



# NEBRASKA'S STATE PLAN

*Planning for Renewal and Acceleration*

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American Rescue Plan and Elementary and  
Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund



## Introduction

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

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

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

## Instructions

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

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

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

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

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

## Cover Page

### Grantee and Contact Information

**ARP ESSER PR Award Number (e.g., S425U2100XX):** S425U210048

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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)**

**Deborah A. Frison, Ed.D.**



Date:  
1/11/  
2023

## 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.

Nebraska stands out as a state that supported in-person learning for the vast majority of students for the entire 2020-21 school year. This accomplishment is a testament to the hard work and perseverance of the state's educators, resiliency of our learners, family and community engagement and support, and partnerships among national, state, and local public health officials.

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) supported the continuity of learning and safe return to school through the following strategies:

First, the NDE served as a **convener and communicator**. NDE hosted weekly, then twice per month, meetings with superintendents and other staff, bringing together local and state public health officials and the governor to share the state of the state. These meetings provided clear, consistent communication focused on health and well-being, mitigation strategies, and continuity of learning. The NDE, in collaboration with myriad partners, developed [Launch Nebraska](#), a comprehensive guide to leadership and systems work, continuity of learning, and conditions for learning necessary to make the 2020-21 school year safe and productive for students. The resource has now pivoted to the key actions necessary for [Renewal and Acceleration](#).

Second, from the beginning of the pandemic, the NDE emphasized the **critical need to support marginalized student groups** in their continuity of learning. School districts were required to submit "Continuity of Learning Plans" which asked specifically about strategies to serve students with disabilities and English learners. Responses informed supports to schools, professional learning offerings, and flexibilities in rules and regulations. **Digital equity gaps** were also addressed through early and coordinated focus on the hierarchy of technology needs. A significant investment was made in bridging the digital divide through both the NDE's CARES Act set aside and the governor's investment of GEER dollars.

Finally, over the past year, the NDE has curated over 30 hours of **professional learning opportunities** targeted toward the varied needs of schools, subject area, and student needs. These resources, which are still accessible, allow districts to choose the learning and resources that best fit the needs of their staff and students.

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.

Across 14 ESSER roundtable discussions, a survey of stakeholders, and quantitative data analysis, the following four priorities have emerged:

- **Access to comprehensive mental health services** for students, staff, and communities. The psychological toll of the pandemic may not be fully understood yet, but access to mental healthcare providers pre-pandemic was already scarce, particularly in rural communities.
  - **Authentic and reimagined family and community engagement**. Parents, guardians, and families have played an invaluable role supporting the safety and learning of students over this past year. Trust, relationships, and two-way communication must be prioritized this summer and throughout the next school year.
  - Teachers and leaders with the requisite **high-quality professional learning and resources** to address the full spectrum of students' academic needs with an explicit focus on the unfinished learning of historically marginalized students. This priority also emphasizes **bolstering the teacher pipeline**. Shortages in critical teaching positions existed pre-pandemic (detailed further below) and have further been exacerbated. Particular attention must be paid to attracting, retaining, upskilling, and elevating educators, with particular attention increasing the racial parity of the teaching force.
  - **Ensure students have equitable access to grade-level instruction to address unfinished learning and support learning acceleration**. Students had differing experiences during the pandemic, and many, especially the historically marginalized, were performing below grade level before the pandemic. That said, educators must not turn solely to remediation to approach the unfinished teaching and learning of students, instead focusing on the acceleration necessary to meet the needs of each student.
3. Identifying Needs of Underserved Students: Describe your State's 2-3 highest priority academic, social, emotional, and/or mental health needs for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year (if applicable) and for the 2021-2022 school year related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on each of the following student groups:
    - i. Students from low-income families,

- ii. Students from each racial or ethnic group (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by race or ethnicity),
- iii. Gender (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by gender),
- iv. English learners,
- v. Children with disabilities (including infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (“IDEA”)),
- vi. Students experiencing homelessness,
- vii. Children and youth in foster care,
- viii. Migratory students, and
- ix. Other groups disproportionately impacted by the pandemic that have been identified by the SEA (e.g., youth involved in the criminal justice system, students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years, students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures, and LGBTQ+ students).

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

**NOTE:** Many 2020-21 data collections, including cohort graduation rate, statewide summative assessment scores, membership, and teacher/personnel data, will not be available until Fall 2021. The NDE has endeavored to detail specific needs for student groups given qualitative input from myriad stakeholders and available quantitative data. Additionally, Nebraska had a high statewide summative assessment participation rate, positioning the state well for data analysis.

Many needs facing specific student groups were present before the pandemic, and while new data may not be currently, the NDE acknowledges the disparate effect of COVID-19 on some communities, which could lead to the widening of these opportunity and achievement gaps. As Commissioner of Education, Dr. Matthew Blomstedt noted, “The collective failure as a nation to successfully confront the pandemics of poverty, racism, and injustice left us more vulnerable to the pandemic of COVID-19 and the consequences it will have for generations.”

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

**Table A1.**

<b>Student group</b>	<b>Highest priority needs</b>
Students from low-income families	<p>Key Data Point(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2018-19 Chronic Absenteeism: 21% (All Students: 13%)</li> <li>• 2019-20 Graduation Rate: 79.7% (All Students: 88%)</li> </ul> <p>1) While a small percentage of students in Nebraska learned remotely this year, economically disadvantaged students in our largest districts were more likely to have started the year in this learning modality.</p> <p>2) Consistent, reliable, high speed internet and broadband access continue to be a challenge for economically disadvantaged students in Nebraska</p>
Students from each racial or ethnic background used by the State for reporting purposes (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by race/ethnicity)	<p>Key Data Point(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2019-20 Graduation Rate for Native American Students: 71% (All Students: 88%)</li> <li>• 2018-19 English Language Arts for Black or African American Students: 27% Proficient (All Students: 52%)</li> <li>• 2018-19 Chronic Absenteeism for Hispanic/Latinx Students: 19% (All Students: 13%)</li> </ul> <p>1) In addition to the pandemic, which disproportionately affected families of color, the twin pandemic of racial injustice came to a head with the murder of George Floyd. Trauma, disproportionate rates of discipline, disproportionality in identification for special education and many other inequities continue to affect learners of color at higher rates than their White peers.</p> <p>2) Significant opportunity gaps existed before the pandemic, with each racial and ethnic group scoring below the White student group in ELA, math, and graduation rates.</p> <p>3) Educators across the state need continued support to ensure culturally relevant/sustaining pedagogy and materials are meeting the needs of all learners and implemented with fidelity.</p>
Students by gender – please add a row for each gender (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by gender)	<p>Key Data Point(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2018-19 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) – 43% of high school girls reported feeling “Sad or Hopeless” compared to 21.1% of boys</li> <li>• 2018-29 YRBS – 22.8% of girls considered attempting suicide, compared to 12.7% for boys</li> <li>• 2018-19 suspension and expulsion data: African American girls represent only 7% of the student population but over 23% of the expulsions</li> </ul> <p>1) Prior to COVID-19, data from the YRBS suggest girls need additional social emotional and mental health supports.</p>

