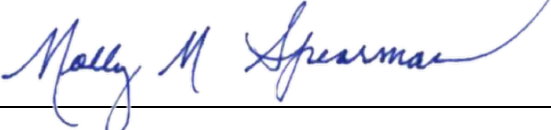## Cover Page

Grantee and Contact Information

ARP ESSER PR Award Number: S425U210019

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By signing this document, I agree to each of the assurances listed in Appendix C and further assure that: To the best of my knowledge and belief, all information and data included in this plan are true and correct.	
Chief State School Officer or Authorized Representative (Printed Name) Molly M. Spearman	
Signature of Authorized SEA Representative	Date: 18 June 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. <u>Progress and Promising Practices</u>: 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.

South Carolina has undertaken extraordinary efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic. An effective strategy the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE; see Appendix E) deployed was to create an aligned ecosystem to support analyzing data and implementing actionable goals. In collaboration with Education Analytics, the SCDE provided all local educational agencies (LEAs) with a common data set of current and historical summative and interim assessments. The data set, known in South Carolina (SC) as the RALLY Tool, provides both achievement and gap data for all students and subgroups. For each subgroup, data can be aggregated by percentages of students in each quartile as well as students in each subgroup needing either mild, moderate, or significant remediation to accelerate unfinished learning. Each LEA used the RALLY Tool to analyze their data and create and submit to the SCDE an Academic Recovery Plan that included Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART) goals, outlines of actionable strategies to address academic acceleration for all students, and procedures for evaluating and monitoring progress of the Academic Recovery Plan. The RALLY Tool is available to LEA leadership to enable analysis of LEA- and school-level data, and is available to teachers for use in instructional planning and identifying learning gaps for student subgroups.

A second effective strategy the SCDE used during the pandemic was to leverage economies of scale across all LEAs in SC. The SCDE surveyed LEAs in May 2020, and learned that 60 percent did not have a Learning Management System (LMS) to assist with delivering digital instruction; only 15 of the state's 81 LEAs were proficient with LMS implementation and underserved LEAs lagged behind in having adequate curriculum resources. To address these needs, the SCDE used support from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act ESSER I funds to acquire LMS licenses for all LEAs and create a Learning Object Repository (LOR) to house curriculum resources aligned to state content standards that all LEAs can access. To help teachers focus on the enduring content standards, the SCDE facilitated a teacher task force to identify priorities and support content standards in English language arts (ELA) and math. The SCDE partnered with the SC Education Oversight Committee (EOC) and SC Educational Television (SCETV) to further leverage resources to LEAs and submitted a successful Rethink K-12 Education Models Grant application to the US Department of Education (USED). The approved plan included deployment of a datacasting system to use the SCETV's network broadcast technology to deliver lessons in remote areas of

the state that lack broadband access. AccelerateED, SC's COVID-response task force in education assembled by State Superintendent Molly Spearman, recommended support to LEAs in implementing Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and the SCDE leveraged state resources to develop SEL lesson plans, create a website with resources, and employ an education associate to facilitate statewide training to classroom teachers on embedding SEL in classroom instruction.

Third, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the SCDE placed high priority and strategic focus on accelerating academic growth for all students to ensure that all students demonstrated annual growth and those below grade level demonstrated additional academic growth. Leveraging the work-to-date around Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), the SCDE developed and distributed a Map for Success for school improvement and an Academic Recovery Plan. The map directs LEAs to analyze and determine strategies for improvement in five key areas: leadership, data system, core instruction, targeted interventions, and LEA support systems. In communicating this work to LEAs, the SCDE emphasized the urgency of a thorough analysis of data and development of an action plan that included timely benchmarks to determine success or the need for redirection.

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.

Students and schools in SC face three critical issues: learning loss in key subjects and grades, partially developed social-emotional learning (SEL) and mental health support, and the need for upgraded facilities.

Learning Loss: Across all grades and subject areas, data from the RALLY Tool reveal that SC students have demonstrated reduced growth compared to previous school years. In winter 2020, the SCDE compiled interim assessment data in math and ELA for students in kindergarten through ninth grade; on average, SC students experienced a two- to three-month lag in expected growth when compared to prior years. Initial data indicated that students in the earliest grades suffered the greatest learning lag and overall, students experienced greater loss in math than in ELA.

Students in the earliest grades also suffered reduced growth stemming from school closures in spring 2020; statewide, only 27 percent of five-year-olds demonstrated overall readiness on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA). Enrollment in public 4K also declined approximately 30 percent, so thousands fewer students will enter kindergarten this fall having experienced high-quality schooling via 4K. At the high school level, roughly double the number of students have failed core courses compared to previous years.

Additionally, the 2020–21 school year saw an increase in the number of students learning remotely or learning via new digital instructional practices in face-to-face environments. Interim assessment data indicate that student performance seems different for some students in virtual environments, which may not be for some an ideal place to learn.

Social-Emotional Learning and Mental Health Support: In the 2019–20 school year, SC began statewide implementation of a MTSS, with an initial focus on improving literacy screening, instruction, and intervention for students. Early feedback from LEAs indicated that Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and mental health supports were needed as the focus for the next core area of implementation; the spring 2020 school closures and fall 2020 school re-openings highlighted the importance of developing strong SEL curricula and student and staff mental health supports. In fact, AccelerateEd highlighted "preparing for the social and emotional needs of students" as a core area of need for the state and LEAs through the end of the pandemic and beyond.

In summer 2020, LEAs rated their implementation of SEL based on the core CASEL competencies, a national standard in SEL frameworks. Statewide, LEAs rated their implementation levels as "Partially Planned and Implemented," indicating that schools had begun planning for SEL processes, but needed additional support to fully implement consistent and effective systems. Overall, LEAs scored themselves lowest in the areas of developing and executing an aligned plan across individual schools and districts.

Facility Upgrades: Since the 1990s, 48 SC LEAs, including the Abbeville, et. al. vs. the State of South Carolina plaintiff school districts and other LEAs with significant numbers of students in poverty, have struggled to build or maintain safe and efficient school facilities comparable to wealthier LEA facilities. Over the years, state funding ($1.5 million) was set aside to evaluate the condition of public school buildings in these LEAs and funds ($55.8 million) were appropriated to assist these LEAs with facility upgrades and improvements they identified and prioritized. The 2017 Facilities Assessment Reports on building infrastructure of these LEAs found that heating and air conditioning systems, electrical and lighting systems, and plumbing were generally in poor to fair condition when compared to the condition of building infrastructures of all state school buildings. These poorer LEAs tended to have older HVAC and electrical systems, resulting in inefficient systems that are both more difficult and more expensive to maintain.

While almost $56 million was appropriated to support these LEAs capital improvements, LEAs identified and requested more than $133 million to address capital needs. Forty percent of the requested projects related to energy efficiency improvements including window replacements, air conditioning, roofing, and water system upgrades. To date, facility improvement needs of rural, poor, and small LEAs have gone unmet, especially in counties or areas with limited revenue generating capacity or a poor tax base. Recognizing the need for additional resources, for fiscal year 2021–22, state lawmakers are proposing to allocate up to $100 million of state funding, $85 million to support facility improvements in disadvantaged LEAs, and $15 million to incentivize consolidation amongst smaller LEAs and schools. If approved, these funds will become available effective July 1, 2021. Leveraging these funds, the SCDE will set aside a portion of its ESSER ARP funds to further address capital needs of rural, poor school districts.

3. <u>Identifying Needs of Underserved Students</u>: Describe your State's 2-3 highest priority academic, social, emotional, and/or mental health needs for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year (if applicable) and for the 2021-2022 school year related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on each of the following student groups:

     i.   Students from low-income families,

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

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

     iv.   English learners,

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

     vi.   Students experiencing homelessness,

     vii.   Children and youth in foster care,

     viii.   Migratory students, and

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

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

Table A1.

Student group	Highest priority needs
Students from low-income families	There is significant need for accelerated learning in ELA and math for students from low-income families. Fall 2020 and winter 2021 interim assessment data indicate a high representation of students from low-income families (i.e., Pupils in Poverty) in the RALLY Tool's Tiers 2 (Moderate) and 3 (Severe). The percentage of pupils in poverty in Tiers 2 and 3 also increased by two percentage points on the winter interim assessment (from 26 percent to 28 percent). This evidence suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic has had an uneven impact on and may be intensifying the achievement gap for low-income students. Students from low-income families are less likely to have access to quality remote instruction and broadband

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[1] For the purposes of the plan, "academic impact of lost instructional time" refers to "learning loss" experienced by students as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, as referenced in the ARP Act and the CRRSA Act.

Student group	Highest priority needs
	internet access during mandatory school closures and quarantines; they are more frequently unsupervised during remote learning.

Student Group	Achievement: Equivalent SC READY scale scores based on linking studies	
	Fall 2020 Moderate or Severe	**Winter** 2021 Moderate or Severe
Pupils in Poverty	26%	28%
Non-Pupils in Poverty	9%	9%

Student group	Highest priority needs
Students from each racial or ethnic background used by the State for reporting purposes	There is significant need for accelerated learning in ELA and math for students of color. Fall and winter interim assessment data demonstrate a high representation of students of color (i.e., American Indians, African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Latinx) in the RALLY Tool's Tiers 2 (Moderate) and 3 (Severe). The percentage of African American students in Moderate or Severe increased from 30 percent on the fall assessment to 34 percent on the winter interim assessment. The data suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic has had an uneven impact on students of minority racial/ethnic groups when compared with White/Non-Hispanic students and that the pandemic may be intensifying their achievement gaps.

Student Group	Achievement: Equivalent SC READY scale scores based on linking studies	
	Fall 2020 Moderate or Severe	**Winter** 2021 Moderate or Severe
American Indian	22%	24%
Black	30%	34%
Pacific Islander	27%	26%
Latinx	26%	26%
White	13%	12%

Student group	Highest priority needs
Students by gender – please add a row for each gender (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by gender)	(table below)

Gender	**Fall** 2020 Moderate or Severe	**Winter** 2021 Moderate or Severe
Female	18%	19%
Male	20%	21%

The RALLY Tool's tier structure system was based on the rank ordered statewide "all students" results, designating 80 percent mild; 15 percent moderate; and five percent severe. Statewide 20 percent of students are in the moderate and severe categories. South Carolina is not experiencing significant variations by gender.

Student group	Highest priority needs
English learners	Multilingual learners face many barriers and challenges to achieving academic success and the COVID-19 pandemic has only heightened the complexities. As the SCDE continues to address the needs of our most vulnerable populations, several priorities became evident: • During the pandemic, it may have been difficult to stay in contact with all students and families. It is essential that the SCDE focus on fostering relationships between school and home to build trust and rapport. • English learners need appropriate scaffolds and accommodations to access grade-level academic standards. Virtual learning may have been a challenging platform for students to receive those academic supports. English learners will need time for academic recovery and will need for their schools to provide appropriate scaffolds and accommodations. • Not all families have access to the internet and technology as other families. Multilingual learners need to be provided access to the internet and any technology that assists them in meeting their academic responsibilities.
Children with disabilities	Based on fall and winter interim assessment data, a gap already existed between students with disabilities and students without disabilities with respect to performance on statewide assessments. The difference between the predicted and actual scores for students with disabilities was not as great as the difference between the predicted and actual scores for students without disabilities. However, the gap already existing between academic benchmarks for students with disabilities and students without disabilities points to the need for academic intervention to continue and be intensified as a priority. Because the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that all Individual Education Programs (IEPs) for students with disabilities address all the student's educational, including academic achievement and functional performance, another priority need is continued social-emotional support. The IEP teams will consider the types of services available to students with disabilities, including all those available to students without disabilities, when determining how to meet each student's unique needs. The National Center on Intensive Intervention's Data-Based Individualization (DBI) will be used as a framework for providing intensive intervention in academics and behavior.
Students experiencing homelessness	Many students experiencing homelessness suffer from instructional loss and mental health challenges due to months of distanced and

Student group	Highest priority needs
	disrupted education, social isolation, and separation from the physical and emotional comforts that school settings provide. Survey data across the country suggest that an estimated 420,000 fewer children and youth experiencing homelessness have been identified and enrolled by schools so far this school year. This decrease in homeless student enrollment, combined with previous estimates of under-identification, means that as many as children and youth experiencing homelessness may be un-identified and unsupported by their school during the pandemic. In SC, the number of students experiencing homelessness has been decreasing, while previously, each year saw gains from the previous year. | Year	# of Students Identified as McKinney-Vento Homeless
2016–17	12,018
2017–18	12,660
2018–19	12,789
2019–20	11,906
2020–21 (135-day ADT)	~10,000 | To address the urgent issues of youth homelessness, the SCDE and partner organizations identified continued priority needs that include: • Collaborating with community partners to provide wraparound services to address the urgent needs of these students is essential. Students need access to programs to address learning loss as well as unmet social emotional needs; • Ensuring local shelters have technology and access for all students to access online education and assignments; and • Providing access to food programs, summer learning opportunities, and afterschool programs.
Children and youth in foster care	Children and youth in foster care face many challenges when it comes to achieving academic success and educational stability. The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the complexities of the needs of students in foster care. Students in foster care struggle with chronic absenteeism due to transitions to new schools, court hearings, parental visitations, and other required appointments for mental health/medical care essential to their wellbeing and healing from traumatic experiences. As the SCDE continues to address the complex needs of our most vulnerable populations, the SCDE identified key priorities for students in foster care, including:

Student group	Highest priority needs
	• Continued collaboration with local/state child welfare agencies to support the educational stability of our foster care youth and reduce barriers; • Increasing data-sharing and partnerships between the SCDE, LEAs, and child welfare agencies to guarantee students in foster care have access to educational materials and technology, track students' academic progress (or regression), and address other concerns as needed; and • Addressing the increased isolation the pandemic is likely to have caused for foster care youth.
Migratory students	The SC Migrant Education Program Parent Advisory Council (SCMEP-PAC) has indicated the following highest priority needs as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic: • Advocacy and meaningful communication from schools/districts in languages that families understand; • Tutoring and supplemental instruction to account for learning loss of migratory children; • Outreach initiatives that provide mobile services and support for families in languages they can understand and at the places where they live; • Bilingual mental health services; • Assisting parents with the use of technology; and • Access to early childhood learning opportunities and bilingual family literacy activities.
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)	**ESSA Neglected and Delinquent (N&D) Programs** The Subpart 1 of the N&D program serves youth in state-operated institutions. Throughout the pandemic, neglected, delinquent, and at-risk students who attend the SC Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) and Palmetto Unified School District (PUSD) – the educational program at adult correctional facilities – have continued to receive synchronous and asynchronous virtual instruction and faith-based services. However, there has been an increase in the delivery of virtual instruction, rather than face-to-face. Due to higher rates of teacher absenteeism, corrections officers have had to increase their level of support and assistance as incidents of disruptive behaviors and delinquent acts have increased during the 2020–21 school year. As part of addressing safety measures, students have experienced increased mobility and solitary confinement this school year, impacting their social-emotional well-being. Students have also been negatively affected during the pandemic because volunteerism and support from faith-based organizations has been scaled back.

