The SEA must submit to the Department, within 60 days of receiving ESSER funds, an initial report detailing a budget for the SEA’s reservation of funds that includes information about the up to ½ of 1 percent of the SEA’s total grant for administrative costs and the uses of funds for emergency needs to address issues related to COVID‑19. This document outlines the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction’s (NDDPI) response to this requirement.

Total State ESSER Allocation = $33,297,699

State Level Set-Aside = $3,329,770

1. Administrative Funding (1/2 of 1% of SEA total grant) $166,489
   * NDDPI Salary for COVID-Related Work ($139,489)
   * Indirect Costs ($27,000)
2. Clarification of the “Other” Category

Since the federal regulations under the CARES Act require states to use the Title I formula to disseminate ESSER funding, there are districts that did not receive an ESSER allocation. The NDDPI will be providing these ineligible districts with a small grant with our state set-aside funds.

$100,000

1. Description of Large Covered Funds

The NDDPI distributed a statewide survey to educators, family members, education groups, advocacy organizations and state lawmakers asking for input on the state set‑aside funds under the CARES Act.

We received a strong response and will be using our state-level ESSER dollars to fund priorities recommended in the survey.

Priorities identified in the Statewide Survey for which state-level ESSER funds will be utilized:

* **Professional development for distance teaching, effective diagnostic assessments, and student-centered learning.**

According to the North Dakota K-12 Educational Needs Survey, 54% of respondents asked for “professional development or virtual training resources for teachers on effective distance learning”. In addition, 61% of respondents indicated a need for “ready-made lessons, personalized to each students’ ability and can be delivered through video, virtual conferencing or at their own pace.” Finally, results and respondents’ comments revealed a critical need for increased and continued supports to young children, early childhood program providers, and increased supports for social emotional learning.

The NDDPI has designed a collaborative and cross-departmental plan that seeks to meet North Dakota educators’ professional development and resource needs. First, the NDDPI plans to support educators’ access to remote and hybrid learning to build the capacity of state, district, and school leadership in the following areas: 1) to plan, implement, and sustain high quality remote and digital learning, 2) to redesign and enhance North Dakota Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports, and 3) to support Special Education Units with assessment tools, professional learning, and access to instructional and educational materials. Any North Dakota educator will be allowed to access these multi-layered supports through personalized, asynchronous content. In addition, the NDDPI plans to facilitate the creation of digital lessons, units, and resources to share best practices and, through review processes, work together in virtual environments to improve the quality of these materials. Having these resources on a consistent platform will allow educators to improve instruction and free them to spend more time individualizing instruction to fit individual students’ needs.

$1,500,000

* **Digital platform for providing precision learning opportunities for students.**

The statewide survey results confirmed the department’s pursuit of a K-12 adaptive learning software program for all K-12 learners across North Dakota. Only when outlined by legislative statute has the department pursued the development or organization of K-12 curriculum to schools and districts across the state. This is typically determined by locally elected school boards in consultation with educational leaders. During the pandemic, the wide variety of approaches and digital supports were met with varied results, as reported by parents. This information was confirmed through feedback from the State Superintendent’s Parent Cabinet, who met regularly throughout the pandemic. This group also was vocal regarding the frustration of using multiple platforms for various grade levels of their students. This information was confirmed anecdotally when speaking with district leaders regarding their feedback from parents. Therefore, the department is looking at providing a supplemental mathematics, reading, and language arts curriculum to all North Dakota K-12 students, including those attending public schools, non-public schools, those schools operated by the Bureau of Indian Education, and home educated students.

This platform provides the framework for precise personalization of instructional practice. This can be based on a North Dakota interim formative assessment (if provided by the district) or individualized for each student based upon entry into the system. It meets each student at their unique ability level using a single platform. This content is aligned to the North Dakota state standards. In addition to meeting students where they are academically, the curriculum provides learning assessments illustrating student growth and achievement. The results are available for schools aligned to current North Dakota metrics and in a language with which families are already familiar with (such as Lexile and Quantile measures). When needed, virtual instructional supports, provided by North Dakota educators, would be readily available to assist the student in their learning.

To be clear, the NDDPI is not seeking to provide a long-term, multi-year solution to curriculum access, instructional supports or distance education. Rather this historic pandemic has inspired the state education department to focus on its responsibility to provide equitable learning opportunities to all North Dakota students during these uncertain times. It is recognized that this response may not be needed in all districts, however, it would be open for all to participate, if they so choose. In some districts, this may be the reading, language arts, and mathematics framework they turn to should they need to provide distance education during the 2020-2021 school year. Moreover, should parents determine they wish to supplement their child’s learning experience, this platform would allow them to do so.

This program presents an opportunity for a variety of state agencies—Office of the Governor, Department of Public Instruction, Career and Technical Education with the Center for Distance Education, and Information Technology with EduTech—to partner to support North Dakota’s youngest citizens.

$1,143,281

* **Best practices for teachers and students.**

The NDDPI will partner with the North Dakota Teachers of the Year, as well as other leading educators in the field, to create robust resources for all teachers during a time of distance learning. State-level ESSER Funds will be used to bring together this workgroup for a week in July 2020 to create resources by teachers, for teachers. Topics included are: quality attendance measures; grading and assessment; virtual curriculum delivery; traditional curriculum delivery; maintaining positive student and teacher mental health; and maintain positive student connections, among many more.

$40,000

* **Address needs of special populations – Para-to-Teacher Pathway.**

The Office of Special Education at NDDPI has been combating shortages in special education and this problem was exacerbated due to COVID-19. The programs that have been the most successful with recruiting and retaining special education teachers are programs with a “Grow Your Own” and distance teaching approach. The Para-to-Teacher Pathway Program is a program that leverages distance learning and paraprofessional experiences to become licensed special education teachers, which is even more critical now that COVID-19 has impacted the current labor market. This is an essential time to reduce restrictions and enhance opportunities to address special education shortages.

The Office of Special Education within the NDDPI will partner with the Governor’s office and a North Dakota University to help fund the Para-to-Teacher Pathway Program. The program addresses the shortage of qualified special education teachers nationwide by transitioning experienced paraprofessionals in special education classrooms into licensed special education teachers.

$380,000

Total = $3,329,770