Student group	Highest priority needs
	<p>2) At the intersection of gender and race/ethnicity, prior to the pandemic, Black girls were far more likely than their White peers to be suspended and expelled at significantly disproportionate rates.</p>
English learners	<p>Key data point(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2019-20 Graduation Rate: 52% (All Students: 88%)</li> <li>• 2018-19 Chronic Absenteeism: 18% (All Students: 13%)</li> <li>• 2020-21 ELPA 21 Participation Rate: 96%</li> </ul> <p>1) Like students with disabilities, the English learner student group is nuanced and complex. In Nebraska, 110 languages are spoken in our schools, and one of the greatest challenges is increasing the capacity of general education teachers to effectively support the English language acquisition of ELs across content areas.</p> <p>2) An additional priority for English learners is authentic and meaningful engagement of parents and guardians of English learners.</p>
Children with disabilities	<p>Key data point(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2019-20 Graduation Rate: 68.9% (All Students: 88%)</li> <li>• 2018-19 Math for Students with Disabilities: 22% Proficient (All Students: 52%)</li> </ul> <p>1) When Nebraska designated schools for targeted support and improvement and additional targeted support and improvement for the first time in 2019, the students with disabilities group had the most school identifications. One of the greatest needs is a collective responsibility and accountability for students with disabilities in general education classrooms and strengthening Tier 1 core instruction.</p> <p>2) Nebraska must continue to pursue explicit supports for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who were often unable to receive the same type of intensive supports necessary and guaranteed to them.</p> <p>3) Building parent and guardian capacity for support and advocacy. Parents, guardians, and families serve as the primary teachers of students. A specific need is continued empowerment of families to serve as advocates and partners in students with disabilities in reaching the goals outlined in IEPs.</p>

Student group	Highest priority needs
Students experiencing homelessness	<p>Key data point(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2019-20 Graduation Rate: 59.9% (All Students: 88%)</li> </ul> <p>1) Students experiencing homelessness often struggle to participate in virtual or online learning. Schools often serve as the most stable structures for this student group, so disruptions created significant barriers to their learning and access to supports.</p> <p>2) While Nebraska's data systems and governance make it virtually impossible for a student to be disenrolled without accounting for their movement, tracking and accounting for students experiencing homelessness continues to be a challenge.</p> <p>3) While all students benefit from wrap around services, students experiencing homelessness specifically gain when the school addresses whole child needs.</p>
Children and youth in foster care and those involved in the justice system	<p>Key data point(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>December 2020: 3,965 Systems-Involved Youth, 3% increase from 2019</li> <li>2019-20 Graduation Rate: 51.2% (All Students: 88%)</li> </ul> <p>1) Students who are systems involved, including those in the foster care or juvenile justice systems, require specific attention to transitions among facilities, when they age out, or from grade to grade.</p> <p>2) Students who are systems involved require more personalized attention through educational advocates, mentors, or liaisons, and a coordinated cross-sector collaboration. In Nebraska, this relationship is developing, but with greater numbers of students, further work must be done.</p>
Migratory students	<p>Key data point(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2019-20 Graduation Rate: 84.7% (All Students: 88%)</li> </ul> <p>1) Students who are migratory often lack stable and consistent transportation. This challenge was especially acute during the pandemic with loss of jobs and housing instability.</p> <p>2) Migratory students and families benefit from two-generational approaches like family literacy, parenting classes, and parent and child together time. These strategies empower parents to support their own learning and that of their children.</p>

Student group	Highest priority needs
	<p>3) As students move from place to place, rapid placement in appropriate courses is often lost or the process prolonged. This means that specific strategies for credit recovery must be pursued for migratory students.</p>
<p>Other groups of students identified by the State (e.g., youth involved in the criminal justice system, students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years, students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures, LGBTQ+ students)</p>	<p>Key data point(s):</p> <p>There are several student groups considered “at risk” before the pandemic, as measured by both the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) and academic outcomes. In addition to those student groups above, the NDE also is monitoring the needs of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LGBTQ+ Youth (2018-19 YRBS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 34.4% of LGBTQ+ students reported being bullied</li> <li>○ 59.4% of LGBTQ+ students reported feeling sad or hopeless</li> <li>○ 41% of LGBTQ+ students reported seriously considering attempting suicide</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>1) According to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey from 2018-19, LGBTQ+ youth are far more likely to experience sadness, depression, and bullying at schools in Nebraska. Among the highest needs from the ARP survey and stakeholder input, mental health supports for all students, including, but not limited to LGBTQ+ students, must be prioritized and provided across the state.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students who are Highly Mobile <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 2018-19 English Language Arts: 30% Proficient (All Students: 51%)</li> <li>○ 2018-19 Math: 26% Proficient (All Students: 52%)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>1) Students who are highly mobile often struggle to participate in virtual or online learning. Schools often serve as the most stable structures for this student group, so disruptions created significant barriers to their learning and access to supports</p> <p>2) Strong structures must be implemented to support continuity of services for students who are highly mobile, especially for mobile students that are also English learners and/or have disabilities.</p>

Student group	Highest priority needs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children with a Parent in the Military               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 2018-19 English Language Arts: 66% Proficient (All Students: 51%)</li> <li>○ 2018-19 Math: 64% Proficient (All Students: 52%)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>1) Children with a parent in the military, while often performing higher than their peers on academic assessments, often need additional support for their transitions to and from new bases or assignments. The patterns and needs of students with parents in the military often mirror those of highly mobile students.</p> <p>2) Additionally, students with a parent in the military often require additional social emotional supports as a result of their movement from place to place.</p>

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

The NDE will support LEAs in unearthing the impact of COVID-19 on students through multiple strategies. First, the NDE will elevate messages developed through its own research on the impact. For example, the NDE has developed a map triangulating the CDC's social vulnerability index, COVID-19 cases per hundred thousand, and our TSI, CSI, ATSI schools. This has enabled the NDE to target funds and strategies and can be replicated at the local level.

Additionally, the NDE will assist districts in inventorying and using their own local data like attendance, interim assessments, classroom assessments, digital equity, and perceptual data. Technical assistance sessions will be held throughout the summer to assist schools in examining available data, triangulating it, and pivoting into action.

Finally, the NDE will assist schools to approach disparate impacts through a multi-tiered systems approach, ensuring tier one academic, social, emotional and mental health needs are met for all, and more intensive supports pursued for those students most affected.

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.

The NDE made a conscious effort to reduce data burdens on schools during this year so districts could focus all efforts on the unique learning environment and safety protocols. Districts self-reported mode of instruction to the NDE.

Additionally:

- Enrollment data is submitted and validated in October of each year
- Attendance data flows to the NDE each day, but is officially validated at the end of the year.
- Mode of instruction was informally collected through Launch NE Learning Status page.

Beginning in the 2021-22 school year, the NDE will include enhanced tracking for Learning Modality, through specific student-level data elements for in person, remote, or hybrid learning. Additional absence codes to capture the reason for absences will provide more specific analytic opportunities to evaluate and identify supports needed for students as well.

- 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.

See Appendix A for more details.

- 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 NDE will continue to support local decisions around offerings for the fall, however, the NDE believes like this year, the vast majority of students will be learning in-person this summer and in the fall of 2021. Additionally, the NDE will enhance its data collections to include more clear measures of remote learning, reasons for absences, and other key indicators of student access and success.

## **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;

Nebraska has prioritized and supported in-person instruction from before the beginning of this year. Planning and support began in late spring 2020 with the development of Launch Nebraska and the NDE’s [Planning a Safe Return to School in Nebraska](#) guidance developed by local, state, and national public health and education experts. Through the development of this document the NDE communicated the following foundational values which drove the state to a successful school year:

- Equity: We must ensure our students, especially those who have been historically underserved, maintain access to high quality teaching.
- Quality: While flexibility and innovation must be pursued, we must not back down from our standards for quality.
- Flexibility: We must pursue flexibilities in regulations and innovations to ensure students have access to high quality teaching.
- Safety: Learning cannot occur if the school community does not feel safe in their environment.
- Decisive: Given the size and scope of the challenge, we must move deliberately and make tough choices. We will make mistakes, and we will adapt quickly as variables on the ground change.

**In sum, Nebraska schools have already safely returned to in-person learning through the commitment of educators, resiliency of students and staff, partnerships with local health departments and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, and clear guidance and communication.** This same commitment to student and staff safety continues into summer 2021 and the 2021-22 school year.

For summer and into next school year, the NDE will insist upon consultation with local health departments in designing safety protocols aligned with the CDC and emerging best practices.

Additionally, the NDE has developed a template plan to guide district leaders in easily aligning their return to learning plans to the most recent CDC guidelines.