Student group	Highest priority needs
	N&D Subpart 2 The Subpart 2 program serves LEAs with high numbers or percentages of children and youth in locally operated juvenile correctional facilities, including jails, detention centers, residential care facilities, and facilities involved in community day programs. During the COVID-19 pandemic, as a part of instituting safety measures, LEAs limited in-person activities including tutoring in ELA/reading, math, and transition services. The pandemic also increased the LEAs and facilities' inability to hire tutors; therefore, LEAs resorted to increased virtual tutoring in ELA/reading, math, and transition services. Additionally, many activities related to in-person and hands-on transition activities were decreased, provided virtually, or suspended altogether. Further, four N&D served facilities in SC closed either permanently or temporarily due to the impact of COVID-19. One N&D served facility closed mid-year 2020 due to the impact of COVID-19, resulting in LEAs providing N&D services to the extent allowable via their own programs for at-risk students.

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

To assist teachers, schools, and LEAs, the SCDE created the ENGAGE South Carolina (ENGAGE SC) program to provide outreach and coaching support for students across the state. The goal is to help re-engage K-12 students who disengaged during the COVID-19 pandemic. In partnership with Graduation Alliance, ENGAGE SC is providing support to students and families who may be struggling to adapt to new learning schedules and environments brought on by the pandemic.

The first phase of ENGAGE SC focused on K-12 students who:
- did not engage in their schools in-person or remote education offerings in spring or fall 2020;
- are chronically absent;
- are in danger of failing one or more classes;
- are eligible for McKinney-Vento services (homeless) or are in foster care; and/or
- are in families that have requested additional support.

The SCDE offered all SC public schools the opportunity to participate at no cost. The following memorandum to LEAs detailed information regarding ENGAGE SC:
https://ed.sc.gov/newsroom/school-district-memoranda-archive/engage-south-carolina-

[attendance-recovery-program/engage-south-carolina-attendance-recovery-program-memo/](https://ed.sc.gov). In the first phase, 55 LEAs opted-in to serve 20,000 students who met the focus criteria.

As the 2020–21 school year persisted, it became apparent that students learning in a fully virtual environment are most impacted by the pandemic. To provide further support and interventions to this group of students, the second phase of ENGAGE SC was launched to focus on K-12 students who:

- have not attended in-person or virtually in 2020 or 2021, including students who have been withdrawn from enrollment due to lack of attendance but have not notified the LEA of withdrawal or transfer to another education program;
- are chronically absent (defined as missing 10 percent of the enrollment period to date);
- are a junior or senior in high school failing one or more classes or at risk of not advancing to the next grade or graduating;
- are participating in an LEA's virtual option; and/or
- will participate in an LEA's summer offerings.

The SCDE offered all SC public schools the opportunity to participate at no cost. The following memorandum to LEAs detailed information on this expansion of ENGAGE SC: [https://ed.sc.gov/newsroom/school-district-memoranda-archive/expansion-of-engage-south-carolina-attendance-recovery-program/expansion-of-engage-south-carolina-attendance-recovery-program-memo/](https://ed.sc.gov). For the second phase, 51 districts opted in for outreach services to an additional 23,000 students who met the focus criteria.

As the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to become known, the SCDE has prioritized student engagement and will continue to offer ENGAGE SC to all LEAs; a third phase will start at the beginning of the 2021–22 school year.

In May 2020, the SCDE surveyed LEAs to gauge implementation of social emotional learning (SEL) statewide. Modeled after the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) competencies, the survey included the following items for LEAs to respond using a scale of 1–4:

- Develop a shared vision and aligned goals for SEL;
- Assess SEL needs and resources;
- Develop and execute a district plan for systemic SEL implementation;
- Establish a foundation for continuous improvement;
- Organize the district to promote collaboration among school and district leaders around SEL, academics, and equity;
- Communicate about SEL as a district priority;
- Align financial resources to support SEL; and
- Implement human resource practices and policies that support SEL.

Of the LEA responses, 93 percent indicated they had "partially planned and implemented" SEL and seven percent reported they had "mostly planned and implemented social and emotional learning."

To support LEAs in strengthening the implementation of SEL, the SCDE convened an internal working group to develop an understanding of SEL and strategies to best implement new learning. As a result, eleven SEL screening tools were approved for district use in determining the needs of students through a tiered system of support, a webpage was created to provide districts with resources and lesson plans, and the most recent South Carolina Teacher of the Year was hired at the SCDE to facilitate effective statewide implementation of SEL.

Using resources provided by the SCDE, LEAs will be asked to use the CASEL survey and SEL screeners as an initial benchmark and to progress monitor SEL implementation by annually completing the CASEL survey and analyzing screening data to determine progress toward effective implementation. In addition, the SCDE supplied districts with a crosswalk between the CASEL SEL competencies and the competencies identified to support meeting the *Profile of the SC Graduate*, the state's overarching goal for all students.

Additionally, to assist LEAs in identifying the extent of the impact of COVID-19 on student behavioral health, the SCDE is hiring a full-time mental health expert to facilitate the effective implementation of mental health services in LEAs statewide.

The SCDE will strengthen its partnership with the SC Department of Mental Health (SCDMH) to provide data and other resources as LEAs expand school-based mental health programs. In 2019, the SCDMH served 1,892 uninsured school mental health patients across the state and provided 9,902 services to those students. Also in 2019, 2,227 students with private insurance received 23,104 school mental health services. The total of 4,119 students served is expected to increase proportionally in 2022.

Evidence from past trends predicts a rise in mental health care needs due to COVID-19. There has been a notable uptick in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) self-harm calls in SC from October 2020, to March 2021. When comparing, ages 10–14 had a 60 percent increase in EMS self-harm calls, with ages 15–19 increasing by 22 percent.

The SCDMH school mental health clinicians work year-round, with no break of service during summer months. This ensures continuity of mental health services for students. In addition, SCDMH uses evidence-based practices, including Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, to ensure needed mental health services provided are effective. During the summer, SCDMH school mental health programs offer more group therapy services that help address the impact of isolation and decreased social interactions with peers experienced by many students during the pandemic.

In summer 2020, the SC General Assembly and the Governor, passed Act 142, which required that all students in kindergarten through grade nine be assessed during the first two weeks of the 2020–21 school year in reading and mathematics to identify students needing additional support and the support to be provided. These same students were required to be assessed prior to the end of the 2020 calendar year to measure the impact of the interventions provided. The district results of these pre- and post-assessments were submitted to the SCDE, to evaluate the pandemic's impact on student learning and the impact of the interventions on student learning. The SCDE

vetted a variety of solutions, researching which interim assessments were currently being utilized by districts in SC, and for purposes of this legislation, approved the five reading and mathematics assessments.

These familiar solutions provided districts with both a historical data perspective as well as a continuum of data to reference and compare the status of student learning pre-pandemic to what is currently taking place in every classroom to date. These assessments were chosen because each one had the capability to offer a virtual platform for administration, yield valid and reliable data, and accurately track progress and identified challenges for all students. Moreover, districts and schools were able to maximize the time needed to comply with the law in an efficient manner because of their familiarity with these assessments and of the results yielded, and no additional training was needed for the teachers.

The results from these pre- and post-assessments provided key data about what students know and understand, as well as showcase topics that the students are having difficulty grasping. To make these data reviews more digestible and actionable, it was critically important that the SCDE create for teachers an interactive platform that provides up-to-date information. The SCDE collaborated with Education Analytics to create the RALLY Tool – a series of interactive tools that provide timely and comprehensive information about students' needs. The platform takes all historical summative and interim assessment data and creates displays for teachers. The data can be accessed on a student level, classroom level, school and district level. The datasets are linked to the SC state standards so teachers have specific information about the standards and domains where students are doing well, and the ones for which they need more reinforcement. Finally, we are linking this platform to state-supported curricular resources in our growing LOR we have launched for our school districts using ESSER funds.

5. <u>School Operating Status</u>: It is essential to have data on how students are learning in order to support the goals of access and equity, especially for student groups that have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Describe the current status of data collection on operational status and mode of instruction of all schools in your State. This description must include:
   i. A description of to what extent, and how frequently, the State collects now and will collect in the future data for all schools in your State on:
      a. Mode of instruction: The number of schools in your State that are offering fully remote or online-only instruction; both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid model); and/or full-time in-person instruction;
      b. Enrollment: Student enrollment for all students and disaggregated for each of the student groups described in A.3.i-viii for each mode of instruction; and
      c. Attendance: Student attendance for all students and disaggregated for each of the student groups described in A.3.i-viii for each mode of instruction.

In April 2021, the SC General Assembly passed and the Governor signed into law S. 704. This legislation required that beginning April 26, 2021, every SC public school must offer full-time, in-person instruction. The legislation also requires that for the 2021–22 school year, every school district must also offer full-time, in-person instruction. Except for virtual charter schools, all public schools are abiding by this legislation. In addition, SC has updated its Student Information System (SIS) to include mode of instruction; enrollment and attendance data have long been gathered in the system.

        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 data are provided in Appendix A.

        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 April 2021, the SC General Assembly passed and the Governor signed into law S. 704. This legislation required that beginning April 26, 2021, every SC public school must offer full-time, in-person instruction. The legislation also requires that for the 2021–22 school year, every school district must also offer full-time, in-person instruction. Every SC public school is abiding by this legislation and will be offering full-time, in person instruction for the upcoming school year.

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;

Table B1.

Mitigation strategy	SCDE's response
Universal and correct wearing of masks	The SCDE under authority provided to the State Superintendent of Education by the State Board of Education (SBE) required that face coverings be worn by students and staff aboard school buses and within school facilities in a policy that reflected Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance. However, on May 11, 2021, Governor Henry McMaster issued Executive Order 2021-23 that rendered the policy unenforceable; it allows students and parents to "opt out" of wearing face coverings. As a result, the SCDE continues to require face coverings to be worn by students and staff aboard school buses and strongly recommends their use within school facilities. The SCDE provides schools and LEAs with the latest updates from the CDC and the state's public health agency, the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) on a weekly basis concerning face coverings and other mitigation strategies. The SCDE created floor and wall graphics for use in elementary and secondary schools that promote mask wearing and other mitigation strategies. These graphics were distributed to all public schools in the state.
Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)	In summer 2020, the SCDE created a task force (AccelerateED Task Force) on the reopening of schools that provided schools and LEAs with strategies on how they could best reopen in fall 2020 using social distancing and cohorting, commonly called the "family model" in SC. Since that time, the SCDE, in cooperation with SCDHEC, has shared additional information and guidance on the importance of social distancing, including seating charts and cohorting. The SCDE also provided more than $50 million in plexiglas to LEAs that wanted to bring additional students back for face-to-face learning and needed a barrier of protection when optimal social distancing could not be maintained. The SCDE created floor and wall graphics that promote social distancing and other mitigation strategies and provided these graphics to all public elementary and secondary schools in the state.
Handwashing and respiratory etiquette	The graphics the SCDE developed for use in elementary and secondary schools promote proper handwashing, respiratory etiquette, and other mitigation strategies. The SCDE made these graphics available to all schools in the state. In partnership with SCDHEC, the state's public health agency, the SCDE created

	presentations and materials to educate school personnel and students on handwashing and respiratory etiquette.
Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation	In conjunction with the AccelerateED Task Force, the SCDE produced a series of operational recommendations on maintaining clean facilities for schools and LEAs. The SCDE also entered into a state-level contractual partnership with the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC), the "Back 2 Business" initiative, in which MUSC health experts conduct on-site and virtual walk-throughs of schools to inform and educate school building personnel on classroom configurations, ventilation, and other COVID-19 mitigation strategies. The SCDE procured custodian and bus driver virtual trainings on proper cleaning techniques and made these available to schools and LEAs. The agency provided schools and LEAs with cleaning equipment and supplies at various points throughout the school year to ensure equitable access and pricing for all schools. The SCDE implemented Remote Virtual Inspections (RVIs) to facilitate approval of school facility repairs and improvements while maximizing physical distancing. The SCDE, in consultation with the SCDHEC, developed a cleaning and sanitation regimen for the state's school bus fleet of 5,400 buses that includes EPA-approved cleaning agents and electrostatic spraying equipment to ensure the safe transport of students for in-person instruction.
Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments	School nurses have been receiving guidance on contact tracing, evolving definitions, and documentation related to quarantine and isolation throughout the COVID-19 pandemic from the SCDE and SCDHEC. The SCDE has presented to school and district leaders on these concepts and local roles and responsibilities.
Diagnostic and screening testing	In fall 2020, the SCDE, in consultation with SCDHEC, made Abbott BinaxNOW diagnostic testing available to all schools and LEAs. The use of BinaxNOW expanded to screening testing May 3, 2021, for Phase 1 pilots of Epidemiology Laboratory Capacity (ELC) screening testing programs. The SCDE also worked with SCDHEC to implement the Increasing Community Access to Testing (ICATT) screening program in two LEAs.
Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible	The SCDE helped disseminate a School Staff Vaccination Toolkit created by SCDHEC to help schools and LEAs offer the COVID-19 vaccine to faculty and staff. The Toolkit was revised in May 2021, to include vaccination events for students age twelve and up.

