

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



U.S. Department of Education

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Montana

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Introduction

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

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

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

Instructions

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

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

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

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

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

Cover Page

Grantee and Contact Information

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

SEA Contact: Julie Murgel

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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) <i>Elsie M Antzen</i>	<i>Sept 27 2021</i>
Signature of Authorized SEA Representative <i>Elsie M Antzen</i>	Date: <i>Sept 27 2021</i>



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.

A. Describing the State's Current Status and Needs

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

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

The Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) gathered input from educational stakeholders across the state to identify the **top three strategies that have been most effective in supporting the needs of students in Montana during the COVID-19 pandemic**, especially for students most impacted. Based on the stakeholder input, which is described in detail in section C, the following three strategies were most effective:

1. Integrating Social and Emotional Learning: During the pandemic, and due to the increased levels of social isolation, districts recognized that mental health and social and emotional supports should be included in all school programming and be given the same level of consideration as academic supports. As districts recognized the need for this shift across Montana, implementation of social and emotional programming to assist in student development of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies, such as self-awareness and self-regulation, increased. As part of the OPI Hope Initiative, which is a commitment to the whole child approach, the OPI strengthened their partnership with the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) to deepen the OPI staff's ability to provide technical assistance and professional development to schools on preventative approaches supporting all students and especially benefitting those disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Two particular SEL intervention programs were adopted by LEAs to serve SEL needs, including Second Step Social and Emotional Curriculum kits and the PAX Good Behavior Game. Eighty-five LEAs in Montana began to implement the Second Step Social and Emotional Curriculum for the first time. Teachers provided approximately 1,878 Second Step lessons over the past year, with 4,300 students (3% of total Montana student population) receiving at least one lesson. In addition, 5 LEAs and 70 schools adopted the PAX Good Behavior Game, an SEL program that teaches children the skills of social and emotional regulation that strengthens inhibition, extends self-regulation, and enables social-emotional scaffolding that improves academic success as well as mental and behavioral health outcomes later in life. About 1,130 (11% of the total Montana teachers) provided this programming to approximately 15,730 or 11% of Montana students (PAXIS Institute, 2014).

2. On-line Professional Learning Opportunities. As part of the OPI Teach initiative, to develop teachers and educational leadership, the OPI quickly developed and delivered professional learning modules on remote instruction and effective technology use. This was identified as a critical resource during the pandemic for Montana educators. The OPI operates a Moodle learning management system called the Teacher Learning Hub that provides free professional development to Montana's educators. As of July 2019, the Hub had 10

courses on effective technology use in the classroom ranging in topics from digital citizenship, Google Suite best practices, digital accessibility fundamentals, universal design for online learning, and technology integration. These 10 courses received 511 completions in the 2018-2019 fiscal year. As of 2021, the Teacher Learning Hub continues to offer the 10 courses previously offered in 2018-2019, however, the OPI added three more courses during the pandemic specifically on how to teach Career, Technical, and Adult Education in remote settings, computer science, and fostering positive online environments for learning. The OPI also provided two sessions of a course dedicated to teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. From March 2020 through April 2021, educators completed 1,241 courses related to effective technology use.

3. Flexibility for School Nutrition Programs. Montana leveraged the flexibilities provided by the USDA for School Nutrition Programs in order to allow districts to provide meals for students. Many schools started out on the National School Lunch Program at the beginning of the school year, before switching to the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) as allowed this year by USDA due to the COVID pandemic. This change allowed schools to provide more opportunity for students living in poverty to have easier access to meals and reduce hunger anxiety that is prevalent in some Montana schools. Schools/organizations submitted monthly meal claims and the following data chart shows the total SFSP meals served in Montana from July 1, 2020 to April 1, 2021. It also shows the disaggregated data for tribal affiliated districts that serve American Indian students. The data shows the level of commitment from staff of all districts in Montana to serve such a vast amount of meals to students during the pandemic.

	SFSP Total Meals Served	Tribal Affiliated districts SFSP meals served
July 1, 2020 to April 1, 2021	14,997,660	2,680,321

The OPI will consider lessons learned from these top three strategies that could be submitted to the Department’s Safer Schools and Campuses Best Practice Clearinghouse.

2. Overall Priorities: Provide your assessment of the top 2-3 issues currently facing students and schools across your State as a result of or in response to the COVID-19 pandemic including, to the extent possible, data illustrating why these are the most critical and/or most widespread issues facing schools and students.

The OPI gathered input from educational stakeholders across Montana to identify the **top 2-3 issues currently facing students and schools as a result of or in response to the COVID-19 pandemic**. Based on the stakeholder input, which is described in detail in section C, the following three needs were identified:

1. Student Mental Health. Community stakeholders and educators emphasized mental health supports, especially assisting students with the trauma induced by the pandemic, as the top priority. In Montana, student mental health has been measured annually through the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). Preliminary findings indicate Montana students have experienced significant increases in depression and poor mental health. The Montana Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics stated in a letter to Montana educators, “that although schools closures slowed the rate of COVID-19 transmission, the absence of in-person learning has negatively affected the education, development, mental health, and overall wellness of children,

adolescents, and their families.” Montana’s experience parallels the nation’s. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as well as the Center for Disease Control (CDC) have stressed the importance of mental health and coping during the Coronavirus pandemic. In addition, students have expressed strain on mental health due to compounded issues, including issues such as fear and worry about the health and wellbeing of friends and family, social isolation, stress due to loss of income within the family, and stress caused by uncertainties regarding the future (*Journal of Medical Internet Research*, September 2020).

2. Integrating Social and Emotional Learning. This was identified as a promising practice during the pandemic and has been established as a continuing critical need. Community stakeholders identified SEL as a key component to engage students in the learning process. They selected SEL as a priority for all students and for every student group on the Stakeholder Engagement survey. SEL, according to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)’s definition, is, “Social and emotional learning (SEL) is an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.” Montana stakeholders’ priority for SEL reflects the national conversation: “SEL plays an important role in shaping how we navigate our lives, making it particularly important for individuals to be able to leverage the power of SEL to manage the personal and collective experiences during the pandemic and the social unrest” (CASEL, 2021).

3. Impacted Learning. While we know that many of the Montana students entered the 2021 school year as an in-person attendee, sanitizing, masking, and social distancing was reported as making learning more difficult for 59% of the student respondents in the limited Opportunity to Learn (OTL) Survey that the OPI conducted in May of 2021 (See Attachment 1). In addition, the OTL survey seems to indicate that changes to the learning environments, schedules, and routines as a response to the pandemic impacted student learning. Most, or 70%, of the 4,500 student respondents indicated that they had to quarantine at least once during the 2020-2021 school year, and half of the 70% were quarantined at least 2 times. Similarly, 75% of the teachers responded that they had to switch from in-person to remote due to potential COVID exposure at least one time during the academic year (See Attachment 2). All of these factors meant that most students in Montana experienced fluctuations to their learning environment and structures, which impacted their learning in 2021. The OPI’s in-person interviews that were conducted this past spring and captured on video with high school seniors indicated that for some, learning remotely was successful, others preferred in-person. A few key comments from the Seniors were: “It was a tough year but give yourself more credit for what you have accomplished.” “We all finished our senior year in a pandemic, persevered and it made us stronger.” “We learned a lot overcoming the pandemic stuff.” “Keep doing what you love.”

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

1. Students from low-income families,
2. Students from each racial or ethnic group (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by race or ethnicity),
3. Gender (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by gender),
4. English learners,

5. **Children with disabilities (including infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (“IDEA”)),**
6. **Students experiencing homelessness,**
7. **Children and youth in foster care,**
8. **Migratory students, and**
9. **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.

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

During the month of May 2021, the Montana Office of Public Instruction sent out two surveys to gather perspective on the highest priorities for each of the identified student groups. The two surveys were: An Opportunity to Learn Survey sent to students and teachers, and a Stakeholder Engagement Survey (See Attachment 3) for development of this plan.

As evidenced by the data gathered during the survey process, **there is consensus concerning all affected student groups as to not only the three main priorities, but in the order of the supports needed.**

Table A1.

Student group (% of Total Montana K-12 student population)	Highest priority needs
Students from low-income families (37%)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mental health supports: contract for additional mental health services including telehealth 2. Social-emotional learning: implement the social-emotional learning competencies K-12, including evidence-based curriculum 3. Academic support to offset missed learning opportunities: summer and extended learning and enrichment opportunities

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 (% of Total Montana K-12 student population)	Highest priority needs
<p>Student Racial/Ethnicity: White/Non-Hispanic-77.75% Black-0.77% Hispanic-5.38% Asian-0.73% American Indian/Alaska Native-10.92% Native Hawaiian or Pacific-0.2% Multi-Racial-4.25%</p>	<p>White/non-Hispanic Priorities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mental health supports: contract for additional mental health services including telehealth 2. Social-emotional learning: implement the social-emotional learning competencies K-12, including evidence-based curriculum 3. Academic support to offset missed learning opportunities: summer and extended learning and enrichment opportunities <p>African American Priorities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mental health supports: contract for additional mental health services including telehealth 2. Social-emotional learning: implement the social-emotional learning competencies K-12, including evidence-based curriculum 3. Academic support to offset missed learning opportunities: summer and extended learning and enrichment opportunities <p>Hispanic Priorities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mental health supports: contract for additional mental health services including telehealth 2. Social-emotional learning: implement the social-emotional learning competencies K-12, including evidence-based curriculum 3. Academic support to offset missed learning opportunities: summer and extended learning and enrichment opportunities

Student group (% of Total Montana K-12 student population)	Highest priority needs
	<p>Asian American Priorities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mental health supports: contract for additional mental health services including telehealth 2. Social-emotional learning: implement the social-emotional learning competencies K-12, including evidence-based curriculum 3. Academic support to offset missed learning opportunities: summer and extended learning and enrichment opportunities <p>American Indian/Alaska Native Priorities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mental health supports: contract for additional mental health services including telehealth 2. Social-emotional learning: implement the social-emotional learning competencies K-12, including evidence-based curriculum 3. Academic support to offset missed learning opportunities: summer and extended learning and enrichment opportunities <p>Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander Priorities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mental health supports: contract for additional mental health services including telehealth 2. Social-emotional learning: implement the social-emotional learning competencies K-12, including evidence-based curriculum

Student group (% of Total Montana K-12 student population)	Highest priority needs
	3. Academic support to offset missed learning opportunities: summer and extended learning and enrichment opportunities
Students by gender – please add a row for each gender (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by gender)	<i>No data available</i>
English learners (2.5%)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mental health supports: contract for additional mental health services including telehealth 2. Social-emotional learning: implement the social-emotional learning competencies K-12, including evidence-based curriculum 3. Academic support to offset missed learning opportunities: summer and extended learning and enrichment opportunities
Children with disabilities (13%)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mental health supports: contract for additional mental health services including telehealth 2. Social-emotional learning: implement the social-emotional learning competencies K-12, including evidence-based curriculum 3. Academic support to offset missed learning opportunities: summer and extended learning and enrichment opportunities
Students experiencing homelessness (2.75%)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mental health supports: contract for additional mental health services including telehealth 2. Social-emotional learning: implement the social-

Student group (% of Total Montana K-12 student population)	Highest priority needs
	emotional learning competencies K-12, including evidence-based curriculum 3. Academic support to offset missed learning opportunities: summer and extended learning and enrichment opportunities.
Children and youth in foster care (2.33%)	1. Mental health supports: contract for additional mental health services including telehealth 2. Social-emotional learning: implement the social-emotional learning competencies K-12, including evidence-based curriculum 3. Academic support to offset missed learning opportunities: summer and extended learning and enrichment opportunities.
Migratory students (.01%)	1. Mental health supports: contract for additional mental health services including telehealth 2. Social-emotional learning: implement the social-emotional learning competencies K-12, including evidence-based curriculum 3. Academic support to offset missed learning opportunities: summer and extended learning and enrichment opportunities.
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	Youth Involved with the Criminal Justice System were as follows: 1. Mental health supports: contract for additional mental health services including telehealth 2. Social-emotional learning: implement the social-

Student group (% of Total Montana K-12 student population)	Highest priority needs
during school building closures, LGBTQ+ students)	<p>emotional learning competencies K-12, including evidence-based curriculum</p> <p>3. Academic support to offset missed learning opportunities: summer and extended learning and enrichment opportunities</p> <p>LGBTQ+ students were as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mental health supports: contract for additional mental health services including telehealth 2. Social-emotional learning: implement the social-emotional learning competencies K-12, including evidence-based curriculum 3. Academic support to offset missed learning opportunities: summer and extended learning and enrichment opportunities.

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

The OPI will provide technical assistance to the districts in identifying groups of students most impacted by the pandemic by providing the following: performance data through the state Growth and Enhancement of Montana Students (GEMS) site, suggestions to the districts on how to analyze the data through tools such as the Early Warning System (EWS), and resources and tools to conduct a gap analysis. The suggested data sources include: The Youth Risk Behavior Survey, local interim assessments, a district's own OTL surveys, student focus group surveys, district staff retention and recruitment data, and attendance data.

