%	87.43%
Students experiencing homelessness	80.57%	82.10%	76.75%	82.87%
Children and youth in foster care	89.63%	89.52%	86.70%	92.68%
Migratory students	89.35%	93.50%	76.51%	98.03%

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

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

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

## Appendix C: Assurances

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

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

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

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

## Appendix D

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

### NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS

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

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

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

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

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

Section 427 requires each applicant for funds (other than an individual person) to include in its application a description of the steps the applicant proposes to take to ensure equitable

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

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

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

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

(1) An applicant that proposes to carry out an adult literacy project serving, among others, adults with limited English proficiency, might describe in its application how it intends to distribute a brochure about the proposed project to such potential participants in their native language.

(2) An applicant that proposes to develop instructional materials for classroom use might describe how it will make the materials available on audio tape or in braille for students who are blind.

(3) An applicant that proposes to carry out a model science program for secondary students and is concerned that girls may be less likely than boys to enroll in the course, might indicate how it intends to conduct "outreach" efforts to girls, to encourage their enrollment.

(4) An applicant that proposes a project to increase school safety might describe the special efforts it will take to address concerns of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students, and efforts to reach out to and involve the families of LGBT students.

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

In accordance with Section 427 of the Department of Education's General Provision Act (GEPA), the Maine Department of Education and all participating School Administrative Units (SAUs) plan to review existing policies and

procedures to ensure that every aspect of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds application and reopening plans fully aligns with the requirements of Section 427. This review of the Maine Department of Education and the SAU policies will occur prior to the beginning of any approved projects. Upon completion of the reviews steps will be taken, as needed, to revise, modify, or develop new policies and procedures for complete alignment and compliance with Section 427 to ensure equal access and participation to all persons regardless of their race, color, ethnicity, religion, national origin, gender, age, citizenship status, or disability to the programs and services provided by the federally funded ARP ESSER federal emergency grant.

The ARP ESSER application is focused on supporting SAUs to safely reopen and sustain the safe operation of schools and address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on underrepresented student subgroups, including each major racial and ethnic group, children from low-income families, children with disabilities, English learners, gender, migrant students, students experiencing homelessness, and children and youth in foster care.

Professional development, technical assistance and any programming will be offered for all participants and every effort will be made to eliminate unfair barriers to their participating, such as translating written materials from English to Spanish, or Braille. Specialized electronic equipment and other needed accommodations will also be made available for those who request it.

The State has a comprehensive Affirmative Action Plan (AAP) committed to creating a workforce that reflects the diversity of qualified individuals in the labor market. It is the policy of the state to recruit, hire, train, and promote persons in all job titles, without regard to race, color, sex, national origin, age,

religion, marital status, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, or other extraneous consideration not directly and substantively related to merit or performance. Employment decisions and personnel actions, including, but not limited to compensation, benefits, promotion, demotion, layoff/recall, transfer, termination, and training are based on the principle of ensuring equal employment opportunity and affirmative action.

### **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.**