	In consultation with SCDHEC, the SCDE required schools and LEAs to submit vaccination plans and helped connect them with vaccine providers. The SCDE and SCDHEC led presentations and created communications to answer frequently asked questions about the COVID-19 vaccines and promote their use. The SCDE created a grassroots campaign to promote vaccinations among school staff, eligible students, and school communities in rural, high poverty areas where vaccination rates are low and vaccine hesitancy is high.
Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies	The AccelerateED Task Force provided guidance specific to students with disabilities related to school operations and COVID-19 policies. The SCDE and SCDHEC encouraged school nurses to use Metered dose inhalers (MDI) instead of a nebulizer for asthma treatments. The SCDE worked with SCDHEC to create guidance on personal protective equipment (PPE) for nurses and trained staff who work with children with disabilities.

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

In April 2021, the SC General Assembly passed and the Governor signed into law S. 704, which required that beginning April 26, 2021, every SC public school must offer full-time, in-person instruction. This legislation also requires that for the 2021–22 school year, every LEA must offer full-time, in-person instruction. Every public school is abiding by this legislation.

The SCDE tracks school operations through an online reporting system that publicly displays the current operational status of school and LEA operations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In collaboration with SCDHEC, the CDC's Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC) school-based COVID-19 screening testing program will initiate as Phase I and Phase II pilots at selected schools in May 2021, and during the summer of 2021. Phase III will begin August 2021, when the screening opportunities will be available to all schools and districts. The BinaxNOW diagnostic testing program will continue while supplies last and alternative tests become available.

      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 SCDE and SCDHEC surveyed schools and LEAs on their interest in piloting and implementing screening testing programs. Pilots are underway and full implementation of screening testing opportunities will be available to all public schools in August 2021. These programs will be supported 100 percent by ELC Reopening Schools' federal funds. Additionally, the SCDE collaborated with SCDHEC's school health team to nominate LEAs and two, Allendale County Schools and Williamsburg County School District, were selected to participate in the Increasing Community Access to Testing (ICATT) program to provide free screening testing for teachers, staff, and students in communities with high social vulnerability.

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

The SCDE, in consultation with SCDHEC, has provided extensive guidance and learning opportunities to LEAs throughout the COVID-19 pandemic on measures and mitigation strategies that support reopening and the continuity of operations. The SCDE has dedicated staff that provide technical assistance and answer questions related to operations during the pandemic and mitigation techniques. The SCDE also contracted with the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) to provide on-site technical assistance. The SCDE will use ESSER funds to hire an additional nurse and program assistant to assist the agency's state-level School Nurse Consultant to build the capacity of the school-based health services program.

Technical assistance, professional development (in-person as well as via virtual platforms and modules), and guidance to school nurses will be provided regarding direct COVID-related responsibilities and development of support structures for recovery from the impact of the pandemic for years to come. Health services and school based nursing supports will be provided in areas such as screenings, immunizations, testing, data collection, Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendment (CLIA) assistance, and vaccine coordination. Nursing health services will also provide guidance in social emotional support, suicide prevention skills, threat assessment skills, conflict resolution, and mental well-being.

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

ii. How the SEA will ensure that each LEA plan describes how it will ensure continuity of services including but not limited to services to address the students' academic needs, and students' and staff social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services;

iii. How the SEA will ensure that the LEA periodically reviews, no less frequently than every six months for the duration of the ARP ESSER grant period (i.e., through September 30, 2023),[2] and revises as appropriate, its plan, and how the SEA will ensure that the LEA seeks public input, and takes such input into account on (1) whether revisions are necessary and, if so, (2) the revisions to the plan; and

iv. Describe, to the extent the SEA collects it, information about LEA implementation, to the greatest extent practicable, of each element of the most up-to-date CDC guidance listed in table B1 and its LEAs' needs for support and technical assistance to implement strategies consistent, to the greatest extent practicable, with relevant CDC guidance.

The SCDE created a standard template that meets the requirements of the ARP as well as interim final rule. The form is online here. The SCDE has provided multiple technical assistance and professional development sessions to LEAs, school leaders, school boards, stakeholders, and the public on this requirement. Each LEA is required to provide a copy of their completed Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan (or their previous plan if it was developed prior to the enactment of the ARP) along with a hyperlink to where the plan is publicly posted online.

The SCDE will require LEAs to report to the SCDE, at least every six months that it has reviewed and if appropriate, revised and updated its plan. As referenced previously, S. 704 which was signed into law, ensures that all LEAs within the state will be offering face-to-face instruction.

The SCDE, as part of its APR ESSER oversight and monitoring, will follow-up with LEAs to ensure they are maintaining compliance with these requirements.

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.

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

1. <u>SEA Consultation</u>: 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.

The SCDE passionately believes that public and stakeholder input, feedback, and ongoing dialogue is imperative to addressing the needs of schools and districts as they relate to the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only are these funds being provided by taxpayer dollars giving the public an inherent interest, local communities, not the state or federal government, know the resources that are needed in their given area.

In seeking input from diverse stakeholders, the SCDE electronically and via the postal system sent letters to 70 community and state organizations representing students, families, civil rights organizations, disability rights organizations, school and district administrators (including charter school leaders), school board members, teachers, school staff, and stakeholders representing students with disabilities, experiencing homelessness, in foster care, that are migratory, and with general vulnerabilities. These organizations for which the SCDE solicited input also have expertise in the areas of mental health, after school and summer programming, the arts, early childhood, and career and technical education.

The list of 70 organization for which the SCDE made direct contact and solicited input are:

- Able South Carolina;
- Afterschool and Community Learning Network;
- Arts in Basic Curriculum;
- Behavioral Alliance of SC;
- Boys and Girls Club of the Upstate;
- Carolina Family Engagement Center;
- Carolina Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages;

- Charleston Trident Urban League;
- Children's Trust of South Carolina;
- Clemson Cooperative Extension;
- Columbia Urban League;
- Communities in Schools Charleston;
- Communities in Schools Greenville;
- Communities in Schools Midlands;
- East Coast Migrant Headstart Project;
- Eastern Carolina Housing Organization;
- Engaging Creative Minds;
- Family Connection of South Carolina;
- Family Promise of the Midlands;
- Girl Scouts of South Carolina Mountains to Midlands;
- Hispanic Alliance;
- Homeless No More;
- Hope Haven;
- Lowcountry Continuum of Care;
- Midlands Consortium for the Homeless;
- National Alliance on Mental Illness South Carolina;
- National Association of Social Workers, South Carolina Chapter;
- Palmetto State School Counselor Association;
- PASOs;
- Public Education Partners- Aiken;
- Public Education Partners- Greenville;
- S.C. Department of Children's Advocacy;
- SC Advisory Council for Educating Students with Disabilities;
- SC Early Childhood Advisory Council;
- SC Federation Families;
- SC Interagency Coordinating Council;
- SC Interagency Council on Homelessness;
- SC State Housing Finance and Development Authority;
- SC Upstate Continuum of Care;
- SC Youth Experiencing Homelessness Taskforce;
- School Social Workers Association of South Carolina;
- Social Emotional Learning Alliance for South Carolina;
- South Carolina Afterschool Alliance (SCAA);
- South Carolina Agricultural Worker Health Program;
- South Carolina Alliance of YMCAs;
- South Carolina Arts Alliance;
- South Carolina Arts Commission;
- South Carolina Association of School Administrators;
- South Carolina Association of School Librarians;
- South Carolina Association of School Nurses;

- South Carolina Association of School Psychologists;
- South Carolina Chamber of Commerce;
- South Carolina Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics;
- South Carolina Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics;
- South Carolina Child Care Inclusion Collaborative;
- South Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault;
- South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs;
- South Carolina Department of Social Services;
- South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness;
- South Carolina Manufacturers Alliance;
- South Carolina Parent Teacher Association;
- South Carolina School Behavioral Health Alliance;
- South Carolina School Board Association;
- South Carolina School Improvement Council;
- South Carolina State Chapter - Future Business Leaders of America;
- South Carolina State Conference NAACP;
- South Carolina Technology Student Association;
- The South Carolina Education Association; and
- Urban League of the Upstate.

To ensure that all South Carolinians were able to provide input on the state's ARP ESSER plan, the SCDE created a public comment form and dedicated email address (communications@ed.sc.gov). The SCDE published the methodology for which the public could provide input on the front page of the agency website using a graphic banner. The SCDE also sent out a press release to statewide news media with information as to how the public could join a May 25, 2021, after work hours virtual public forum where information regarding ARP ESSER was provided, questions were answered, and public input was received. The press release and virtual public forum also contained links to the public comment form and dedicated email address. The virtual public forum was recorded for those that were unable to attend and for later viewing.

The SCDE intends to continue to solicit public and stakeholder input and feedback once its state ARP ESSER plan has been submitted and throughout the lifetime of the funds availability to ensure the state is constantly aware of local needs and can adjust the use of its ARP ESSER funds to meet any new or changing challenges that may arise.

As of the date of the SCDE's submission of its ARP ESSER plan, the SCDE has received responses in the form of written communication, face-to-face and virtual meetings, and phone conversations from over 40 community and state stakeholder organizations. The SCDE has received 131 responses to its public comment form and over 100 emails and comments from its virtual public forum and dedicated email address.

An in-depth review of 36 letters received from diverse stakeholder organizations identifies consensus that COVID-19 has had significant, detrimental impacts on students in the state, particularly as it relates to loss of learning and the behavioral, social and emotional health of

students (as well as teachers and parents). Concerns are particularly strong among vulnerable segments such as low-income households, students with disabilities, minorities, English language learners, the homeless, etc.

While there is agreement that the allocation of ARP ESSER funds should strategically focus on these factors (loss of learning, social and mental health, and vulnerable student segments), specific recommendations for how to best identify and address needs are varied. As would be expected (and appropriate), each party submitting a recommendation advocates for their unique cause/group. Still, within that context, there are some consistencies in perceptions and recommendations.

LEARNING LOSS
- Supplemental learning opportunities through afterschool and summer enrichment programs
- Recruitment and retention of teachers
- Professional development for teachers and educators
- Additions to staff relating to academic support services (tutors, interpreters, librarians, advocates)
- Communication with/support for/engagement of parents
- IT infrastructure, training, and support
- Rounded curriculum (including arts, play, physical education)

SOCIAL AND MENTAL HEALTH
- Availability of mental health services
- Additions to staff relating to medical professionals (nurses, counselors, mental health professionals)
- Implementation of SEL practices
- School/community collaboration
- Safety

TARGETING VULNERABLE SEGMENTS
- School/community collaboration
- Grants/funding for existing programs
- Additions to staff relating to special needs

The following is a tally of general recommendation topics submitted within the letter contents (in order of mentions):

- Staff additions/academic support (tutors, advocates, librarians, interpreters) (18);
- Mental health services (17);
- Training/professional development for teachers/educators (13);
- Staff additions/medical professionals (counselor, special needs, mental health) (13);
- IT infrastructure/devices/technical support (12);
- Grants/funding to service providers (11);
- Parental training/counseling/support/engagement (10);

- School/community collaboration, professional liaison (9);
- Staff/teachers (recruitment, retention) (8);
- SEL (specific reference) (8);
- Rounded curriculum (arts, PE, play) (7);
- Research/assessment/monitoring (6);
- Safety (4);
- Transportation (3);
- Library books and resources (3);
- Communication (3);
- Nutrition (3);
- Staff additions/other (bus drivers, custodians) (2); and
- General infrastructure (building repairs/updates) (2).

An in-depth review of the responses received from the state's ARP ESSER public input form reveal common concerns and priorities among the public. These include class size/room crowding/sufficient staffing, academic support/enrichment/remediation/afterschool programs, student mental health, teacher compensation, safety (including HVAC/filtration), and access to technology.

Sentiment is also strong for several with regards to: decreasing testing/standards, focusing on vulnerable segments, availability of district-funded interventionists, decentralized decision-making/flexibility, the need for parental support/engagement, focus on core competency (reading and math), and including teachers in the planning and decision-making process.

Specific results by question are as follows.

1. What student needs do you believe the state needs to account for when it comes to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic?

   - Mental health – 30%
   - Crowding/class size/staff shortages – 27%
   - Academic support/enrichment – 25%
   - Technology/access to technology – 16%
   - Emphasis on reading recovery/math – 15%
   - Vulnerable segments – 9%
   - Individualized/small group instruction – 9%
   - Interventionists/funding for – 8%
   - Resources/books/supplies – 6%
   - Staff/teacher compensation (salaries/incentives/bonuses) – 6%
   - Parental support/engagement – 6%
   - Decrease in testing standards – 4%
   - Afterschool programs – 3%
   - Safety (vaccines, masks, sanitizing) – 2%
   - HVAC/filtration updates – 2%

- Other – 15%

2. How can the SCDE best support schools and districts to sustain safe full in-person operations next school year?

- Crowding/class size/staff shortages – 40%
- HVAC/building updates – 22%
- Follow CDC/DHEC guidelines/science based – 20%
- Sanitizing products/stations/more thorough cleaning - 20%
- Return to normalcy – 14%
- Vaccines (require/educate/offer) – 11%
- Teachers/staff compensation – 6%
- Mental health services – 4%
- Resources/books/supplies – 4%
- Decentralized decision-making – 3%
- Technology – 3%
- Afterschool programs – 2%
- Other – 14%

3. What ideas do you have to address the academic impact of lost instructional time, provide summer learning and enrichment programs, and provide comprehensive afterschool programs? How might the state best target these activities towards our most vulnerable students and those that have been most adversely impact by the pandemic?

