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

U.S. Department of Education

Issued: April 21, 2021

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Introduction

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

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

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

Instructions

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

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

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

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

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

Cover Page
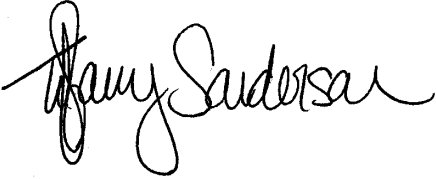
Grantee and Contact Information

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

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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) **Tiffany Sanderson**	
Signature of Authorized SEA Representative *[signature: Tiffany Sanderson]*	Date: Initial Submission: 6/25/2021 Updated: 11/12/2021 Updated: 10/03/2022 Updated: 12/12/2022

A. Describing the State's Current Status and Needs

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

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

South Dakota's most effective strategy for supporting the needs of students and families during the pandemic was committing to provide in-person instruction, to the fullest extent possible, for school year (SY) 2020-21. This commitment, coupled with appropriate mitigation strategies and options for students unable to participate in in-person instruction, allowed South Dakota schools to balance the equally important needs of keeping students and staff healthy (i.e., preventing virus spread) and ensuring continued learning.

Identified as one of the leading principles in the South Dakota Department of Education's ("the department") Starting Well 2020 guidance for schools, the commitment to safe, in-person instruction honored not only the academic needs of students, but also their social-emotional needs, and their overall mental health. This commitment manifested itself throughout the K-12 system, from policy makers at the school board and state legislature levels to front-line school staff who interacted with students on a daily basis, including principals, teachers, counselors, school secretaries, cafeteria staff, custodians, and bus drivers. As a result of this shared commitment and joint efforts, South Dakota students were able to enjoy the benefits of continuous learning throughout the pandemic.

A COVID Impact Survey administered by the department in May 2021 provides high-level detail of the school year. Results are preliminary; however, it is remarkable to note that public schools across the state were able to begin SY 2020-21 largely on time and in person. Of the 679 public schools that completed the survey, 676 indicated they started school in August or September. Of those, 92 percent reported that most or all of their students were learning in-person. Notwithstanding these successes, some of the state's most at-risk students were not able to participate in in-person learning. For example, many schools on Indian reservations operated virtually for much of the school year, in line with tribal ordinances. Further, the department acknowledges that even where in-person instruction was the predominant mode of instruction, there were still pockets of students who disengaged and will need support.

Partnerships with stakeholders were a second key to success for South Dakota's safe return to school in August 2020. These partnerships among state agencies (Departments of Education, Health, Social Services, and the Bureau of Information and Telecommunications), local school districts, and other education groups (School Administrators of South Dakota, Associated School Boards of South Dakota, South Dakota Education Association, and South Dakota High School

Activities Association) were essential to a constant flow of communication that provided local leaders with the data and information they needed to make decisions based on local conditions and need. Some of these partner efforts are highlighted below.

- Throughout the pandemic, the Departments of Education and Health held regular webinars for school superintendents and school nurses. These webinars connected school leaders directly with the state's chief health officials, including the State Epidemiologist and Secretary of Health. The webinars focused on providing the most up-to-date scientific information regarding the virus, CDC-recommended mitigation strategies, procedures for contact tracing in schools, testing options available to schools, vaccination of school personnel, as well as pertinent education questions. These webinars started in March 2020 and have continued since that time – sometimes daily, sometimes twice weekly, and now on a weekly and as-needed basis.

- The Departments of Education and Health established a process to track positive COVID numbers in schools for both staff and students, which was in place at the start of SY 2020-21. These numbers were shared not only with school leaders, but also, in the aggregate, with the general public (see weekly dashboard). Some school districts also posted their local case numbers, in the aggregate, on their websites. This transparency, along with community spread information posted on the Department of Health's website, allowed schools and families to make sound decisions based on local conditions.

- The Departments of Education and Health offered a sentinel testing program for K-12 school staff, designed to recognize potential virus spread in the school setting. Shortly after the start of the school year, the agencies added a rapid testing program aimed at identifying symptomatic students/staff members with COVID and isolating them from the school setting as quickly as possible. Both programs involved on-site testing at the schools, training for those involved in administering the tests, and free courier service and lab processing.

- The department partnered with the Bureau of Information and Telecommunications to establish the K-12 Connect program. This effort was aimed at providing broadband connection to low-income families, so students could continue their learning in a distance mode if that became necessary (either because of COVID isolation/quarantine or by family choice).

- The Governor issued executive orders designed to temporarily remove certain requirements that stood in the way of educators being able to focus on what mattered most: attending to the needs of their students. For example, one of the executive orders allowed individuals who were engaged in student-teaching experiences in spring of 2020 to have extra time to complete the experience and still move forward with applying for a teaching license, in order to keep new teachers flowing into the workforce pipeline.

- Recognizing the tireless efforts of teachers to pivot to remote instruction during spring 2020, the department's Certification Office allowed teachers to earn continuing education credit for this work.

In sum, the commitment and collaborations exhibited during this unprecedented year allowed South Dakota to provide continuous learning opportunities – primarily in an in-person mode of instruction – while simultaneously providing a safe learning environment. On behalf of students and their families, the department is deeply grateful for these efforts.

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

The most pressing issues facing South Dakota schools and students can be grouped into three broad categories. These categories were developed based on limited quantitative data currently available to the department, along with qualitative data gathered through extensive feedback loops throughout the year, the year-end COVID Impact Survey, and public comment. The department will continue to review pertinent data routinely and adjust accordingly in order to support those students most significantly impacted by the pandemic. The three categories are: 1) supporting strong pedagogy and educational opportunities; 2) addressing students' social-emotional and mental health needs; and 3) continuing to address issues of educator recruitment and retention.

1-Supporting strong pedagogy and educational opportunities
Identifying, engaging with, or re-engaging with students that may have missed out on instruction and educational opportunities – for a variety of reasons – will be critical in the months ahead. The department expects these students to run the gamut from pre-school-age youngsters in need of special supports as they prepare to enter the formal K-12 setting to high school students that dropped off the radar at some point during the pandemic. State-level spending will focus on strategies designed to engage and/or re-engage these students and provide strong instruction for academic attainment for all students based on their individual needs.

At this time, the department has limited data to assist in identifying these students. Input received via the SEA's extensive feedback loops indicates stakeholders are concerned about lost instructional and learning time. An analysis of fall enrollment data reveals several significant differences between the fall 2020 enrollments and trend predictions: a drop in the number of students enrolled in Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools; a drop in the number of students with disabilities in public schools; and an increase in the number of students opting out of formal instruction and receiving "alternative instruction" (i.e., homeschool). According to the data, alternative instruction enrollments increased by approximately 25 percent, representing the largest significant difference between enrollments and predictions. Whether this move to alternative instruction becomes something more permanent has yet to be seen. All of these differences will require ongoing attention and may be helpful in determining where to target resources. State assessment data is not yet available.

2-Addressing students' social-emotional and mental health needs
Experience tells us that the pandemic is having repercussions far beyond physical health. The less tangible, but very real, social-emotional impacts of the pandemic – fear, isolation, stress – have taken a toll on educators, school staff, students, and families. Student mental health and

well-being is an area where the department is partnering with other state agencies to impact positive change. COVID funding available will allow South Dakota to make strides in supporting students' needs in a more holistic manner. One partnership between the SEA and the Department of Social Services will focus on providing access to mental health services, via technology, to youth in remote areas of the state where access would not otherwise be possible. Other strategies will include training opportunities for school administrators and educators related to trauma-informed care and youth mental health, making data more accessible (and therefore actionable) for administrators, and providing South Dakota-specific toolkits and resources from which school leaders can draw to meet their students' needs.

3-Continuing to address issues of educator recruitment and retention
Within the last six years, South Dakota has taken proactive steps to address educator recruitment and retention challenges. The pandemic likely will exacerbate some of those challenges; therefore, understanding the pandemic's true impact on the education workforce will be paramount. That understanding will drive innovative strategies that will target both traditional students coming out of teacher preparation programs and individuals interested in entering the teaching field through an alternative pathway. The department expects strategies in this area to build upon existing efforts established in 2016 with passage of historic legislation (i.e., Blue Ribbon Task Force on Teachers and Students). That legislation resulted in a half-cent sales tax with revenues going to the state's school funding formula – specifically, to support raising teacher salaries statewide. In related recruitment/retention efforts, the department developed a statewide mentoring program for first- and second-year teachers; facilitated entry into the teaching profession through alternative certification routes; partnered with School Administrators of South Dakota to mentor new principals; and partnered with Black Hills State University to offer two cohorts of paraprofessionals working in high-needs schools the opportunity to earn a teaching degree and certification.

3. <u>Identifying Needs of Underserved Students</u>: Describe your State's 2-3 highest priority academic, social, emotional, and/or mental health needs for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year (if applicable) and for the 2021-2022 school year related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on each of the following student groups:
   i. Students from low-income families,
   ii. Students from each racial or ethnic group (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by race or ethnicity),
   iii. Gender (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by gender),
   iv. English learners,
   v. Children with disabilities (including infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA")),
   vi. Students experiencing homelessness,
   vii. Children and youth in foster care,
   viii. Migratory students, and

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

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

The department's two highest priority needs related to the impact of the COVID pandemic on the groups listed above are: (1) accessible mental health services and (2) targeted interventions to address disengagement and lost instructional time. These needs have emerged through extensive feedback loops referenced earlier and a focus group with stakeholders representing the student groups detailed above. These needs also were echoed throughout the public comment leading up to the development of the South Dakota ARP ESSER State Plan. As quantitative data becomes available (e.g., state assessment results, NWEA MAP data), the SEA will use this information to target strategies to support all students, especially those most impacted by the pandemic.

In the focus group discussion referenced above, participants noted increases in behavioral issues, including increases in aggression and misbehavior among at-risk students returning to in-person instruction after remote or virtual learning. They also expressed concern for certain students who experienced abuse and other forms of trauma while learning from home. Finally, participants expressed concern for English learners and students with disabilities, who they say have struggled increasingly with feelings of isolation, anxiety and stress during the pandemic.

This regression will be paramount for the department to address moving forward, in particular given the historical lack of school counselors, school psychologists and other school-based mental health providers throughout the state.

In addition to mental health, there is concern among stakeholders that students in underserved groups have exhibited a lack of student engagement and could be significantly impacted by lost instructional time. Students that opted for online education, or who attended districts that did not offer in-person instruction for the majority of the year, were often part of one or more of the underserved student groups listed above and may not have had the support they needed to meet standards. Students attending schools on Indian reservations have been particularly impacted. Many of these schools were online-only during the pandemic, and many of these students did not respond to online education. Disengagement is expected to be high among this group, including among students learning in-person due to competing priorities for teachers.