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

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

OPI Current Data Collection Methods on Operational Status and Mode of Instruction: The OPI does not currently collect data on Mode of Instruction, so it is not possible to report on how many schools offered or how many students were enrolled in remote, hybrid, or in-person instruction, or the attendance of students by mode of instruction for school year 2021. The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services administered a survey to schools that chose to participate in the Pandemic- EBT (P-EBT) program regarding mode of instruction. The OPI awaits that information and will provide it along with the OTL survey data on its website by June 21, 2021.

- 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.**

To the extent available, the OPI will make data publicly available on its website no later than June 21, 2021.

- 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.**

The OPI does not have means to collect the planned operational status and mode of instruction data for Summer 2021 but has begun discussion with its Student Information System vendor, Infinite Campus, to acquire that capacity for the 2021-2022 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	SEA response
Universal and correct wearing of masks	MT Schools Reopening Guidance (Attachment 4) The OPI’s Emergency Planning and Safety webpage (Appendix B2)
Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)	MT Schools Reopening Guidance (Attachment 4) The OPI’s Emergency Planning and Safety webpage (Appendix B2)
Handwashing and respiratory etiquette	MT Schools Reopening Guidance (Attachment 4) The OPI’s Emergency Planning and Safety webpage (Appendix B2)
Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation	MT Schools Reopening Guidance (Attachment 4) The OPI’s Emergency Planning and Safety webpage (Appendix B2)
Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments	MT Schools Reopening Guidance (Attachment 4) The OPI’s Emergency Planning and Safety webpage (Appendix B2)
Diagnostic and screening testing	MT Schools Reopening Guidance (Attachment 4) The OPI’s Emergency Planning and Safety webpage (Appendix B2)

Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible	Advised to work with local County Health Departments and local pharmacies for resources.
Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies	MT Schools Reopening Guidance (Attachment 4)

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;

Montana is unique in that **93% of our schools have less than 500 students** and therefore when granted permission from the Governor and local county Health Departments reopened schools rather quickly. LEAs worked with local county Health Departments and their governing school boards to develop plans and update plans as COVID challenges continued through the 2020-2021 school year.

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

Screening and testing in Montana were conducted through the State of Montana's Department of Public Health and Human Services, Public Health and Safety Division, which also supported screening and testing efforts within local county Health Departments, Hospitals, Pharmacies and other health agencies. The OPI hosted virtual sessions for LEAs to participate in question and answer sessions with various organizations, like the Montana Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Montana's Disaster and Emergency Services Division, and Montana's Public Health and Safety Division. The OPI worked with Montana's Disaster and Emergency Services to distribute personal protective equipment to LEAs across the state. At the beginning of August 2020, the OPI surveyed a sample of parents and teachers in the state. Respondents were asked: "Given what we know currently about the COVID-19 pandemic, for each of the following, please indicate how this precaution would affect your willingness to send your child to school." The types of precautions included physical precautions for buildings such as the cleaning of buildings, ventilation, or the availability of items such as hand sanitizer. Respondents also included distancing measures such as buses running at reduced capacity and 6-foot distance mandates. Finally, there were precautions regarding the actions for staff and students such as limited visitation, required hand washing, and required masks. All responses were assigned a number based on their scale, with 1 being not at all important and 5 being very important. The factors that respondents identified as most important (on average) were: 1. The school is thoroughly cleaned at least once a day. (4.71) 2. Students and staff regularly wash hands with soap and water. (4.65) 3. Hand sanitizer is provided in each classroom and frequently used. (4.58). The MT Schools Reopening Guidance (Attachment 4) addressed the survey responses by offering guidance and resources.

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

Through the work to finalize the MT Schools Reopening Guidance (Attachment 4), the OPI met with the Montana School Safety Advisory Committee (MSSAC) to review additional requests and feedback from the field. As a result, the OPI added several resources and tools to the OPI's Emergency Planning and Safety webpage (Appendix B2). Here are some of the Tools and Resources (links are provided in Appendix B2):

1. Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools through Phased Mitigation - Guidance for schools to determine how to best support the safety of students, teachers, and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Essential Elements of Safe K-12 School Operations for In-Person Learning - Guidance from the CDC on how schools can mitigate the spread of COVID-19 during in-person learning.
3. Toolkits for K-12 Schools - Toolkits for schools to use to plan for safe in-person learning.
4. Trends in Number of COVID-19 Cases - Information on local COVID-19 case numbers, including county-level data. The CDC's guidance on how to best use this data in making decisions for in-person learning.
5. New School Safety Resources, such as: Strategies for Promoting Educator and Student Safety and Wellness During Online Learning - Information on available resources and strategies schools can implement to promote safety and wellness during online learning.
6. Ten Essential Actions for Improving School Safety - Steps every school can take to improve school safety and links to additional resources. The OPI also produced the following instructional video to help districts "learn more about the 10 Essential Actions to Improve School Safety."

The OPI administers HB 601 School Safety Professional Development grants which provide \$100,000 annually for schools to conduct training. To date, thirty-one Montana school districts have received funding totaling \$200,000. Over 1,243 staff members have participated in trainings focused on mental health, emergency operations planning, crisis management, and active shooter preparedness.

Social, Emotional, and Behavioral supports, resources and guidance are embedded throughout the guidance and are identified as priorities. In addition, the OPI created a School Mental Health website (Appendix B4) that focuses on Trauma-Informed Schools, Social Emotional Learning, Educator Self-Care, and School Mental Health Resources. The OPI also held virtual meetings starting March 26, 2020 for the Montana School Counselors that continued throughout spring 2020 focusing on school counseling, screening, and SEL in partnership with the Montana School Counselors Association. School Counselors wanted a place to network with peers, share what is going well, discuss challenges, and learn best practices. The Montana School Counselors Association also offered additional support through their annual virtual conference in April 2021.

The OPI Student Support Service Department worked with LEAs to consider a wide range of delivery methods and modalities in order to make good faith efforts in providing services to students with disabilities in accordance with the intent of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Available on the Special Education page on the OPI website are guidance documents, professional learning opportunities,

resources, and tools to assist districts, IEP teams, and families as they work together to provide the most appropriate services in light of the students', schools', and communities' unique individual circumstances. Additionally, monthly Special Education Administrator virtual sessions were held during the 2020-2021 school year to support leaders on learning and wellness efforts for students with disabilities.

The OPI American Indian Student Achievement did trauma informed training in the tribal districts and how that would pertain to online learning during remote instruction.

The OPI Teacher Learning Hub released free online courses for Montana's educators regarding remote, online, hybrid, and COVID-19 teaching. The first course released was "Introduction to Online Course Design," a one-hour overview of the basics of what educators should know to get started with creating their own online course. The "10-hour Connect and Reflect: Taking What We Learned During COVID-19 Into Next Fall" course was also developed and facilitated using the Teacher Learning Hub during the summer of 2020. Additionally, the OPI developed and hosted remote learning sharing sessions beginning March 23, 2020. The topics ranged from digital learning tips and tricks, literacy, multi-tiered systems of support, music education, career and technical education, science, and more. Many of these groups chose to continue meeting in the 2020-2021 school year.

To continue with supports for Montana's educators a "Relaunching After COVID – 19" training with subsequent coaching sessions for schools that attended to help them develop a six-week relaunching plan was offered starting June 25, 2020. The Continuing Education and Technical Assistance Unit recognized that the disruption to schools and the lives of staff and students would have an extraordinary impact on the return to school during the COVID-19 Pandemic. In partnership with Dr. Bella Bikowsky from the INUA group, a training was offered on June 25, 2020, which focused on the systems and practices that schools would need to consider putting into place for the first six weeks of school. Special attention was given to trauma-informed, community building practices for both staff and students, followed by a targeted process for teams to follow, broken down by each month. Teams were encouraged to sign up together, and breakout work sessions provided an opportunity for schools to build their plan together, with the guidance of the presenter and MTSS Implementation Specialists throughout the day. Teams were able to develop a solid action plan for the 2020-2021 school year by the end of the day. The CETA unit offered subgrants to schools that attended for an additional individualized coaching session with Dr. Bikowsky.

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

- i. **How the SEA will ensure that each LEA plan includes, or will be modified to include, the extent to which it has adopted policies and a description of any such policies on each of the strategies listed in table B1;**
- ii. **How the SEA will ensure that each LEA plan describes how it will ensure continuity of services including but not limited to services to address the students' academic needs, and students' and staff social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services;**
- iii. **How the SEA will ensure that the LEA periodically reviews, no less frequently than every six months for the duration of the ARP ESSER grant period (i.e., through September 30, 2023),¹ 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 OPI will ensure LEA compliance of requirements in section 2001(i) of the ARP Act and ARP ESSER interim final requirements through a series of signed assurances and compliance checks. The assurances outlined in the LEA ESSER III E-Grant application for an LEA are either:

- (a) It will, within 30 days of receiving ARP ESSER funds (June 24, 2021), develop and make publicly available on the LEA's website a plan for the safe return of in-person instruction and continuity of services as required in section 2001(i)(1) of the ARP and in ED's Interim Final Requirements, or
- (b) It developed and made publicly available on the LEA's website such a plan that meets statutory requirements before the enactment of the ARP that meets ARP requirements. (ARP was enacted March 11, 2021).

The assurance also requires that before making the plan publicly available, the LEA must seek public comment on the plan and take such comments into account in the development of the plan.

In order to ensure that LEA plans include the information necessary (strategies listed in table B1 and the continuity of services as laid out in the interim final rule), the OPI provided a checklist and a text box to copy and paste the URL to the LEA webpage where the plan is uploaded. The checklist included public comment and revision timelines.

The OPI will monitor the plans every six months through September 30, 2023 at the following checkpoints: July 2021, December 2021, June 2022, December 2022, and June 2023.

C. Planning for the Use and Coordination of ARP ESSER Funds

The Department recognizes that seeking input from diverse stakeholders is essential to developing plans for the use of ARP ESSER funds that are responsive to the needs of students, families, and educators. In this section, SEAs will describe their plans for consultation and for coordinating the use of ARP ESSER funds with other resources to meet the needs of students.

1. **SEA Consultation**: Consistent with the ARP ESSER requirements, describe how the SEA engaged in meaningful consultation with stakeholders, and incorporated input into its plan, including, but not limited to:
 - i. students;
 - ii. families;
 - iii. Tribes (if applicable);
 - iv. civil rights organizations (including disability rights organizations);
 - v. school and district administrators (including special education administrators);
 - vi. superintendents;
 - vii. charter school leaders (if applicable);
 - viii. teachers, principals, school leaders, other educators, school staff, and their unions; and
 - ix. stakeholders representing the interests of children with disabilities, English learners, children experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, migratory students, children who are incarcerated, and other underserved students.

The description must include how the SEA provided the public the opportunity to provide input in the development of the plan, a summary of the input (including any letters of support), and how the SEA took such input into account.

Throughout May of 2021, the OPI initiated the ARP ESSER stakeholder process for the purposes of conducting meaningful and timely consultation with diverse stakeholders and providing adequate notice and opportunity to comment on the experience of their schools and communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. All methods used in this public comment process were conducted in a manner that the OPI customarily provides for notices and information to the public.

Here is a **timeline** outlining the process with stakeholder involvement:

- **May 11, 2021**: Launched survey
- **May 12, 2021**: Consultation for ARP-ESSER funding regarding homeless and special education with superintendents, special education directors and in-state treatment facility directors
- **May 14, 2021**: Presentation to the Montana Board of Public Education
- **May 17, 2021**: Consultation with the Governor's office
- **May 17, 2021**: Webinar 1 for public input, 9:00am-10:30am
- **May 17, 2021**: Webinar 2 for public input, 4:00pm to 5:30pm

- **May 18, 2021:** Discussion with Education Advocates
- **May 18, 2021:** Webinar 3 for public input, 10:30am-12:00pm
- **May 19, 2021:** Chippewa Cree Tribal Consultation
- **May 19, 2021:** After school steering committee with Community Learning Centers Representative and a Montana legislator
- **May 20, 2021:** Fort Belknap Tribal Consultation
- **May 21, 2021:** Survey for public comment deadline
- **May 26, 2021:** Meaningful consultation on ARP-ESSER LEA plans with our Montana Small School Association (MSSA) and Montana Rural School Association (MRSA)
- **June 2, 2021:** After school steering committee with Community Learning Centers Representative and two Montana legislators

The OPI developed and utilized two survey tools: The Stakeholder Engagement survey (Attachment 3) and the OTL survey (Attachment 1 & 2). The purpose of the Stakeholder Engagement survey was to engage in meaningful consultation with stakeholders on the ARP-ESSER State template and the two LEA plans: In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan and the LEA ARP ESSER Plan. The Stakeholder Engagement Survey provided stakeholders an opportunity to share their experiences, needs, and concerns as a result of the pandemic. The online survey link was sent out by the OPI's mass email list that includes every district in the state and representatives of each of stakeholder groups listed above from I. to IX. OPI staff proactively reached out to key stakeholders such as Tribes, students, families, and departments. As of May 24th, 699 Stakeholder Engagement Surveys were completed. The OPI took the results of the 699 surveys into account to develop its State ARP ESSER plan. In particular, the results were critical to identifying the past promising practices (question A.1), assessing the top 2-3 priorities (question A.2) and the top 2-3 needs by student groups (question A.3), and the requirements that will make up the LEA ARP ESSER Plans outlined in section E.