- Afterschool/weekend programs/fun enrichment/low cost/qualified instructors/transportation – 33%
- Remediation classes/small groups/District-funded Interventionists – 23%
- Crowding/class size/staffing shortage – 18%
- Summer programs/camps – 18%
- Reading recovery/literacy – 13%
- Teachers/staffing/compensation – 10%
- Target vulnerable segments – 10%
- Mental health services/emotional support – 7%
- Reduce testing/standards/paperwork – 5%
- Academic support – 4%
- Resources/books/supplies – 4%
- Attendance policies/options – 3%
- Modified schedule/year round school – 2%
- Technology/access to technology – 2%
- Parental support/engagement – 2%
- Other – 16%

4. How can the SCDE support districts in developing high-quality plans for the use of district level ARP ESSER funds?

- Ask teachers what they need/get recommendations/professional development – 23%
- Fund counselors/social workers/mental health – 22%
- Decentralized decision-making/allow District flexibility – 18%
- Reduce class size/increase staffing – 17%
- Non-discretionary funds/ensure funds spent on evidence-based programs/impact students – 9%
- Increase compensation (salaries, incentives, bonuses) – 8%
- More parental input/support – 8%
- Technology/access to technology – 5%
- More interventionists/funded by District – 3%
- Summer camps/fun enrichment activities/transportation – 3%
- Target vulnerable segments – 3%
- Air quality/filters/HVAC – 2%
- Adequately supply classrooms with supplies – 2%
- Reading recovery/reading intervention – 2%
- Do not let politics dictate – 2%
- Other – 19%

5. How can the SCDE best support current educators as they work to address student academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs? How can the SCDE work to recruit a diverse pool of educators to fill vacancies and new positions related to the pandemic?

- Increase compensation/benefits (salaries/incentives/bonuses, loan forgiveness, healthcare) – 65%
- Show support/respect/appreciation/involve in decision-making – 27%
- Reduce class size/address staff shortages – 24%
- Reduce paperwork/testing – 15%
- More mental health support in schools – 12%
- Improve recruitment efforts/highlight benefits of profession/target retirees/colleges – 10%
- Protect planning time – 9%
- Support teacher retention – 6%
- Elect governor/lawmakers that support education – 5%
- More interventionists/funded by District – 5%
- Quality leadership/staff – 3%
- Fully funded education/adequate supplies – 3%
- Focus on what is best for all students – 2%
- Parental support/engagement – 2%
- Other – 12%

These findings reflect the perceptions and opinions of 131 key stakeholders, including teachers (76 of the sample), parents (31), taxpayers (13), administrators (6), and students (4). Except for teachers, sample sizes are too small to be statistically representative or projectable; rather, please regard them as directional indicators of sentiment of individual stakeholder groups.

In addition, while this feedback has been coded for identification of commonalities and ease of review, many respondents provided detailed, thoughtful responses. The SCDE staff read individual responses to enrich the understanding of stakeholder positions.

The SCDE used and continues to use the input of stakeholders and all South Carolinians to drive its decision-making. The letters from organizations representing our state's diverse demographics and input from the public through the feedback form and direct written communication provide clear indicators as to the needs of those who work in our schools, live in, and interact with our school communities. The SCDE considered this input when drafting the priorities and how the state will use ARP ESSER funding.

2. <u>Coordinating Funds</u>: 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);

At the SEA level, the SCDE has been and will continue to coordinate all funds provided under the CARES, CRRSA, and ARP Acts through its Division of Federal Programs, Accountability and School Improvement (FPASI). The FPASI Division oversees all programs authorized under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In spring 2021, the SCDE created a new organizational unit, the Office of Emergency Programs, within the FPASI Division. The chief responsibilities of the Office of Emergency Programs will be to administer programs and funds provided under the CARES, CRRSA, and ARP Acts. All LEAs have used funds to meet a variety of needs to return to in-person instruction, given the passage of S. 704. As such ESSER funding has been used to meet additional and changing needs.

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)
CARES Act ESSER	The SCDE has obligated all of its ESSER I funds, and has expended roughly $13,155,386 of state-level funds as of June 15, 2021. Approximately 65 percent was used to support or address data and technology needs, including standing up a LOR and procuring licenses for LMS for LEAs. Roughly one-quarter of the state-level activity funds were or are being used for curriculum and instruction, including developing materials for the LOR. Approximately six percent of funds were used for supplies and materials. To date, LEAs have expended the majority of the ESSER I allocation on the following allowable activities: developing and implementing procedures and systems to improve preparedness and response efforts, PPE and sanitation supplies, educational technology and other activities necessary to maintain operations and continuity of services. Eighty percent of total expended funds to date have been to fund the previously listed activities. The remaining funds have been spent on the unlisted allowable activities under ESSER I.	Remaining state-level funds will be used for procurements with the LOR, developing materials for the LOR, and for continued licenses for LMS systems. LEAs primarily allocated their subgrant funds for PPE and sanitation supplies, educational technology, and other uses to ensure the continuity of operations. LEAs plan to spend $9,899,396.52 to provide principals and school leaders with resources for individual schools. $9,897,759.58 will be used to develop and implement procedures to improve preparedness for emergencies. LEAs plan to spend $28,672,092.37 in PPE and sanitation supplies. An additional $62,125,944.35 is planned to be spent to provide schools with educational technology. $58,747,453.53 will be expended on other activities necessary to maintain the operation of and continuity of services. The remaining 14 percent of the SCDE's allocation to LEAs will be spent in the remaining allowable uses of activities.
CARES Act GEER	*Charter Schools:* The SC Public Charter School District	*Expansion of 4K* – the SCDE was awarded $2,000,000 to

Funding source	Prior/current SEA and LEA uses (including funding amounts, if applicable)	Planned SEA and LEA uses (including funding amounts, if applicable)
	and the Charter Institute at Erskine are the two statewide charter school authorizers in SC. As part of how the Governors Education Emergency Relief (GEER) funds were used, the SC Governor's Office designated $9,000,000 for educational services for students in charter schools. In school year 2020–21, student enrollment in the two LEAs increased 25 percent due to COVID-19. Funds may be expended for the following costs: PPE, instructional salaries, substitute pay, technology, etc. The LEA may also retain up to two percent for district administration costs. Although these funds have been obligated, as of April 30, 2021, no funds have been expended for this area. *SC Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ)* – The Governor awarded $12,054,124 to DJJ to be invested in evidence-based, community-based, juvenile delinquency prevention interventions targeting at-risk youth. These interventions will include the areas of Multisystemic Therapy and Functional Family Therapy. Funds will also be used to expand summer programs through a partnership with the SCAA, especially in rural areas of the state. These funds will also help implement full-time mentoring programs in	provide in-person, expanded day or summer programs in public schools for four-year-olds eligible for the full day 4K program in SC. Additionally, SC First Steps was awarded $5,000,000 to provide similar services in private 4K provider programs. *Coordinating Council for Workforce Development:* The Coordinating Council is a state council chaired by the SC Secretary of Commerce; it includes the State Superintendent of Education and staff, representatives from higher education and business, and representatives from the SC Department of Employment and Workforce. The Governor awarded $1,500,000 to the Coordinating Council to implement the SC Workforce Journey's Initiative that will provide career exploration and job preparation; funds will allow 30,000 individuals to take an assessment to measure soft skills and core competencies for entry and mid-skill jobs.

Funding source	Prior/current SEA and LEA uses (including funding amounts, if applicable)	Planned SEA and LEA uses (including funding amounts, if applicable)
	public schools for the 2021–22 school year.	
CRRSA Act ESSER (ESSER II)	The SCDE has contracted with school facilities vendors to assist LEAs in facility repair and improvements as well as indoor air quality projects. LEAs have been spending funds for summer activities and programs to address learning loss.	The SCDE has a robust plan to support LEAs and much of this work extends and expands state-level activities initiated with ESSER I funds. Roughly $52 million in state-level funds is budgeted for curriculum and instructional activities to targeted LEAs to assist them with students most impacted by COVID-19. Roughly $11 million is reserved for data and technology needs to 1) analyze data to understand better the impact the pandemic has had and continues to have; and 2) ensure data systems are up-to-date. Another $11 million is budgeted for activities for engagement – inclusive of students, parents, and communities – with the goal of re-engaging students and families back to school. Approximately $5 million is budgeted for health and safety activities, including activities to address the social and emotional needs of students. With respect to LEAs, the vast majority of funds are being budgeted and expended for activities to address learning loss, school facility repairs, and indoor air quality projects (roughly 70 percent of budgeted funds) to ensure and enable the safe return to in-person instruction.

Funding source	Prior/current SEA and LEA uses (including funding amounts, if applicable)	Planned SEA and LEA uses (including funding amounts, if applicable)
CRRSA Act GEER (GEER II)	As of June 15, 2021, no GEER II funds have been awarded.	As of June 15, 2021, no GEER II funds have been awarded.

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.

All ESSER I funds have been awarded to LEAs, which reflects the 90 percent flow-through of funds. Of the ESSER I amounts awarded, $124,486,260.52 has been expended and claimed by LEAs as of June 15, 2021. With respect to ESSER II, all funds have been obligated, and $2,487,156.84 have been expended as of June 15, 2021. The half of one percent used for administrative costs is still being utilized to pay for ESSER-related staff's time and effort, as well as fringe costs.

Regarding ESSER II funds, 60 of 80 LEAs have received subawards; LEAs were required to submit an application that included a budget and details on how they planned to expend funds. This enabled the SCDE to ensure that LEAs intending to use funds for activities to address learning loss had aligned those activities with other academic learning loss activities. Likewise, for LEAs planning to use funds for facilities repairs and indoor air quality improvement projects, their applications provided the SCDE with information that allowed its Office of Facilities to determine the alteration level (and determine whether architectural plans or permits were needed) and give prior approval.

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

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

The SCDE will continue to provide clear guidance to assist LEAs in engaging a broad and diverse set of stakeholders; identifying data to drive decisions; and setting priorities to ensure funding is targeted to students who need it most. Technical assistance to LEAs will be coordinated across program offices at the SCDE to ensure coordination of programs, initiatives, and use of funds. This coordination across SCDE offices will ensure LEAs are able to create safe and equitable learning environments and provide whole child supports, particularly for those students most impacted by the pandemic.

With respect to funds from the ESEA and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, the SCDE's Office of Federal and State Accountability (OFSA) revised processes to meet the needs of LEAs during the pandemic. For example, the OFSA worked closely with LEAs to revise subgrant budgets, provide professional development, and conduct monitoring activities via digital platforms. By doing so, this supported LEAs by not having to use precious time with instruction (e.g., by setting aside time for professional development or meeting onsite with SCDE staff for monitoring). In addition, some of the initiatives undertaken with ESEA state-level funds created a venue for expansion with ESSER I funds, including working with districts with the most need. School improvement funds also were revisited during the pandemic to allow districts to review the best use of funds in meeting the academic, social, and emotional needs within the changed context COVID-19 created. In addition, the SCDE has used state-level ESSA funds to support LEAs with low achievement in ELA and math, which continued from the 2019–20 school year.

With respect to IDEA funds, the SCDE's Office of Special Education Services (OSES) likewise revised processes similar to the OFSA. Furthermore, in summer 2020, the OSES, using IDEA state-level funds, provided supplemental grants to LEAs to ensure that students' needs were being met. In fact, early on in the pandemic, the SCDE created and supported the need for districts to ensure that LEAs were meeting their obligations under the IDEA for special education and related services as outlined in a [memorandum](#) issued May 4, 2020. Throughout the summer 2020 into the fall, bimonthly conference calls were held with all LEA special education directors to attend to unique needs arising in meeting the needs of students with disabilities. The OSES used other state-level IDEA funds for contracts with partner organizations to provide support to LEAs for students with disabilities.

In supporting LEAs as they plan for the safe return to and continuity of in-person instruction and for meeting the academic needs of students resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the SCDE's Office of Adult Education (OAE) is using funds from the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), to aid in the recruitment of students, and to provide digital literacy training for local adult education practitioners as a part of the professional development process. Prior to the pandemic, all student registration into local adult education programs was completed face-to-face. When schools closed and were only working with students through distance education, new students were locked out of adult education. The OAE contracted with a company to develop an online registration process that allowed providers to register and bring new students into adult education virtual classrooms.

The digital literacy class was developed internally and is delivered virtually through the College of Charleston as a graduate level course for local adult education practitioners for the purpose of improving in-class and online teaching, learning, professional development, productivity, and

system efficiencies. The course has been offered twice since summer 2020 and its participants can now perform the following tasks as a result of the class:

1. Integrate digital literacy resources into instruction to assist students in finding, evaluating, organizing, creating, and communicating information.
2. Integrate strategies into instruction to assist adult education students in finding, evaluating, organizing, creating, and communicating information.
3. Integrate strategies that build resilience in adult education students.
4. Use digital resources for professional learning and development.