On the year-end COVID Impact Survey, 50 percent of public schools indicated that less than half of their English learner (EL) students stayed caught-up while virtual learning. More than 30 percent of schools with EL students learning remotely indicated that less than half of their English learner students stayed caught-up while remote learning. Language barriers led to a lack

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

of parental involvement for these students, further compounding learning gaps for English learners. Of the schools that offered special education services virtually or remotely, 6 percent said there were services they were unable to provide students with disabilities.

(For clarification, virtual learning, as referenced in the paragraph above, is a long-term distance learning arrangement that utilizes either the South Dakota Virtual School or an online curriculum purchased specifically for learners participating in this method. Remote learning is a short- or long-term distance learning arrangement that utilizes a school district's curriculum materials.)

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.

South Dakota school districts' most effective strategy in mitigating the effects of COVID was reopening schools for in-person instruction in August 2020. This commitment has allowed most schools an entire school year of in-person learning to diagnose, identify needs and remedy lost instruction time from spring 2020. Most schools have chosen to identify academic needs through instructional tools, benchmark assessments, and data available to them both locally and through the state's longitudinal data system, SD-STARS. As of the writing of this State Plan, there is limited state-level data available. As a clearer picture emerges through resources such as the year-end COVID Impact Survey, public comment leading up to this plan, state assessment data and other sources, the department will be able to make conclusions about COVID-related impacts and the types of supports needed to address specific challenges.

The department also has key, comprehensive needs assessment tools in place to help districts holistically examine their local operations, diagnose root causes of issues, and identify solutions. These are the South Dakota Comprehensive Needs Assessment, the Career and Technical Education Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment, and the IDEA Results Driven Accountability. All three were designed to work in concert to help a school district pinpoint areas of need. These tools will be invaluable to districts as they pursue strategies moving forward to understand and meet the needs of their students.

Finally, the department will further aid districts in identifying COVID impacts by providing increased access to mental health tools that allow education leaders to meet the needs of their students effectively.

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 department purposefully chose not to collect mode of instruction data during the 2020-21 school year for two reasons. First, the SEA had asked schools to commit to providing in-person instruction, to the fullest extent possible, and wanted school leaders, teachers and staff to concentrate their time and efforts on that priority. Second, the state-provided student management system was not set up to track mode of instruction. Therefore, the department chose to issue one comprehensive survey to all accredited schools at the end of the school year. This year-end COVID Impact Survey included questions on school participation in each mode of instruction.

The department annually collects student enrollment data for all students and disaggregated by subgroup on the last Friday in September. The department also conducts a December Child Count, which is an unduplicated count of all children with disabilities receiving special education and related services according to an individualized education program. These annual collections will continue to occur moving forward.

The department collects student attendance data for all students and disaggregated by subgroup through the state's student information management system. LEAs have until the second Friday of June each year to submit this data. This annual collection will continue to occur moving forward.

At the state level, the student information system does not have the ability to disaggregate student enrollment or attendance data by mode of instruction. The department is currently exploring options for capturing the data described above by mode of instruction.

Moving forward, the department will continue to examine its data collections and what emerging needs may arise and are practicable.

ii.   The data described in A.5.i.a. and b. using the template in Appendix A (and to the extent available, the data described in A.5.i.c.) for the most recent time period available. Please note that this data can be submitted separately within 14 calendar days after a State submits this plan. The SEA must also make this data publicly available on its

website as soon as possible but no later than June 21, 2021, and regularly provide updated available information on its website. The Department will periodically review data listed in A.5.i on SEA websites.

The data in Appendix A will be made publicly available on the department's website in accordance with the timeline above. As noted above, the department is currently exploring options for updating this data. However, as noted elsewhere, the majority of South Dakota's schools were open for in-person instruction in August 2020 and remained so throughout the year. Therefore, the extent to which continuing to collect this data in subsequent school years, and to add a disaggregation by subgroup, is not practicable nor actionable.

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

In South Dakota, most schools have been open the entire school year with students learning in-person, and the department expects this to continue in school year 2021-22. As previously noted, schools on Indian reservations were those that operated virtually for much of the school year, in line with tribal ordinances. According to the year-end COVID Impact Survey described above, 54 percent of schools indicated they would operate in-person summer school during summer 2021. For a more extensive discussion of summer 2021 programming, please see below.

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. <u>Support for LEAs</u>: 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;

A vast majority of South Dakota schools opened their doors largely on time and in an in-person learning mode for the 2020-21 school year. The SEA supported this effort through the partnerships, resources and technical assistance described throughout this application. The department's efforts to support LEAs will continue into summer 2021, SY 2021-22 and beyond. The department's goal for SY 2021-22 is similar to last year: provide local leaders with the data,

resources and technical assistance they need to make sound decisions based on the needs of their students, local conditions and the most up-to-date science.

NOTE: In the table below, DOE is the South Dakota Department of Education and DOH is the South Dakota Department of Health.

Table B1.

Mitigation strategy	SEA response
Universal and correct wearing of masks	DOE and DOH provided guidance in line with CDC recommendations to all schools regarding the use of masks in school settings.
Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)	DOE and DOH provided guidance in line with CDC recommendations to all schools regarding the use of physical distancing in school settings.
Handwashing and respiratory etiquette	DOE and DOH provided guidance in line with CDC recommendations to all schools regarding the use of handwashing and respiratory etiquette in school settings.
Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation	DOE and DOH provided guidance in line with CDC recommendations to all schools regarding proper cleaning and healthy facilities in school settings. DOE also provided school administrators research on air quality standards in learning environment to mitigate virus spread.
Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments	DOE and DOH provided guidance in line with CDC recommendations to all schools regarding contact tracing, isolation and quarantine. Additionally, DOE and DOH set up protocols specific to schools to get information to school leaders faster, in

Mitigation strategy	SEA response
	order to facilitate timely isolation and quarantine. These protocols included a special system for schools to confirm positive cases within the school setting and support teams in both agencies available to quickly provide information and answer questions about current guidance around isolation and quarantine.
Diagnostic and screening testing	DOE and DOH provided guidance in line with CDC recommendations related to testing. DOE and DOH operated and funded both a voluntary sentinel/ screening testing program and a voluntary diagnostic testing program.
Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible	DOE and DOH provided guidance in line with CDC recommendations and prioritized school nurses, educators and school staff on the state's vaccination schedule.
Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies	DOE created specific guidance for LEAs on the topic of addressing the special needs of students with disabilities.

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

The department's Starting Well 2020 guidance, created in conjunction with educators from across the state, provided the guiding principles for the reopening and safe operation of school facilities at the start of the 2020-21 school year. The commitment to safe, in-person instruction outlined in that guidance was adopted by a great majority of schools.

Throughout the course of the year, the department had numerous touchpoints with school leaders to understand, and monitor, local conditions and concerns. One of the primary monitoring tools came in the form of a feedback loop established early in the school year. The department's

Leadership Team divided all the state's accredited schools into seven regions, with each Leadership Team member assigned as a direct point of contact for school leaders. Leadership Team members were available 24/7 and also had direct access to counterparts at the state Department of Health (DOH). Together, the staff at the two agencies were able to quickly provide technical assistance and answer school leaders' pressing questions. The regular webinars for school leaders and school nurses, described previously, served as another regular and ongoing monitoring mechanism.

Additionally, the department posted relevant information from these webinars and kept a continuously updated "Frequently Asked Questions" document, with answers sourced from the department and DOH leaders, on the department's COVID response page to ensure school leaders had the answers they needed, whenever they needed them.

A final monitoring mechanism was a year-end COVID Impact Survey administered in May 2021. At the start of the 2020-21 school year, the department made a conscious decision not to burden schools with additional reporting requirements this year. This decision allowed school personnel to concentrate on teaching, learning, and supporting students and families in a holistic way during the pandemic. Data from the year-end survey will be made available on the department's website.

          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

As previously described, the department worked hand-in-hand with state health officials to support school districts throughout the 2020-21 school year. That support included two voluntary testing programs, operated and funded through the Department of Health (DOH) and its federal funding. The testing programs included a sentinel testing program, which provided COVID testing for asymptomatic adults in the school setting, and a diagnostic testing program, which provided rapid testing for symptomatic students and staff in the school setting. These programs were crucial to understanding, and reporting publicly, spread within school communities.

The two agencies are currently working on testing options for SY 2021-22 and plan to offer both screening testing and diagnostic testing options, paid for through the state DOH's funding.

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

Since March 2020, the department has regularly provided guidance, professional learning and technical assistance to its LEAs. As described in A-1, the department partnered extensively with the Department of Health to provide guidance and technical assistance specific to CDC recommendations, appropriate mitigation strategies, etc. The two agencies provided extensive training and near-daily technical assistance related to the state-provided sentinel testing and rapid

testing programs. In addition, the department provided specialized opportunities in summer 2020 and throughout the year for professional learning to specific groups of educators and school personnel, including curriculum directors, special education directors, teachers, teachers of English learners, school librarians, school counselors, and school food service directors. The department produced numerous topic-specific guidance documents that are posted on the Starting Well 2020 webpage.

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

    i. How the SEA will ensure that each LEA plan includes, or will be modified to include, the extent to which it has adopted policies and a description of any such policies on each of the strategies listed in table B1;

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

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

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

The department is ensuring compliance with the components above through a series of signed assurances and compliance checks. The first assurance, which was due in May 2021, outlined

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

either: (1) that an LEA had a reopening plan that was subject to public comment and posted on the LEA website, and that by the department's required deadline of Aug. 20, 2021, the LEA would revise its plan to come into compliance with the elements required by the interim final rule; or (2) that if the LEA did not have a reopening plan prior to March 11, 2021, that was subject to public comment and posted on the LEA's website, that it would come into full compliance with all elements required by the interim final rule by June 23, 2021.

In order to ensure that LEA plans include the information necessary (strategies listed in table B1 and the continuity of services as laid out in the interim final rule), the department provided a checklist for LEAs outlining each component. That checklist also included items such as required public comment and revision timelines, and how the department would ensure compliance.

The department will collect LEA assurances at several checkpoints throughout the ARP timeframe: August 2021, December 2021, June 2022, December 2022, and June 2023. Department staff will check LEA plans periodically in accordance with these timeframes and/or as LEA requests and amendments for ARP ESSER funding come to the department.

For 2020-21, the department purposefully chose to wait until the end of the school year to collect data on LEA implementation of CDC-recommended mitigation strategies. As previously mentioned, this decision was made to allow school leaders to focus on their most important work: providing safe environments for student learning to occur and caring for kids. That said, preliminary data from the year-end COVID Impact Survey indicates that schools implemented a variety of mitigation strategies to prevent virus spread within their buildings. For example, more than 60 percent implemented some manner of physical distancing; nearly 90 percent taught and reinforced hand washing and use of hand sanitizer; 43 percent required masks; and 77 percent worked with state, local, or tribal health departments to facilitate contact tracing and case investigation. As it did throughout the 2020-21 school year, the department will keep in place strategies for support of and technical assistance to LEAs in implementing CDC guidelines for 2021-22. This includes department staff dedicated as liaisons between LEAs and the state's Department of Health, statewide webinar and collaboration opportunities with senior state health officials, and frequent dissemination of information and resources on current mitigation strategies and recommendations.