The OTL survey was sent to teachers and students, grades 3-12, for voluntary completion. The purposes of the OTL survey were to gain a better understanding of learning experiences, student access to educational resources, and learning conditions during the 2020-2021 school year; and to support more appropriate interpretations of the 2020-2021 assessment data. Each student survey response was held in confidence. The student survey did ask the student for a last name and birthdate so that the OPI can attempt to connect a student's demographic and program participation information. That effort was necessary in order to learn whether different students are more affected than others.

The goals of the OTL surveys were to use the data in two ways. First, to assist the OPI to thoughtfully diagnose areas of student need and identify priorities to guide responsive ARP ESSER plan and use of ARP ESSER funding. Secondly, to inform the OPI about how to maximize the impact of support, resources, and flexibility for the districts to accelerate learning and meet the social, emotional, mental health, and academic needs of all Montana students. The survey participation was lower than needed for a robust analysis, so the data were considered guiding.

The OTL survey results are as follows:

- Number of Student OTL surveys as of May 24: 4,855
- Number of public schools participating in OTL student survey: 52
- Number of public schools participating in OTL teacher survey: 62
- Number of private schools participating in OTL survey: 0

Number of homeschool student OTL surveys as of May 21: 19

Number of Teacher OTL surveys as of May 24: 848

Number of days OTL survey was open May 3 - 21: 18

The OPI also scheduled “Montana ARP-ESSER Webinars” to supplement the two surveys. The webinars announcement was sent out through the OPI’s mass email list that includes every district in the state and representatives of each of stakeholder groups listed above from I. to IX. The purposes of the webinars were to listen and to collect comments from the public. The OPI held three 90-minute virtual webinars for stakeholders emphasizing the need of their voice in the design of the ARP-ESSER plan. The webinars were scheduled throughout the week to provide options for attendance. The public was also welcomed to e-mail the OPI questions and comments to a common mailbox. The participation number for the webinars (including the Montana Board of Public Education, Education Advocates, and community members) was 48 unique participants.

Through consultation with the Governor’s Office, the OPI captured recommendations within four categories: Promoting local control and flexibility; funding considerations for all students; building a robust data system; and focusing on sustainability as a critical component of success. After the consultation, the OPI received a letter of support from the Governor (See Attachment 5). Letters of support from Montana delegates are also included in Attachment 5.

Beyond gathering stakeholder input, the OPI has made specific outreach to the Tribal Nations of Montana for meaningful consultation. Phone calls and meetings were scheduled, and discussions have occurred as the OPI seeks Tribal organizations’ direction on how to better meet the needs of Native American students. During this process we have and will continue to follow our established Guidelines of Tribal Consultation (Attachment 6), which state that affected LEAs should conduct their Tribal consultation in advance of making significant decisions regarding plans or applications for covered programs, to ensure an “opportunity for . . . appropriate officials from Indian tribes or tribal organizations to meaningfully and substantively contribute” to an LEA’s plan (section 8538(a)).

Another critical group that provided the OPI with input throughout the 2020-2021 school year was a virtual youth leadership group the students self-named Resiliency in Something Else (RISE). RISE was created to find ways to maintain social interactions for the youth when schools closed, and students were limited to screen interactions. The students created virtual committees emphasizing online opportunities for success and potential career development. Example committees included Music, Gaming, Indigenous Worldview and Leadership. The final RISE goal of the 2020-2021 school year was to create a Virtual Leadership Conference to showcase their work and connect with Educators and Leaders to share their experiences during the global pandemic. Over 80 students participated alongside Tribal Elders, State Legislators, Tribal Leaders, and the State Superintendent. RISE and their virtual communities gave students the opportunity to build relationships between their peers across the state to support each other, build confidence and to share their ideas and solutions in a global pandemic. The results brought hope, built friendships, and provided an opportunity to share their innovative solutions regarding education, exemplifying the fact that their voice is the most critical to reimagining education as we move forward.

In addition, the OPI engaged in meaningful consultation with stakeholders representing the interests of educators and 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 in the following ways:

- Charter school leadership (if applicable):
 - Not applicable
- Unions:
 - May 4, 2021 Education Advocates (Appendix C4) invitees included The Montana Federation of Public Employees (MFPE)
 - May 11, 2021 Stakeholder bulletin seeking public comment emailed directly to MFPE for distribution to members with link to survey and ARP-ESSER Timeline for public input
 - May 18, 2021 Education Advocates (Appendix C5) attendees representing MFPE included the President and Public Policy Director
- Stakeholders for Children with Disabilities:
 - May 11, 2021: Launched survey for public comment. The special education directors (stakeholder for children with disabilities) educators, and superintendents were included in the distribution.
 - May 12, 2021: Consultation for ARP-ESSER funding regarding special education with superintendents, special education directors, and in-state treatment facility directors.
- Stakeholders for English learners (ELs):
 - May 5, 2021 Survey was emailed to EL coordinators for direct feedback regarding ESSER III
 - May 12, 2021 Montana English Learner Instructional Network (MELIN) roundtable
 - May 19, 2021 Survey for EL coordinators closed
- Stakeholders for children experiencing homelessness:
 - May 11, 2021: Launched survey for public comment. The homeless liaisons (stakeholder for children experiencing homelessness) educators, and superintendents were included in the distribution.
 - May 12, 2021: Consultation for ARP-ESSER funding regarding homelessness with superintendents, homeless liaisons, and educators.
- Stakeholders for children in foster care:

- May 11, 2021: Launched survey for public comment. The Foster Care Points of Contact (stakeholder for children and youth in foster care) include educators and superintendents and were included in the distribution.
- May 12, 2021: Consultation for ARP-ESSER funding regarding homeless and special education with superintendents, special education directors and in-state treatment facility directors (This included Foster Care Points of Contact – stakeholders for children and youth in foster care).
- Stakeholders for migratory children:
 - May 11, 2021 Launched survey for public comment. The Montana Migrant Education Program (MEP, stakeholder for migratory children) include educators and school administrators
 - May 14, 2021 meeting with parents and stakeholders for migratory children (more meetings are held during summer)
- Stakeholders for children who are incarcerated:
 - May 11, 2021: Launched survey for public comment. The High Tiered Community of Practice (stakeholder for children who are incarcerated) include educators and superintendents and were included in the distribution.

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

The OPI holds a series of yearly trainings both onsite and virtually to discuss the coordination of federal funds under the main federal education programs: Title I, Parts A, C, and D; Title II, Part A; Title III; Title IV, Part A; Title VB; and IDEA. The training reviewed the amount of funds received by the OPI and the amounts allocated to LEAs, proper uses of funds, how to blend the various program funds together, programmatic requirements, program development, implementation, and evaluation, and finally, fiscal requirements. These sessions are recorded and posted to the OPI website along with the presentation slides. The training dates were as follows:

- ESSER I and II April 8, 2021 (Clerks and business managers)

- ESSER I and II April 14, 2021 (Clerks and business managers)
- ESSER I and II April 19, 2021 (Clerks and business managers)
- ESSER I and II April 22, 2021 (Clerks and business managers)
- ESSER I and II April 28, 2021 (Clerks and business managers)
- ESSER II and III May 11, 2021 (Authorized Representatives and Superintendents)
- ESSER II and III May 13, 2021 (Authorized Representatives and Superintendents)

The OPI has produced a series of guidance documents, district allocations, fund coding, and monitoring processes for all ESSER funds. These documents are posted on the OPI website.

Listed below are the key events for ESSER I, II, and III funding:

- **June 1, 2020.** ESSER I applications were opened in e-grants and funds were made available as soon as the application was approved.
- **May 1, 2021.** MT OPI opened the application for ESSER II. Funds will be available as soon as district applications are approved.
- **May 15, 2021.** MT OPI opened the application for ESSER III. Funds will be available as soon as district applications are approved.
- **May 24, 2021.** MT OPI allocated the school district share of the ARP ESSER funds received on March 24, 2021, through the e-grants system.
- **June 7, 2021.** Due date for submitting the ARP ESSER State Plan to the US Department of Education (OPI requirement).
- **June 8, 15, 22, & 29, 2021.** The OPI will host weekly virtual **Q & A Sessions** during the month of June to address questions related to ARP ESSER district plans and budgets.
- **June 16, 2021.** Final day to submit cash requests for June payment for all Federal programs, including ESSER.
- **June 24-25, 2021.** The virtual **Montana Education Summit (MTedx-21)** to support districts with educational planning opportunities. The work sessions include: Developing ARP ESSER LEA plans, Meaningful Stakeholder Consultation, Data Usage, Effective strategies, Redefining the purpose of K-12 education, and SEL methodologies.
- **July 1, 2021.** The **District ARP ESSER Plan** template will open through the Terms of Employment, Accreditation, and Master Schedule (TEAMS) on this date (and close on August 24th in TEAMS). See August 24th detail below for more information on submitting District ARP ESSER Plans.
- **July 13, 20, & 27, 2021.** The OPI will host three **ARP ESSER Webinars** during the month of July to assist districts in developing and submitting District ARP ESSER Plans. The webinars will be recorded and posted for future viewing on the OPI webpage.
- **August 3-5, 2021.** The OPI will host the **Regional Summit** for all schools and districts in Comprehensive Status. There will be designated times for school leadership teams to meet, plan, and coordinate programming and funding from Title I, ESSER II, ESSER III, Impact Aid, and School Improvement Support. The OPI highly recommends that schools include their business clerk with their leadership team to ensure coordination among funding streams and programs.

- **August 24, 2021.** Districts must **submit an ARP ESSER Plan** to the OPI through the Terms of Employment, Accreditation, and Master Schedule (TEAMS). The **District ARP ESSER Plan** template will open July 1st and close on August 24th in TEAMS.
- **September 1, 2021.** Due date to complete and **submit ESSER II and ESSER III applications** in the E-grants system.

The ESSER Annual Report was designed by the USED. The OPI consulted with LEAs to gather and synthesize the data, which was then uploaded to the ESSER Final Data Collection Instrument. The OPI sent out a survey to all Montana districts to get this information. This report will then be uploaded to USED every February 1st.

Complete the table below or provide a narrative description.

Table C1.

Funding source	Prior/current SEA and LEA uses (including funding amounts, if applicable)	Planned SEA and LEA uses (including funding amounts, if applicable)
ESSER I (CARES Act)	See narrative below	See narrative below
GEER I (CARES Act)	GEER I funding was distributed by the Montana Governor's Office. Funding distribution went to state and private colleges and universities, Montana School for the Deaf and Blind, Montana Digital Academy and Montana State Library. The Montana Governor's Office distributed Corona Relief Funds to the LEAs. The link to review the distribution of funds is: 01-05-21 Summary ALL CRF Distributions.xlsx (mt.gov) and 01-05-21 Summary ALL CRF Distributions.xlsx (mt.gov) .	GEER I funding was distributed by the Montana Governor's Office. Funding distribution went to state and private colleges and universities, Montana School for the Deaf and Blind, Montana Digital Academy and Montana State Library. The Montana Governor's Office distributed Corona Relief Funds to the LEAs. The link to review the distribution of funds is: 01-05-21 Summary ALL CRF Distributions.xlsx (mt.gov) and 01-05-21 Summary ALL CRF Distributions.xlsx (mt.gov) .

ESSER II (CRRSA Act)	See narrative below	See narrative below
GEER II (CRRSA Act)	The SEA has made the EANS portion of GEER II funds available for distribution, but no distribution has been completed to date.	The SEA has made the EANS portion of GEER II funds available for distribution, but no distribution has been completed to date.

How the OPI and Montana districts spent Federal Covid-19 funds:

As reported in the ESSER Annual Report, Subgrantees expended ESSER I funds in the following categories:

• Educational Technology	\$992,261
• Assisting Disadvantaged Populations	\$350,206
• Mental Health Services	\$88,215
• Sanitation	\$50,560
• Summer and After School Services	\$26,430
• Other (Indirect Costs, HVAC, Meal Prep and Delivery, Additional Hours for Staff, Additional Staff)	\$876,256

Data for the uses of the remaining ESSER I funds is not yet available.