During the pandemic, the SCDE completed a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a consolidated, online grants management system. The system, when procured, will streamline federal program subgrant applications, grant awards, reporting, and monitoring that will enable LEAs and the SCDE to manage funds in a more efficient, streamlined approach, and reduce administrative burden so as to better support LEAs. The implementation of this new grants management system will begin in 2021–22, and is being funded by ESEA, IDEA, WIOA, Perkins, and other non-emergency administrative funds.

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 SCDE plans to use a portion of the state's total allocation of ARP ESSER funds to provide training and instructional materials to schools where 33 percent or more of 3rd graders scored in the lowest performance level, Does Not Meet (DNM), on the 2019 state summative assessment, SC READY, English language arts (ELA) Assessment. The training and materials must meet evidenced-based criteria in the science of reading.

Learning loss in one academic area affects all others. Conversely, an interdisciplinary approach that implements the arts strengthens learning in other content areas, including ELA and math (Investigating Causal Effects Study; Critical Evidence Study). The arts allow students to experience language repetition, grow in fluency, internalize content, and increase comprehension. To this end, the SCDE will provide funds directly to the SC Arts Commission (SCAC) to ameliorate for lost learning opportunities in the arts and to support acceleration in key content areas. In partnership, the SCAC and the SCDE will establish a Fine Arts career pathway that meets the criteria for SC's College and Career Readiness accountability indicators and strengthens the competencies and skills of the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate*. This collaboration with the SCAC will increase access to quality arts education, develop arts-rich learning environments, build and support infrastructure for arts learning at the LEA level, and research and develop new and innovative practices.

The SCDE will work with partner organizations and LEAs to support and provide high-dosage tutoring to students, who data illustrates, have been most impacted by COVID-19. This includes services in all grade levels and in all content areas. The SCDE's work will be guided by best practices in core areas, including the tutoring frequency, group size, tutoring focus, curriculum (tied to classroom content), scheduling, safety, and subject and grade prioritization.

SC's youngest learners were significantly impacted by the pandemic, particularly those in under-served areas of the state. In partnership with SC First Steps to School Readiness (First Steps), the SCDE will use ARP ESSER funds to transition students into pre-kindergarten and kindergarten, recruit and retain pre-kindergarten teachers, engage parents, and monitor the physical and mental health of early learners through early identification and referrals to appropriate medical care.

Interim assessment data indicate a loss in math achievement in upper elementary and middle school. Grade distribution data highlights an increase in the number of students failing high school math courses. To address the learning loss in math, the SCDE will procure and upload math interventions into the LOR which will be available to all middle and high school classrooms in the state. The interventions to be procured will compliment and existing statewide elementary math intervention.

To assist students with a seamless transition to post-secondary education, the SCDE will partner with the SC Commission on Higher Education (CHE) and the SC Technical College Board to develop innovative pathways to post-secondary education and reducing the number of students needing remediation in their freshman year.

Further, due to the pandemic and to further employment of SC's citizens, the SCDE will engage local communities in identifying adults who have not earned a high school diploma and assist through an online platform for equitable access to earning a General Educational Development (GED) diploma and assistance through family literacy. Counseling will be provided to ensure the adult learners have a smooth transition to the adult learning environment and are equipped for the education and training need for the workforce.

Over the past year, the SCDE's virtual instruction program, Virtual SC, has seen a significant increase in the number of courses requested by high school students. To meet the demand, the SCDE plans to expand the course offerings of Virtual SC which will assist with on-time graduation and an equitable access of opportunities to students in the underserved areas of the state. Using ESSER I funding, Virtual SC began offering middle school courses during the pandemic. The SCDE will continue to provide technical support to ensure these courses are delivered, retained, and stored properly.

Interim assessment data also indicate that the learning loss of our multilingual learners escalated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. To help multilingual learners recover from the loss, the SCDE will provide a focus on improving access to quality multilingual learners instruction. By developing a cohesive, statewide data system, multilingual learners' teachers will have timely and accurate data to plan for personalized needs of multilingual learners. Additionally, the SCDE will develop a statewide model that emphasizes differentiating instruction through content in all classroom settings. The intent of the statewide model is to build greater capacity in teachers to delivery effective, results oriented instruction to ML students as well as ensure engagement of multilingual learners during instruction.

The SCDE will use funding for SEL, a recommendation of the AccelerateED Task Force, by developing a MTSS to impact the needs of all learners. An education associate was hired through ESSER II funds and will focus on support of tier one SEL instruction for all students. ARP ESSER funds will be used to identify evidence-based curricula and instructional materials that can be accessed and integrated in all classrooms. Professional development will be provided through the state's LOR, the Instruction Hub, as well as face-to-face and virtual delivery. To meet the needs of tier two and three, multiple offices and divisions within the SCDE along with key external partners will provide LEAs with evidence-based strategies and referrals to services that can provide support to the student and their families.

The COVID-19 pandemic also escalated the need to recruit and retain quality teachers, specifically in underserved and low performing areas of the state. To address this critical need, the SCDE will collaborate with institutes of higher education, LEAs, and the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA) to develop a pipeline of new talent with a specific focus on attracting minorities to the classroom. The collaboration will include support to the Call Me MISTER® (Mentors Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models) Initiative, strengthening LEA teacher cadet programs, and broadening the support for the SC Teaching Fellows program. In addition, the SCDE will focus on launching innovative pathways for entering the teaching profession and will develop a communication platform to inform stakeholders of various pathways for becoming a teacher. The SCDE also recognizes the opportunity to develop and recruit talent through afterschool programs across the state.

To ensure the most promising, evidenced-based practices are implemented, the SCDE will collaborate with Marzano Research to establish an infrastructure and professional development system to establish replicable data on evidence-based interventions in a teacher-friendly environment. With this partnership, the SCDE will engage LEAs to conduct action research on practices that show evidence of increased student performance. These practices and results will

be published and made available to teachers and administrators for the purpose of replicating the most promising interventions.

> 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

Using the RALLY Tool and state summative assessment data, the SCDE will identify students in all subgroups who are scoring below proficiency and need annual growth as well as accelerated growth. The RALLY Tool uses historical summative assessments and interim assessments to predict scores if COVID-19 had not occurred, so it provides strong insight on the impact of the pandemic on learning loss. Evidence-based strategies for each subgroup will be aligned to the specific needs of each group of students to ensure equity and access.

> 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 SCDE will continue its collaboration with ENGAGE SC in identifying students who missed significant amounts of in-person and remote instructional time. The collaboration will focus on including disengaged students in the SCDE's learning loss strategies.

The SCDE operates a statewide school bus transportation system with 5,600 school buses. Buses are assigned to LEAs based on various factors, such as student ridership, fueling infrastructure, and route complexity. The SCDE will use ARP ESSER funds to extend student-learning opportunities while riding school buses.

The SCDE will use funds to equip 500 state-owned school buses with Wi-Fi capabilities to serve rural and vulnerable communities. Enhanced Wi-Fi routers will be installed on buses that will be assigned to eligible communities, depending on community geography, economic status, community Wi-Fi connectivity capacity, and average student ride time, amongst other considerations. Once activated, this enhanced Wi-Fi system will provide internet access for multiple simultaneous users/students and will access multiple cellular providers serving these geographic areas. The system can be used while students are on board the bus and can also be used as mobile Wi-Fi hotspots in the community.

> 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 collaboration with the SCAC, the SCDE will invite LEAs to include in summer programs innovative enrichment interventions that are aligned to the *SC College- and Career-Ready Standards for English Language Arts and for Mathematics*. The goal of the evidence-based interventions is to further accelerate learning for students to reach grade level proficiency and reduce the number of retentions.

The SCDE will collaborate with First Steps to offer summer learning opportunities to rising pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students as a transition to the early childhood learning environment. To increase family awareness of kindergarten expectations, create positive home-school relationships, and ensure smooth transitions to school, connections will be made to students' soon-to-be teachers for one-on-one home visits and school visits. The one-on-one visits will include learning activities for students that will better ensure school readiness.

The SCDE will use summer learning to collaborate with the CHE and the SC Technical College System to employ post-secondary students as summer teaching interns. Participating students will receive a stipend for their work and summer tuition costs. This summer teaching intern program will be an opportunity to engage with post-secondary students about the necessary steps to earn teacher certification and develop a pipeline for preparing such students to become certified teachers.

The SCDE also will generate summer learning opportunities for high school students to connect with post-secondary institutions and earn dual credit in areas of student interest. Through career counseling, students will be made aware of the post-secondary entry requirements, access to programs of interest, and opportunities for employment. Participation in a career training program will be required as part of the summer learning program.

The SCDE will evaluate summer learning and enrichment programs through a random sample of site visits and an external evaluation that will include an analysis of pre- and post-assessment data. Education associates employed by the SCDE will be placed in five regions throughout the state to monitor, provide feedback, and provide redirection if necessary.

     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

Using the RALLY Tool and state summative assessment data, the SCDE will identify students in all subgroups who are scoring below proficiency and need annual growth as well as accelerated growth. The RALLY Tool uses historical summative assessments and interim assessments to predict scores if COVID-19 had not occurred, so it provides strong insight on the impact of the pandemic on learning loss. The summer programs outlined by the SCDE provide a strategic focus to underserved students and those impacted most by COVID-19, beginning in pre-kindergarten with preparation for school readiness, through post-secondary with ensuring on-time graduation and transition into the workforce.

> 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 SCDE will continue its collaboration with ENGAGE SC to identify students who missed significant amounts of in-person and remote instructional time. The collaboration will focus on including disengaged students in the SCDE summer learning opportunities.

> 3. <u>Evidence-Based Comprehensive Afterschool Programs</u>: 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:

The SCDE will provide funds directly to the SCAA to enable them to implement afterschool programs designed to address academic learning loss and meet the following criteria:
1. Are based on youth development principles;
2. Provide opportunities for remediation and acceleration;
3. Explicitly build on or supplements instruction that is occurring during the school day;
4. Are staffed with certified educators or "educators in training";
5. Maintain a student-to-staff ratio that does not exceed 15:1;
6. Operate a minimum of three days per week;
7. Provide 50-60 minutes of academic instruction/tutoring, beyond homework help, in literacy and math; and
8. Incorporate activities/services proven to address the SEL and mental health needs of students.

Through its partnership with the SCAA, these programs will be evaluated to ensure fidelity of implementation.

<ol type="i" start="2">
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

Using the RALLY Tool and state summative assessment data, the SCDE will identify students in all subgroups who are scoring below proficiency and need annual growth as well as accelerated growth. The RALLY Tool used historical summative assessments and interim assessments to predict scores if COVID-19 had not occurred; therefore, it provides strong insight on the impact of the pandemic on learning loss. Evidence-based strategies for each subgroup will be aligned to the specific needs of each group of students to ensure equity and access. The subgroup data, when coupled with applicable evidence practices implemented with fidelity will respond to those students most impacted by COVID-19.

<ol type="i" start="3">
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 SCDE will continue its collaboration with ENGAGE SC in identifying students who missed significant amounts of in-person and remote instructional time. The collaboration will focus on including disengaged students in afterschool programs.

<ol start="4">
<u>Emergency Needs</u>: 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 SCDE will reserve a proportion of its ARP ESSER funds to supplement $85 million of state funding to be set aside for facility upgrades of small, rural, and high poverty LEAs with aging buildings. This is an opportune time to target and maximize use of state appropriations, a portion of the SCDE's ARP ESSER allocation and portions of LEAs' ESSER and other local funding for facility improvements in some of the neediest districts. The SCDE will subgrant a portion of its allocation to various LEA capital improvement and construction projects leading to safer, more efficient school buildings. School and facility renovations, improvements, and upgrades will also mitigate the spread of COVID-19. These funds will support, among other things, capital projects for additional classrooms or spaces that facilitate physical distancing, projects that improve indoor air quality, heating system upgrades, ventilation and window replacements, and air conditioning systems. Depending on the age of buildings, the condition of building systems and

equipment, costs related to code compliance, and other factors, these shared funding sources could be more effectively used, when feasible, for new construction or building replacement instead of building renovations.

Additional emergency ARP ESSER funding will be used to enhance web-based applications used to collect data on capital needs and track the status of projects. Funds also will be used to procure contractors and design professionals to assist in reviewing design plans and inspecting projects; this assistance is needed to comply with state requirements that certain school renovation or new construction projects conform to the latest Building Code standards and specifications in the SC Facilities Planning and Construction Guide.

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. <u>LEA Plans for the Use of ARP ESSER Funds</u>: 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 ARP ESSER application package that all SC LEAs must submit by August 24, 2021, will contain:

1. An application with contact information for each LEA;
2. An ARP ESSER Plan;
3. A detailed Spending Plan; and
4. A GEPA Statement.

Consistent with the ARP Act and guidance from the USED, the SCDE issued subawards to LEAs within 60 days of receiving the state's grant award (i.e., on May 24, 2021); included with the subaward for signature were ARP ESSER-specific Assurances and the SCDE's Assurances and Terms and Conditions for Federal Subawards.

LEAs will complete their ARP ESSER Plan using an accessible PDF form document for the LEA to provide narrative and information on:

1. ESSER Budget Overview
   a. Funding amounts – both the total subaward amount the LEA receives and the required 20 percent set-aside for learning loss;
   b. How funds will be used for prevention and mitigation strategies; and
   c. a high-level Budget (i.e., budget summary) by all categories and the 20 percent set-aside for learning loss.
2. Activities to Address Learning Loss
   Each LEA submitted an Academic Recovery Plan to the SCDE in May 2021, that detailed goals, strategies, and evidence-based interventions they will implement to address the academic and social/emotional impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Rather than requiring LEAs to "re-invent the wheel" and create a new plan for ESSER, the SCDE is requiring that LEAs align their planned ESSER activities with their Academic Recovery Plan to address learning loss.
3. Activities for Other ESSER Funds
   LEAs will describe planned activities for the remainder of their funds, by category.
4. Evaluation and Review
   LEAs must describe how the interventions it implements address the academic and social/emotional/mental health impact that COVID-19 has, and continues to have on students and staff, including students most impacted by the pandemic.
5. Consultation and Public Input
   LEAs must describe how they obtained public input on their ESSER plans, and describe the specific groups of constituents from whom the input was obtained. LEAs must also include how they used the input in the development of their plans.
6. Assurances
   In the plan form, LEAs must check each of the assurances. When subawards were issued to LEAs on May 24, 2021, each LEA received the ARP ESSER-specific Assurances in a document requiring signature by their superintendent and chief financial officer. LEAs are required to return this signed document with the signed copy of the LEA's subaward.