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.

When it comes to COVID-19 issues, the department has approached consultation as an ongoing process of engagement with stakeholders.

The initial phase of engagement started in March 2020 and continued throughout the 2020-21 school year – encompassing continuous efforts to identify, understand and respond to the needs of all students and their families, including underserved students. The department hosted regular opportunities for information sharing and feedback, and in turn, staff participated in opportunities hosted by stakeholder groups. Depending on the topic, events were attended by superintendents, principals, school nurses, special education directors, teachers of English learners, tribal educators, parents, and representatives of professional organizations such as the South Dakota Education Association, School Administrators of South Dakota, and Associated School Boards of South Dakota. Early on in the pandemic, the department also partnered with Disability Rights South Dakota and South Dakota Parent Connection to take steps to ensure students with disabilities would continue to receive services.

The conversations had through these feedback loops were foundational to development of the ARP ESSER State Plan and will continue to inform the details of state spending priorities moving forward.

Building on this foundation, the next phase of engagement was a formal opportunity to provide input into the development of the ARP ESSER State Plan. To cast this wider net, the department offered an official public comment period, May 6-24, 2021. A survey was developed and disseminated to the stakeholder groups listed below.

Students
Jobs for America's Graduates-South Dakota
Career and Technical Student Organizations
South Dakota Student Council Association

Transition Liaison Project (Youth Leadership Forum)
Justice-involved youth (through Department of Corrections)

Families
South Dakota Advisory Panel on Children with Disabilities
South Dakota Parent Connection
Statewide Family Engagement Center
South Dakota PTA

Tribes
Indian Education Advisory Council
Great Plains Tribal Education Directors

Civil Rights Organizations
Disability Rights South Dakota

School Personnel
Superintendents
Curriculum directors
Special education directors
Principals
Teachers (English learners, career and technical education, math, science, English language arts, social studies, fine arts, music, award-winning)
Counselors
Other school staff, including paraprofessionals
Educational cooperative directors

Professional Organizations
South Dakota Education Association (teachers union)
School Administrators of South Dakota
Associated School Boards of South Dakota
South Dakota Association of School Psychologists
South Dakota Speech-Language-Hearing Association
21st Century Community Learning Centers
South Dakota Afterschool Network
South Dakota School Age Care Alliance
House and Senate Education Committee Chairs

Stakeholders Representing Underserved Students
Developmental Disabilities Council
South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired
South Dakota School for the Deaf
Title Programs contacts (representing foster care, homeless, migrant youth)
Department of Corrections (justice-involved youth)
Department of Tribal Relations

The survey asked respondents what they saw as the most pressing needs currently facing students and schools in their area; what lessons could be learned from the experience of the COVID pandemic to improve the K-12 education system; and what they saw as spending priorities for the state's ARP ESSER funds. In response, the department received 263 completed comments. Respondents encompassed most of the groups noted above.

Summary of Funding Priorities - All Responses
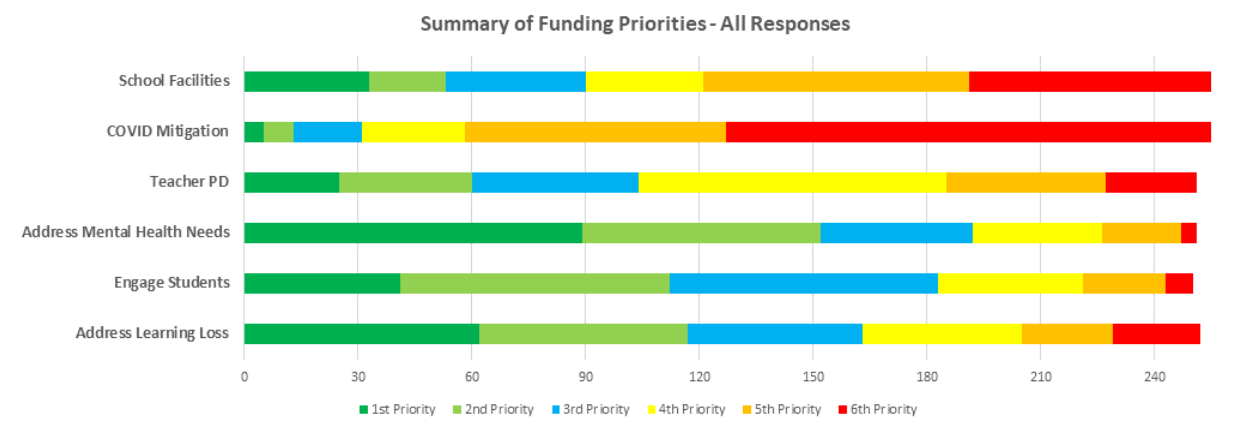
To better understand the needs of underserved populations, the department also hosted a focus group with participants who work directly with some of the state's most underserved students, including English learners, students with disabilities and Native American students.

Finally, the public had opportunity to offer input into the development of the ARP ESSER State Plan at the state Board of Education Standards meeting in May 2021.

The official public comment largely mirrored what the department had heard through the ongoing conversations with stakeholders. Stakeholders identified several clear priorities for moving forward: student mental health issues and the capacity to address them; student disengagement and lost instructional time; and the impact of the pandemic on the educator workforce. Many stakeholders also expressed interest in updating school facilities to create healthier learning environments. These issues – minus school facilities – are reflected as state priorities as outlined in this plan (see A-2 and A-3 in this document).

Consultation with stakeholders will continue as the department reviews data and makes decisions about state-level ARP ESSER spending priorities. To that end, the next phase of engagement includes plans for an August summit to dive deeply into the topics of student engagement and learning loss; the role of summer school, afterschool and community-based organizations in supporting students; and educator recruitment and retention. Critical to these conversations will be stakeholders who represent the interests of underserved student populations such as educators who work with underserved populations; those involved in the juvenile justice system; and community- and faith-based organizations that serve these youth and their families.

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);

As previously indicated, a vast majority of South Dakota schools were able to provide safe, in-person instruction throughout the 2020-21 school year. Dollars provided through federal COVID funding supported LEAs in their re-opening efforts this year and will be used to support continuous operation during the 2021-22 school year and beyond.

Coronavirus Aid, Relief, Economic Security (CARES) Act
Under the CARES Act, the department awarded $41.3 million to public school districts for Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER I). Schools used these funds to address the impact of coronavirus on their students, staff and daily operations, including implementing mitigation strategies, providing for continuous learning opportunities, and developing and implementing plans for return to school in August 2020. Also, under CARES Act funding, the State of South of Dakota, via the department, distributed an additional $72 million, or $500 per student, of Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) to public, private and non-accredited schools. These funds were used as an administrative convenience for schools responding to COVID. Some of these funds also went to educational cooperatives in the state that serve public school districts.

In the technology realm, the department used CRF dollars to establish the K-12 Connect program in partnership with the Bureau of Information and Telecommunications and local telecommunication providers around the state. Through this program, the state was able to give internet access to families who qualified for the free and reduced-price meals program under the U.S. Department of Agriculture. With this service, students were able to participate in online instruction and coursework when they were at learning at home. In addition, CRF funds were used to purchase Zoom licenses, at a highly discounted rate, for teachers and administrators. This opportunity was made available to all public schools in the state and facilitated continuous instruction and communication between educators and their students.

GEER I funds have been dedicated to the UpSkill Program, a collaboration between the state's Board of Technical Education and the Department of Labor. This program allows impacted South Dakotans the opportunity to earn certificates from the state's technical colleges

at little or no cost. Additionally, GEER I funds have been obligated to educational cooperatives to provide Birth to 5 services and to afterschool programs to enhance learning opportunities for youngsters that have experienced learning loss due to the pandemic. These programs all combine under the theme of addressing the needs of some of the state's most vulnerable and most impacted citizens.

Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act
Under the CRRSA Act, the department has awarded more than $169 million ESSER II funds to all public schools in the state. LEAs are using this second round of ESSER funding for a variety of activities, including benchmark assessments to determine where students are at in their learning; strategies to address learning loss; technology purchases; purchases to address mitigation; and upgrades to improve air quality in school buildings.

More than $7.5 million of Emergency Assistance to Non-Public Schools (EANS) funds will be provided to non-public schools to provide services or assistance designed to address educational disruptions cause by COVID.

Planning for GEER II funds is under way.

> ii. To what extent ESSER I and ESSER II funds have been awarded to LEAs and, if funds have not yet been made available to LEAs, when they will be. In addition, please provide any available information on the total dollar amounts of ESSER I and ESSER II funds that have been obligated but not expended by the SEA and its LEAs, including whether the SEA is able to track LEA obligations.

The department has awarded 99.5 percent of both ESSER I and ESSER II to LEAs in the state. The LEAs have obligated $41,088,754 and expended $24,447,798 in ESSER I funds. The LEAs have obligated $153,089,516 and expended $157,980 in ESSER II funds. The department tracks the LEA obligations in monthly financial reports.

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

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

The department has relied on strong partnerships with other state agencies throughout the COVID pandemic to provide support and technical assistance to schools. The partnership with the Department of Health (DOH) is a prime example. During the 2020-21 school year, DOH provided rapid and sentinel testing at no cost, including testing materials, courier services and lab processing, to all interested schools. Those efforts will continue into the 2021-22 school year with support to provide rapid testing and screening testing in schools. Funding provided via the U.S. Department of Agriculture was critical in keeping school meal programs operating – and serving entire families, not just students – throughout the pandemic. From March of 2020 to March of 2021, nearly 12.9 million lunches were served by public, non-public and Bureau of Indian Education schools across the state. And in the months ahead, the department will partner with the Department of Social Services, with its various resources, to address challenges around providing mental health services to students in rural and isolated areas.

Regarding education-specific funding, the department is coordinating existing Title II funds to provide professional development opportunities to assist teachers in identifying supports for students that are not on track to be proficient in accordance with our statewide aspirations. Additionally, the department will use some of its state assessment funds to provide supports for assessment literacy – specifically formative assessments and how they can be used to understand student progress towards standards mastery. In the area of special education, the department will continue to support multi-tiered systems of support and improved literacy through the State Systematic Improvement Plan (SSIP).

D. Maximizing State-Level Funds to Support Students

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

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

Because South Dakota was primarily open for in-person instruction throughout the 2020-21 school year, the pandemic's impact through lost instructional time was dampened in comparison with other states. Interim assessment data, summative accountability results, ACT participation and scores, and anecdotal information collected from extensive district-level input all support that conclusion – that the impacts, while real, were less severe than other states experienced. Also, because most schools were open for instruction, schools began addressing any impact of two months of remote instruction in the spring of 2020 when they reopened in fall 2020. Even so, the department is fully aware that the full impact of COVID's educational disruption will take years to emerge and thus to mitigate. Some of those longer-term effects, if left unattended, could include lower readiness for postsecondary education and for meaningful contributions to the state's workforce. As a state, we may face the reality of a less-qualified workforce in ten years and beyond if we do not act with effective and proven strategies now. The department is fully cognizant of the challenge before us and has worked diligently to reverse this trend.