**Table B1.**

Mitigation strategy	SEA response
Universal and correct wearing of masks	The NDE has led statewide efforts and partnerships to message the continued need for safety, masking, vaccinations, and mental health through its sponsorship in the <a href="#">Do Right, Right Now</a> campaign.
Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)	
Handwashing and respiratory etiquette	Additionally, guidance was provided for schools in the NDE's <a href="#">Planning a Safe Return to School in Nebraska</a> , and through continued evolution of guidance on the Launch NE website.
Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation	
Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments	The NDE has also worked closely with the Nebraska Association of Local Health Departments and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services to share consistent messages every other week through joint webinars with education leaders.
Diagnostic and screening testing	The NDE coordinated the distribution of hand sanitizer and face masks at the beginning of the 2020-21 school year, and continues to closely monitor PPE needs for districts.
	The NDE worked closely with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services to pilot COVID-19 screening tests to 2,500 students statewide through two separate rounds.
Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible	Finally, the NDE has developed and executed professional learning webinars for school nurses and other school health personnel through a partnership with Nebraska Children's Hospital and their Project ECHO.
	The Do Right, Right Now campaign pivoted from mitigation efforts to vaccination efforts beginning in January 2021. The NDE has also elevated district efforts for staff and student vaccination.

<b>Mitigation strategy</b>	<b>SEA response</b>
Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies	The NDE Office of Special Education developed guidelines aligned to CDC and local, state, and national public health officials accommodating for the unique needs of students with disabilities. This included proper alternatives to health and safety protocols.

- 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;

Every Nebraska school district has provided in-person instruction in the 2020-21 school year. The NDE has been tracking districts that have offered remote or hybrid options.

- 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

Central to the success of this year has been the partnerships with public health officials at all levels. The NDE has partnered with the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC), national partners, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, and the Nebraska Association of Local Health Directors (NALHD).

The NDE hosted weekly meetings with education stakeholders from March 2020 through March 2021. Each week, the governor, DHHS, and at least one representative from local health departments (LHDs) have presented relevant data and guidance to school leaders, and allowed significant dialogue and questions and answer time.

Additionally, NDE staff met weekly with the chief medical officer and state epidemiologist to collaborate and create a strategy for LEA COVID-19 screening, distribution of PPE, and virus mitigation in school settings.

Finally, districts bolstered relationships with LHDs and the NDE, and worked collaboratively to develop plans for school operations. Local health departments provided the following services to LEAS:

- Consulted with superintendents.
- Provided guidance and technical assistance to local schools.
- Determined consistent protocols for when cases occurred within schools.

- Quarantined and isolated school staff and students based upon COVID-19 cases and/or exposure.
  - Regularly communicated local COVID-19 status – including via risk dial.
- iv. Any guidance, professional learning, and technical assistance opportunities the SEA will make available to its LEAs.

The NDE provided guidance on [Launch NE](#) distilling CDC guidance for facilities, lunchroom settings, fine arts, in career and technical education classrooms, and extracurricular activities. The NDE worked collaboratively with DHHS and local health departments to disseminate and update these documents regularly, and shared the resources weekly with superintendents and other school leaders.

The NDE also participated in Project ECHO professional learning opportunities for school nurses.

2. Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plans: Describe how the SEA will ensure that its LEAs that receive ARP ESSER funds meet the requirements in section 2001(i) of the ARP Act and the requirements relating to the ARP ESSER funds published in the Federal Register and available at <https://oese.ed.gov/offices/american-rescue-plan/american-rescue-plan-elementary-and-secondary-school-emergency-relief/> (ARP ESSER requirements) to either: (a) within 30 days of receipt of the funds, develop and make publicly available on the LEA’s website a plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services, or (b) have developed and made publicly available on the LEA’s website such a plan that meets statutory requirements before the enactment of the ARP Act, including:
- i. How the SEA will ensure that each LEA plan includes, or will be modified to include, the extent to which it has adopted policies and a description of any such policies on each of the strategies listed in table B1;
  - ii. How the SEA will ensure that each LEA plan describes how it will ensure continuity of services including but not limited to services to address the students’ academic needs, and students’ and staff social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services;
  - iii. How the SEA will ensure that the LEA periodically reviews, no less frequently than every six months for the duration of the ARP ESSER grant period (i.e., through September 30, 2023),<sup>2</sup> and revises as appropriate, its plan, and how the SEA will ensure that the LEA

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

- iv. seeks public input, and takes such input into account on (1) whether revisions are necessary and, if so, (2) the revisions to the plan; and Describe, to the extent the SEA collects it, information about LEA implementation, to the greatest extent practicable, of each element of the most up-to-date CDC guidance listed in table B1 and its LEAs' needs for support and technical assistance to implement strategies consistent, to the greatest extent practicable, with relevant CDC guidance.

See responses below:

- i. Since all Nebraska schools were already providing in-person instruction in the 2020-21 school year, the NDE has created a simple template to capture district best practices, ensure required consultation with local health departments, and guarantee alignment with CDC guidelines.
- ii. In the spring of 2020, the NDE required "Continuity of Learning Plans" which can serve as models for this year's version. In the template for the Safe Return to In-Person Learning, districts will detail their plans for continuity of learning, including services for specific student groups, and their plan for providing nutritional services and other students support if disruptions should occur this year. The NDE will collect this response through the grants management system.
- iii. The NDE will provide technical assistance and consultation during the summer of 2021 including support with the template for a safe return, grants management assistance, etc. These plans will be periodically reviewed by both programmatic and fiscal staff throughout 2021-22 and beyond at six-month intervals.
- iv. The NDE does not collect these data.

### **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.

NDE is **committed to meaningful consultation with stakeholders**, and modeled this engagement for districts by taking time to intentionally meet with a broad set of voices representing multiple communities and stakeholder groups. Throughout May and into early June, the NDE met with 14 stakeholder groups in round table discussions focused on determining the greatest needs facing students and families, and priorities for investments of ARP funds. These groups include the following:

- i. Students
  - Career and Technical Student Organization Executive Leaders – June 2, 2021
  - Nebraska Youth Leadership Council – June 3, 2021
- ii. Families
  - Special Education Advisory Committee – May 6, 2021
  - Parents and Families (Translation services provided) – May 27, 2021
- iii. Tribes (if applicable);
  - Commissioner’s Native American Advisory Committee – May 19, 2021
  - Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs – May 19, 2021
- iv. Civil rights organizations (including disability rights organizations);
  - Equity Committee – (Urban League, Latino American Commission, Nebraska Commission for Indian Affairs, OutNebraska, Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing) – May 26, 2021
  - Nebraska NAACP – May 20, 2021
  - Statewide Facilities-Based Schools Administrators – May 26, 2021

- v. School and district administrators (including special education administrators);
  - Nebraska Council of School Administrators Executive Team – May 18, 2021
  - Commissioner’s Superintendents Advisory Committee – May 12, 2021
- vi. Superintendents;
  - Commissioner’s Superintendents Advisory Committee – May 12, 2021
- vii. Charter school leaders (if applicable);
  - Not Applicable
- viii. Teachers, principals, school leaders, other educators, school staff, and their unions; and
  - Commissioner’s Teacher Advisory Group – April 8, 2021
  - Nebraska Council of School Administrators Executive Team – May 18, 2021
  - Commissioner’s Superintendents Advisory Committee – May 12, 2021
  - Nebraska State Education Association – May 19, 2021
- 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.
  - Special Education Advisory Committee – May 6, 2021
  - Statewide Facilities-Based Schools Administrators – May 26, 2021
  - Omaha Education Partners – May 21, 2021

The following six questions were posed to all stakeholder groups. Responses in the tables represent consistent or recurring themes across all groups.