An LEA must post their ESSER plan publicly on its website; SCDE staff will confirm each LEA's public posting of their plan.

To accompany its ARP ESSER plan, each LEA must complete a detailed spending plan that indicates by category, by function, and by object code the budget for their full ARP ESSER subaward. As part of its spending plan, an LEA must provide a narrative about the budgeted items.

LEAs must submit their full ARP ESSER package to the SCDE on or before August 24, 2021.

2. <u>LEA Consultation</u>: 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.

As part of LEA's ESSER application package, LEAs must describe how they obtained public input on their ESSER plans, and describe the specific groups of constituents from whom the input was obtained. LEAs must also include how they used the input in the development of their plans. Through technical assistance sessions, LEAs have been informed that the SCDE will include a review of this documentation in the state monitoring of ESSER funds to ensure that such input happened, and continues to happen, as applicable.

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;

As part of its oversight, the SCDE has established the Office of Emergency Programs to administer and oversee ESSER I, II, and ARP ESSER programs. New and existing SCDE staff will be placed in five regions throughout the state to monitor and provide feedback and technical assistance to LEAs. The LEA or provider must include an evaluation of the ESSER activity/program's impact on student learning, using multiple data sources including RALLY Tool data. The evaluation is due to the SCDE no later than June 30 each year.

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 SCDE will use subgroup data from the RALLY Tool as well as summative assessment data to monitor the implementation and impact of school and LEA interventions for key groups of students. The SCDE will monitor non-academic data sources, such as attendance and engagement data from LEAs and information from ENGAGE SC, during monitoring and support activities.

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 SCDE will continue its collaboration with ENGAGE SC in identifying students who missed significant amounts of in-person and remote instructional time. The collaboration will focus on including disengaged students in afterschool programs.

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 SCDE will develop monitoring and support plans using 2020–21 district attendance data for face-to-face students and LMS engagement data for those learning remotely, in addition to interim and summative assessment data. These students should be prioritized in district intervention planning. The SCDE will also continue to use the data and services of ENGAGE SC to track students with extended absences and low engagement.

The SCDE supports LEAs in taking education equity into account in expending ESSER funds. In particular, each LEA was required to develop an Academic Recovery Plan based on data that identified particular students most impacted by COVID-19. LEAs are instructed to use their Academic Recovery Plans in developing plans for their ARP ESSER learning loss activities, so that their use of ARP ESSER funds for these activities will be based on student need as indicated by date.

In addition, through the passage of S. 704, all LEAs are required to offer in-person instruction. The SCDE will use its state-level ESSER funds to provide support to LEAs in student engagement.

In 2018, the State Superintendent convened a School Safety Taskforce to review discipline policies, sanctions, and practices statewide. As a result of this work, the SBE revised discipline-related state regulation to further define offenses that should not result in exclusionary discipline (including in- or out-of-school suspension) for any student.

To help LEAs avoid the over-use of exclusionary discipline measures, SCDE staff will coordinate and facilitate a series of professional development opportunities on the following topics: 1) how to properly define and code discipline offenses equitably based on state requirements; 2) how to impose discipline sanctions equitably using the SCDE's Discipline Matrix; and 3) how to implement evidence-based behavior intervention strategies, including restorative practices, trauma-informed schools, and SEL, to create a positive and supportive learning environment for all students.

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

1. Supporting and Stabilizing the Educator Workforce:
    i. Describe the extent to which the State is facing shortages of educators, education administration personnel, and other school personnel involved in safely reopening schools, and the extent to which they vary by region/type of school district and/or groups of educators (e.g., special educators and related services personnel and

paraprofessionals; bilingual or English as a second language educators; science, technology, engineering, and math ("STEM") educators; career and technical education ("CTE") educators; early childhood educators). Cite specific data on shortages and needs where available.

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

Table F1.

Area	Data on shortages and needs	Narrative description
Special educators and related service personnel-and paraprofessionals	According to the South Carolina Annual Educator Supply & Demand Report (2020-21 School Year), vacancies in the field of special education comprised 20 percent of all vacant teaching positions reported by LEAs at the beginning of the 2020–21 school year. This represents approximately 120 vacancies. Special education certifications fields (all areas) remain critical need subject areas for the 2021–22 school year. The SBE designates critical need subject areas annually using data collected through the Annual Supply and Demand Survey of LEAs conducted by the SC CERRA. These designations reflect the percentage of full-time teaching positions that are vacant or filled by individuals not fully certified in the subject area.	To meet annual reporting requirements related to the IDEA, the SCDE's OSES collects and reports data related to the number of full-time equivalent (FTE)-related services personnel employed or contracted to provide related services for children with disabilities who were age 3–21. The report does not require data related to vacant positions. Except as noted in this table, data on shortages and needs for related services personnel and paraprofessionals are not collected.
Speech-Language Pathologists	The SBE has designated the certification field of Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) as a critical need subject area for the 2021–22 school year. LEAs reported 32.4 vacant SLP positions at the beginning of the 2020–21 school year; these positions comprised 38 percent	

	of vacant service positions reported statewide.	
English as a second language educators	The SBE has designated the certification field of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) as a critical need subject area for the 2021–22 school year. LEAs reported 13.5 vacant positions in ESOL at the beginning of the 2020–21 school year. These positions comprised two percent of vacant teaching positions reported statewide.	
STEM educators	The SBE has designated the certification fields of Science, Computer Science, and Mathematics as critical need subject areas for the 2021–22 school year. LEAs reported 134 vacant positions in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields at the beginning of the 2020–21 school year. These positions comprised 22 percent of vacant teaching positions reported statewide.	
Career and Technical Education (CTE) educators	CTE work-based certification fields have been designated by the SBE as critical need subject areas for the 2021–22 school year. The related academic certification field of Business and Marketing Education has also been designated as a critical need subject area for 2020–21. LEAs reported 24 vacant positions in CTE fields at the beginning of the 2020–21 school year and 15 vacant positions in Business and Marketing. These positions comprised 6.3 percent of vacant teaching positions reported statewide.	

Early childhood educators	LEAs reported 93 vacant positions in Early Childhood and Elementary Education at the beginning of the 2020–21 school year. These positions comprised 15 percent of vacant teaching positions reported statewide. LEAs reported hiring a total of 2,004 Early Childhood and Elementary teachers for the 2020–21 school year.	CERRA's Annual Supply and Demand Survey does not collect data regarding new hires and vacancies for Early Childhood positions.* LEAs provide aggregate data regarding new hires and vacancies in primary and elementary schools.
School counselors	LEAs reported 12.5 vacant School Counselor positions at the beginning of the 2020–21 school year. According to the SCDE's Professional Certified Staff (PCS) system, 2,392 school counselors are employed currently in the state. Considering the state's total student enrollment of 782,315 for 2019–20 (the most recent year for which a complete count is available) the student-to-guidance personnel ratio is 327:1 (782,315/2,392=327).	The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recommends a 250-to-1 ratio of students to school counselors; the national average is 424-to-1 for the 2019–20 school year.
Social workers	According to the PCS, 233 social workers (full- or part-time) currently serve in schools and/or district offices in 42 of the state's 87 LEAs. Considering the state's total student enrollment of 782,315 for 2019–20, the student-to-school-based social worker ratio is 3,357:1 (782,315/233=3,357).	According to the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), "School social work services should be provided at a ratio of one school social worker to each school building serving up to 250 general education students, or a ratio of 1:250 students. When a social worker is providing services to students with intensive needs, a lower ratio, such as 1:50, is suggested (NASW, 2012)."
Nurses	According to the PCS, 1,518 nurses currently work in schools and/or LEAs statewide, full-time or part-time. Seventy-five schools have a school nurse that works part-time and 129 schools do not employ a nurse. Considering the state's total student enrollment of 782,315	In a typical school year, the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) uses nurse-to-student ratios to determine how many nurses were needed in a school setting. In the general population, the NASN recommends 1 nurse to 750 students as an acceptable ratio, with 1:225 for students with needs for daily nursing

	for 2019–20, the student-to-school nurse ratio is 515:1 (782,315/1,518=515).	services. The NASN changed its position to urge schools to use the following as current best practice criteria: 1) number of students; 2) how the social determinants of health impact the student population; 3) acuity levels; 4) what other responsibilities the nurse will be expected to perform; 5) what barriers to care exist in the school community; 6) what the technology infrastructure is in the school and the health office; and 7) what other resources are available from a health care team such as mental health services, social work, and counseling. If this is thought of as a continuum from compliance with numerical ratios to full implementation of best practices, most LEAs have not considered numerical ratios yet.
School psychologists	The SBE has designated the certification field of School Psychologist as a critical need subject area for the 2021–22 school year. LEAs reported 13 vacant School Psychologist positions at the beginning of the 2020–21 school year. These positions comprised 15 percent of vacant service positions reported statewide. According to the PCS, 618 school psychologists currently work in schools and/or LEAs statewide. When considering the state's total student enrollment of 782,315 for 2019-20, the student-to-school psychologist ratio is 1,266:1 (782,315/618=1,266).	The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) recommends a ratio of 1:500 students in order to provide comprehensive and integrated school psychological services. Few LEAs in SC can meet this NASP recommended service ratio.

ii. Describe how the SEA will assist its LEAs in identifying the most urgent areas of shortages or potential shortages, with particular plans for individual LEAs facing the most significant needs (e.g., by avoiding layoffs, providing high-quality professional learning opportunities, and addressing the impact of stress or trauma on

educators). Include a description of how other Federal COVID-19 funding (e.g., ESSER and GEER funds under the CARES Act and CRRSA Act) have already been used to avoid layoffs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As described below, the SCDE will continue to assist LEAs in identifying the most urgent areas of shortages or potential shortages.

Annually, the SBE approves [critical need subject and geographic areas](#) for the purposes of the SC Teacher Loan Program, the employment of retired teachers exempt from the earnings limitation imposed in state statute, and federal student loan forgiveness through teaching service. The SBE approved designations for the 2021–22 school year in January 2021. The critical need subject areas are determined using a federal formula, are reported to the USED annually, and reflect the percentage of full-time teaching positions that either are vacant or filled by individuals not fully certified in the specific subject area. Pursuant to SC statute, a critical need geographic area is defined as a school that meets at least one of the following criteria:

- a poverty index of 70 percent or higher;
- a three-year average teacher turnover rate of 20 percent or higher; or
- a school report card rating of Below Average or Unsatisfactory.

These annual designations assist LEAs in recruiting and retaining teachers in shortage areas and hard-to-staff schools, providing incentives for educators to work in critical need areas.

CERRA, in collaboration with the SCDE and the SC Education Oversight Committee (EOC), is charged with the continued development and implementation of a program of recruitment and retention incentives. The [Rural Recruitment Initiative](#) (RRI) is designed to assist underserved LEAs with excessive turnover rates in recruiting and retaining teachers. According to the most recent SC Annual Supply and Demand Report (December 2020), 29 LEAs that received funding through the RRI in 2019–20 reported some improvement in recruitment and retention at the beginning of the 2020–21 school year—either having fewer teachers leave or fewer vacancies at the start of this school year.

The SCDE's OFSA monitors LEAs and schools to ensure that educators are appropriately credentialed to meet the learning, developmental, social, and emotional needs of PK–12 learners and for the positions and roles to which they are assigned. When deficiencies are identified and educators have been assigned out-of-field, the OFSA works with LEA and school leaders as they develop action plans to address staffing needs and ensure compliance with state mandates. Additionally, the SCDE's Office of Educator Services (OES) offers direct technical assistance to LEAs through assigned district certification contacts and supports educators in meeting requirements to become certified or credentialed in additional areas.

As part of each LEA's annual educator effectiveness report to the SCDE's Office of Educator Effectiveness and Leadership Development (OEELD), LEAs will analyze the school-level human capital report to identify schools with higher percentages of inexperienced teachers and lower percentages of highly effective teachers. In partnership with the Urban Schools Human

Capital Academy, the OEELD will provide LEAs with a follow-up assessment to help them identify specific human capital strategies based on their needs.

The SCDE also supports LEAs by providing high-quality professional learning, including:

- partnering with the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching to provide free professional learning modules centered on strategies for engaging virtual and hybrid instruction aligned with the SC Teaching Standards;
- leading a micro-credential academy centered on issues identified by schools and LEAs as essential to the COVID-19 response: virtual instruction, collective leadership, and equity and culturally responsive instruction;
- providing supports for LEAs interested in embedding SEL in their curriculum as well as adult mental health supports for educators;
    - In 2021, the SCDE will hire a full-time temporary grant employee to lead the agency's SEL initiative and another full-time temporary grant employee to lead the agency's mental health initiative. These individuals will provide professional development opportunities designed to assist LEAs in addressing the SEL and mental health needs of students and staff.
    - The SCDE launched a website devoted to SEL: Social and Emotional Learning.
- embedding self-care reflections and commitments into the Principal Induction Program, Foundations in School Leadership, and Leadership Advancement and Development cohorts for teachers, counselors, librarians, and other school support professionals;
- providing Youth and Adult Mental Health First Aid trainings and conducting training of trainers sessions.
- offering, in collaboration with Children's Trust of South Carolina, professional development for educators related to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), trauma-informed classrooms, and teaching resilience in the classroom; and
- hosting, in collaboration with the National Association for Mental Illness (NAMI) SC, a series of self-care workshops for school staff.