Throughout the department's analysis, a particular concern is those students, or pockets of students, that were not engaged in instruction either in spring 2020 or into the subsequent school years, in addition to students attending schools that remained closed through the majority of the 2020-21 school year. Because of those extended closures, little reliable data, other than the absence of informative data, is available regarding these vulnerable students.

During the summer of 2021, school districts and community-based organizations led the effort at the local level to provide summer programming, since they have first-hand knowledge of student needs. Ninety public school districts – 60% – offered summer school, a significant strategy to close any COVID gaps. Additionally, over the summer, the department took the necessary steps to build a data collection around both summer and afterschool programming, a feature that was not part of the existing data collection. All public school districts are currently reporting student enrollment in afterschool programs, which began with the 2021-22 school year and continued with the same data for summer school in summer 2022, and moving forward. This will provide a more reliable data set for analysis than was previously available.

As it considered use of its reserve funds, the department focused on selecting meaningful, evidence-based interventions that have positive, long-term impact on students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. In concert with the priorities identified at the beginning of this plan, the department has identified more specific categories of funding for interventions to address learning loss and re-engage students. Additionally, the department's strategy for state-level efforts is to come along side and either complement district-level work or provide programming and services districts are unable to provide. This strategy keeps the state's efforts rooted at the local level, where educators are best able to identify those individual students most impacted by the pandemic and lost instructional times.

- **Promoting the importance of regular school attendance**. As identified in the department's 2021 COVID Impact Report, the percent of students chronically absent (missing 30 or more days of instruction) jumped from 3.8% in 2018-19SY to 6.4% in 2020-21SY. Numerous studies identify connections between chronic absenteeism and its adverse effects on student learning. Given the increase in chronic absenteeism, the

department created a public awareness campaign aimed at promoting consistent school attendance. The campaign targets certain geographic areas as well as specific populations, in line with the trends identified in the absenteeism data from school year 2020-21. These targeted efforts are ensuring reach among those most impacted by lost instructional time – both geographically and within certain identified subgroups. The message of the campaign, both in English and Spanish, reminds students that they skip their future (and potential lifetime earnings) when they skip school. The campaign debuted in the fall of 2021 as schools were starting up for the year. Future iterations of the awareness campaign will build on the messaging of the importance of regular school attendance to a student's future.

- **Building literacy statewide**. The department is developing a comprehensive literacy plan to bring clarity and consistency to South Dakota's literacy instruction and related interventions for reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The plan will include a state definition and shared approach to literacy; outline evidence and research-based strategies, including current successful initiatives; and a process for the state to flexibly engage with districts on their implementation. To develop the literacy plan, the department is engaging stakeholders to advise on key components, especially on structuring literacy supports to meet the needs of learners across all grades and districts. The department understands that students receiving special education services, as well as our youngest learners, high school students, and those students from low-income backgrounds, are among the groups most affected by the pandemic. Therefore, this strategy targets efforts for participation by students identified in these groups, ensures implementation remains rooted at the individual level, and will provide robust educator training for quality instructional practices.

- **Engaging middle and high school students**. Using absenteeism rates as a measure of the pandemic's effects, high school students were disproportionately impacted. Through its partner agencies, the department also has evidence of increased demand for high school equivalency testing, which also points to lost instructional time and disengagement with the school system. Additionally, district-level information (based on stakeholder conversations and interventions in LEA-level ESSER spending plans) indicates middle school students disengaged at high rates during the pandemic. Engagement in their learning and connection to the world outside of the school building are effective means of getting students excited about learning and preparing for their futures. This work will provide more access for middle and high school students to high quality career and technical education as well as provide quality Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO) experiences for students. The department is contracting with experts to improve work-based learning experiences and materials – for educators, students, and industry – that will enhance the ability of students, in particular those belonging to underserved populations most acutely affected by the pandemic, to explore the world of work through laddered work-based learning. In these efforts, the state will also expand the proven engagement and drop-out prevention program, Jobs for America's Graduates, through contracted work to expand state capacity to support the program and start-up grants directly to schools. This program has been especially effective for students identifying as Native American, one of the subgroups most impacted by the pandemic

and related school closures. Targeted supports for FAFSA completion and postsecondary enrollment are being developed, including a renewed campaign about postsecondary options within the state. As a result, students will have increased access to work-based learning opportunities, programs that encourage student engagement, and tools to help them make decisions about their future – all of which are proven to support students in successfully completing high school and transitioning into adulthood. Finally, the department is working with experts in the field to survey the extent of and reasons for student disengagement, particular among 16- and 17-year old learners. This study will better inform state-level efforts to employ practices targeting this very specific population experiencing lost instructional time and disengagement from their learning.

- **Mitigating learning loss**. Knowing that educators, and parents and guardians, may need support in meeting students' individualized learning needs, the department is launching a statewide, online tutoring service. This effort is a partnership with the state's university system. It will be aimed at specific geographic areas of high absenteeism, as well as student groups that experienced high absenteeism and therefore significant lost instructional time. The department will also consider the state's summative assessment data to determine those districts low in growth and academic performance as possible additional options for geographic targeting for academic supports outside the school day. Additionally, the department is partnering with education professionals in the state to launch a K-5 STEM education initiative including statewide efforts to increase the capacity for computer science instruction in schools. The department knows that STEM education engages students and prepares them for future career paths. This initiative also dovetails with the state's workforce needs as it positions itself as a leader in cyber and IT fields. Together with the state's university partners, this programming will set the state up to better equip students with the vital STEM skills they will need in today's (and tomorrow's) workforce.

- **Recruiting, retaining and supporting educators.** After extensive stakeholder consultation, the department is kicking off a multi-pronged effort in this area. First, the department is investing in two new programs built to support and retain educators throughout their career. The first program, created in collaboration with statewide education leaders, directs support and professional development for early-career educators and builds on the state's foundational mentoring program for all first-and second-year teachers. *Good to Great Teachers* empowers teachers in their third through fifth years in the profession by increasing teacher effectiveness and fostering self-efficacy through reflective practices in a community of educators. Through a partnership with the state's university system, the department is investing in a Leadership Academy for K-12 mid-career professionals. Targeted at teacher-leaders with at least five years of experience, the academy is a three-graduate credit, 45-contact hour academy that will prepare teachers for future educational leadership opportunities. In the area of recruiting educators, the department is investing in grants to help chapters of the Career and Technical Student Organization, Educators Rising, to introduce more high school students to the field of education and support them in that journey. The department is bringing in capacity to augment efforts in recruiting and retaining educators, which will aid in the establishment of new pathways for first and mid-career adults seeking to make

a difference in the classroom. Strategies in this area include expanding options for alternative certification and exploring nontraditional routes to licensure, such as apprenticeship and stackable pathways. Finally, the department is contracting to develop a professional development platform that will provide a one-stop shop for department-sponsored, virtual training for educators. This innovative learning management system for education professionals will store content and allow for the creation of new content as well as easy access to timely and relevant professional development ongoing.

- **Developing the foundation for quality early learning opportunities.** School leaders have expressed since school started in August 2021 that the percent of kindergarten students who are ready for school is noticeably less than in past years. Fall 2021 also brought the state's largest kindergarten class on record, indicating that many parents held their children back during the uncertainty of the 2020-21 school year. There is a large body of evidence that points to the positive impact preschool programs have on preparing children for school and offering them benefits that last a lifetime. As a state with a high percentage of residents in the labor force (South Dakota ranks near the top nationally in both the male and female categories, according to the 2019 South Dakota Workforce Report), the department recognizes that many children are in settings outside the home during the traditional work week. Efforts to address availability of and access to quality opportunities will begin with conducting a statewide study. The study will help the state better understand the existing state of preschool opportunities across the state and the gaps in available services and other factors such as affordability, educator qualifications, and implementation of quality education programs. From the study's results, the state will determine future efforts to improve educational programming for 3- and 4-year-olds, the preparation and on-going training of preschool providers, and the data and technical support needed to help young learners transition into K-12.

- **Tending to student wellness.** In order to engage fully in their learning, students need to feel safe and supported at school. This area is also of particular importance, given the extent to which mental health has been identified by stakeholders as a key area of need. Funding directed to this category will expand educators' access to tools and training that address creation of positive school environments – those where behavioral issues are limited; educators are adept at identifying students who may be struggling and connecting them to appropriate resources; and students experience improved academic outcomes. Further, the department is partnering with other state agencies to support the overall well-being of the state's youth. Examples include supporting the Department of Social Services' efforts around providing tele-mental health services for students in remote areas and collaboration with several state agencies around youth suicide prevention. The department is also ensuring school counselors have the tools they need by providing training and resources to the field throughout the life of the grant. Knowing that all educators have a role in student wellness, educators statewide will be able to participate in training programs that help them ensure every student has a daily touchpoint with an adult – thereby ensuring no child slips through the cracks. Finally, smaller touchpoints such as wellness marketing materials and prevention resources for schools, developed in-house or with other state agencies, will equip districts to help their student populations. These efforts will increase the abilities of counselors and other educators to understand

and support their student populations and reach those students most affected by the pandemic on an individual level.

- **Improving Data System**. As is evident throughout, the department's strategies in addressing the impact of lost instructional time resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic is rooted in our data. However, it is also apparent that the department does not have sufficiently robust data systems and practices to meet long-term needs in this area. The department will determine specific avenues to pursue to enhance and integrate statewide data systems with the intention of increasing the sustainability and usability of the department's longitudinal data system. This will allow for improved long-term analysis, build the skills of educators in the field in accessing and working with data, centralize district accounts and validation processes, and remove current barriers in our systems. Investing in this critical ability to analyze the progress of our students will make us more nimble in analysis and identifying areas of both need and bright spots.

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 students in South Dakota were fortunate to be able to elect to participate in in-person instruction, which the majority of families did choose. However, the department recognizes the needs that still persist for students in schools that remained shuttered for the majority of the 2020-21 school year – namely, public schools and tribally funded schools located on Indian reservations that were subject to closure by tribal ordinance.

South Dakota has used the data sources noted throughout this plan to understand the impact of lost instructional time. To gain a more sophisticated understanding, the state is looking at engaging a partner to help us develop more robust data capabilities. These will help provide insight with greater precision the extent of learning loss in the state.

Data sources that already show a picture of the level of need include summative and benchmark test scores, attendance measures, chronic absenteeism, graduation rates, and teacher retention.

Notable in the data is the participation rate on the state's summative assessments. While overall the state reached a 95% participation rate in spring 2021, students identified as economically disadvantaged only participated at a 90% rate and Native American students at 74%. This shows us that while the proficiency rates themselves may be similar to years past, we are clearly missing students. Those students are likely among those with the most acute learning loss needs.

Attendance patterns during 2021-22 show 6.3% of public school students missed 30 or more days of school, compared with 3.4% in 2018-19. Certain subgroups of students were disproportionately represented within that 6.3%. These subgroups included: Economically Disadvantaged, Grades 9-12, Native American, Students with Disabilities, and Hispanic.