For ESSER funds reported above, Subgrantees expended the Educational Technology funds in the following subcategories:

- Providing Online Services to Elementary and Secondary Students:
 - o Submit Assignments
 - o Tracking Student Logins
 - o Provide Coaching
 - o Communications
 - o Participation in Online Class
 - o Remote Assistance
- Providing Home Internet for Students
- Providing Dedicated Learning Devices for Students

How the OPI and Montana districts plan to spend ESSER funds:

	ESSER I	ESSER II / HB 630	ESSER III / HB 632	Total
Basic Allocation to School Districts	37,165,707	153,089,519	343,817,312	534,072,538
Special Education - Related Services	3,000,000	0	0	0
Supplemental Allocation to School Districts	593,402	3,400,000	3,400,000	7,393,402
Allocation to Other Educational Institutions	30,000	120,000	120,000	270,000
Special Needs Allocation	0	2,500,000	0	2,500,000
Targeted Support to School Districts	0	1,200,000	0	1,200,000
Education Leadership in Montana	0	939,449	555,234	1,494,683
OPI Database Modernization	0	8,000,000	5,475,248	13,475,248
Administration	206,476	850,497	1,910,096	2,967,069
State Learning Loss	0	0	19,100,962	19,100,962
State Summer Enrichment	0	0	3,820,192	3,820,192
State Afterschool Programs	0	0	3,820,192	3,820,192
Other	299,645	0	0	0
TOTAL	41,295,230	170,099,465	382,019,236	593,413,931

ESSER II funds have been allocated to the LEAs, but no reimbursement distributions have been completed to date.

- 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, ESSER II and ARP-ESSER III funds have been awarded to LEAs (See Appendix C3: ESSER_I_II_Allocations.xlsx). Only 2/3 of ARP-ESSER III funds were distributed to LEAs.

Montana does not track LEA level obligations.

1. **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.^[1]**

^[1] 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.

LEAS are highly encouraged to coordinate and leverage all their federal funds, including ESEA, McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, child nutrition, and Perkins to meet the social, emotional, mental health, academic, and aspirational needs of students resulting from COVID-19 as they plan for the fall 2021 opening of Montana schools.

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 after school 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;

HB 632 – Montana Legislative Action on ARP ESSER Funds:

During the 2021 Montana Legislative Session, the Legislature allocated the use of ESSER II and ARP ESSER (ESSER III) funds as is their duty, when the legislature is in session. HB 632 contains instructions for the use of ARP funds, including the following ESSER III funds:

Basic Allocation to School Districts	343,817,312
Supplemental Allocation to School Districts	3,400,000
Allocation to Other Educational Institutions	120,000
Education Leadership in Montana	555,234
OPI Database Modernization	5,475,248
Administration	1,910,096
State Learning Loss	19,100,962
State Summer Enrichment	3,820,192
State Afterschool Programs	<u>3,820,192</u>
TOTAL	382,019,236

HB 632 section 22, part 2(d) states: “ For Education Leadership in Montana, the Office of Public Instruction shall create a system to build the capacity of principals, teachers, and other leaders to ensure recovery of each

school from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in a model that addresses the learning opportunities missed and needed by each person to reach their full educational potential.”

In addition, HB 632 section 22, part 2(g) states: “For State Learning Loss, State Summer Enrichment, and State Afterschool Programs, funds may be used at the discretion of the Office of Public Instruction for purposes allowed by federal law and may include grants to school districts. A school district may use these funds to provide allowable support to a special education cooperative of which it is a member. Any funds granted to school districts must be distributed in the same manner as used for the basic allocation.”

Evidence-based interventions to address the academic impact of lost instructional time:

The OPI will provide a variety of sustained, MTSS Tier II, professional learning, data support and technical assistance opportunities to LEAs to support their Academic Impact plans and implementation. An evidence-based, online course on the Teacher Learning Hub is currently available that defines what it means for practices to be evidence-based, how to select evidence-based practices, and recommendations set by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the OPI.

All tiers of evidence under ARP/ESSER III can be considered. Culturally relevant or intervention strategies can be listed under Tier IV with a plan for data collection and documentation demonstrating improvement in student outcomes. (Ex. Smudging, outdoor experiential learning)

To provide these supports and professional learning, the OPI has and will continue to collaborate with external partners, facilitators, and Montana stakeholders.

1. Material Support will include:

- Evidence-based vendor lists that meet Montana’s student data privacy agreements and the definition of ESSA evidenced-based with reported Tier for K-12 mathematics, English language arts, and science.
- Evidence-based material acquisition for accelerating and supplementing students’ learning for K-12 mathematics and English language arts.

2. Professional Learning. Based on the needs identified at the local level, the OPI will provide professional learning opportunities to districts who are using ESSER funds to provide innovative and evidence-based interventions. In addition, the OPI will provide support in the model that districts most request: in person, remote, or blended. The OPI will work with external partners to provide professional learning. The OPI is braiding the various resources available to ensure that the professional learning for all Montana educators and the support staff is continuously developed as the State moves good-to-great strategies from the classroom to the boardroom of every school district. Support through guidance documents and trainings throughout the school year will be provided for Montana rural schools without instructional coaches.

Professional learning will include:

- Teacher-Leader Academy.** A cohort model that will utilize effective adult learning strategies for six-sessions for a total of 60 hours of instruction. The Academy is designed to empower teacher leaders to be a leader in their school community while improving their practice in the classroom. The Teacher Leader Academy incorporates research from, The Thinking Classroom (Liljedahl, 2018), which emphasizes practices for effective engagement in the various modalities and learning delivery models. This research will guide the content and instruction of the courses, so that, teacher leaders can enhance and build skills to personalize learning for each child, effectively measure learning of children, and use the most proven instructional strategies that can be learned and shared with colleagues. In order to enhance leadership skills, the Teacher Leader Academy will focus on how to: implement the Universal Design for Learning framework (CAST, 2018); utilize a consultative model to engage family and community as partners and agents for school improvement; structure professional learning communities to apply the curriculum triangle; and use instructional rounds to monitor student outcomes and the growth of students, especially students significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Within the Teacher Leader Academy, teachers will build awareness of the diverse children in the classroom and effective strategies in ensuring each person has educational experiences to reach their full educational potential, and conflict resolution to address critical needs in local communities as a result of the pandemic. The model enables teacher leaders to collaboratively analyze and solve problems within and across school districts in order to become effective change-agents. The program culminates with a capstone project in which participants work collaboratively to identify and solve site-based problems of practice. (Tier I)
- Executive Leadership Academy.** An intensive 8 month-session cohort program with a faculty that includes renowned scholars, implementors of effective strategies, with support from leading practitioners from across the country. Each session provides participants an opportunity to engage with Montana’s most successful political, business, and community leaders, creating workforce partnerships, and stakeholder involvement. The Executive Leadership Academy is designed to optimize human capital and creation of a method of learning and growth that develops and retains leaders in Montana schools. A critical impact of the pandemic is the loss of leaders and the heightened awareness of the need for more adaptive and transformational leadership development. The Executive Leadership Academy responds to these impacts of the pandemic. Graduates will attain a deeper skillset for conflict resolution; leveraging the lessons of the pandemic; creative problem-solving; seeing, honoring, and leveraging diversity in our schools, communities, and state; using current resources to better serve students; family engagement; and effective coaching for improved instruction and student outcomes. Leaders will also improve , strategic thinking, data applications, use of best practices from public and private arenas, community building, and the practice of ethical and courageous leadership. The skills gained from the Executive Leadership Academy will lead to innovative solutions that improve outcomes for all students and the varied impact of the pandemic. For select capstone projects, Leadership Montana collaborates with school districts, the OPI, and state policymakers to develop and implement education policy solutions. Additional capstone projects that impact the broader community may receive funding to initiate a pilot program. (Tier I)
- Professional Coaching** in partnership with Education Associations is available for aspiring educational leaders, teachers, and school board members. The purpose of the coaching model is to develop capacity to respond to the shifting impact of the pandemic and its effect on all aspects of

the whole child, while providing a collaborative space. for school leaders. Coaching will also be offered to new school board members and established school boards. The school board coaching will ensure board members understand the authority and responsibility of the board, what local control means, effective governance of the budget, student curriculum and outcomes, meeting the needs of individual learners, strategic thinking and planning, the role of policy, the use of federal dollars from the varied sources and most importantly how to establish and support the key purpose of improving student outcomes. (Tier I)

- **Family and Community Regional Summits.** Implement family and community engagement summits to support local communities on developing partnerships and systems between parents, families, and communities. The summits will explore evidence based strategies that schools, and families can collaboratively employ including strategic planning, mitigation strategies, providing SEL services to students, digital or blend learning strategies, accelerated learning, summer enrichment, after-school programming, and more. The OPI will also provide a unique parent portal on the OPI website with specific resources for parents and child learning.
- **Business Manager or Clerk Academy.** A Clerk's Academy will be developed and implemented to focus on the skill development for staff within business offices of LEAs and strive to build retention in these key roles. The pandemic has heavily impacted the key business office of each LEA with a turnover rate in 2021 of nearly ¼ of business officials, which leaves districts short on skilled individuals who can help districts effectively navigate the resource infusion to address the pandemic. (Tier I)
- **Digital Leadership Institute Participants.** In this course, participants will experience the power and importance of building relationships and creating an online community of learners. A distance education model challenges some of the preconceptions that we hold about what teaching is and the way in which we engage students. However, teaching online and in the new hybrid models across our state, allows educators to focus on mastery, application, and supporting all learners by individualizing support and pacing. (Tier I)
- **Innovation Zones Project.** The OPI will provide incentives, supports and technical assistance to establish Innovation Zones with key LEAs where underserved student populations demonstrate the greatest needs as a result of the ongoing pandemic. The project is an innovative approach to unfinished and impacted learning by blending adaptive digital curriculum with more traditional classroom study with an emphasis on learner agency and student driven choice. Innovation Zone LEAs will work with expert partners in developing their innovation plan that will guarantee improved student outcomes in student-driven curriculum and experiences. The OPI will work with the Montana State partners to waive requirements for LEAs selected for the innovations zones project. This allows teachers to continuously offer feedback and co-assess learning in real time. The OPI will use external partners to ensure effective practices around learner agency, blended learning, formative assessments, and student ownership of learning are developed in LEA teachers.

Evaluation: Districts will provide feedback after professional development trainings on the quality of the support and reflection on quarterly data. The evaluation will be handled by an independent agent

Based on feedback; professional learning opportunities external partners may be hired again for the 2022-2023 school year.

3. Just-In-Time Support. Support through guidance documents and trainings throughout the year on effective program implementation will be provided to educators:

- Extended day programs (Tier I, II, III)
- After school programs (Tier I, II, III)
- Summer Learning and Enrichment programs (Tier II, III)
- Accelerating learning (Tier I)
- Social emotional learning (Tier III)
- Tutoring (Tier II, III)
- Mentoring (Tier II, III)
- Extended school year (Tier I, II, III)
- Assistance in aligning all initiatives for strategic planning (Tier I)
- Collaboration with Northwest Rise to support rural schools (Tier IV)
- Collaboration with Education Northwest on effective Social Emotional Strategies in supporting LEAs on the health and wellbeing of each child (Tier IV)
- Virtual job fairs for the recruitment of school employees due to the critical teacher shortage exacerbated by the pandemic (Tier IV)
- Selecting evidence-based practices and materials that will be relevant to the context, and practices of the local community (Tier I)

4. Assessment. The Montana OPI will proceed with updating the state assessment system through the development of a modernized system pilot designed to better measure student growth. A valid and reliable modernized testing system will interact more closely with the student body and better understand the performance of frontier schools while simultaneously reducing the burden of time allotments on teachers, students, and local districts.

- Use MetaMetrics in improving the accuracy of student growth data
- Reduce student time allotment dedicated to assessment testing

Develop robust and defensible improvements to student assessment

5. Data Support. Based on the Professional Needs Survey, additional professional development statewide for data-based instruction practices for school leaders and teachers is requested. The OPI will provide professional development and technical supports for data acquisition, interpretation, and reporting through work with external partners. Data support will include:

- Data coaches, or virtual support
- Guidance documents and professional development on the Comprehensive Needs Assessment, gap analysis, Early Warning System, the Opportunity to Learn Survey, state assessment data etc.

Evaluation: Districts will provide feedback after professional development trainings and at the end of the year on level of support and impact their data coaches have had. Based on feedback, external partners may be hired again for the 2022-2023 year.

6. Technical Assistance. Technical assistance will be provided to LEAs who have received for ESSER III/ARP funds. Technical Assistance will be provided in collaboration with external partners. Technical assistance will include:

- Guidance documents
- Webinars
- Calendars and checklists
- Frequently Asked Question knowledgebase
- Assistance in aligning all initiatives and guidance on strategic long-range planning
- One on one assistance
- Data acquisition, interpretation and reporting

7. Collaborative Projects. The OPI will continue to collaborate with stakeholders and partnerships through task forces, focus groups, and collaborative efforts.

- The OPI is partnering with the School Administrators of Montana on the following:
 - Summer Institute 2022
 - Leadership Collaborative Networks – coaching on effective mitigation strategies for the impact of unfinished learning
 - Professional Coaching Models
- The OPI is partnering with legal partners to bring the first Montana School Law Conference focused on: Policy, Effective Governance, Parental Rights, Equality, Tribal Sovereignty for educational stakeholders and leaders.
- The OPI is partnering with national thought leaders to ensure all educators have the opportunity to engage with emerging learning practices from redesigning assessment.
- The OPI is partnering with experts across the nation to develop an educational workforce redesign and pilot that is targeted to solve the workforce shortage and readiness issues in our schools.
- The OPI is partnering with industry in creating career paths through industry classrooms and relevant industry, which will lead to micro-credentials and high-demand career opportunities through the MT Ready initiative. Partners include: The Department of Labor, the MT Chamber of Commerce, the medical community, the high-tech industry, the natural resources industry, small businesses, and other trade and business associations.
- The OPI is partnering with tribal councils and community resources on culturally based learning and language immersion for the purpose of preserving language, culture, history, and contributions to the development of the whole child.