**What have been the greatest needs facing students and communities during the COVID-19 pandemic?**

Mental Health; Social-Emotional Supports; Increased mental health crises; Trauma across multiple crises (ex. COVID, Racial Reckoning in Summer 2020, etc)
Staff burnout, mental health, engagement, professional learning needs
Technology; Gaps in infrastructure and connectivity
Engagement, re-engagement, and connection for students who learned remotely
Holistic needs of children: nutritional, physical health, housing insecurity, family crises

**If money weren't a barrier, what investments would you make in your school and community to transform education?**

Offer Universal pre-K for all
Increase family and community engagement; parent education and two-generational approach
Focus on equitable learning strategies such as restorative practices; explicit strategies for SPED, EL, and students of color; Support for culturally relevant pedagogy
Focus on the teacher pipeline - recruitment, retention, elevation of educators. Intensive professional learning now and into next year; focus on remote learning
Implement a Community schools model and wrap around services; integration of services with DHHS, etc.

**What state and local investments should be made to prioritize students who have been historically marginalized?**

<b>Increase racial diversity among the teaching force</b>
Provide training on inclusion and inclusionary practices: ex. Universal design for learning, restorative practices, cultural competence and culturally relevant pedagogy and materials.
Elevate student and family voice, specifically students and families of color
Rethink school schedules
Implement project based learning and invest in CTE

**What are the most important strategies local school districts could implement as part of their investments?**

Summer and enhanced program offerings, ex. Tutoring and expanded learning
Summer learning for educators
Early interventions for struggling readers
Full-time nurses, school counselors and/or mental health counselors, social workers, behavioral coaches, etc.
Substitute teachers, and teacher pipeline

**What statewide supports could/should NDE provide through our investments?**

<b>Statewide strategy for mental health access; Tier one supports for SEL</b>
Summer school supports and programming

Incentives or investments for HQIM
Not choosing cookie cutter projects, but allowing for the customization at the district level
Strategies for parent and community engagement and full-scale community schools models

**In what ways can we better recruit, support, and retain teachers and leaders during this time?**

Offer and accept micro-credentialing
Remove the Praxis as a requirement
Create teacher pipeline support: Mentor teaching, Paid teacher residency programs, instructional coaches; Develop EdRising statewide
<b>Provide teacher mental health supports</b>
Clearly communicate recertification processes, invest in additional certification for teachers, or upskill paraeducators and teachers

Additionally, the NDE provided a public survey from May 21 to June 7 and received 543 responses. Trends from the survey reiterate themes from roundtables and include the following:

**Question 1: Please select the 3 greatest needs facing students during the COVID-19 pandemic from the list below.**

Student Need	Number of Responses
Social emotional supports for all students	245
Mental health supports for students	204
Unfinished teaching and learning resulting from closures	181
Supports for wraparound services at schools (i.e supports for physical, emotional, nutritional, and health supports)	176
Barriers to learning remotely (eg. lack of internet, devices)	153

**Question 8: Please select the 3 most important strategies local school districts could implement as part of their investments.**

Strategies	Number of Responses
Reduced class sizes	185
Mental health training and support	174

Professional learning to support the implementation of high-quality instructional materials	145
Purchase high-quality instructional materials	139
Short-term mental health practitioners, psychologists, social workers	137

**Question 9: Please select up to 3 statewide supports that NDE could/should provide through their investments.**

<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>
Mental health training and support	171
Reduce class sizes	146
Short-term mental health practitioners, psychologists, social workers	145
Purchase/leverage educational technology investments	143
Professional learning networks to support the implementation of high-quality instructional materials	143

The listening sessions and survey reiterate the priority areas and strategies identified by the NDE and written into this plan in Section A2 and D1i.

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

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

**Table C1.**

<b>Funding source</b>	<b>Prior/current SEA and LEA uses (including funding amounts, if applicable)</b>	<b>Planned SEA and LEA uses (including funding amounts, if applicable)</b>
ESSER I (CARES Act)	<p><i>See screenshots below. More details at <a href="https://www.education.ne.gov/cares-act/">https://www.education.ne.gov/cares-act/</a></i></p>	
GEER I (CARES Act)		
ESSER II (CRRSA Act)		
GEER II (CRRSA Act)		



# RELIEF AID

## PreK-12 EDUCATION



INVESTMENTS IN  
*Nebraska*

Since March 2020, the federal government has passed three relief packages in response to the COVID-19 pandemic that include unprecedented support for K-12 schools to address the impact that COVID-19 has had, and continues to have, on elementary and secondary schools across the nation. The relief funding awards grants to States (SEAs), school districts (LEAs), and nonpublic schools through two separate funds: the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund and the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund. The purpose of this document is to provide a high-level overview of the NDE's actions to date on the administration of federal COVID-19 relief funds.

**Table 1. Overall Funds Available to Nebraska K-12 Schools through COVID-19 Relief Packages**

Legislation	CARES Coronavirus Aid, Relief & Economic Security Act	CRRSA Coronavirus Response & Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act	ARP American Rescue Plan Act
Enacted	March 2020	December 2020	March 2021
Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief <b>ESSER</b>	\$65,085,085	\$243,073,530	\$545,908,619
Governor's Emergency Education Relief <b>GEER</b>	\$16,357,685	\$17,272,129	\$18,618,767
Total Education Stabilization Funds	\$81,442,770	\$260,345,659	\$564,527,386



**Table 2. Aid Available through the GEER & Emergency Assistance for Nonpublic schools (EANS)**

Program Details	GEER I	GEER II/EANS	ARP EANS
Stimulus Program	<a href="#">CARES Act</a>	<a href="#">CRRSA Act</a>	<a href="#">ARP Act</a>
State Allocation & Methodology	<a href="#">State Allocation</a>	<a href="#">State Allocation</a>	<a href="#">State Allocation</a>
Available for Obligation Through	9/30/22	9/30/23	9/30/23
Nebraska GEER Aid	\$16,357,685	Governor education funds became EANS funds	
Nebraska EANS Services/Assistance Emergency Assistance for Nonpublic Schools	Public school districts provide equitable services to nonpublic schools through ESSER	\$17,272,129 Including \$200,000 for State Administration	\$18,618,767 Including \$200,000 for State Administration
Level of Aid Spent to Date Costs may date back to March 13, 2020	100% Obligated	\$0 - May 2021 Services Available	\$0 - June 2021 Schools Apply
Nebraska Allocation & Methodology	Governor providing devices/access for all students in need	<a href="#">Nonpublic Allocation</a> 50% Total Enrollment 50% Low-Income	July 2021 - Final Allocations Available
Main Purpose of Funds  <i>Check it out! Click the pic!</i>	 Address digital equitable access and Learning		
	 Provide services or assistance to non-public schools through partnership with FACTS to serve the most impacted by COVID-19		

More information available at: [education.ne.gov/cares-act/](https://education.ne.gov/cares-act/)

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Table 3. Aid Available through the ESSER COVID-19 Relief Packages