Additionally, there were 41 public school districts with more than 5% of their student population missing six weeks or more of school.

DOE will implement its evidence-based interventions in a two-tiered approach: interventions that serve all students and targeted interventions for those most impacted by the pandemic and the subsequent lost instructional time. Any strategy employed at the state level will broadly help the state's students recover academically. Within that effort, the state will hone in on particular subgroups that will most benefit from the strategy employed. For example, attendance awareness campaign ads will appeal to a broad audience but will also include targeted ads that will run in geographic areas most heavily impacted. Online tutoring will be available to any student, but marketing efforts will focus on geographic areas and subgroups of students who are most in need of that service. Finally, the department's overall approach in employing this strategy will be to both complement districts' ability to serve their students most impacted, and to provide programming and services statewide that districts are unable to do on their own. This programming and services will target student groups most disproportionately impacted by the pandemic while ensuring that each student's individual needs are met.

Specifically:

- **Promoting the importance of regular school attendance.** This intervention, as described above, is rooted in the state's absenteeism data. For example, messaging for social media platforms included both English and Spanish versions, and radio ad buys included geographic areas near Indian reservations. Both Hispanic and Native American subgroups experienced disproportionately higher chronic absenteeism rates. The campaign has and will impact geographic areas showing the largest gaps and target English learner, low-income, American Indian, and high school learners.

- **Building literacy statewide.** This initiative will aid all learners in gaining vital literacy skills with a particular emphasis on students with disabilities, English learners, and those in the economically disadvantaged subgroup. The data sources driving this area include the summative South Dakota English Language Arts assessment and the State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG). SPDG is a leading driver of literacy initiatives in the state focusing on improving literacy for all students, especially students with disabilities. Building early literacy skills is proven to lead to students' long-term success, making this program vital to the state's recovery efforts. In addition other programs, such as the State's IDEA Part C program are collaborating to support early language development and literacy training to professionals working with families of infants and toddlers.

- **Engaging middle and high school students.** The department has incorporated an array of efforts in this category, signaling its importance to achieving the goal of mitigating the pandemic's impacts and making up for lost instructional time. Students who will specifically be served by and benefit from the efforts include students belonging to the Native American subgroup, low-income students, and high school students. To determine the specific areas of focus, the department used absenteeism data, stakeholder input from districts, and local evidence that both JAG and CTE course-taking patterns increase graduation rates.

- **Mitigating learning loss.** The online tutoring services will impact those in particular geographic areas, middle and high school students (who evidence points to having had high negative impacts from the pandemic), economically disadvantaged students, and English learner students. This is also a specific area that will augment district efforts to provide tutoring and academic supports to students most impacted. The STEM initiative will aid all learners in gaining skills necessary to support future learning. Data consulted include participation rates and stakeholder input. The department will consider data from the state's summative assessments to target areas with low growth and academic performance rates.

- **Recruiting, retaining and supporting educators.** Well-prepared and trained teachers are the lynchpin to helping students overcome learning loss. The state's historical educator shortage has been exacerbated by the impacts of COVID-19, as seen through the state's own educator data as well as that of partner organizations. High-quality educators will help all students achieve; these efforts will have the greatest impact in geographically remote areas and with educators serving students historically underserved (including Native American and economically disadvantaged).

- **Developing the foundation for quality early learning preschool opportunities.** The crux of this strategy is rooted in a statewide study which will inform the state of opportunities to leverage federal, state, and local early education investments. This will benefit all early childhood learners, particularly those who are economically disadvantaged, receive special education services, and/or reside in areas without access to high quality early-learning opportunities – all of which were particularly impacted by COVID-19 and the resulting lost instructional time.

- **Tending to student wellness.** Efforts aimed at tending to student wellness will support all students, and even more so those most directly impacted by the effects of the pandemic. Students of color, economically disadvantaged students, migratory students, and students who are experiencing homelessness have been more likely to experience family stress, uncertainty, interrupted learning, and trauma. Investments in strategies to address students' individual social, emotional, and mental health, including strategies such as school-based tele-mental health opportunities and better cross-agency collaboration, will help schools address whole child needs of those most impacted by the pandemic.

As previously noted, the department will continue to work in concert with districts and, where appropriate, community organizations to identify strategies and interventions to meet the needs effectively of vulnerable students, using local and state set-aside funding, throughout the life of the grant. The department also notes the above-described efforts fill gaps that districts may not otherwise able to, a strategy more fully explained below.

        iii.   The extent to which the SEA will use funds it reserves to identify and engage 1) students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years; and 2)

students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures.

The department has a high-level picture of disengaged students due to COVID from its robust collaboration with districts and local stakeholder networks – at its core, the percent of students chronically absent (missing 30 or more days of instruction) jumped from 3.4% in 2018-19SY to 6.3% in 2021-22SY. A fuller picture of the level of statewide need in this area continues to emerge through LEA ARP ESSER plans. As referenced below, districts must identify how, at the local level, they are using ESSER funding to identify, re-engage, and support students most likely to have experienced the impact of lost instructional time, including but not limited to students who have missed the most in-person instruction, students who did not participate or participated inconsistently in remote instruction, and students most at-risk of dropping out of school. What has emerged is that in areas mostly open for in-person instruction, the academic gaps have widened for those who were behind traditionally, even before the pandemic.

The strategies outlined previously – which focus on meeting students where they are, equipping teachers and school leaders, and supporting strong pedagogy – and further broken down into specific interventions such as middle and high school engagement, student wellness, and literacy, will work to specifically engage the students who missed critical instruction and the support system of their school in the last two years.

At the state level, the department's efforts have also focused on coming alongside districts to provide services not otherwise possible at the local level. This includes efforts such as statewide tutoring, which fills a gap districts have noted they cannot fill with available personnel. Student wellness efforts (including tele-mental health and more professional development for school counselors and educators in this area) are most effectively coordinated at the state level, which then allows educators to put those strategies into practice locally. The department's effort around providing more robust data analysis tools also exemplify this strategy. Local districts are best equipped to identify and serve students most impacted and most disengaged by the pandemic and its aftermath, including lost instructional time. The department, therefore, has included in its strategies empowering local leaders to do just that.

2. <u>Evidence-Based Summer Learning and Enrichment Programs</u>: 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 department, along with key partners, supported districts in starting school in person, to the greatest extent possible, in August 2020. After being open for the full school year, 90 public school districts – 60% – offered summer school in 2021. Data that has emerged, including from statewide summative assessments, ACT results, attendance, and graduation rates, indicate that while the impact on South Dakota's students was not at the rate seen in other states, an impact nevertheless is there. Most notably in the areas of the state that remained closed through the majority or the entirety of the 2020-21 school year, a fuller picture will take longer to emerge as districts and the state collect reliable data. And indeed, the full impact of the pandemic itself is not confined to a single school year or two but will require long-term monitoring and analysis.

As noted initially, in making decisions about programming, the department's aim is to leverage partnerships to provide supports to highly impacted student groups and areas, and to ensure such programs respond to students' individual academic, social, emotional and mental health needs.

The department embarked on this strategy in August 2021 with an education summit aimed at gathering key stakeholders' best advice and input for, among other areas, summer school programs. As a result of that summit and other collaborations, priorities emerged that the department is now making actionable.

In summer 2022 and continuing through summer 2023 and 2024, the department is partnering with the South Dakota Board of Regents (SD BOR), along with the state's technical colleges and businesses and employers, to offer middle school students the opportunity to spend a week on a college campus engaging with hands-on career pathways experiences. These enrichment opportunities are available free of charge to students and allow them to be immersed in the college experience – dorm life, campus food, activities, and camaraderie, all the while getting to "try on" education and career pathways available to them post-graduation. The outcomes of the camps will be to expose students early to opportunities available, allow them to connect both to their education and peers across the state, and begin putting together pieces for what comes next (i.e., what education they need in order to get to their desired career field).

Campers are selected on an application basis that prioritize students most heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lost instructional time – namely, low-income, under-represented subgroups, parents'/guardians' education level, and geographic areas of the state.

Applications for the first round of summer camps far outstripped initial capacity – more than quadruple the number of spots initially available. The department worked with the SD BOR and campuses to double capacity for summer 2022 and will work to increase capacity further for subsequent summers.

These camps fill a need in the state for high-quality summer programming to mitigate the impact of learning loss during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the summer of 2021, as the department convened stakeholders to discuss priority areas for funding, lack of options for middle schoolers in particular emerged as a theme. Also, districts have reported that summer school at the local level is an important tool to address learning loss, but planned programming has not always been possible due to lack of staff. Because the state is able to arrange for programming and staffing,

this alleviates some of that burden at the local level and provides a key demographic of students with high-quality, evidence-based programming.

The department also recognizes that there is need for local-level programming, as was clear through stakeholder input. To supplement local entities' ability to meet instructional, material, and programming needs to mitigate the impact of learning loss due to the pandemic's effect of lost instructional time, the department is providing assistance through two avenues:

- **Competitive grants**. Grants to local agencies assist in providing high quality, academic rich support when they are not in school. Local providers identify needs such as expanding hours, hiring certified teachers at out-of-contract rates, providing field-trip opportunities, expanding experiences in the classroom through materials such as makerspaces, providing high-quality, evidence-based professional development for staff in meeting the learning loss and mental and behavioral health needs of their learners, and beyond. Grant awards made to entities based on the statement of need, impact, and sustainability of the proposal.

- **Mobile programming.** Contracting with one of the state's education service providers, the department will identify the statewide needs of summer school providers to most effectively mitigate the disproportionate effects of the pandemic on certain learners. As a result of this effort, the contractor will develop hands on programming aligned to academic content standards to meet those needs. This mobile programming (which will range from physical materials deployed to the field or virtual opportunities) will allow summer school providers to tap into resources not otherwise available. The materials will be designed to address learning loss gaps in particular for student populations most impacted by the pandemic, as described elsewhere. As an additional targeting measure, in the event that the materials are oversubscribed, preference will be given to providers serving students and geographic areas most heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic's result of lost instructional time. Once developed, these resources will far outlive the lifecycle of the grant itself, benefitting students for years to come.

Given the overlapping nature of out-of-school-time programming (encompassing both afterschool and summer school), several of the activities and the grantees for the funds between these two categories are similar or the same. The department embraces the need to ensure that each respective set aside (afterschool and summer school) are obligated and expended to their full extent in each respective category. As such, the department has implemented and will continue to implement agreement language, budget coding, and technical assistant to grantees to ensure that funds intended for each category remain separate and distinct.

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

Similar to the department's approach with the learning loss set-aside, the department is making efforts available to all students with particular targeting towards those most significantly impacted by COVID-19. That targeting statewide is based on information previously discussed; similar to learning loss, the department is making resources available for districts to target their own student groups most significantly impacted by lost instructional time.