8. Professional Learning for the OPI. Supports for the OPI professional learning and collaboration. Professional learning for the OPI includes:

- Collaboration with other states and organizations
- Trauma-informed, and culturally relevant practices training
- Training on equality as identified in the Montana Constitution
- Unfinished or Accelerated Learning strategies that the OPI can provide to LEAs
- Excellent service models for the LEAs
-

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**

Based on the identified needs at the local level, the interventions listed above will be used to address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19.

Data: The OPI will use the Opportunity to Learn (OTL) Survey collected in May of 2021 and the Professional Needs Survey collected in February of 2021, along with local level specific data to identify the disproportionate impact of COVID-19. A few findings from the OTL Survey collected in May 2021 indicate:

- 58% of educators felt that most of their students learned less this year compared to other years. Professional development will be offered to help districts accelerate learning for their students.
- 50.2% either disagreed more than agree or disagreed that they received helpful learning opportunities to help provide high-quality in-person instruction while social-distanced and masked. The OPI will provide this support and professional learning for high-quality in-person instruction.

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.**

Based on the reported needs of the districts and local communities, the OPI will provide technical assistance in identifying students who were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. Example : GAP Analysis Process using local data, Early Warning System etc.

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;**

HB 632 – Montana Legislative Action on ARP

During the 2021 Montana Legislative Session, the Legislature allocated the use of ESSER II and ARP ESSER (ESSER III) funds as is their duty. HB 632 contains instructions for the use of ARP funds, including the ESSER III funds. HB 632 shows the following use of the ESSER III funds:

Basic Allocation to School Districts	343,817,312
Supplemental Allocation to School Districts	3,400,000
Allocation to Other Educational Institutions	120,000
Education Leadership in Montana	555,234
OPI Database Modernization	5,475,248
Administration	1,910,096
State Learning Loss	19,100,962
State Summer Enrichment	3,820,192
State Afterschool Programs	<u>3,820,192</u>
TOTAL	382,019,236

HB 632 section 22, part 2(g) states: “For State Learning Loss, State Summer Enrichment, and State Afterschool Programs, funds may be used at the discretion of the Office of Public Instruction for purposes allowed by federal law and may include grants to school districts. A school district may use these funds to provide allowable support to a special education cooperative of which it is a member. Any funds granted to school districts must be distributed in the same manner as used for the basic allocation.”

The OPI is developing summer enrichment opportunities for Montana students based on student-driven interests and purpose. The first student film festival will be held the Summer of 2022 and will be enhanced with after school workshops developing student interests and skills in digital media and communication. The Montana Arts Council, the Department of Labor, the Chamber of Commerce, and Reach Higher are all partners in this effort. Montana Games will be implemented the Summer of 2022 that focuses on student subgroups that may have hindered opportunities. In Montana tribal lands, basketball is enjoyed by all ages. The traveling games will include basketball, gaming, coding, creativity, entrepreneurship and more. In Montana, what students can dream will be facilitated for enrichment and passion projects.

The OPI will release a summer enrichment planning guide for public and nonpublic schools and communities the winter of 2022.

The OPI will provide Tier II support for LEAs and Community Learning Centers (Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, Local libraries, Tribal Communities, other local community centers) who implement summer learning

and enrichment programs. Based on the needs identified by districts and Community Learning Centers, the OPI will provide guidance documents, regional training and capacity support. Trainings and guidance documents will be created through collaboration with the OPI and external partners.

If the LEA lacks the capacity to bolster or sustain summer learning or enrichment programs, partnerships will be facilitated with external entities. (ex. Community Learning Centers). The resources that have been developed with a variety of partners to date will be provided to strengthen capacity of such programs.

Support will look like:

- Professional learning opportunities for new/current extended day and enrichment educators/staff
- Program system level support
- Capacity support

Evaluation: Districts and/or Community Learning Centers will provide feedback after trainings and at the end of summer on the level of support and impact.

- 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**

Based on the reported needs of the districts and local communities, the OPI will provide technical assistance in identifying students who were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. Example : GAP Analysis Process using local data, Early Warning System etc.

- 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.**

Based on the reported needs of the districts and local communities, the OPI will provide technical assistance in identifying students who were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. Example : GAP Analysis Process using local data, Early Warning system etc.

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

- i. **A description of the evidence-based programs (e.g., including partnerships with community-based organizations) the SEA has selected, and the extent to which the SEA will evaluate the impact of those programs;**

During the 2021 Montana Legislative Session, the Legislature, which holds authority for the authorization of federal funds, fulfilled their responsibility with ARP ESSER funds. HB 632 contains instructions for the use of ARP funds, including the ESSER III funds. HB 632 shows the following use of the ESSER III funds:

Basic Allocation to School Districts	343,817,312
Supplemental Allocation to School Districts	3,400,000
Allocation to Other Educational Institutions	120,000
Education Leadership in Montana	555,234
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TOTAL	382,019,236

HB 632 section 22, part 2(g) states: “For State Learning Loss, State Summer Enrichment, and State Afterschool Programs, funds may be used at the discretion of the office of public instruction for purposes allowed by federal law and may include grants to school districts. A school district may use these funds to provide allowable support to a special education cooperative of which it is a member. Any funds granted to school districts must be distributed in the same manner as used for the basic allocation.”

A facilitation team with afterschool partners has been established and will provide guidance for after-school opportunities by the fall of 2021. The OPI will provide Tier II support for LEAs and Community Learning Centers (Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, Local libraries, Tribal Communities, other local community) who implement extended day learning and enrichment programs.

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

Based on the identified needs at the local level, interventions listed above will be used to address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19.

Data: The OPI will use the Opportunity to Learn (OTL) Survey collected in May of 2021 and the Professional Needs Survey collected in February of 2021, along with local level specific data to identify the disproportionate impact of COVID-19. A few findings from the OTL Survey collected in May 2021 indicates:

- 58% of educators felt that most of their students learned less this year compared to other years. Professional development will be offered to help districts accelerate learning for their students.

- 50.2% either disagreed more than agree or disagreed that they received helpful learning opportunities to help provide high-quality in-person instruction while social-distanced and masked. The SEA will provide this support and professional learning for high-quality in-person instruction.

- 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.**

Based on the reported needs of the districts and local communities, the OPI will provide technical assistance in identifying students who were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. Example : GAP Analysis Process using local data, Early Warning system etc.

Emergency Needs: If the SEA plans to reserve funds for emergency needs under section 2001(f)(4) of the ARP Act to address issues responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, describe the anticipated use of those funds, including the extent to which these funds will build SEA and LEA capacity to ensure students’ and staff’s health and safety; to meet students’ academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs; and to use ARP ESSER funds to implement evidence-based interventions.

The OPI, at this time, will reserve a minimal amount of ARP-ESSER III funds for emergency needs to ensure student health, safety and wellbeing along with staff.

E. Supporting LEAs in Planning for and Meeting Students’ Needs

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

1. **LEA Plans for the Use of ARP ESSER Funds:** Describe what the SEA will require its LEAs to include in LEA plans consistent with the ARP ESSER requirements for the use of ARP ESSER funds, how the SEA will require such plans to be made available to the public, and the deadline by which the LEA must submit its ARP ESSER plan (which must be a reasonable timeline and should be within no later than 90 days after receiving its ARP ESSER allocation). The LEA plan 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.**

What the OPI will require its LEAs to include in LEA plans:

Through the LEA ESSER III E-grant application, the Montana OPI collected assurances from LEAs that in receiving the funds, they would meet the ARP ESSER plan submission deadline of August 24, 2021 and that they would comply with the requirements as set out in the law and the interim final rule.

The OPI provided a template (Attachment 9) for LEAs to use in completing their ARP ESSER Plans. In the template, the OPI outlined instructions for the development of plans, stakeholder input and posting requirements to districts website, and requirements to continuously monitor and update the LEA’s ARP ESSER Plan at a minimum of every six months. The OPI will utilize the information provided by LEAs in the template to support and monitor LEAs use of ARP ESSER funds.

LEAs receiving ARP ESSER funds must submit their ARP ESSER Plans on the template to the OPI and make the plan available to the public no later than Aug. 24, 2021. The requirements for the LEA plans include, at a minimum, how LEAs will:

1. use funds to implement prevention and mitigation strategies;
2. use the funds totaling not less than 20% to address lost instructional time;
3. spend its remaining 80% of ARP ESSER funds;
4. respond to needs of student disproportionately affected by the pandemic; and
5. meaningfully engage with and consult stakeholders in crafting their plans.

In addition, the template requires the LEA to describe how it will use ARP ESSER funds, including:

1. implementation of evidence-based interventions;
2. address the student groups specifically that were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic; and
3. identify, reengage, and support students who have experienced the impact of lost instructional time.

Throughout the template, the OPI has emphasized local control and coordination of state initiatives and requirements so that LEAs can identify innovative solutions for unique local needs and priorities.

Additionally, the OPI sought and received approval from the Montana Board of Public Education to use the Goals section of the LEA ARP ESSER plan in place of the Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP).

How LEAs will use funds to implement prevention and mitigation strategies:

As a local decision, LEAs will determine the development and implementation of prevention and mitigation strategies to ensure continuous safe operation of schools for in-person student learning. If an LEA has already returned students to 100 percent full-time-in-person instruction, its local plan should focus on its current and future activities to keep students and staff safe and ensure continuity of services. As stated in the Interim Final Rule (IFR), the requirement does not mandate that an LEA adopt the CDC guidance, but only requires that the LEA describe in its local plan the extent to which it has adopted, to the extent practicable, the key prevention and mitigation strategies identified in the guidance.

How LEAs will use the funds (totaling not less than 20 percent) to address the academic impact of lost instructional time:

Local communities will determine how they will incorporate summer learning or summer enrichment programs, extended day programming, comprehensive afterschool programs, or extended school year programs. As a local decision, educators and communities will establish and select evidence-based interventions that address the impact of lost instructional time unique to their student needs and local context. The LEA can select evidenced-based interventions under the ESEA's four tiers of evidence, including novel approaches under the fourth tier. LEAs will be encouraged to use ESSER funds to develop their own evidence-based innovative approaches to address the loss of instructional time.

How LEAs will spend its remaining ARP ESSER funds:

LEAs are encouraged to develop local plans which are consistent with Section 2001(e)(2) of the ARP Act; including the expenditure of funds consistent with allowable expenditures. The OPI will emphasize that the ESSER resources are available for a wide range of activities to address diverse local needs arising from an exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and to emerge strong post pandemic.

How LEAs will respond to needs of students disproportionately impacted by the pandemic:

The selection of evidenced-based interventions that respond to students' academic, social, and emotional needs and address disproportionate impact of coronavirus on student populations will be a local decision. LEAs will be encouraged to use a variety of methods to identify the needs of students disproportionately impacted, for example, comprehensive needs assessments, gap analysis, district benchmarks, parents and student inputs and other LEA data sources. LEAs will also be encouraged to use ESSER funds to develop their own evidence-based innovative approaches to address the needs of students disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. For instance, full language immersion programs and cultural pedagogy will be encouraged for those districts with at least 35% American Indian student enrollment.

2. **LEA Consultation:** Describe how the SEA will, in planning for the use of ARP ESSER funds, ensure that, consistent with the ARP ESSER requirements, its LEAs engage in meaningful consultation with stakeholders, including, but not limited to:

- i. **Students,**
- ii. **Families,**
- iii. **School and district administrators (including special education administrators), 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 (a) children with disabilities, (b) English learners, (c) children experiencing homelessness, (d) children and youth in foster care, (e) migratory students, (f) 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.

Based on local control, LEAs must determine if their stakeholder input meets the minimum requirements required in both statute and federal rule. The OPI will encourage LEAs to gather public comment in a manner that is consistent with existing local procedures. The OPI will also recommend best practices for LEAs to meet the stakeholder input requirement. Best practices might include a community-wide public notice and comment process with an optional survey to gather input from the various required stakeholder groups. School board meetings, small group meetings or public forums would also supplement the process. Regardless of the process followed, the LEA will be required to document that all the applicable stakeholder groups were included in the process, meaningful consultation occurred, and input was included in the plan. Documentation of all plans and public comment will need to be saved locally as OPI may request the documents as part of compliance monitoring of ESSER grantees.