Unlike other states, SC has been fortunate to maintain its state base budget at pre-pandemic levels throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, ESSER I subaward funds allowed LEAs to ensure continuity of operations and continued employment. In fact, 81.6 percent of LEAs (n=71 out of 87) budgeted and are expending ESSER I funds for continued operations and employment. As a result, there have been no layoffs during the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, LEAs have been able to bring on additional staff to meet the unique needs of their districts, schools, and staff. Data provided by LEAs as part of their ESSER I annual report indicate there were 102,287 FTEs in SC LEAs on March 13, 2020, and by September 30, 2020, the number of FTEs had increased to 103,126. From preliminary discussions with LEAs, many plan to bring on additional instructional and interventionist staff to meet the exigent needs of their students.

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).

To support LEAs in meeting staffing needs for the 2021–22 school year and to assist educators impacted by the public health emergency, the SCDE will offer additional flexibility related to educator certificate renewal and certificate extensions.

- To assist graduates of educator preparation programs who were unable to complete their required certification examinations due to the closure of testing centers in 2020, the SCDE offered a Provisional certificate option for the 2020–21 school year. This option allows an LEA to employ an eligible teacher candidate and request the Provisional certificate for an individual who otherwise met all requirements for educator certification except for testing. For the 2021–22 school year, an LEA will be able to request a one-year extension of the Provisional certificate for an educator who has not been able to complete the certification assessment requirement for issuance of a standard Initial certificate.
- The 2020–21 school year presented extraordinary challenges for teachers, leaders, and service professionals who have re-designed curriculum, implemented safety protocols, and shifted instructional and service modalities to meet the evolving needs of the state's PK–12 learners. Transitions to hybrid and virtual instruction impacted the ability of some LEAs to complete all components of the performance evaluation process. Additionally, educators seeking to complete certificate renewal requirements have encountered limited availability of professional learning opportunities and, in many instances, have struggled to balance their many additional responsibilities related to the pandemic with the time and other resources needed to complete renewal requirements. To assist LEAs and educators, the SCDE is automatically adding a one-year grace period to certificates that will expire June 30, 2021, for educators who have been unable to complete requirements for certificate advancement or renewal.
- Similarly, the SCDE will offer a one-year extension option for 2021–22 for alternative certification route participants who are unable to complete requirements to advance to a standard, renewable certificate by June 30, 2021.

The SCDE also is engaged in other actions to expand and diversify the educator pipeline and to support educator preparation providers, not just in recruiting candidates, but in ensuring candidates progress in their preparation programs despite the impacts of the pandemic.

- Pursuant to state statute, candidates seeking full admission to an undergraduate teacher preparation program must earn passing scores on the basic skills assessment in reading, writing, and mathematics adopted for program admission by the SBE. The SCDE has requested flexibility from the General Assembly to allow college and university providers to develop program admission criteria using other measures for candidates to demonstrate basic skills proficiency. If the General Assembly approves this flexibility, providers will be able to submit proposals for SBE approval. The intent of this flexibility, if approved, is to expand the number of candidates eligible for admission to a teacher preparation

program and to address barriers that may disproportionately impact underrepresented demographic groups.

- To address critical shortage areas, the SCDE has provided technical assistance to approved alternative route program providers seeking to prepare candidates in additional certification fields. For the 2021–22 school year, three additional alternative route providers will be approved to prepare candidates in special education certification fields. The OES continues to support LEAs and the OSES with the certification process for LEA employees seeking initial or add-on certification in a special education field through the [South Carolina Centers for the Re-Education and Advancement of Teachers (SC-CREATE)](#).

- The OES also continues to assist LEAs and college and university providers by issuing the Internship certificate to eligible teacher candidates. This option, pursuant to SBE regulation, allows an LEA to employ an eligible candidate as a classroom teacher while the individual is enrolled in and completes the student teaching or clinical component of the preparation program. This Internship certificate option requires partnerships between LEAs and providers, assists LEAs in meeting staffing needs, and offers selected candidates a combined support system during their initial employment.

- The SCDE has extended additional flexibility to college and university providers for the 2021–22 school year to ensure candidates nearing completion of an educator preparation program have access to placements in public schools for culminating clinical experiences despite limitations related to safety protocols. Additionally, the SCDE continues to encourage and support providers in designing and implementing innovative field experiences in virtual, hybrid, and face-to-face settings so that candidates continue to progress in their certification programs and engage in meaningful experiences working with in-service teachers and PK–12 students.

- Based on public input, the SCDE will encourage LEAs to develop residency partnerships with high-quality teacher preparation programs to address the need for additional qualified educators to meet the needs of PK–12 learners.

The SCDE is partnering with the Urban Schools Capital Alliance to offer a SC Human Capital academy that will teach LEA teams how to better support recruitment, retention, and advancement at the school-level. The SCDE plans to invite school and LEA teams based on the critical need geographic areas and the educator effectiveness needs assessment.

2. <u>Staffing to Support Student Needs</u>: 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).

<u>School Counselors</u>: In 2005, the SC General Assembly passed the Education and Economic Development Act (EEDA). One of the goals of the legislation was to increase the number of guidance personnel in schools who provide direct services to students. Currently, the SCDE allocates funds from its appropriation from the General Assembly to every LEA to assist with

reducing the student-to-school counseling personnel ratio. These funds have helped reduce the ratio which is, on average, slightly below 350:1, but still above the ratio recommended by the ASCA. In LEAs where the ratio is less than 300:1, funds are used to support hiring career specialists who relieve school counselors of some of the duties associated with career counseling and thereby increase the counselors' availability to focus on the academic and social emotional needs of students.

Special Education Personnel: SC-CREATE in Special Education and Related Services Professionals is an ongoing personnel preparation initiative funded by the OSES. Since its inception in 2003, SC-CREATE's chief mission has been to grow a highly qualified special education and related services workforce in SC public schools.

Working in conjunction with the OES, SC-CREATE is a scholarship program that underwrites tuition and textbook costs for individuals pursuing add-on, alternative, or initial state certification in special education or national certification in a related service area. The program provides funds for coursework delivered through 15 SC-CREATE centers located at 13 SC colleges and universities. Most of the add-on/alternative certification coursework (83 percent) offered through the SC-CREATE centers was provided online. The centers are located throughout the state, but strategically in the areas of the state with the highest need for special educators.

Although LEAs continued to report shortages in the areas of special education personnel, including paraprofessionals, the number of paraprofessionals reported as employed rose from 4,904 in the 2018–19 school year to 5,574 in the 2019–20 school year.

Funded programs currently include behavior interventionist, orientation and mobility specialist, school psychologist, secondary transition specialist, special education teacher (Early Childhood Special Education, Emotional Disabilities, Hearing Impairments, Intellectual Disabilities, Learning Disabilities, Multi-categorical Special Education, Severe Disabilities, and Visual Impairments), special education teacher at both the bachelor's and master's degree levels, and speech-language pathologist.

Currently the OSES allocates state set-aside funds from the IDEA to support SC-CREATE in the expansion of its programs throughout the state to address LEA needs related to special education service providers. All individuals employed full-time by a SC public/charter school or by an SCDE-operated program are eligible for SC-CREATE scholarship funds. These individuals include teachers, teacher assistants, non-instructional staff, and central office staff in non-leadership positions.

The OSES will continue the SC-CREATE program, and will continue to look for opportunities to expand to other areas of special education service provision. The OSES will encourage LEAs to consider using their ESSER funds to address these needs in critical areas.

Nurses: In a typical year, school nurses provide nursing services for students with both acute and chronic needs. Nurses provide direct services such as medication administration, treatments, and monitoring. They also create individualized health plans and educate students, families, and

educators about a student's diagnosis and care. They promote wellness, provide first aid, and help plan for field trips and other school-sponsored activities.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the responsibilities of school nurses expanded exponentially. School nurses became contact tracers, case managers, and liaisons with public health officials. School nurses helped to plan and execute vaccination clinics for their staff and older students. They carried out contact tracing and disease reporting at night, on weekends, and even during holidays and other school breaks to optimize safety on their campuses and to reduce and prevent spread of the disease. School nurses had to become experts on PPE, set up isolation rooms, and maintain infection control and safety in their health rooms.

The federal school-based testing program afforded schools the opportunity to participate in using the Binax Now testing kits to perform real-time, school-based testing to mitigate virus spread and help keep staff and students in school when testing negative and at home when testing positive. About half of SC's LEAs participate in the Binax Now testing program, which requires school nurses to report all results to both the SCDHEC and to parents or staff. The nurses must maintain Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments logs and other documentation for this testing process. School nurses are now being asked to implement school-based screening, which will be a new on-site testing program that will involve nurses either performing the tests or coordinating with testing services to provide this campus-based testing for disease mitigation.

A growing concern is that the workload and demands added to the job responsibilities of school nurses because of the pandemic may negatively impact recruitment and retention of these critical personnel. To further support LEAs in providing health services and increase student access to school nurses, the SCDE will employ additional staff. The SCDE's staff will continue to encourage schools to address staffing gaps and support new nurses with trainings.

Social Workers: Recognizing the role of school social workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, the School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA) published a resolution statement. The organization stresses that school:

> social workers have been called upon to provide a continuum of support to
> students, their families and educational communities who are struggling with
> increased physical, emotional, and mental health needs such job loss, death of
> family members or loved ones, and ongoing uncertainty and instability.
> School social workers are also assisting their communities by bringing
> specialized skills in networking and resource procurement to those who are
> dealing with social isolation. Additionally, school social workers are critical
> points of contact within a school district offering support to teachers and
> school staff who must address their own needs and distress.
> Resolution Statement: The Impact of School Social Workers during the COVID-19 Pandemic, p. 1.

Recognizing the importance of school social workers and the lack of state funding for such positions, the SCDE will actively encourage LEAs to use ARP ESSER funds to hire school social workers.

School Psychologists: Information related to school psychologists is provided. While LEAs continued to report shortages in this area, the number of school psychologists reported as employed rose from 531 in 2018–19 to 586 in 2019–20.

G. Monitoring and Measuring Progress

The Department recognizes that transparency on how ARP ESSER funds are used and their impact on the Nation's education system is a fundamental responsibility of Federal, State, and local government. In this section, SEAs will describe how they are building capacity at the SEA and LEA levels to ensure high-quality data collection and reporting and to safeguard funds for their intended purposes.

1. Capacity for Data Collection and Reporting: It is important for an SEA to continuously monitor progress and make adjustments to its strategies, as well as to support its LEAs in making adjustments to LEA strategies, based on impact. Describe how the SEA will ensure its capacity and the capacity of its LEAs to collect data on reporting requirements, including but not limited to the examples of reporting requirements described in the SEA's Grant Award Notification (listed in Appendix B). Describe the SEA's capacity and strategy to collect data from its LEAs (disaggregated by student group, where applicable), to the greatest extent practicable, including any steps the SEA will take to build its capacity in the future (which may include the use of ARP ESSER and other Federal COVID-19 pandemic funds at the SEA and LEA levels), on issues that may include the following:

    i. Student learning, including the academic impact of lost instructional time during the COVID-19 pandemic;

    ii. Opportunity to learn measures (e.g., chronic absenteeism; student engagement; use of exclusionary discipline; access to and participation in advanced coursework; access to technology, including educator access to professional development on the effective use of technology; access to high-quality educators; access to school counselors, social workers, nurses, and school psychologists; and results from student, parent, and/or educator surveys);

    iii. Fiscal data that is comparable across the State (e.g., per-pupil expenditures at the LEA and school levels);

    iv. Jobs created and retained (by position type);

    v. Participation in programs funded by ARP ESSER resources (e.g., summer and afterschool programs); and

    vi. Other reporting requirements reasonably required by the Secretary (please refer to Appendix B of this template; final requirements will be issued separately).

Capacity and Strategy for Collecting Data: Although the SCDE has many systems for collecting data, some of the data elements identified in G above are not currently collected at the state level,

and are ones for which the SCDE does not currently have capacity to gather. When the "other reporting requirements reasonably required" (i.e., item vi.) are identified, the SCDE plans to assess where data collection gaps exist and to possibly use ARP ESSER funds to bridge those gaps.

i. Student Learning Impact: The SCDE partnered with Education Analytics to develop a teacher-facing tool to inform teachers about student progress (K–9) in the absence of 2020 summative assessments (RALLY). The RALLY Tool used the interim assessments approved through the formative evaluation criteria designed by the SCDE and the Education Oversight Committee (April 2017): NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), Renaissance STAR Assessments (STAR), and Curriculum Associates i-Ready Diagnostic Assessment (i-Ready). Two other assessments (Certica TE21 CASE, and HMH Reading Inventory and Mathematics Inventory) undergoing evaluation were also included. The interim assessments were equated with the SC summative assessments for ELA and mathematics (SC READY). The students' historical interim and summative scores were used to project expected scores on the interim and summative assessments for the 2020–21 school year.