Program Details	ESSER I	ESSER II	ESSER III
Stimulus Program	<a href="#">CARES Act</a>	<a href="#">CRRSA Act</a>	<a href="#">ARP Act</a>
Total Nebraska ESSER Aid	\$65,085,085	\$243,073,530	\$549,484,612
Available for Obligation Through	9/30/22	9/30/23	9/30/24
Total Nebraska ESSER Aid	\$65,085,085	\$243,073,530	\$545,908,619
State Allocation & Methodology	<a href="#">State Allocation</a>	<a href="#">State Allocation</a>	<a href="#">State Allocation</a>
School District Aid Distribution (90%)	\$58,576,577	\$218,766,177	\$491,317,757
School District Allocation & Methodology	<a href="#">District Allocation</a>	<a href="#">District Allocation</a>	Released May 2021
Budgeted Investments	42% Technology 26% Closure/Employ Staff 19% Response/Supplies 11% Nonpublic Schools 1.2% Vulnerable Populations 0.4% Prof Development 0.3% Social/Emotional	April 2021 Districts Applying & Budgeting Aid	May 2021 Allocations & Application become available  Note: 20% reserved for "learning loss" through evidence-based interventions & LEA maintenance of equity
Level of Aid Spent to Date Costs may date back to March 13, 2020	68% Reimbursed \$40,108,258	\$0	\$0
Main Purpose of Funds 	Ensure students and educators have devices, connectivity, support needed to continue to learn, and provide communication /support to families and students.	Measure and address learning loss among students disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and school closures, particularly students with high-needs.	Reopen schools and sustain safe operation aligned to CDC guidance for in-person learning. Provide evidenced-based interventions to meet social, emotional, and academic needs.
SEA Reservation (10% - NDE) Including 0.5% State Administration Maintenance of Effort and Equity Provisions	\$6,508,509	\$24,307,353	\$54,590,862
Budgeted Investments	60% Technology 19% Fall Planning 9% Unobligated 5% Administration 4% Inclusive Environment 3% SEL & Mental Health	 Developing strategic priorities-based planning guidance and supports for schools to achieve <b>School Renewal and Acceleration</b> through <a href="#">launchne.com</a> and educational partners	
Level of State Reservation Spent to Date Costs may date back to March 13, 2020	91% Obligated \$59,227,427	\$0	\$0



More information available at: [education.ne.gov/care-act/](https://education.ne.gov/care-act/)

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- 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.

See above graphics.

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

The NDE has supported districts in the blending and braiding of other federal funds in two ways:

- [CRRSA Guidance Letter](#) – Provides example scenarios for school leaders to consider when budgeting over the next year.
- NDE’s Renewal and Acceleration Budget Roadmap (In development) – Provides a budgeting tool to inventory all federal and state funds, and prompts schools in their strategic allocation.

#### **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

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

interventions to address the academic impact of lost instructional time by supporting the implementation of evidence-based interventions, such as summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs, or extended school year programs, and ensure that such interventions respond to students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. The description must include:

- i. A description of the evidence-based interventions (e.g., providing intensive or high-dosage tutoring, accelerating learning) the SEA has selected, and the extent to which the SEA will evaluate the impact of those interventions on an ongoing basis to understand if they are working;

The following four themes were consistently noted in consultation sessions and survey results as priorities. The NDE will pursue the following evidence-based interventions to address these priorities, and ensure systems and infrastructure are present to carry them out successfully.

- Interventions to **support student and staff social emotional wellbeing and mental health** – This may include Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) curricula and training for teachers, Mental Health First Aid Training, and expanding access to mental health practitioners, social workers, school psychologists, school counselors, and tele-health opportunities.
- Initiatives to **reimagine family and community engagement** – This may include dual capacity frameworks to systematize family-school-student partnerships, resources to support in-person communication with families linked to learning goals, expanding access to community school models, and strategies that provide the opportunity for parents and children to interact together.
- Investment in **teacher professional development, upskilling, and the teacher and leader pipeline** – This may include providing professional learning to improve culturally relevant teaching and learning, building teacher content knowledge, supporting the implementation of high-quality instructional materials, and investing in the teacher and school leader pipeline by creating opportunities to upskill credentials, certifications, etc.
- **Ensure students have equitable access to grade-level instruction to address unfinished learning and support learning acceleration** – This may include supporting learning acceleration anchored in high-quality instructional materials, evidence-based interventions and assessments, and

high-quality professional learning to support equitable teaching and learning for all students, with particular attention to student most impacted by COVID-19.

Following intensive stakeholder feedback to develop the four investment focus areas, the NDE has continued to engage stakeholders in the ESSER state set aside investment process. This has included intentional outreach to state partners like the NAACP of Nebraska, Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs, Nebraska State Education Association, and Council of School Administrators. Additionally, the commissioner and staff have visited several schools in the fall and spring to engage not only in discussions of uses of local funds, but how to better target and invest set aside funds.

Internally, the NDE has developed a process whereby initiatives and new contracts are vetted for their evidence basis, target school audience and population, and evaluation options. Finally, all expenditures over \$50,000 are approved by the Nebraska State Board of Education.

Below is a description of the distribution of ESSER III set aside funds by priority area.

- Interventions to **support student and staff social emotional wellbeing and mental health**
  - Nearly 19% of the set aside funds for evidence-based practices have been allocated for mental health supports.
  - Mental Health Support Grant (\$5.1 million)
    - Partnerships through Nebraska's intermediary agencies, Educational Service Units (ESUs), have created regional systems to maximize mental health supports.
    - Providing training in mental health first aid to districts
    - Increasing access to licensed mental health practitioners
    - Creating tele-mental health opportunities
    - This discretionary grant was in two parts and available to all 17 ESUs and 244 public school districts:
      - ESUs completed an action plan describing their ability and capacity to support regional mental health institutes for their educators.
      - LEAs applied for funds to support plans which emerged as a result of a needs assessment and required training at regional mental health institutes. Districts were eligible for funding to support a menu of options.
- Initiatives to **reimagine family and community engagement**

- Around 11% of funds are supporting outreach, education, and support to families and communities.
- Strategies have included contracted services supporting LEAs which include the use of an evidence-based early childhood family engagement and literacy tool, expanding and deepening family literacy centers, translation services, and expanded support for systems-involved youth.
- **Investment in teacher professional development, upskilling, and the teacher and leader pipeline**
  - 13% of evidence-based set aside funds have been allocated for high-quality professional learning opportunities and strategies to address the teacher shortage.
  - Intensive support (training, materials, and collaboration) to schools designated for ATSI for the students with disability group and those that are also identified for disproportionality for SPED.
  - Educator Shortage Call for Proposals (\$1.5 million)
    - In April, the NDE worked with stakeholders to better understand potential responses to the state's educator shortage. The NDE designed a call for proposals for higher education, districts, ESUs, and others to share ideas for immediate relief of critical shortage areas.
    - Higher education institutions, ESUs, and school districts were eligible to apply. A rubric was created and scored applicants on their identification of partnerships, focus on immediate needs, engagement of stakeholders, ESSA evidence level, inclusion of evaluation processes, and focus on identified shortage areas.
- **Ensure students have equitable access to grade-level instruction to address unfinished learning and support learning acceleration**
  - This strategy represents the bulk of the investments of these funds, constituting roughly 41% of investments. Notably, many strategies in this category are also high-quality professional learning, and therefore cross-cut to the focus area above.
  - Supports include investments in leadership development for schools identified as CSI, funding to districts that were ineligible for ESSER funds, math-specific professional learning, and funding to support career and technical education.
- **Modernizing Information, Data, and Technology, and Process Systems**
  - 13% of set aside funds are being used in this strategy area
  - After continued stakeholder feedback, the NDE added a fifth priority area focused on modernization of systems. As early as 2014, the Nebraska Legislature called upon the NDE to study the impact of discordant data systems on teaching and learning. A lack of modern data systems at the state level creates inefficiencies

and burden on schools and districts. Additional feedback from users, and first hand experience during the pandemic further demonstrated the need to focus on this area.

- These set of strategies represent Tier 4 evidence, and the NDE has created a logic model and plans to study these investments further.

For a more detailed look at the NDE's statewide investments, please visit <https://www.education.ne.gov/esser/esser-iii-arp/ndes-esser-iii-application/>

*Evaluation of Strategies:*

The NDE is evaluating evidence-based strategies in many ways. First, almost all specific investments include an independent or built-in evaluation by the contractor, vendor, or third-party provider. Additionally, the NDE is using its internal research capacity to monitor and evaluate investments for both formative and summative purposes. Finally, the NDE created theories of action surrounding each of the five investment priority areas. These have then been turned into specific short and long term expected outcomes which provide a road map for adjustments of investments if needed.