1. Describe how the SEA will support and monitor its LEAs in using ARP ESSER funds.

The description must include:

- i. **How the SEA will support and monitor its LEAs’ implementation of evidence-based interventions that respond to students’ academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs, such as through summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs, or extended school year programs – including the extent to which the SEA will collect evidence of the effectiveness of interventions employed;**

The OPI will empower LEAs to examine their performance data in the GEMS site, which includes enrollment, graduation, and summative assessment data. LEAs will also be encouraged to use a variety of data sources to frequently monitor their implementation of evidence-based interventions that respond to students’ academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. For example, district interim and benchmark assessment data, parent and student interviews and surveys, grades, engagement data, discipline data, or other relevant local data. LEAs will be guided to determine frequent and responsive monitoring systems that enable them to adjust in real-time rather than waiting until the end of the semester or school year. The recommended monitoring systems will include student self-monitoring and family monitoring.

ii. How the OPI 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 COVID-19 pandemic impacted American Indian individuals at a higher proportion than Non-Indians. American Indians make up 7% of the state's population but account for 10% of those who contracted COVID-19. According to a CDC report published in April 2021, American Indians in Montana had a mortality rate of 3.8 times that of Non-Indians. As a result of this impact, many Reservations went on lockdown during the pandemic in order to minimize person to person contact. Even after the state of Montana lifted restrictions, several Tribal Councils continued to keep their schools on lockdown to minimize transmission. These schools provided remote instruction for the majority of the 2020-2021 school year. LEA's provided alternative meaningful learning experiences to students without access to reliable internet.

Thus, LEAs that serve a high percentage of American Indian students will be encouraged to use the data sources and processes mentioned above in section ii to measure the impact of interventions on groups of students most impacted. LEAs then can disaggregate the data by student groups. This extra step will allow the LEAs to establish if any disproportionate rates are evident, allowing them to adjust as necessary. The extra step is especially important for student groups, like the American Indian students, who were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

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 OPI will encourage LEAs to utilize an Early Warning System, because LEAs that have already implemented an Early Warning System (EWS) have experienced improved outcomes for at-risk students. When an LEA implements an Early Warning System, careful analysis of the data on a monthly basis produces real-time data that can be used to identify students whose risk factors suddenly change and allow the implementation of the appropriate intervention to minimize the obstacle. In order to encourage data collection, the OPI will work to establish support systems for LEAs to upload their EWS data no less than a quarterly basis.

The OPI will offer EWS professional learning events to ensure successful implementation in districts. LEAs will be encouraged to utilize the existing state EWS to identify students with absentee rates of less than 80%. LEAs will submit specific action plans that target those students such as after school and summer school programs. LEAs will be encouraged to develop alternative credit recovery options through digital delivery, independent students study, internships, afterschool programs, other student-driven learning experiences.

2. **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.**

Montana LEAs utilizing ARP ESSER funds to address educational opportunity gaps will be encouraged to identify priority student groups through survey data, OPI GEMS data, and other sources. LEAs can also leverage specific local data through student and parent surveys and focus groups. Data analyzation should be robust enough to identify both subgroup and individual student needs in the areas of academics and social and emotional well-being. The OPI will advocate for and provide strategies for an individualized approach for meeting learner needs for all students. An increased focus on mental health supports and initiatives will be recommended, based on individual student needs. The OPI will also provide strong guidance to LEAs to tie the use of funding to the student in the classroom and their needs and facilitate LEA supports in the areas of data use and analysis, evidence based instructional practices, and mental health supports.

The OPI will work with external partners, including but not limited to the Montana School Boards Association (MTSBA), a statewide association that provides policy support to several Montana School districts, in providing analysis to the OPI with respect to collected student discipline data, to ensure that student groups are not being disciplined at disproportional rates. The OPI will recommend that review teams consist of a variety of school staff and community stakeholders including students and parents. This approach would include representation from traditionally marginalized sub-groups to ensure they have a voice in the process and can provide perspective. If the data identifies a disproportionate impact on identifiable student subgroups, LEAs can revamp their policies to address disparities in disciplinary approaches. The OPI will provide resources and professional development on child development, cultural awareness and methodologies of discipline that maintain the value of the child.

Regarding a positive and supportive learning environment for all students, the OPI has recently shifted the paradigm around academic achievement focusing on learning opportunity gaps versus achievement gap. Thus, the focus has become addressing student opportunity, a key element of educational equality.

The American Indian Student Achievement Research Project (2020) preliminarily identified lack of access to effective teachers who understand the cultural norms, practices, and values of Native students. Thus, LEAs that serve significant populations of American Indian students will be offered models of teacher development that can aid in overcoming this barrier.

School districts have historically played an organic role in student social emotional learning and development in the form of verbal and non-verbal peer communication, play, and meaningful interactions with teachers and staff. The OPI will encourage LEAs to address social emotional learning initiatives and opportunities in their

ARP ESSER plans while providing guidance in the areas of research, evidence based best practices, and other resources and supports.

The OPI has developed an Early Warning System (EWS) designed to determine the chance of a student dropping out in grades 3-12 as well as identify the reasons why a student is at risk. Minority, low income, and other marginalized student populations are often at highest risk due to socioeconomic issues, disproportionate disciplinary referrals, and lack of relevant meaningful learning opportunities. LEAs will be encouraged to better utilize their early warning systems and provide supports and interventions for students who score in the highest risk categories. The OPI will continue working to collect and provide EWS data in a timelier manner so as to provide LEAs a more useful and timelier tool for identifying students in need of interventions.

Traditional educational settings and practices have focused on passive learning strategies assessed by mastery of content. For students who do not thrive in this environment and/or excel in the areas of applied knowledge or hands on learning, the OPI will assist districts in tailoring plans that place skills and competencies on equal footing with mastery of knowledge and content. The Montana Legislature passed proficiency-based assessments and learning several years ago. The majority of Montana school districts adopted proficiency-based assessment models in 2020. The OPI will work with school districts in building competency-based models that can be applied in all disciplines, and in providing student-driven learning that can meet career and life-ready competencies.

Students often struggle to find relevance in their schooling and curriculum. Additionally, traditional educational practices have focused on mastery of content that will most likely not significantly increase preparedness for a workforce in which success is most highly dependent upon soft and cross cutting skills. This is especially true in the 21st century when information is easily attained when needed. Lack of relevance is often especially acute in minority and underserved student populations as curriculums tend to focus on western histories, accomplishments, and values. As a part of their ARP ESSER plan, LEAs can offer increased career pathways, industry classroom credentialing, dual enrollment courses, entrepreneurship ventures, job shadowing and internship opportunities.

Article X of the Montana Constitution states that “our state recognizes the distinct and unique cultural heritage of American Indians and is committed in its educational goals to preserving their cultural integrity.” Montana Code Annotated 20-1-501, commonly known as Indian Education for All, states that “every Montanan, whether Indian or non-Indian be encouraged to learn about the distinct and unique heritage of American Indians in a culturally responsive manner.” These two codifications form the basis of a unique requirement that all Montana students learn about Montana’s twelve (12) tribal nations. As our American Indian students are generally our most significant minority population and experience the largest opportunity gap, Indian Education for All is a critical approach to achieving equality-relevant pedagogy in Montana classrooms.

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.

3. **Supporting and Stabilizing the Educator Workforce:**

- iv. **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
		Data reported from the Critical Shortage report. It is a 3-year comparison, but FTE and percentage included in column 2 is for 2021 only. Deviation data is reported from the 2021 OPI TEAMS data collection.
Administrators (as a whole)	<u>TEAMS Deviation Data 2021:</u> Nonlicensed Administrators - 14; Administrators not endorsed - 22; Insufficient Administrator FTE - 1; No Administrator FTE - 0	Montana State accreditation is by school. An administrator is counted for each school they serve.
Educators (as a whole)	<u>Critical Shortage Report 2021</u> Total FTE to Hire* - 1513.45 Possible to Hire - 502.14 (33%) Difficult / Not Filled - 1011.31 (67%) Filled with Emergency Auth or Provisional License - 826 (55%) <u>TEAMS Deviation Data 2021:</u> Nonlicensed Teachers - 184 Misassigned Teachers - 87	Montana State accreditation is by school. A teacher is counted for each school they serve.
School Systems with Reservation Schools, All Educators	<u>Critical Shortage Report 2021</u> Total FTE to Hire* - 175.73 Possible to Hire - 19 (11%) Difficult / Not Filled - 156.73 (89%) Filled with Emergency Auth or Provisional License - 146 (83%)	
Not Large or Urban Districts	<u>Critical Shortage Report 2021</u> Total FTE to Hire* - 807.4	

Area	Data on shortages and needs	Narrative description
	Possible to Hire - 143.23 (18%) Difficult / Not Filled - 664.17 (82%) Filled with Emergency Auth or Provisional License - 649 (80%)	Data reported from the Critical Shortage report. It is a 3-year comparison, but FTE and percentage included in column 2 is for 2021 only. Deviation data is reported from the 2021 OPI TEAMS data collection.
Large or Urban Districts	<u>Critical Shortage Report 2021</u> Total FTE to Hire* - 706.05 Possible to Hire - 358.91 (51%) Difficult / Not Filled - 347.14 (49%) Filled with Emergency Auth or Provisional License - 177 (25%)	
Special educators and related service Personnel and paraprofessionals	<u>Critical Shortage Report 2021</u> Total FTE to Hire* - 191.51 Possible to Hire - 22.6 (12%) Difficult / Not Filled - 168.91 (88%) Filled with Emergency Auth or Provisional License - 75 (39%)	Special Educator and related service personnel includes teacher, school service personnel, audiologist, Occupational therapist, occupational therapy assistant, physical therapist, and speech-language pathologist FTE. Critical Shortage report does not capture paraprofessionals.
English as a Second Language	<u>Critical Shortage Report 2021</u> Total FTE to Hire* - 3 Possible to Hire - 0 Difficult / Not Filled - 3 Filled with Emergency Auth or Provisional License - 1	
STEM educators	<u>Critical Shortage Report 2021</u> <u>Science and Mathematics</u> Total FTE to Hire* - 141.69 Possible to Hire - 38.8 (27%) Difficult / Not Filled - 102.89 (73%) Filled with Emergency Auth or Provisional License - 109 (77%)	The data represented here is specific to educator content area in Science and Math and may not be STEM-specific.
CTE educators	<u>Critical Shortage Report 2021</u> Total FTE to Hire* - 131.76 Possible to Hire - 30 (23%) Difficult / Not Filled - 101.76 (77%) Filled with Emergency Auth or Provisional License - 115 (87%)	
Early Childhood	<u>Critical Shortage Report 2021</u>	

Area	Data on shortages and needs	Narrative description
	Total FTE to Hire* - 6.5 Possible to Hire - 1 Difficult / Not Filled - 5.5 Filled with Emergency Auth or Provisional License - 9	Data reported from the Critical Shortage report. It is a 3-year comparison, but FTE and percentage included in column 2 is for 2021 only. Deviation data is reported from the 2021 OPI TEAMS data collection.

***Total FTE does not include Emergency Auth or Provisional**

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

In Montana, schools and districts report employment information in a system called TEAMS (Terms of Employment, Accreditation, and Master Schedule). Schools report nonlicensed or misassignment educators within their yearly TEAMS reporting. Our Accreditation Unit will continue to provide work sessions and guidance related to this reporting on the School Accreditation website (Appendix F1). The Quality Educator Loan Assistance Program (Appendix F2), part of House Bill 211, continues to be available for nearly hired quality educators who teach or work in a subject area that has been identified as a critical quality educator shortage area at an impacted school, and the educators that take advantage of this program are eligible to receive state-paid loan assistance for up to four years, so long as they remain a full-time employee at an impacted school.

House Bill 630 (Appendix F3) was made law on May 14, 2021, and it appropriates CARES II funds and temporarily revises education funding. The bill establishes a temporary maintenance of equity payment for school districts, temporarily suspends anticipated enrollment increases due to COVID-19, temporarily modifies financial support for unanticipated enrollment increases due to COVID-19 and allows COVID-19 relief appropriates to continue into the biennium beginning July 1, 2021. The extra flexibilities provided, particularly related to fluctuating pupil enrollments, will help to stabilize the workforce by reducing the likelihood of layoffs.

In Montana, schools conduct up to 18 hours of professional development per year, and the decisions regarding the priorities for these hours are locally controlled. This process is outlined in Administrative Rules of Montana 10.55.714 Professional Development (Appendix F4). Many schools choose to include professional

learning offered by the OPI in their yearly professional development planning. In February of 2021, the OPI conducted a professional learning needs survey. Over 700 of Montana's educators from nearly all roles in education responded to the survey. Two topics that were identified as top priorities include self-care for educators and educator resiliency. The OPI operates a free online learning management system for Montana's educators called the Teacher Learning Hub. The courses require interactivity and reflection and often ask the educator to make a plan for the future at the conclusion of the course. We have over 100 courses on a variety of topics, including self-care for educators and resiliency. Those courses were made available shortly after the COVID-19 pandemic began. In addition, we have courses on topics such as how to work with students experiencing grief and loss, trauma-informed practices, suicide prevention, adverse childhood experiences, and best practices for online teaching. The OPI also shares professional learning opportunities from Montana's many educational partners on the OPI Professional Learning Opportunities Portal (Appendix F5), and we will continue to do so in the upcoming school year. Many of the opportunities listed on the Portal relate to educator self-care and mental health.