Specifically:

- **Middle school career camps**. This effort inherently seeks to engage a student population heavily impacted by the pandemic. Students eligible each summer are those entering seventh and eighth grade. Additionally, as noted previously, campers are selected on an application basis that prioritizes low-income, under-represented subgroups, parents'/guardians' education level, and geographic areas of the state – key factors that allow the state to prioritize those most heavily impacted by the pandemic's effect of lost instructional time.

- **Competitive Grants.** The grants, by design, expand access to student populations most heavily affected by lost instructional time. Applicants describe the academic interventions and enrichment offered to these students. Applications are then selected through a rubric that prioritizes low-income, under-represented subgroups, and geographic areas of the state most impacted by the pandemic's effect of lost instructional times.

- **Mobile programming.** This resource will allow providers in underserved areas to access resources and programming not otherwise available – which also overlaps in part with those geographic areas most heavily affected by lost instructional time. In the event that the materials are oversubscribed, preference will be given to providers serving students and geographic areas that are known to the department to be most heavily impacted.

Data indicating the impact of these efforts will be participation rates in programming, triangulated with attendance, academic proficiency, and, later, students' graduation rates.

iii.   The extent to which the SEA will use funds it reserves to identify and engage 1) students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years; and 2) students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures.

The department has a high-level picture of the extent of disengaged students due to COVID from its robust collaboration with districts and local stakeholder networks, as well as from the LEA ARP ESSER plans. As referenced below, districts are required to identify how, at the local level, they are using ESSER funding to identify, re-engage, and support students most likely to have experienced the impact of lost instructional time, including but not limited to students who have missed the most in-person instruction, students who did not participate or participated inconsistently in remote instruction, and students most at-risk of dropping out of school.

As previously described, the department's efforts in this area have also focused on coming alongside districts to provide services not otherwise possible at the local level – where districts leaders are best placed to identify and re-engage students most impacted, including those who may not have engaged in remote instruction when buildings were closed. The middle school career camps and building mobile programming toolkits embrace this strategy, while also targeting at the state level those populations known to be most highly impacted.

Data indicating the impact of these efforts will be participation rates in programming triangulated with attendance, academic proficiency, and graduation rates.

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;

The department, along with key partners, supported districts in starting school in person, to the greatest extent possible, in August 2020 and again in Fall 2021. Initial data from the COVID Impact Survey indicates nearly half offered before- or afterschool in-person programming during the 2020-21 school year, with some offering remote options. Results also show that 23 percent of schools offered supplemental educational experiences (for example, weekend opportunities). Data that has emerged, including from statewide summative assessments, ACT results, attendance, and graduation rates, indicate that while the impact on South Dakota's students was not at the rate seen in other states, an impact from the pandemic nevertheless is visible through lower overall academic proficiency rates, lower graduation rates, and a spike of chronic absenteeism (from 3.8% in 2018-19 to 6.4% in 2020-21). Most notably in the areas of the state that remained closed through the majority or the entirety of the 2020-21SY, a fuller picture will take longer to see as districts and the state collect reliable data. And indeed, the full impact of the pandemic itself is not confined to a single school year or two but will require long-term monitoring and analysis.

As noted initially, in making decisions about programming, the department's aim is to leverage partnerships to provide supports to highly impacted student groups and areas, and to ensure such programs respond to students' academic, social, emotional and mental health needs.

The department sought considered stakeholder engagement on this strategy in August 2021 with an education summit aimed at gathering key stakeholders' best advice and input for, among other areas, afterschool programs. The specific evidence-based programming described below is a

result of that engagement, in addition to ongoing collaboration the department maintains with afterschool programming providers.

Specifically, under contract with one of the state's educational cooperatives, the department will focus on these avenues:

- **Out-of-school-time leadership professional learning community**. This effort will develop leadership curriculum to provide support to directors, site coordinators, lead teachers, and others in areas of afterschool leadership to build and grow high-quality out-of-school-time (OST) programs statewide. Applications will be specifically targeted towards those communities most impacted by the pandemic. Two cohorts will run each of the two remaining years of the grant and will result in graduate credit or continuing education hours. Topics covered will include student development, project-based learning, engaging families, building relationships, and more. In between class time, the contractor will provide technical assistance to participants to build on and extend their learning.

- **Onboarding and training toolkit**. Ensuring that program staff have the skills necessary is a vital component of high-quality OST programs. This project will build and provide resources to programs to get staff onboarded and trained quickly. In conjunction with a project described above, the materials themselves will be hosted on the department's new learning management system.

- **Resources and curriculum toolkit**. Overlapping between summer school and afterschool, this OST-specific toolkit will house lessons, units, and other resources for programs to utilize statewide. A particular focus will be on family engagement and the materials will align with South Dakota content standards, further maximizing their utility in addressing learning loss during the pandemic.

Additionally, the mobile programming and competitive grants initiatives described previously for summer school programming will also be available to afterschool providers. Given the state's size and sparsity, many providers offer both afterschool and summer school programs (combined under the framework of "Out of School Time") and therefore the state is maximizing the impact of these dollars by allowing programs to use the resources under both settings.

- **Competitive grants**. Grants to local agencies assist in providing high quality, academic rich support when they are not in school. Local providers identify needs such as expanding hours, hiring certified teachers at out-of-contract rates, providing field-trip opportunities, expanding experiences in the classroom through materials such as makerspaces, providing high-quality, evidence-based professional development for staff in meeting the learning loss and mental and behavioral health needs of their learners, and beyond. Grant awards made to entities based on the statement of need, impact, and sustainability of the proposal.

- **Mobile programming.** Contracting with one of the state's education service providers, the department will identify the statewide needs of summer school providers to most

effectively mitigate the disproportionate effects of the pandemic on certain learners. As a result of this effort, the contractor will develop hands on programming aligned to content area standards to meet those needs. This mobile programming (which will range from physical materials deployed to the field or virtual opportunities) will allow after school providers to tap into resources not otherwise available. The materials will be designed to address learning loss gaps in particular for student populations most impacted by the pandemic, as described elsewhere. As an additional targeting measure, in the event that the materials are oversubscribed, preference will be given to providers serving students and geographic areas most heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic's result of lost instructional time. Once developed, these resources will far outlive the lifecycle of the grant itself, benefitting students for years to come.

Given the overlapping nature of out-of-school-time programming (encompassing both afterschool and summer school), several of the activities and the grantees for the funds between these two categories are similar or the same. The department embraces the need to ensure that each respective set aside (afterschool and summer school) are obligated and expended to their full extent in each respective category. As such, the department has implemented and will continue to implement agreement language, budget coding, and technical assistant to grantees to ensure that funds intended for each category remain separate and distinct.

> 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

Making necessary educational programming and technical supports available statewide in afterschool programming to elevate quality and access remains an emerging area for the department. Therefore, the department relies heavily on the expertise in the field with districts and with community-based organizations to help determine the most effective way to support partners in providing evidence-based afterschool programming, including targeted supports for students who have not yet met grade-level learning or age-appropriate social emotional targets.

Similar to the department's approach with the learning loss and summer school set-asides, the department is making efforts available that will support all students, with particular targeting to more effectively serve those most significantly impacted by COVID-19. That targeting statewide is based on information previously discussed; similar to learning loss, the department is also making resources available for districts to support their own students most significantly impacted by the pandemic.

Data indicating the impact of these efforts will be participation rates in programming triangulated with attendance, academic proficiency, and graduation rates.

> iii. the extent to which the SEA will use funds it reserves to identify and engage 1) students who have missed the most in-person instruction

during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years; and 2) students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures.

The department has a high-level picture of the extent of disengaged students due to COVID from its robust collaboration with districts and local stakeholder networks, as well as from the LEA ARP ESSER plans. As referenced below, districts are required to identify how, at the local level, they are using ESSER funding to identify, re-engage, and support students most likely to have experienced the impact of lost instructional time, including but not limited to students who have missed the most in-person instruction, students who did not participate or participated inconsistently in remote instruction, and students most at-risk of dropping out of school.

As noted above, the department's efforts in this area have focused on coming alongside local professionals to provide services not otherwise possible at the local level – where education leaders are best placed to both identify and re-engage students most impacted, including those who may not have engaged in remote instruction when buildings were closed. Building the professional and educational skills of staff, providing competitive grants to afterschool providers, and building resources all embrace this strategy, while also targeting at the state level those populations known to be most highly impacted.

Data indicating the impact of these efforts will be participation rates in programming triangulated with attendance, academic proficiency, and graduation rates.

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.

Not applicable to South Dakota

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 department collected assurances from LEAs that in receiving the funds, they would meet the ARP ESSER plan submission deadline set out by the department (i.e., Aug. 20, 2021) and that they would comply with the requirements as set out in the law and the interim final rule.

The department provided a template for LEAs to use in completing ARP ESSER Plans. LEAs receiving ARP ESSER funds must submit their ARP ESSER Plans on the template to the department no later than Aug. 20, 2021. In the template, the department outlined instructions for the development of plans, public comment and posting requirements, and requirements to update the LEA's ARP ESSER Plan should the LEA change priorities or submit substantial amendments to its funds request.

The department's template asks an LEA to record its ARP ESSER funding available, date of approval of the plan, and the link where the plan is publicly accessible. The template further asks the LEA to outline its spending plan to address the following priorities: Prevention and Mitigation Strategies, Academic Impact of Lost Instructional Time, Investments Aligned with Student Needs, and Investments in Other Allowed Activities. Each of those priorities aligns with the categories noted above and as outlined in the interim final rule. Further, the template requires LEAs to describe how they will use ARP ESSER funds to engage at-risk students (i.e., those

who missed the most in-person instruction, those who did not participate or participated inconsistently in remote instruction, and students most at risk of dropping out of school). Finally, the template requires LEAs to outline how they did and will continue to meaningfully engage in stakeholder consultation with each of the required stakeholder groups as listed in the interim final rule.

2. <u>LEA Consultation</u>: Describe how the SEA will, in planning for the use of ARP ESSER funds, ensure that, consistent with the ARP ESSER requirements], its LEAs engage in meaningful consultation with stakeholders, including, but not limited to:
   i. students;
   ii. families;
   iii. school and district administrators (including special education administrators); and
   iv. teachers, principals, school leaders, other educators, school staff, and their unions.

   The LEA must also engage in meaningful consultation with each of the following to the extent present in or served by the LEA:
   i. Tribes;
   ii. civil rights organizations (including disability rights organizations); and
   iii. stakeholders representing the interests of children with disabilities, English learners, children experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, migratory students, children who are incarcerated, and other underserved students.

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

At the department level, ensuring that LEAs involve key stakeholders in meaningful consultation starts with clear communication. In regular webinars with superintendents, as previously described, the department has clearly communicated federal expectations regarding the requirement for meaningful consultation with stakeholders as LEAs build their plans for using ARP ESSER funds. It is important to note that, similar to at the SEA level, LEAs already have been coordinating with stakeholders throughout the 2020-21 school year to ensure the safe operation of schools.