- 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

Most Nebraska schools have served students through in-person learning this school year. Given that unique context, Nebraska schools should consider using ESSER III funds to support students most impacted by COVID-19 disruptions, including but not limited to:

- **Those students who attended the majority or even part of their year remotely.** While some students excelled during remote learning space, other remote learners may have found challenges. It is critical to determine the content remote learners may have not been taught in order to prepare them for learning acceleration.
- **Those students who were disengaged or did not participate when learning remotely.** While great efforts were made to serve students through any modality this year, remote learning provided its own set of challenges. The NDE is aware of and understands that some students were hard to reach, did not participate, and/or did not have the tools necessary to succeed. Determining some of the reasons why these students were disengaged and applying the most appropriate intervention will support these students upon return to school buildings and should remain an area of focus.
- **Those learners who were below grade level before the pandemic.** Disaggregate data from before the pandemic to better understand the student

groups or specific students that were struggling and consider how the pandemic may have disproportionately affected them.

- **Students who have been historically marginalized**, including students of color, students with disabilities, English learners, and the economically disadvantaged. Specifically, schools that are identified for targeted support and improvement or additional targeted support and improvement for one of these groups had opportunity gaps before COVID-19 which could have been widened during the pandemic.

The NDE created an impact map which triangulated school designation data, specifically TSI, ATSI, and CSI school identifications, with the CDC's county-level social vulnerability index, and COVID-19 case counts. This map shows the schools and regions most impacted by COVID-19, and has enabled the NDE to better target resources and interventions.

Additional data from summative and interim assessments, attendance and graduation rate, and teacher shortage data have also been monitored to understand better where schools need additional support from statewide investments.

Finally, the NDE has relied upon a partnership with the state's 17 regional Educational Service Units to identify schools for statewide activities and target support. Sharing resources and investing in ESUs helps maximize reach efficiently, and also identifies schools that are best poised to take up specific interventions.

- 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.

See above.

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;

The NDE is entering into a partnership with the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation to manage, support, and monitor the implementation of expanded learning programs throughout the state using ESSER III funds. These programs will implement evidence-based enrichment activities consistent with the definition and tiers of evidence outlined in ESSA.

Evidence-basis ([After School Alliance, April 2021](#)):

- Expanded learning and summer enrichment has been found to lead to successful reengagement of learners.
- High-quality summer enrichment programs have been found to be particularly effective in supporting math and reading gains for students. Similarly, high-quality after school and summer enrichment programs yield improved grades.
- Expanded learning and summer enrichment leads to increased family and community engagement, which is a strong predictor of student success.
- 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers and other such expanded learning opportunities improve student attendance and decrease risky behaviors.
- Afterschool and summer school learning better the overall health of vulnerable youth.
- Programs will be evaluated using a similar evaluation plan developed for the Nebraska 21st CCLC grant program by the University of Nebraska Medical Center, Munroe-Meyer Institutes.

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

The partnership detailed above will direct funds to schools serving the highest proportions of underserved students, large numbers of historically marginalized learners, and sites that experienced significant rates of COVID-19. Three types of grants will be provided:

- **Incubator** – three-year grants to support for start-up programming in currently underserved schools / communities
- **Expansion** – one to three-year grants to support for expanding quality and capacity in existing programs serving historically underserved communities, including support for summer programming strands

**Incubator** and **Expansion** grants will be prioritized for historically underserved communities (students of color, students with disabilities, English learners and economically disadvantaged students) and communities experiencing disproportionate disruptions to in school learning due to the COVID pandemic during the 2019-21 pandemic. The selection process will prioritize applicants in all three areas who identify a

balance of academic enrichment and engaging STEM-rich experiences, career exploration, outdoor education, entrepreneurship, Social Emotional learning opportunities and hands on engaged activities.

Data used to target resources will include educational data like enrollment, designation data (CSI, TSI, ATSI), and achievement data, as well as data on COVID-19 case counts.

- 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.

See 2.ii. above.

- 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;
  - 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
  - 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.

See 2 above for details on partnerships, evidence-basis, and selection criteria.

Through its budget and accounting system, the NDE is tracking and ensuring the separate use of the 1% allocation for summer programs and 1% for after school programming. Selected schools are using funds to expand learning time, often engaging in both summer and after school projects. Some schools are only using

these funds to expand summer school offerings, while others invested in after school. Across these varied and purposefully flexible opportunities for schools, the NDE is carefully tracking budgets and expenditures to ensure not less than 1% of the award will be used for after school programs and not less than 1% for summer programming.

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

The NDE will reserve 2.5% for "emergency needs." These funds will be used to bolster partnerships with community organizations, invest in liaison positions to serve as direct lines to youth- and family-serving organizations, and improve internal systems and infrastructure.

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

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

1. LEA Plans for the Use of ARP ESSER Funds: Describe what the SEA will require its LEAs to include in LEA plans consistent with the ARP ESSER requirements for the use of ARP ESSER funds, how the SEA will require such plans to be made available to the public, and the deadline by which the LEA must submit its ARP ESSER plan (which must be a reasonable timeline and should be within no later than 90 days after receiving its ARP ESSER allocation). The LEA plans must include, at a minimum:
  - i. The extent to which and how the funds will be used to implement prevention and mitigation strategies that are, to the greatest extent practicable, in line with the most recent CDC guidance, in order to continuously and safely operate schools for in-person learning;
  - ii. How the LEA will use the funds it reserves under section 2001(e)(1) of the ARP Act (totaling not less than 20 percent of the LEA's total allocation of ARP ESSER funds) to address the academic impact of lost instructional time through the implementation of evidence-based interventions, such as summer learning or summer enrichment,

- extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs, or extended school year programs;
- iii. How the LEA will spend its remaining ARP ESSER funds consistent with section 2001(e)(2) of the ARP Act; and
  - iv. How the LEA will ensure that the interventions it implements, including but not limited to the interventions under section 2001(e)(1) of the ARP Act to address the academic impact of lost instructional time, will respond to the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of all students, and particularly those students disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, including students from low-income families, students of color, English learners, children with disabilities, students experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, and migratory students.

The NDE is **dedicated to ensuring the responsible, accountable, focused, and transparent use of federal funds** at both the SEA and LEA level. Additionally, the American Rescue Plan provides an **opportunity of a lifetime** to implement evidence-based strategies that will close achievement gaps and advance the learning of all students. The NDE is providing significant support up front, and taking a measured, planful approach to providing resources, guidance, and technical assistance for educators as they develop their ARP plans.

The NDE will use planning documents, the application process through the Grants Management System, and the district-level monitoring to ensure districts meet the requirements of ESSER III including consultation with stakeholders, publishing plans for safe return and use of funds to their individual websites, reserving at minimum 20% of the funding to address needs associated with learning loss, and selecting interventions that are evidence based to assure the quality of the interventions that students are receiving.

See additional responses to specific questions below:

i. As mentioned above, the NDE has created a template for schools to complete as they consider safety procedures for the summer, fall, and throughout the grant period. Launch NE serves as a continued repository for best practices and guidance for safety procedures. A draft of this safety plan will be posted on each of the LEA's websites, reviewed at the local level at a minimum of every six months, and all documentation must be kept for auditing purposes. Documentation will include at minimum: who was involved in the writing of the plan, how public input was gathered, and screenshots of the plan posted on the LEA website. Safety plans are required to be published on the District's websites and during the monitoring documentation will be required to prove this has occurred.

ii. Since Nebraska students have mostly been learning in-person, "learning loss" has a different meaning. The NDE began by providing a consistent definition and

guidance for schools in understanding the disparate affect the pandemic has had on some learners and their families.

The NDE has also developed a list of vetted evidence-based interventions and considerations for schools to implement. LEAs will detail these evidence-based interventions in their plan for use of funds.

iii. The NDE has developed budgeting and planning resources for districts, and will host technical assistance sessions throughout the summer and early fall to propose innovative, evidence-based, and transformational uses of funds. The NDE is also emphasizing the alignment of ARP ESSER plans to other plans implemented by the districts including improvement plans for designated schools, continuous improvement plans, etc. Finally, the NDE will be providing support for the creation of a theory of action for the strategic use of funds in an effort to ensure the tight alignment and evidence-based focus and assure accountability.

iv. The budget roadmap and other previously developed resources consistently require schools to consider the differential impact of COVID-19 on their varied student groups through a data-informed approach, resources for selecting and evaluating evidence-based interventions, and alignment to processes already in place at their district.