Additionally, the OPI developed and hosted remote learning sharing sessions beginning March 23, 2021. The topics ranged from digital learning tips and tricks, literacy, multi-tiered systems of support, music education, career and technical education, science, and more. Many of these groups chose to continue meeting in the 2020-2021 school year. We anticipate that our partner organizations will continue to host many of these sharing sessions throughout the 2021-2022 school year.

Previous funds have been spent in accordance with the Allowable Activities for ESSER I, II, and III, specifically in regard to recent passing of House Bill 630.

- 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).**

As mentioned previously in this report, Montana is a local control state, and thus recruitment and hiring decisions are made at the local level. However, Montana has created some new ways to help LEAs fill gaps in certified teachers. We just started our Data Systems Modernization Project (Appendix F6). We also recently hosted the first OPI Virtual Job Fair (Appendix F7) with many LEAs, including some of our most rural schools, in attendance.

According to the Title II Reports National Teacher Preparation Data (Appendix F8), our educator pipeline and enrollment has grown from 2016-2017 to the most recent year reported, 2018-2019, by 22.6% or 441. In order to grow the pipeline, the SEA partners with grant programs such as the Rural Mental Health Pathways Grant (Appendix F9) and the Teacher Quality Partnership Grant (Appendix F10). Both of these grants focus on rural communities where the majority of the state's critical shortage areas are located. House Bill 403 Create "Grow Your Own" Teacher Grant Program (Appendix F11) was recently signed into law and allows the Commissioner of Higher Education to strengthen teacher pipelines by including dual credit courses in education in high school and by providing students with the opportunity to engage in work-based learning opportunities in the field of education. Eligible districts are able to create their own "grow your own grant" programs as it pertains to quality educator shortages.

Technical assistance is provided to LEAs that are experiencing hiring concerns. Increased flexibilities regarding Class 5 Provisional licenses has been provided since the beginning of the pandemic, along with guidance related to emergency authorizations for accreditation purposes. House Bill 246 Revise education laws to enhance local control and opportunities for pupils (Appendix F12) also permits the Board of Public Education to provide a license to an educator wanting to teach in Montana if the educator currently holds a license in another state or country and has successful experience as an educator. The SEA is currently reviewing the current licensing rules and anticipates over the next seven months to have recommended substantial changes in licensing barrier rules that can improve recruitment and retention. The OPI has recently engaged with a third-party vendor that facilitates international teacher employability opportunities in Montana.

For the most part, Montana's schools have remained open for in-person learning throughout the 2020-2021 school year. LEAs are encouraged to consider the 2021 Summer Learning and Enrichment: State Guidance for District and School Leaders (Appendix F13) for suggestions on how to address the needs of students most disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The OPI will explore greater flexibility in Chapter 55 updates to determine how social workers, licensed clinicians, and case managers could help districts with the shortage of licensed school counselors.

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

In Montana, staffing is a local decision, however, Montana supports the following Acts and initiatives within the state. House Bill 143 Provide incentives for increasing starting teacher pay or the Montana TEACH Act (Appendix F14) allows schools that have been experiencing difficulty recruiting educators, particularly Montana's rural schools, to increase starting teacher pay. This recently passed bill will allow Montana to recruit and retain more teachers. In addition, the Special Education Endorsement Project is a way to help school districts fill vacant special education teacher positions. The project is part of Montana's Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD), which is included under Montana Administrative Rule (ARM 10.16.3135 in the Montana IDEA Plan and is regulated by the Accreditation and Licensure Rule 10.55.707.

The OPI maintains a Jobs for Teachers website (Appendix F15) that allows schools to post jobs and search for candidates. Schools are also encouraged to post positions with the Montana Schools Recruitment Project (Appendix F16) to assist with recruiting special education personnel. Montana currently has the USED grant for Mental Health Pathways for rural and tribal communities. This program is designed to prepare counselors for Montana's rural schools and communities. Montana also has the SAMHSA Project AWARE Grant that offers scholarships and loan forgiveness for graduates studies for graduates that agree to work in schools. This project is beginning in the Summer of 2021. The OPI works with School Administrators of Montana on recruitment of hard-to-find positions, has held and continues to hold Virtual Employment Fairs, and has opened the state to greater opportunities for international students. The SEA began the review process of

educator licensing in October of 2020 and is looking at any rules that are barriers to educator licensure. Finally, the OPI and the MT Healthcare Foundation have a joint project focusing on school-based health clinics that provide mental health supports to students.

The OPI encourages schools to utilize the additional funding received from COVID-19 to add additional personnel to their schools as deemed necessary through local needs assessments.

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).**

The OPI's current capacity for collecting data for the LEAs is accomplished through a statewide student information system called Achievement in Montana (AIM) and a number of other database applications. These systems enable the OPI to report annually on a number of state and federally required data points, including

- Statewide summative assessments as a measure of student learning,
- Chronic absenteeism,
- Use of exclusionary discipline,
- Access to high-quality educators,
- Classified and certified educators, and
- Per-pupil expenditures by school and district.

The OPI developed a survey instrument in 2021, in partnership with the National Center for Assessment, to collect data on the opportunities students had to learn (OTL), especially around student engagement, perception of learning, and access to technology. This inaugural administration will establish the baseline for this new data collection; results will be available in June 2021 and full analysis will conclude in August 2021.

The OPI also operates a Moodle learning management system called the Teacher Learning Hub. In July 2019, the Hub had 10 courses on effective technology use in the classroom that received 511 completions in the 2018-2019 fiscal year. The OPI added three more technology courses in 2020. All of the OPI technology courses received, between March 2020 through April 2021, 1,241 completions.

OPI's future data collection strategy:

1. The OPI will build on that foundation by making the following data available in the statewide longitudinal data system, GEMS, to provide transparent monitoring by all educational stakeholders for all applicable subgroups:

- Student learning
 - State summative assessments
- Opportunities to Learn (OTL)
 - Chronic absenteeism
 - Student survey responses to learn about student engagement;
 - In-school and out-of-school suspension data to determine use of exclusionary discipline;
 - Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment coursework to gauge high school student advanced coursework where available;
 - Gifted & Talented evaluation and participation data to gauge elementary and middle school student advanced coursework;
 - Access to technology – student access
 - Access to technology – teacher professional development on technology
 - Access to high-quality educators
 - Access to school counselors, social workers, school psychologists, and nurses
- Per-pupil expenditures

- Jobs Created and retained (by position type)
 - Extended learning funded by ARP ESSER
 - Extended School Year evaluation and placement for children with disabilities;
 - Afterschool program enrollment
 - Summer School enrollment
 - Mode of Instruction-students enrolled in online, hybrid, and fully in-person instruction.
2. This will require the following new and continuation of recently new data collections:
 - Mode of Instruction data
 - Calendar and enrollment information related to afterschool and summer school programs
 - Opportunity to Learn survey
 3. Montana will also pursue innovations to perform *Lexile* and *Quantile* averaging of formative interim assessments.
 4. Student subgroups listed in Appendix A will be reported in GEMS to the extent possible.
 - The category ‘Race/Ethnicity information not available’ is not applicable to the state of Montana, due to rigorous data collection processes
 - Three subgroups from Appendix A will be defined by individual districts, collected at the district level, and progress of these groups will be reported in aggregate.
 - Severely Affected by COVID19: Missed most in-person
 - Severely Affected by COVID19: Missed remote instruction
 - LBGTQ+
2. **Monitoring and Internal Controls:** Describe how the SEA will implement appropriate fiscal monitoring of and internal controls for the ARP ESSER funds (e.g., by updating the SEA’s plan for monitoring funds and internal controls under the CARES and CRRSA Acts; addressing potential sources of waste, fraud, and abuse; conducting random audits; or other tools). In this response, please describe the SEA’s current capacity to monitor ARP ESSER; steps, if needed, to increase capacity; and any foreseeable gaps in capacity, including how the SEA will provide its LEAs with technical assistance in the anticipated areas of greatest need.

The OPI has a rigorous internal monitoring and grant management plan that includes risk assessment and training provided on allowable uses for the Superintendents and Clerks. The OPI determined that a key risk to the grant effectiveness was for subrecipients to not comply with the CARES Act provision for funds to be expended “to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus.” In order to mitigate this risk, the OPI took the following steps:

- Created clear guidance for LEAs that emphasized this requirement;

- Included this requirement on the overview, allowable uses, and ESSER assurance pages agreed to by each LEA in the e-grants process; and
- Made sure LEA budget proposal line items included sufficient information to make a reasonable belief the COVID-19 connection was present.

The LEAs classified as “risky” will receive a desk audit once each quarter conducted by the CFO. The remaining LEAs will receive desk audits according to the size of the award. The desk audit will review:

- Detailed documentation of one month’s expenditures, reconciling LEA accounting system transactions with cash draws to supporting documents;
- Status of corrective actions from last budget;
- Inventory of any equipment purchased with grant funds;
- Discussion of provision of equitable share services; and
- Discuss plans for remaining grant funds.

OPI utilizes the state of Montana’s approved accounting system (SABHRS) to complete all fiscal activity for state and federal funding. SABHRS allows OPI to manage state and federal funds from initial budget setup, tracking of expenditures, and extraction of fiscal data for applicable reporting. When OPI receives the current years funds (GAN) the funds are allocated based on the requirements of the grant (i.e. Admin, Set Asides, Flow through, etc.). To setup budgets in SABHRS, the OPI Budget Analyst utilizes the New Grant Setup Checklist to ensure all applicable steps are completed in setting up allocations. OPI utilizes “project ID’s” for each type of funding source to ensure funding is expended within the applicable budget period and incurred expenditures are accurately reported at the state level. Use of project ID’s allows OPI to separately track funds expended for administration (Personal Services and Operating) of the program and those funds which are sub-granted (Flow through).

More detailed information for the monitoring and internal controls processes is outlined in the Monitoring Plan (See Attachments 7 and 8).

Appendix A: School Operating Status and Instructional Mode Data Template

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

[Click here to enter text.](#)

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	#	#	#	#
School buildings open with both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)	#	#	#	#
School buildings open with full-time in-person instruction	#	#	#	#

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

Table 2

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

Add or change rows as needed

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	#	#	#	#
White, not Hispanic	#	#	#	#
Black or African American, not Hispanic	#	#	#	#
Hispanic, of any race	#	#	#	#
Asian, not Hispanic	#	#	#	#
American Indian or Alaskan Native, not Hispanic	#	#	#	#
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, not Hispanic	#	#	#	#
Two or more races, not Hispanic	#	#	#	#
Race/Ethnicity information not available	#	#	#	#
English learners	#	#	#	#

Number of students	Total enrollment	Remote or online only	Both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)	Full-time in-person instruction
Children with disabilities	#	#	#	#
Students experiencing homelessness	#	#	#	#
Children and youth in foster care	#	#	#	#
Migratory students	#	#	#	#

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/COVID plan).

Appendix D

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

NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS

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

To Whom Does This Provision Apply?

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

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

What Does This Provision Require?

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

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

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

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

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

- (2) An applicant that proposes to develop instructional materials for classroom use might describe how it will make the materials available on audio tape or in braille for students who are blind.
- (3) An applicant that proposes to carry out a model science program for secondary students and is concerned that girls may be less likely than boys to enroll in the course, might indicate how it intends to conduct "outreach" efforts to girls, to encourage their enrollment.
- (4) An applicant that proposes a project to increase school safety might describe the special efforts it will take to address concerns of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students, and efforts to reach out to and involve the families of LGBT students.

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

The Montana OPI recognizes the importance of equitable access to, and participation in, federally assisted programs for students, teachers, and their beneficiaries with special needs. As a component of applying for and accepting federal funds, LEAs must submit assurances that include nondiscrimination. These assurances relate specifically to ARP ESSER funding and to the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA).

ARP ESSER-specific assurances include that recipients will comply with all state and federal rules and regulations regarding nondiscrimination on the basis of gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age. The OPI has also included in its LEA ESSER III E-Grants application a required 427 section that LEAs must describe in a narrative response. Within the narrative response, the LEA must outline the steps they propose to ensure equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally assisted program for students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries with special needs.

The OPI will assist LEAs in ensuring they follow GEPA, as part of the state's LEA ESSER III E-Grants application review and approval process. The OPI will monitor the submitted GEPA narrative responses that explain how LEAs intended use of funds will be all-inclusive. To assist recipients in the creation of these responses, the OPI will provide on its ARP ESSER website an example response that recipients can use and adjust to reflect their unique local requirements and needs. The example will explain that the LEA must provide a specific explanation of the LEA's proposed use(s) of grant funds and a specific explanation of how the LEA will use grant funds in a way that addresses barriers to access and does not discriminate on the basis of any federally protected category.

Montana ARP ESSER Plan Appendices

Section A Appendix

A1-OTL Student Survey Summary Results-See [Attachment 1](#)

A2-OTL Teacher Survey Summary Results-See [Attachment 2](#)

A3-Stakeholder Survey-See [Attachment 3](#)

Section B Appendix

B1-MT Schools Reopening Guide-See [Attachment 4](#)

Table B1-Resources

Universal and correct wearing of masks

State Guidance: Emergency Planning & Safety website:

<http://opi.mt.gov/Leadership/Management-Operations/Emergency-Planning-Safety>.

Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)

State Guidance: Emergency Planning & Safety website:

<http://opi.mt.gov/Leadership/Management-Operations/Emergency-Planning-Safety>.

Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

State Guidance: Emergency Planning & Safety website:

<http://opi.mt.gov/Leadership/Management-Operations/Emergency-Planning-Safety>

Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

State Guidance: Emergency Planning & Safety website:

<http://opi.mt.gov/Leadership/Management-Operations/Emergency-Planning-Safety>. MT DPHHS

<https://dphhs.mt.gov/schoolhealth/safeenvironment> and <https://dphhs.mt.gov/schoolhealth>.

Contact in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments

State Guidance: Emergency Planning & Safety website:

<http://opi.mt.gov/Leadership/Management-Operations/Emergency-Planning-Safety>.MT DPHHS

<https://dphhs.mt.gov/schoolhealth>.

Diagnostic and screening testing

State Guidance: Emergency Planning & Safety website:

<http://opi.mt.gov/Leadership/Management-Operations/Emergency-Planning-Safety>.

Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible

State Guidance: Emergency Planning & Safety website:

<http://opi.mt.gov/Leadership/Management-Operations/Emergency-Planning-Safety>.

Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety

Policies Federal Guidance:

<http://opi.mt.gov/Educators/School-Climate-StudentWellness/Special-Education/COVID-19-Special-Education-Information#93815610-federalguidance---updated-5132021>.

State Guidance: [http://opi.mt.gov/Educators/School-Climate-StudentWellness/Special-Education/COVID-19-](http://opi.mt.gov/Educators/School-Climate-StudentWellness/Special-Education/COVID-19-Special-Education-Information#93815611-stateguidance---updated-4292021)

[Special-Education-Information#93815611-stateguidance---updated-4292021](http://opi.mt.gov/Educators/School-Climate-StudentWellness/Special-Education/COVID-19-Special-Education-Information#93815611-stateguidance---updated-4292021)

<http://opi.mt.gov/Leadership/ManagementOperations/Emergency-Planning-Safety>.

Professional Learning:

<http://opi.mt.gov/Educators/School-Climate-StudentWellness/Special-Education/COVID-19-Special-Education-Information#93815613-professionallearning---updated-1062020>.

Resources:

<http://opi.mt.gov/Educators/School-Climate-Student-Wellness/SpecialEducation/COVID-19-Special-Education-Information#93815612-resources---updated-3242021>.

Other Tools and Resources on the Emergency Planning & Safety website:

1. Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools through Phased Mitigation -

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/operationstrategy.html>.

Guidance for schools to determine how to best support the safety of students, teachers, and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Essential Elements of Safe K-12 School Operations for In-Person Learning -

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/operationstrategy.html>.

Guidance from the CDC on how schools can mitigate the spread of COVID-19 during in-person learning.

3. Toolkits for K-12 Schools - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/toolkits/schools.html>.

Toolkits for schools to use to plan for safe in-person learning.

4. Trends in Number of COVID-19 Cases - https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#trends_dailytrendscases

Information on local COVID-19 case numbers, including county-level data. The CDC's guidance on how to best use this data in making decisions for in person learning.

5. New School Safety Resources, such as: Strategies for Promoting Educator and Student Safety and Wellness During Online Learning -

<http://opi.mt.gov/Portals/182/Page%20Files/Emergency%20Planning%20and%20Safety/Strategies%20for%20Promoting%20Educator%20and%20Student%20Safety%20and%20Wellness%20During%20Online%20Learning.pdf?ver=2021-02-02-131143-020>.

Information on available resources and strategies schools can implement to promote safety and wellness during online learning.

6. Ten Essential Actions for Improving School Safety -

<http://opi.mt.gov/Portals/182/Page%20Files/Emergency%20Planning%20and%20Safety/10%20Essential%20Actions%20to%20Improve%20School%20Safety%20in%20Montana.pdf?ver=2020-11-13-133224-880>.

Steps every school can take to improve school safety and links to additional resources. The OPI also produced the following instructional video

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=sj07eAcAtpY&feature=youtu.be>.) to help districts “learn more about the 10 Essential Actions to Improve School Safety.”

B2-Emergency Planning and Safety Website-

Emergency Planning & Safety website: <http://opi.mt.gov/Leadership/ManagementOperations/Emergency-Planning-Safety>.

B3-MTSBA 1900 Policies-

https://issuu.com/montanaschoolboardsassociation/docs/mtsba_1900_series_model_policies?fr=sODk0NzY0NTY5NA

B4-Other Website Resources School Mental Health

website <http://opi.mt.gov/Educators/School-Climate-StudentWellness/School-Mental-Health>.

That focuses on Trauma-Informed Schools, Social Emotional Learning, Educator Self-Care, and School Mental Health Resources

Section C Appendix

C1-Letters of Support-See Attachment 5

C2-MT Tribal Consultation Guide-See Attachment 6

C4-Stakeholder Evidence-May 4, 2021 Education Advocates-

<http://opi.mt.gov/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=DafGw8QlQ6g%3d&portalid=182>

C5-Stakeholder Evidence-May 18, 2021 Education Advocates-

<http://opi.mt.gov/Portals/182/Education%20Advocates/2021Meetings/5.18.21%20Education%20Advocates.pdf?ver=2021-05-18-100909-270>

C3-ESSER_I_II_Allocations.xlsx-http://opi.mt.gov/Portals/182/COVID-

[19/ESSER/ESSER_I_II_III%20Allocations.pdf?ver=2021-03-26-092919-663](http://opi.mt.gov/Portals/182/COVID-19/ESSER/ESSER_I_II_III%20Allocations.pdf?ver=2021-03-26-092919-663)

Section D Appendix

D1-Citations

CAST (2018). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 2.2. Retrieved from <http://udlguidelines.cast.org>

Liljedahl, P. (2018). Building a Thinking Classroom in Math. [[edutopia](#)]

Section E Appendix

E1-LEA ARP ESSER Template-[See Attachment 9](#)

Section F Appendix and Resources

F1 – Office of Public Instruction School Accreditation. URL: <http://opi.mt.gov/Leadership/Assessment-Accountability/School-Accreditation>

F2 – Office of Public Instruction Quality Educator Loan Assistance Program. URL: <http://opi.mt.gov/Educators/Licensure/Educator-Recruitment-Retention>

F3 – House Bill 630. Full Bill URL: <https://leg.mt.gov/bills/2021/sesslaws/ch0551.pdf>

AN ACT GENERALLY REVISING STATE FINANCE LAWS RELATED TO APPROPRIATING FEDERAL FUNDS FOR COVID-19 RELIEF FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2021; ESTABLISHING A TEMPORARY MAINTENANCE OF EQUITY PAYMENT FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS; TEMPORARILY SUSPENDING ANTICIPATED ENROLLMENT INCREASES DUE TO COVID-19; TEMPORARILY MODIFYING FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR UNANTICIPATED ENROLLMENT INCREASES DUE TO COVID-19; ALLOWING COVID-19 RELIEF APPROPRIATIONS TO CONTINUE INTO THE BIENNIUM BEGINNING JULY 1, 2021; APPROPRIATING FUNDS TO THE OFFICE OF STATE PUBLIC DEFENDER FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2021; ALLOWING MODIFICATIONS RELATED TO APPROPRIATIONS AND AUTHORIZATIONS; AMENDING SECTIONS 20-6-326, 20-9-166, AND 20-9-314, MCA; AMENDING SECTION 1, CHAPTER 483, LAWS OF 2019; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE AND A TERMINATION DATE.

F4 – Administrative Rule of Montana 10.55.714 Professional Development. URL: <http://www.mtrules.org/gateway/ruleno.asp?RN=10.55.714>

F5 – OPI Professional Learning Opportunities Portal. URL: <https://mtplportal.org/>

F6 – OPI Data Systems Modernization Project. URL: <http://opi.mt.gov/Data-Systems-Modernization>

F7 – OPI Virtual Job Fair. URL: <https://hopin.com/events/mt-education-virtual-job-fair#booths>

F8 – Title II Reports National Teacher Preparation Data. URL: <https://title2.ed.gov/Public/Home.aspx>

F9 – Rural Mental Health Pathways Grant. URL: <http://opi.mt.gov/Portals/182/Page%20Files/School%20Mental%20Health/Mental%20Health%20Rural%20Pathways.pdf?ver=2020-05-08-145942793#:~:text=RMHP3%20is%20a%20federally%20funded,Montana's%20rural%20schools%20and%20c>

[ommunitie s.&text=In%20order%20to%20participate%20in,or%20Marriage%20and%20Family%20Counseling.](#)

F10 – Teacher Quality Partnership Grant. URL: <https://www.montana.edu/education/grad/mat/tqp.html>

F11 - House Bill 403. Full Bill URL: <https://leg.mt.gov/bills/2021/sesslaws/ch0514.pdf>

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR LAWS ADDRESSING EDUCATOR RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PROBLEMS IN RURAL MONTANA AND INDIAN COUNTRY; ESTABLISHING A MULTIFACETED GROW YOUR OWN GRANT PROGRAM ADMINISTERED BY THE COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION TO STRENGTHEN TEACHER PIPELINES; PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATION; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE AND A TERMINATION DATE.

F12 - House Bill 246. Full Bill URL: https://leg.mt.gov/bills/2021/HB0299/HB0246_2.pdf

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: “AN ACT GENERALLY REVISING EDUCATION LAWS TO STRENGTHEN 5 SUPERVISION AND CONTROL BY ELECTED SCHOOL BOARDS AND TO INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES 6 FOR PUPILS; BROADENING THE CONCEPT OF INSTRUCTION TO EXPAND A FOCUS ON THE 7 OUTCOME OF LEARNING FOR EACH PUPIL; REVISING TEACHER, SPECIALIST, AND ADMINISTRATOR 8 CERTIFICATION TO CODIFY FLEXIBILITIES AVAILABLE TO ELECTED SCHOOL BOARDS UNDER RULES 9 OF THE BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION; STREAMLINING THE PROCESS OF LICENSING TO ASSIST 10 ELECTED SCHOOL BOARDS IN SUCCESSFULLY RECRUITING AND RETAINING QUALIFIED 11 EDUCATORS; CLARIFYING THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH AN ELECTED SCHOOL BOARD MAY 12 QUALIFY FOR EMERGENCY AUTHORIZATION TO EMPLOY AN UNLICENSED TEACHER; CODIFYING 13 THE AUTHORITY OF ELECTED SCHOOL BOARDS TO WAIVE SPECIFIC COURSE REQUIREMENTS 14 BASED ON INDIVIDUAL PUPIL NEEDS, INTERESTS, ASPIRATIONS, AND PERFORMANCE LEVELS; 15 CODIFYING THE AUTHORITY OF ELECTED SCHOOL BOARDS TO GRANT CREDIT FOR ANY COURSE 16 WHEN A PUPIL HAS GAINED PROFICIENCY OVER COURSE CONTENT THROUGH ALTERNATIVE 17 MEANS; AUTHORIZING ELECTED SCHOOL BOARDS TO EXPAND PARTNERSHIPS WITH WORK-BASED 18 LEARNING PARTNERS AND GRANT EQUIVALENT CREDIT FOR TIME SPENT BY A PUPIL 19 PARTICIPATING IN ON-THE-JOB EXPERIENCES WITH A WORK-BASED LEARNING PARTNER; 20 AUTHORIZING AN ELECTED SCHOOL BOARD TO ALLOW NONRESIDENT STUDENTS TO PARTICIPATE 21 IN OFFSITE INSTRUCTION IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES; AMENDING SECTIONS 20-1-101, 20-3-324, 22 20-4-101, 20-4-104, 20-4-106, 20-4-111, 20-7-118, AND 20-7-1601, MCA; AMENDING SECTION 7, CHAPTER 23 402, LAWS OF 2019; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE.”

F13 – 2021 Summer Learning and Enrichment: State Guidance for District and School Leaders. URL: <http://opi.mt.gov/Portals/182/Page%20Files/Summer%20Learning%20Challenges/2021%20MONTANA%20SUMMER%20LEARNING%20Report.pdf?ver=2021-04-29-101027-283>

F14 – House Bill 143. Full Bill URL: <https://leg.mt.gov/bills/2021/billpdf/HB0143.pdf>

AN ACT INCENTIVIZING INCREASES IN BASE PAY FOR TEACHERS IN PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS; INCREASING THE QUALITY EDUCATOR PAYMENT FOR DISTRICTS THAT MEET LEGISLATIVE GOALS FOR COMPETITIVE BASE PAY OF TEACHERS; PROVIDING DEFINITIONS; AMENDING SECTION 20-9- 306, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE

F15 - Jobs for Teachers. URL: <http://opi.mt.gov/Educators/Licensure/Jobs-for-Teachers>

F16 – Montana Schools Recruitment Project. URL: <https://www.sammt.org/mcase-recruitment-project>

Section G Appendix

G1-ARP ESSER Monitoring Plan-See Attachments 7 and 8