The department's expectations are reinforced in an assurance within the ARP ESSER grant award notification that must be signed by LEA superintendents. They are also reinforced in the template that the department created for its LEAs to use when developing their local ARP ESSER plans. The template specifically includes a section asking the LEA to describe its engagement with each stakeholder group separately, and how it took that input into account in building its plan. LEAs must then submit their completed ARP ESSER plans as a requirement to receive ARP ESSER funds. Through this process, the department will ensure compliance with this important component of plan development.

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 department will require LEAs to submit annual performance reports on the use of ARP ESSER funds that will detail the outcomes achieved based on the uses of funding. This performance report will be a direct line of sight in how effective LEA strategies were in meeting the needs of their students in this area. Additionally, the department has deployed programmatic staff from across the department, including senior leadership, to review ARP ESSER Plans and applications, including allowable uses of funds and budget line items, to ensure that the objectives of the ARP ESSER funds are met.

Given the strong networks the department has developed with districts throughout the pandemic, the department will continue to make available statewide initiatives, training opportunities, and best practices for districts to participate in and adopt to meet the individual needs of their local students.

    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 department will require LEAs to submit annual performance reports on the use of ARP ESSER funds that will detail the outcomes achieved based on the uses of funding. This performance report will be a direct line of sight in how effective LEA strategies were in meeting the needs of their students in this area. Additionally, the department has deployed programmatic staff from across the department, including senior leadership, to review ARP ESSER Plans and applications, including allowable uses of funds and budget line items, to ensure that the objectives of the ARP ESSER funds are met.

Additionally, the department's required template to access these funds requires the LEA to detail its plan on addressing the needs of each subgroup through the ARP ESSER funding. This plan is subject to stakeholder consultation, public comment, and must remain posted, including in accessible formats, on the LEA's website.

Given the strong networks the department has developed with districts throughout the pandemic, the department will continue to make available statewide initiatives, training opportunities, and best practices for districts to participate in and adopt to meet the individual needs of their local students.

     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.

Identifying, engaging with, or re-engaging with students that may have missed out on instruction and educational opportunities – for a variety of reasons – will be critical in the months ahead. The department expects these students to run the gamut from pre-school-age youngsters in need of special supports as they prepare to enter the formal K-12 setting to high school students that dropped off the radar at some point during the pandemic. State-level spending will focus on strategies designed to engage and/or re-engage these students and provide strong instruction for academic attainment for all students based on their individual needs.

The department will require LEAs to submit annual performance reports on the use of ARP ESSER funds that will detail the outcomes achieved based on the uses of funding. This performance report will be a direct line of sight in how effective LEA strategies were in meeting the needs of their students in this area. Additionally, the department has deployed programmatic staff from across the department, including senior leadership, to review ARP ESSER Plans and applications, including allowable uses of funds and budget line items, to ensure that the objectives of the ARP ESSER funds are met.

Additionally, the department's required template to access these funds requires the LEA to detail its plan on addressing the needs of each of these groups of students through the ARP ESSER funding. This plan is subject to stakeholder consultation, public comment, and must remain posted, including in accessible formats, on the LEA's website.

Given the strong networks the department has developed with districts throughout the pandemic, the department will continue to make available statewide initiatives, training opportunities, and best practices for districts to participate in and adopt to meet the individual needs of their local students.

    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.

South Dakota school districts' most effective strategy in mitigating the effects of COVID and addressing educational equity was reopening schools for in-person instruction in August 2020. This commitment has allowed most schools an entire school year of in-person learning to create an environment for equitable return and a positive, supportive learning environment for all students. However, the department recognizes that some of the state's most vulnerable students – many of them subject to tribal shelter-in-place orders – did not have access to in-person instruction through a majority of the school year. As noted above, once the department is better able to analyze the data, it will be paramount to target technical assistance and support to these districts.

The department facilitated return in a wide array of areas. Specific support included:
- Regular calls with school leaders during the spring and summer 2020, and throughout the 2020-21 school year
- A Starting Well guide crafted in summer 2020 with the input of stakeholders to meet administrators' needs in reopening school buildings (available here)
- A Starting Well guide specific to special education (available here)
- Calls with administrators regarding participation expectation and reinforcing policies and procedures on student discipline, including students in virtual environment.
- Calls with administrators on summer programming and enhanced learning, reinforcing that these opportunities should include all students, and not exclude groups of students based on subgroup status
- Supporting programs that create positive and supportive environments

The department also has key, comprehensive needs assessment tools in place to help districts holistically examine their operations, diagnose root causes of issues, and identify solutions, which lead to greater educational equity. These are the South Dakota Comprehensive Needs Assessment, the Career and Technical Education Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment, and the IDEA Results Driven Accountability (RDA). All three were designed to work in concert to help a school district pinpoint areas of need. Specific to the RDA, through the data retreat process, districts review academic and social-emotional areas through multiple lenses, including disaggregating multiple subgroup options. Coaches then help districts focus on areas of greatest need and strategies to impact greatest change in order to develop a plan to address their focus area.

As districts allocate ARP ESSER funds, the department has provided guidance to districts to make spending decisions in line with creating positive long-term impacts and addressing student needs. The department provided guidance in March 2021 (available here) that provided administrators a lengthy list of ideas to consider for using federal stimulus funding. Given the strong relationship the department has forged with district leaders, the department will continue to serve as a resource to districts in equitably investing these dollars.

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.

Long before the pandemic, South Dakota has struggled with teacher shortages. In 2015, South Dakota created the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Teachers and Students to address the challenge comprehensively as a state. A 26-member panel studied related issues and brought forward recommendations during the 2016 legislative session. The result was $75 million in ongoing funding for teacher salaries (thanks to a new half-penny sales tax); a new funding formula; a new statewide teacher mentoring program; restored funding for National Board Certification; and updated certification rules to grant full reciprocity to teachers who are certified to teach in another state. The legislation also established a Teacher Compensation Review Board, which is to meet every three years to review the state's progress as it relates to educator salaries, recruitment and retention. That board is set to meet summer 2021 and provide recommendations for next steps.

As the department prepares information for the board's review, initial data indicates the number of unfilled vacancies on the first day of school increased by 24.93 FTE, or .25 percent of the workforce, from school year 2019-20 to 2020-21. (For context, South Dakota public schools reported 9,624 total teacher FTE in 2019-20.) See Tables F.1 and F.2.

Generally, the initial data shows minimal increase in staffing turnover during school year 2020-2021; however, there are early indicators that staff turnover will be higher in school year 2021-2022. According to the Associated School Boards of South Dakota, which operates an online Job Placement Center used by school districts across the state, the number of job openings for educators has sharply increased for the upcoming school year. The positions with the highest number of job openings continue to be special education/early childhood and elementary teacher positions, followed by math and English language arts positions. Table F.3 identifies the top four categories with the highest postings on the Job Placement Center from 2018 to 2021.

Table F1.

UNFILLED VACANCIES – FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

Vacancy Type	FTE			Courses		
(Public School Districts)	SY20	SY21	Difference	SY20	SY21	Difference
Administrators	3.62	0.62	-3	4	1	-3
Education Specialists (not including counselors)	3.20	4.94	1.74	4	8	4
School Counselors	.58	2.50	1.92	1	3	2
Career and Technical Education	4.86	4.36	-0.5	35	24	-11
Computers	0	0.5	0.5	0	1	1
English Language Learner	0	.12	0.12	0	1	1
Fine Arts	1.3	4.51	3.21	2	22	20
Language Arts	4.52	6.37	1.85	28	20	-8
Math	3.07	5.90	2.83	8	29	21
Miscellaneous	6.16	14.77	8.61	17	32	15
Music	6.44	4.80	-1.64	40	31	-9
Non-Credit	7.23	11.92	4.69	42	66	24
PE-Health	0.43	1.97	1.54	4	5	1
Science	3.05	6.43	3.38	13	36	23
Elementary	12.8	12.15	-0.65	17	18	1
Social Science	1.74	2.72	0.98	8	15	7
Special Education	8.25	10.74	2.49	10	14	4
World Language	5.18	2.04	-3.14	20	8	-12
TOTAL FTE	72.43	97.36	24.93	253	334	81

SOURCE: SD DOE Personnel Record Form database

Table F2.

PARAPROFESSIONALS AND CLASSIFIED STAFFING			
Number of Staff Employed (Public School Districts)	FTE		
	SY2019-20	SY2020-21	Difference
Paraprofessionals	2,111.83	2,177.47	65.64
Social Workers	32	29	-3
School Nurses	134.96	145.05	10.09
SOURCE: SD DOE Personnel Record Form database			

Table F3.

SOUTH DAKOTA EDUCATOR JOB OPENINGS							
Top Four Openings Posted on the Teacher Placement Center							
2018		2019		2020		2021	
April							
SPED/Early Childhood	62	SPED/Early Childhood	39	SPED/Early Childhood	53	SPED/Early Childhood	71
Elementary	61	Elementary	37	Elementary	52	Elementary	69
Math	27	Art/Music/Health/PE	26	CTE	35	Math	52
Administrators	26	Language Arts	24	Art/Music/Health/PE	28	Language Arts	52
August							
SPED/Early Childhood	10	SPED/Early Childhood	8	SPED/Early Childhood	8	NA	
Elementary	7	Elementary	5	Elementary	4	NA	
Language Arts	5	Art/Music/Health/PE	5	Math	4	NA	
Administrators	4	Technology Education	4	Speech Pathologist	4	NA	
SOURCE: Associated School Boards of South Dakota – Teacher Placement Center							

> 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 collection of data used for the Teacher Compensation Review Board will help the department identify urgent areas of shortages or potential shortages. This information will be shared widely with school districts and the state's educator preparation programs. The department currently works closely with LEAs experiencing staffing shortages – providing appropriate flexibilities that have been developed and vetted through the state's administrative rules process. The department also will work with districts if an administrative rule needs to be waived for good cause.

The department supported educators throughout the year by providing open lines of communication and up-to-date, relevant information regarding the pandemic. These venues allowed school leaders to share common challenges and gain support from one another as well as the state. For example, in partnership with the Department of Social Services, educators, administrators, and school counselors had opportunities to attend sessions separately – all focused on COVID stress and coping mechanisms.

Generally, federal COVID funding has not been used for the purpose of avoiding layoffs during SY 2020-21, since South Dakota schools were mostly open. Of those LEAs that did use funds to avoid layoffs, they typically indicated paying classified staff with ESSER funding in the spring of 2020 when school buildings were physically closed.

> iii. Describe the actions the SEA will take to fill anticipated gaps in certified teachers for the start of the 2021-2022 school year and to what extent the SEA will further support its LEAs in expanding the educator pipeline and educator diversity while addressing the immediate needs of students disproportionately impacted by the pandemic (e.g., recruiting teaching candidates to provide high-dosage tutoring or implementing residencies for teacher candidates).