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

- i. students;
- ii. families;
- iii. school and district administrators (including special education administrators); and
- iv. teachers, principals, school leaders, other educators, school staff, and their unions.

The LEA must also engage in meaningful consultation with each of the following to the extent present in or served by the LEA:

- i. Tribes;
- ii. civil rights organizations (including disability rights organizations); and
- iii. stakeholders representing the interests of children with disabilities, English learners, children experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, migratory students, children who are incarcerated, and other underserved students.

The description must also include how the SEA will ensure that LEAs provide the public the opportunity to provide input in the development of the LEA's plan for the use of ARP ESSER funds and take such input into account.

In every communication to districts about the use of their American Rescue Plan funds, the NDE has stressed the requirement to consult with myriad stakeholders. Budget and planning documents include draft communications, surveys which can be adapted by the district, and other strategies for seeking input and feedback.

Districts signed assurance statements that indicated they will involve stakeholders in required planning components. Additionally, the ARP grant that districts submit will include a section specifically asking districts to detail who was consulted, when, and how the input was incorporated into their planning documents. Failure to detail all necessary stakeholders will result in the return of the application to the district until a time which they can prove consultation meaningfully occurred.

3. Describe how the SEA will support and monitor its LEAs in using ARP ESSER funds. The description must include:
  - i. How the SEA will support and monitor its LEAs' implementation of evidence-based interventions that respond to students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs, such as through summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs, or extended school year programs – including the extent to which the SEA will collect evidence of the effectiveness of interventions employed;

The NDE has supported schools and districts in the selection of evidence-based interventions beginning with CSI and ATSI designations in 2018 and 2019, respectively. This support has involved the clarification of definitions of evidence-based and introduction to tiers of support as outlined in ESSA, as well as steering districts to resources and tools that make the selection easier. It is upon this foundation that continued support will be provided to districts.

The NDE will host a session on evidence-based interventions this summer, and provide continued support and technical assistance in selection and evaluation of the appropriate evidence-based interventions tailored to the unique needs of schools and students.

Finally, the ARP application will require districts to indicate the evidence level of each selected interventions and investment. NDE staff will review, and, if necessary, return applications to districts until the appropriate evidence level is selected or the intervention is changed.

The NDE is developing further protocols for ensuring enhanced programmatic and fiscal monitoring to include the use of evidence-based interventions and strategies.

- ii. How the SEA will support and monitor its LEAs in specifically addressing the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on certain groups of students, including each of the student groups listed in question A.3.i.-viii; and

The NDE will host several technical assistance sessions on inventorying and analyzing available data to identify the students and student groups most needing focused attention in summer 2021 and the 2021-22 school year. The NDE will also offer support for the identification and selection of evidence-based interventions for addressing gaps in achievement.

The NDE is developing further protocols for ensuring enhanced programmatic and fiscal monitoring to include the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on specific student groups.

- iii. How the SEA will support and monitor its LEAs in using ARP ESSER funds to identify, reengage, and support students most likely to have experienced the impact of lost instructional time on student learning, such as:
  - a. Students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years;
  - b. Students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures; and
  - c. Students most at-risk of dropping out of school.

The Launch Nebraska webpage includes specific considerations for schools when addressing the disproportionate affects of COVID-19 on students who missed the most in-person learning or who did not consistently participate in remote instruction. These considerations are also captured in Nebraska's resources on learning loss, which were created since the vast majority of students in the state learned in-person in 2020-21.

The NDE is developing further protocols for ensuring enhanced programmatic and fiscal monitoring to include identifying, reengaging, and supporting students with lost instructional time.

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

The NDE's budget roadmap provides guidance to districts on the equitable investment of funds. This begins with a clear definition of education equity, an emphasis on utilizing disaggregated data to target specific students, and the sharing of strategies which are evidence-based and lead to improved student achievement.

In addition to planning resources, the ARP application for LEAs will require attention to and response for the distribution of funds for both schools and districtwide activities.

## F. Supporting the Educator Workforce

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

### 1. Supporting and Stabilizing the Educator Workforce:

- i. Describe the extent to which the State is facing shortages of educators, education administration personnel, and other school personnel involved in safely reopening schools, and the extent to which they vary by region/type of school district and/or groups of educators (e.g., special educators and related services personnel and paraprofessionals; bilingual or English as a second language educators; science, technology, engineering, and math (“STEM”) educators; career and technical education (“CTE”) educators; early childhood educators). Cite specific data on shortages and needs where available.

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

Nebraska public and non-public schools annually complete a [Teacher Vacancy Survey](#) outlining specific shortage areas. Response rate for 2019-20 was 37%, however, trends did emerge as high-need and shortage areas.

**Table F1.**

Area	Data on Shortages and Needs
Special educators and related service personnel and paraprofessionals	30.25% of the positions unfilled by qualified personnel; 4 positions left vacant
Bilingual educators	0.42% of the positions unfilled by qualified personnel; 0 positions left vacant
English as a second language educators	2.52% of the positions unfilled by qualified personnel; 0 positions left vacant
STEM educators	Science: 7.56% of positions unfilled by qualified personnel; 7 positions left vacant

Area	Data on Shortages and Needs
	Math: 6.72% of positions unfilled by qualified personnel; 10 positions left vacant
CTE educators	5.04% of the positions unfilled by qualified personnel; 2.5 positions left vacant
Early childhood educators	2.94% of the positions unfilled by qualified personnel; 3 positions left vacant
School counselors	2.10% of the positions unfilled by qualified personnel; 0 positions left vacant
Social workers	Data Not Collected
Nurses	Data Not Collected
School psychologists	3.78% of the positions unfilled by qualified personnel; 3 positions left vacant

- 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.

The NDE encouraged districts to utilize CARES Act funding for maintaining all staff, including certified and non-certified personnel. Additionally, a Nebraska state statute ([NRS 79-8.106](#)) written after the 1919 Spanish flu pandemic required that in case of pandemics and when schools/districts are closed, “teachers shall be paid their usual salaries in full for such time as the school or schools shall be closed.” The NDE reiterated this requirement, and interpreted it to include administrators and all instructional staff.

Also, the implementation of enhanced safety protocols resulted in all 244 districts in Nebraska providing in-person learning during the 2020-21 school year. These safety protocols resulted in districts needing *more* staff to accommodate additional bus routes, reduced class sizes, and additional support for cleaning.

What’s more, the NDE has consistently administered the annual Teacher Vacancy Survey, providing data to higher education and state officials for the strategic deployment of educators for high-need areas and subjects. These data are shared with districts and Nebraska’s 17 intermediary agencies or Educational Service Units.

The NDE is providing technical assistance and professional development this summer through the Budget Roadmap and through recorded sessions on talent acquisition, retention, and elevation.

- 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 part of its stakeholder survey at the end of May, the NDE asked the following question and received the subsequent responses from stakeholders on supporting the educator workforce.

**Question 10 – Please select up to 3 ways in which the NDE can better recruit, support, and retain teachers during this time.**

<b>Support for Educators</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>
Provide scholarships for continued education, additional certifications, proper endorsements	212
Improve access to social, emotional, and mental health resources for educators	164
Support alternate routes to certification	159
Build or deepen programs to encourage students to become teachers for their own schools (often called “grow your own” programs)	135
Provide models or grant opportunities for teacher mentoring programs	126
Create specific strategies to recruit and retain racially and ethnically diverse educators	126

In response to these needs, and even before, the NDE provided significant additional flexibilities for provisional certifications of teachers and will continue to extend flexibilities while ensuring quality.