The students' actual scores on the interim assessments were subtracted from the projected score to determine missed learning opportunity score. The use of this RALLY Tool is being expanded to provide school, LEA, and state aggregate data. Since these data were tied to student identifiers, traditional subgroup reporting was available. In addition, the SCDE tracked the test environment to disaggregate between remote and in-person testing. The SCDE added a new attendance code, SC-Virtual Present, to track student-learning environment on a daily basis. The SCDE used this information to derive three measures: estimated learning opportunity loss in months, student-level achievement tier and quartile based on state norming, and student gap tier and quartile.

ii. Opportunity to Learn Measures: The SCDE's SIS tracks attendance from which chronic absenteeism is calculated. The SIS also tracks use of discipline and access to and participation in advanced coursework. The SCDE had a student engagement survey, but has terminated that contract. Annually, the SCDE issues parent, teacher, and student surveys, which include some questions from which student engagement, could possibly be assessed; however, it would not be tied to demographic information.

Many of the opportunity to learn measures are embedded in the SCDE ESSA accountability module. The SCDE is investigating a tool set to gather qualitative data electronically in conjunction with an LEA's student information system. The application would allow data to be gathered from various stakeholder groups. Specifically parents, teachers, and students, demographic identifiers could be embedded in the tool for parents and the demographics are linked to the SIS for teachers and students. The SCDE has done repeated surveying of LEAs to assess student and educator access to technology, and has added SIS fields as an effort to formalize some of this voluntary tracking. Note, however, that the technology situation changes daily with new broadband initiatives, access to hotspots, changes in computing devices, etc. Any "snapshot" of the situation will likely be out-of-date as soon as collected.

With CARES Act funding, the SCDE purchased LMS licenses for any LEA requesting it (Schoology, Canvas, Blackboard, and later Google Enterprise Suite) and a state-level LOR

(Safari Montage). Professional development on these systems and effective online teaching have been made available and continue to be developed. The SCDE plans to use ARP ESSER funds to extend those licenses.

The SCDE's Professional Certified Staff (PCS) system, recently replaced with the SCEducator Compensation system, tracks numbers of staff employed in LEAs in various positions. This system does not track contracted services, which sometimes is the case for nurses and psychologists. A full picture of those services would require separate data collection that is not currently done by the SCDE. The CERRA does do an annual "Supply and Demand" survey. Its report has state-level totals of budgeted positions for school counselors and school psychologists.

iii. Comparable fiscal data: The ESSA requires that all states' LEAs publish per-pupil expenditures at the school building level by source of fund. The SCDE reports on per pupil expenditures by school building level on LEA report cards. The SCDE will currently use the agency's manual data collection process to gather information on the ESSER per pupil expenditures at both the LEA and school levels. In the near future, the SCDE intends to use ESSER state-level activity funding to fund a robust and efficient financial collection and reporting platform that will generate more efficient and timely reporting.

iv. Jobs created – retained: The SCDE will collect quarterly financial reports from LEAs on the use of their ESSER I (CARES Act), ESSER II (CRSSA), and ARP ESSER subawards. The SCDE will include in the reports for ARP ESSER a requirement for LEAs to report on the jobs created and retained with ESSER funds.

v. Participation in ARP ESSER programs: The SC SIS has the capacity to track student participation in programs; however, it requires that LEAs and schools be instructed on how to code programs in the SIS, a link for those programs to ARP ESSER, and a directive to the LEAs to enter this data for all students and funded programs. This has not been done; therefore, the SCDE does not currently have capacity to supply this data.

vi. Appendix B

Public Health Protocols: The SCDE School Health Program has been working with the SCDHEC to educate school nurses and the school community about the safe return to school and what mitigation strategies can be used to maintain a safe environment for learning. This includes layers of options such as screening testing programs, diagnostic testing programs, contact tracing, and reporting. The school health room operating as a lab also requires the schools to acquire a Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA) certificate and maintain record keeping, infection control procedures, and training that will be supported by the SCDE. The SCDE also will work with SCDHEC regarding the infectious waste removal requirements generated by the testing on campus. The SCDE will help schools plan and coordinate COVID-19 vaccination events for staff, students, and their families.

Return to in-person instruction: By state law, all SC LEAs were required to offer five-day, in-person instruction by April 26, 2021. https://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess124_2021-2022/bills/704.htm All LEAs have plans for how to safely return post-pandemic. On May 25, 2021, the SCDE advised LEAs that plans must be posted by June 24, 2021, and that public input must be requested.

Data on each school's mode of instruction: During the 2020–21 school year, schools moved in and out of various modes including virtual, hybrid, and full face-to-face instruction. The SCDE has maintained a map showing the current operational status of LEA. Some LEAs had schools operating in different modes; for example, a high school might have been virtual, but an elementary school operated face-to-face. The SCDE created a "virtually present" attendance code that tracks each students' mode of school daily. (That coding has been used to coordinate USDA P-EBT benefits for students in poverty.)

Use of funds for social, emotional, and academic needs and advancing equity: The SCDE will track its expenditures within the categorical funding supplied under the ARP Act (administration, learning loss, summer programs, after school programs, and emergency needs). The SCDE will consider whether to focus funds on the rural and poorer areas of the state. Monitoring of LEA expenditures will be through the application, budget approval, claim approval, and monitoring processes.

Early childhood: The SCDE's SIS has the ability to track information on 4K students; however, it does not track the use of different funding sources for that instruction. The SCDE would have to rely on LEA reporting to supply that information and it would not be available by subgroup. Currently a state bill is pending that would expand funding for 4K students to all counties for students in poverty.

Impacts and outcomes disaggregated: The SCDE does not currently have capacity to collect and report data on impacts and outcomes connected to ARP ESSER uses of funds.

Student data disaggregated on the pandemic's impact on instruction and learning: The student data collected in the SIS can be disaggregated by subgroup. To the extent that the "virtually present" coding was done appropriately, the SCDE can pull information on mode of instruction by subgroup and tie those results to assessment performance via the RALLY Tool.

FFATA: The SCDE will continue to adhere to the requirements under the Federal Financial Accountability Transparency Act as it relates to ESSER I, ESSER II, and ARP ESSER awards.

2. <u>Monitoring and Internal Controls</u>: 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 SCDE is updating its current CARES and CRRSA Act internal control and monitoring plans to include fiscal monitoring for the ARP Act funds. Fiscal monitoring will be conducted by auditors in the agency's Office of Auditing Services. In addition, the agency is establishing an Office of Emergency Programs that will also include monitors. The SCDE has provided extensive technical assistance sessions prior to awarding the subgrant funds and will continue to provide technical assistance. LEAs are advised to email ESSER-related questions to the ESSER

general inbox, scesser@ed.sc.gov; program coordinators and members of the agency's leadership team for ESSER funds provide timely responses to questions regarding the allowability of activities and costs, documentation requirements, etc. The SCDE has updated its procedures for determining the allowability of costs to address the specific requirements related to ESSER funds.

Appendix A: School Operating Status and Instructional Mode Data Template

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

Data as of May 7, 2021

Table 1

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

Add or change rows as needed

Number of schools	All schools	Offered to all students	Offered to some students	Not offered
Remote or online only	1220	5*	1030	185
School buildings open with both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)	1220	927	103	190
School buildings open with full-time in-person instruction	1220	1215	0	5

*South Carolina has five virtual charter schools. Their regular mode of instruction is online.

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?

Data from attendance records as of May 7, 2021. Records are incomplete because inconsistencies in recording and reporting.

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	470,184	95,931	42,803	331,450
White, not Hispanic	371,430	41,084	24,555	305,791
Black or African American, not Hispanic	248,699	74,524	29,118	145,057
Hispanic, of any race	87,806	12,051	6,778	68,977
Asian, not Hispanic	12,875	3,734	1,313	7,828
American Indian or Alaskan Native, not Hispanic	2,231	435	152	1,644
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, not Hispanic	997	192	74	731
Two or more races, not Hispanic	38,829	6,936	3,037	28,856
Race/Ethnicity information not available	47	6	3	38
English learners	42,871	4,871	3,236	34,764
Children with disabilities	108,762	17,545	8,805	82,412
Students experiencing homelessness	8,824	1,063	521	7,240
Children and youth in foster care	3,209	389	260	2,560
Migratory students	405	40	25	340

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

NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS

The purpose of this enclosure is to inform you about a new provision in the Department of Educations 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.

South Carolina GEPA Section 427 Statement

The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) ensures equitable access to, and participation in, all federally assisted programs awarded to the SCDE for all students, teachers, and other beneficiaries. Local educational agencies (LEAs) and other participating contractors and subgrantees in South Carolina's Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds, as provided by the

American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act, will be required to provide all activities and services in accessible formats for all families, teachers, and non-public school students. The SCDE and LEAs fully support Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action principles, practices, and programs, and do not discriminate among applicants or employees on the basis of gender, race, national origin, color, disability, religion, political affiliation, marital status, sexual orientation, veteran status, or age.

Applicants or employees capable of performing the duties of a position or job classification may not be discriminated against for any reason, including a physical or mental disability. Project staff will ensure that the materials and resources are accessible to all stakeholders, including those with disabilities and English learners by complying with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 AA (WCAG 2.1 AA) set forth by the World Wide Web Consortium's Web Accessibility Initiative. All materials developed or curated through this project will be internally reviewed using the built-in accessibility checkers in programs such as Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and Adobe Acrobat Pro and checklists created by the SCDE to identify any issues with, but not limited to, the order of content, contrast ratios and uses of color, and the inclusion of alternative text. In addition, materials developed will be made available in multiple forms to accommodate accessibility needs. Project staff will disseminate all materials in formats that comply with Section 508 on the SC Remote Learning website, maintained in conformance with Section 508 and WCAG 2.1 AA. These efforts will deliberately address equitable access and participation by all students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries.

The SCDE will ensure that all buildings and facilities used for project activities, technical assistance, and meetings are in compliance

with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). All project activities will be available through assistive and informational technologies upon request. All public entities are mandated by federal law to comply with ADA. Training materials will be provided upon request in a variety of modalities including print, Braille, auditory form, and experiential activities. The SCDE will not prohibit participation of any particular gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age. The SCDE remains in full compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to receive federal funds and sign an assurance indicating we will comply with all federal and state laws and constitutional provisions prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, gender, national origin, religion, ancestry, or need for special education services; and adhere to all provisions of federal law relating to students with disabilities, including IDEA, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Title II of the ADA.

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Estimated Burden Statement for GEPA Requirements

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

Appendix E: Acronym and Abbreviation List

Abbreviation	Term(s) or Entity
AccelerateED	SC's COVID-response task force in education assembled by the State Superintendent of Education, Molly M. Spearman
ACEs	adverse childhood experiences
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
ARP ESSER	American Recovery Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief
ASCA	American School Counselor Association
CARES	Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security
CASEL	The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CERRA	Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement
CHE	South Carolina Commission on Higher Education
CLIA	Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendment
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
CRSSA	Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021
CTE	Career and Technical Education
DBI	Data-Based Individualization (developed by the National Center for Intensive Intervention)
DJJ	South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice
DNM	does not meet
EEDA	Education and Economic Development Act—SC legislation passed in 2005
ELA	English language arts
ELC	Epidemiology Laboratory Capacity
EMS	Emergency Medical Services
ENGAGE SC	ENGAGE South Carolina; a partnership between the SCDE and Graduation Alliance to re-engage K-12 students and support them and their families
EOC	South Carolina Education Oversight Committee
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act
ESSER	Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief
FFATA	Federal Financial Accountability Transparency Act
First Steps	South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness
FPASI	SCDE's Division of Federal Programs, Accountability and School Improvement

Abbreviation	Term(s) or Entity
FTE	Full Time Employee
GED	General Education Development
GEER	Governors Education Emergency Relief
ICATT	Increasing Community Access to Testing
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEPs	Individualized Education Programs
i-Ready	Curriculum Associates i-Ready Diagnostic Assessment
K–9	kindergarten through grade nine
K–12	kindergarten through grade twelve
KRA	Kindergarten Readiness Assessment
LEA	local education agency (school district)
LMS	Learning Management System
MAP	NWEA Measures of Academic Progress
MDI	Metered dose inhalers
MTSS	Multi-tiered Systems of Support
MUSC	Medical University of South Carolina
NAMI	National Association for Mental Illness
NASN	National Association of School Nurses
NASP	National Association of School Psychologists
NASW	National Association of Social Workers
N&D	Neglected and Delinquent
NWEA	formerly known as Northwest Evaluation Association, NWEA is a nonprofit organization that supports students and educators by creating assessment solutions that precisely measure growth and proficiency.
OAE	Office of Adult Education (SCDE office)
OEELD	Office of Educator Effectiveness and Leadership Development (SCDE office)
OFSA	Office of Federal and State Accountability (SCDE office)
OSES	Office of Special Education Services (SCDE office)
PK-12	Pre- kindergarten through grade twelve
PPE	personal protective equipment
PCS	professional certified staff
PUSD	Palmetto Unified School District
RALLY Tool	Common data set of current and historical summative and interim assessments provided by the SCDE to all LEAs in SC
RFP	request for proposals
RRI	Rural Recruitment Initiative
RVIs	Remote virtual inspections

Abbreviation	Term(s) or Entity
SBE	State Board of Education
SC	South Carolina
SCAC	South Carolina Arts Commission
SC-CREATE	South Carolina Centers for the Re-Education and Advancement of Teachers
SCDE	South Carolina Department of Education
SCDHEC	South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control—SC's public health agency
SCDMH	South Carolina Department of Mental Health
SCETV	South Carolina Educational Television
SCMEP-PAC	South Carolina Migrant Education Program Parent Advisory Council
SC READY	South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Assessments, the state's summative assessments for ELA and mathematics
SC-Virtual Present	new attendance code the SCDE added to track the student-learning environment on a daily basis
SEL	Social Emotional Learning
SIS	student information system
SLP	Speech-Language Pathologist
SSWAA	School Social Work Association of America
STAR	Renaissance STAR Assessments
STEM	science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
USED	US Department of Education
WCAG 2.1 AA	Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 AA
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act