Current rules regarding teacher certification are under review, with a specific emphasis on eliminating barriers to entry and elevation in the field.

The NDE also used ESSER II investments in partnership with other stakeholders to hire an “Educator Equity Specialist” tasked with:

- Rolling out elements of the new teacher and performance standards in Nebraska with special attention to culturally responsive practices contained therein,
- Identification and selection supports for high quality instructional materials and culturally relevant pedagogy,
- Specific supports for education preparation and certification to understand and eliminate barriers to educators of color from entering the field, and
- An explicit focus on the recruitment and retention of educators of color.

As noted above, significant investments will be made in statewide strategies for mental health and well-being, which must be accessible to educators as well.

Finally, the NDE continues to bolster its Educators Rising program to strengthen “grow your own” initiatives across the state. Additionally, the NDE successfully received a planning grant from AmeriCorps which will enable the development of a strategy for deploying a corps of potential, current, and retired teachers to support communities most impacted by the pandemic.

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

The NDE is elevating data on recommended student-to-support staff (ex. Counselors, nurses, social workers, etc.) ratios, and providing additional support and incentives to “grow your own” strategies for key support staff. The NDE will also be highlighting innovative approaches to whole child models and full-scale community schools models which schools can implement using their funding.

## **G. Monitoring and Measuring Progress**

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

1. Capacity for Data Collection and Reporting: It is important for an SEA to continuously monitor progress and 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 NDE continues to invest and prioritize modernization of data collection and use systems and approaches to inform teaching and learning, equity, and continuous improvement. This includes prioritizing the use of ARP ESSER and other Federal COVID-19 pandemic funds, leveraging Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) resources, and leveraging other investments.

See specific responses to individual questions below:

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

The robust nature of moving to the EdFi® data standard has enabled agility of Nebraska to utilize data, provide near real time analytics tools, and ensure access to a variety of both structured and unstructured data more effectively. Nebraska is also focused on supporting “interoperability” capacity at the SEA and supporting efforts at the LEA level as well. These intentional and strategic efforts to support interoperability enable the capacity for insights among and across a variety of systems to more effectively understand the impact of lost instructional time among other topics.

- 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);

The opportunity to address these key measures and inputs is very solid in Nebraska. Optional data elements have been available to support district submission of Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) for a number of years along with the continued addition of new timely and appropriate data elements, a focused integration across systems (e.g., Health, Systems Involved Students, etc.), and using tools and systems that support timely and secure perceptual data collection all provide a value-added approach to addressing the opportunity to learn measures.

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

Nebraska has successfully implemented methodologies to collect and report school level per pupil expenditures and is working through the approaches to include the resources from Federal COVID-19 resources as well. A strong commitment to the transparency and use of the funds is also in motion.

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

Nebraska does collect staffing information, but has not identified the jobs created or retained as part of ESSER investments. Work will need to be done to determine the best approach to address this metric including the depth and type of job, retained position definition, etc. See response in Section F1ii for more information.

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

Nebraska is working through the strategies to most effectively capture the participation in the summer and afterschool programs that result from ARP ESSER resources and effectively consider the long-term opportunities to ensure the participation and impact data become a part of the information available for SEA and LEA decisions. Connecting the work of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century program and deep partnerships with Nebraska's Beyond School Bells, and other programmatic work continues and will be critical to ensure quality and useful data is collected.

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

As the reporting and accountability requirements emerge, Nebraska is positioned well through to address and support the requirements. The targeted investments in system modernization are enabling this to occur. Depending upon the types of requirements, there may be a length of time to implement. The importance of thoughtful data governance, coordination with vendor partners, and processes for implementation, testing, validating, evaluating data quality, training, and other required steps take time.

- 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 NDE relies on internal controls critical to the success in grants management, illustrated by best practices to serve as a guide to prompt reflection, self-assessment, and improve outcomes ensuring ESSER funds are expended for allowable purposes and in accordance with cash management principles of 2 CFR, Part 200, subpart E of the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards. These internal controls include, but are not limited to using management systems, managing risk, understanding federal and non-federal requirements, translating a proposed award in a program plan, managing and administering sub-grants, managing budget and finances, keeping records and documentation, and continuous review. Internal risks, associated with implementing the program are based on past performance, internal reviews, independent audits which include single audits of federal and State, identifying strategies for mitigating such risks.

The Office of ESEA Programs has established a team of program managers assigned to each district to manage the various grant application, provide technical assistance to assigned districts, and programmatic monitoring activities identified through the assurances of the ESSER LEA applications. The Grant Management System (GMS) amendment process restricts districts' ability to move funds without the NDE program approval. The GMS provides multiple grant management reports designed to assist program and fiscal monitoring activities.

All subrecipients are required to submit adequate documentation for every reimbursement request to ensure the existence of primary documentation necessary to support fiscal reviews, including audits and improper payment assessments, by the NDE. Entities submit an annual independent audit report, which may include a single audit if those requirements were met.

Risk is mitigated by conducting fiscal monitoring reviews which targets accountability based on quantitative and then qualitative (sequential sampling, risk assessment categories, and field/desk determination) identified through subrecipient risk-based needs. The reviews focus on the financial management systems' internal controls developed and implemented by the subrecipient to demonstrate compliance with applicable requirements, including organizational operations, policies and procedures, financial reports, and record-keeping. The review also tests the allowability of expenditures charged to the federal grant, as well as compliance with federal program requirements. Ongoing financial and administrative training and technical assistance is provided to all subrecipients and independently as assessed to enable subrecipients to comply with grant subaward requirements and maintain their funding. The NDE will utilize its current [Fiscal Monitoring Plan for LEAs and Subrecipients](#), revised and updated to reflect the expanded risks and opportunities associated with the ESSER grant program in July 2021.

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

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

The data provided represents the latest unvalidated numbers for the 2020-21 school year. The learning modality and approach is not available at the student level on a comprehensive nature, and thus is not provided. More detailed and specific information on learning modality will be collected during the 2021-22 school year.

**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	7	#	#	#
School buildings open with both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)	88	#	#	#
School buildings open with full-time in-person instruction	941	#	#	#

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*

<b>Number of students</b>	<b>Total enrollment</b>	<b>Remote or online only</b>	<b>Both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)</b>	<b>Full-time in-person instruction</b>
Students from low-income families	151,729	#	#	#
White, not Hispanic	210,541	#	#	#
Black or African American, not Hispanic	21,627	#	#	#
Hispanic, of any race	64,566	#	#	#
Asian, not Hispanic	9,511	#	#	#
American Indian or Alaskan Native, not Hispanic	4,189	#	#	#
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, not Hispanic	481	#	#	#
Two or more races, not Hispanic	13,670	#	#	#
Race/Ethnicity information not available	0	#	#	#
English learners	22,322	#	#	#
Children with disabilities	52,375	#	#	#

Number of students	Total enrollment	Remote or online only	Both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)	Full-time in-person instruction
Students experiencing homelessness	2,318	#	#	#
Children and youth in foster care	2635	#	#	#
Migratory students	3460 (2019-20 school year)	#	#	#

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

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

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

## Appendix C: Assurances

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

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

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

## Appendix D

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

### NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS

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

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

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

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

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

Section 427 requires each applicant for funds (other than an individual person) to include in its application a description of the steps the applicant proposes to take to ensure equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally-assisted program for students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries with special needs. This provision allows applicants discretion in developing the required description. The statute highlights six types of barriers that can impede equitable access

or participation: gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age. Based on local circumstances, you should determine whether these or other barriers may prevent your students, teachers, etc. from such access to, or participation in, the Federally-funded project or activity. The description in your application of steps to be taken to overcome these barriers need not be lengthy; you may provide a clear and succinct description of how you plan to address those barriers that are applicable to your circumstances. In addition, the information may be provided in a single narrative, or, if appropriate, may be discussed in connection with related topics in the application.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[Click here to enter text.](#)

### **Estimated Burden Statement for GEPA Requirements**

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