The department will continue to work closely with LEAs to utilize flexibilities offered through state-implemented strategies such as alternative certification and educator permits. As is standard practice, the department will work closely with educators to identify and remove unnecessary barriers, while prioritizing what is best for students. During this past year, university preparation programs have encouraged students to become substitute teachers for districts. This has been an effective strategy to assist LEAs in an unusual year, and it provides an opportunity for preparation candidates to gain additional experience. In turn, student-teachers have assisted their LEAs by supporting their supervising teachers with competencies related to online learning. Documentation from universities reflects this has been a positive result of the COVID pandemic.

The department anticipates additional recruitment/retention strategies to be recommended by the Teacher Compensation Review Board, which is meeting this summer. Strategies will likely build upon programs implemented successfully through the 2016 Blue Ribbon legislation mentioned previously (e.g., statewide mentoring program for 1st year teachers; partnership with School Administrators of South Dakota for new administrator mentoring; National Board Certification cohorts). The department expects to work with educator preparation programs and professional education organizations to establish an updated, multi-dimensional approach to educator workforce needs.

> 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).

Access to wraparound student supports is critical for academic success. The challenges brought on by the COVID pandemic have shone a bright light on the need to ensure students have access to those services. The department has supported activities throughout the school year to allow students more access to these services and will continue to find ways to partner with relevant organizations to increase access.

Throughout the 2020-21 school year, the department focused on:

Better Equipping Counselors and School Building Staff
- Equipped school counselors with professional development tools (including collaboration opportunities, specific resources, and virtual trainings) to allow them to be more efficient, effective and equitable in their comprehensive school counseling programs
- Promoted Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) and trauma-informed professional development opportunities statewide to educators of all disciplines, which results in educators better able to meet students' needs
- Offered PREPaRE School Crisis and Intervention Training to administrators, special services directors, school psychologists, school counselors, at-risk coordinators, administrative and support staff, school resource officers, etc. This training better equips those within schools to respond to students' critical mental health needs in a crisis.
- Supported teachers in Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG-SD) programs throughout the state, which take a whole child approach to help students succeed by addressing social-emotional in addition to academic needs

Increasing Staff
- Supported district-led initiatives to add school nurses, counselors and special education paraprofessionals using federal ESSER funding

Increasing Community Connections to Serve Students
- Project AWARE continued in several districts in the state. This program bridges the worlds of educators, school-based mental health providers, and community-based mental health clinicians. Using tiered systems of support, including moving students up in tiers and getting them additional support, has allowed participating schools to better meet the mental health needs of all students.
- Encouraged school partnerships with local health care providers for easier access to health professionals, including but not limited to COVID care
- Deepened partnerships and collaborations with school-based mental health professional associations on ways to meet students' needs

Knowing the need in the field, the department will build upon the above and embark on additional strategies for subsequent school years, including support to school-based mental health providers, support to administrators and educators through training and resources, and

state-led community supports that maximize the resources of state agencies to provide support to school districts and their students.

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 department values the role of data collection and analysis in determining effective strategies. Therefore, the department is placing a renewed emphasis on data collection and analysis, as demonstrated through a reorganization that will bring disparate data collections and systems

under one umbrella to maximize the modest SEA resources available in this area. Further, as part of the department's investment of state set-aside dollars, the SEA will pursue initiatives to enhance data collection, quality and use at the school, LEA and SEA levels.

The department and LEAs already have access to certain data collections and reporting that identify the broader impacts of the pandemic and its effect on students learning. Information available through state systems includes summative assessments, graduation rates, advanced coursework patterns, "at-risk" warning reports including chronic absenteeism, dropout rates, and more. Districts use these state tools in combination with local-level tools such as screening, diagnostic, formative, and benchmarking assessments, as well as behavior and other local data to affect outcomes. In addition, as noted above, the department's year-end survey gathered data that included measures of student engagement and access to technology. Finally, the department will explore incorporation of other collections and reporting to provide LEAs with a better picture of learning opportunities that will benefit educational leaders for the foreseeable future.

Access to data is only half of the story. The other half is using data to impact outcomes for students. The department will continue training opportunities for educators and school leaders to utilize the data collections and reporting available to them. The department will also explore the use of ARP ESSER funds to expand data trainings and usability.

Fiscal data that is comparable across the state is already publicly accessible on the department's accountability report card. This includes per pupil expenditures at the state and district levels, broken out by federal funding sources and state and local funding sources.

Students' access to high quality educators by poverty and minority status is also reported on the accountability report card.

The department's staffing database includes a position vacancy collection. This collection identifies all open positions on the first day of school and requires the district to respond to how the course(s) will be offered – for example, by eliminating the program, contracting with another schools, etc. The staffing database separately also requires districts to identify why a staff person is no longer employed. The department currently does not have the capacity, nor is it practicable, to identify positions created directly tied to the pandemic.

With reference to Appendix B, as noted elsewhere, South Dakota's schools were largely open for in-person instruction for the entirety of the 2020-21 school year. Therefore, the department will continue to use the effective model developed during that school year of providing school leaders with resources, information, and access to the state's leading health officials to maintain health in schools and inherently, ensure equity and inclusivity by maximizing in-person instruction. The department will use data collected throughout the school year and on summer 2021 initiatives to set the parameters for additional investments in extended learning opportunities for the 2021-22 school year and beyond. This is with the intention of gaining the most significant long-term impact and investment of these one-time funds possible for the benefit of South Dakota's students, including and primarily those in underserved and historically marginalized groups.

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

The department's monitoring of and internal controls for ARP ESSER funds will be similar to its practices for CARES and CRRSA funding. The department's Office of Grants Management will oversee the application for funding and payment processes, as well as subrecipient monitoring. In conjunction with these activities, program staff from throughout the SEA will review LEA ARP ESSER Plans.

The department will use its online Grants Management System (GMS) that includes grant application and payment process functions, based on approved program budgets. LEAs will be required to submit their local ARP ESSER Plans via this system as well. The department uses a risk analysis to evaluate LEAs and to conduct risk-based monitoring. These processes are used to verify that LEAs receiving federal education program funds are spending their grant awards in compliance with the rules and regulations governing the programs. The department regularly provides LEAs with training and technical assistance and will continue to do so specific to ARP ESSER funding.

Application Review and Internal Control
The GMS grant application function has been designed with business rules that ensure many basic program and fiscal requirements are met and followed prior to allowing submission of an application by subrecipients. LEA subrecipients are required to provide program information and budgets in their ARP ESSER applications. The applications are reviewed by both program and fiscal staff to ensure the program and fiscal requirements will be met. The proposed activities and budgets are reviewed to ensure compliance with applicable statutes and regulations; and to ensure the costs are reasonable, necessary, allocable and allowable under the program.

Program applications are reviewed in the following order:

1. Program Specialist
2. Fiscal Program Specialist
3. Grants Management Administrator

At each level, if it is determined that the applicant meets the program and fiscal requirements, the application will be forwarded to the next level with a recommendation for approval. The Grants Management Office Administrator will provide final approval of the applications. If, at any level during the review process, it is determined that the application does not meet program or fiscal requirements:

- Additional information may be requested from the LEA or prior SEA reviewers, or

- Application may be returned to the LEA with written notification of the specific parts of the application that fail to meet the federal requirements. Technical assistance will be provided to the LEA as necessary. The LEA must address the specific issues and resubmit the application.

The department will approve an LEA's ARP ESSER application once it determines that the applicant meets the requirements of the federal statutes and regulations that apply to the ARP ESSER program. (EDGAR §76.400)

An LEA may submit budget amendment requests to the SEA as needed. The SEA will review and process these requests using the original application process, to ensure they are appropriate and within program requirements before approving an amendment. When an LEA submits an amendment request, it will follow the same review process as the original application.

Risk Analysis
The department will evaluate each subrecipient's risk of noncompliance with federal statutes, regulations, and the terms and conditions of the subaward as described in 2 CFR 200.331(b), and may in appropriate circumstances apply specific conditions under 2 CFR 3474.10. The risk assessment process permits the department to differentiate oversight based on local needs. This has the potential to reduce burden for both the SEA and its LEAs, and ensures LEAs get the specific supports they need to run effective and compliant programs.

The department considers the following risk assessment criteria when evaluating an LEA's risk of noncompliance:

- The size of the grant awards,
- Outcome of initial or prior reimbursement request analysis,
- Recent (last two years) turnover of key administrative staff (superintendents and business managers),
- Prior experience with the same or similar awards,
- Noncompliance identified in audit or prior monitoring findings,
- Subject to the equitable private school services requirements.

Other factors that may be considered in the risk process at the discretion of the Program Specialists and Office Administrator:

- High average federal funding amount per student,
- Turnover of key federal program director or staff,
- Single audit eligibility status,
- Failure to submit timely reimbursement requests,
- Lack of alignment between actual expenditures and approved budgets,
- Failure to adhere to the terms and conditions of the awards,
- Other risk factors that may become apparent.

Federal Education Grant Payments on the GMS
Approved LEAs submit requests for reimbursement of incurred expenses based on the approved

program budgets in the GMS. An authorized fiscal representative of the LEA must log into the GMS using their own unique username and password. Once in the GMS, the user goes to the appropriate application and program section and creates a reimbursement request in the GMS. The reimbursement requests pull in the approved program budget line items by activity code and sub object. The LEA's fiscal representative must enter the requested amounts by line item. The GMS limits reimbursements requests to no more than 10 percent above the approved budget line item amounts, while staying within the total approved budget amount. An account inquiry from the LEA's accounting software that matches the total amount requested must be uploaded in the GMS with each reimbursement request.

The LEA is also required to submit a closeout report on the GMS at the end of the grant period or sooner if all funds are exhausted.

The authorized user must electronically sign the following required certification statement in 2 CFR 200.415(a) when submitting the reimbursement requests or closeout reports.

The reimbursement requests will be reviewed by the SEA's Division of Finance and Management staff to ensure they are supported by an appropriate account inquiry report that indicates costs consistent with the activities listed in the approved budget. Once the reimbursement request is accepted, it goes into a batch payment file that the Accounting Office will process after the 10th day of each month. The batch payment file is approved by the Grants Management Office Administrator and the Director of Finance, or if unavailable, their designees.

ARP ESSER Fund Fiscal Monitoring Reviews
The department will conduct fiscal reviews of a selected portion of LEAs based on the ongoing risk analysis. The fiscal reviews will primarily be conducted as desk reviews; however, the SEA may decide to do on-site review depending on the complexity and risk involved.

The number of LEAs chosen will be based on the resources (staff time) available, and the size, complexity or high-risk nature of the LEAs identified for review. The LEAs will be selected based on a risk assessment and at the discretion of the SEA. The SEA will select districts for review periodically throughout the year based on the resources available to initiate and conduct timely monitoring reports.

The department will use a program specific monitoring protocol as part of the review process to verify that the selected LEA meets the fiscal requirements of the ARP ESSER grant program. Selected LEAs will be asked to submit ledger accounting reports to verify the expenditures reflected on the reimbursement requests or project end close out report. The accounting reports and expenditures will be reviewed to determine if they are consistent with the approved program budget. The SEA will select and request a sampling of support documentation for entries in these accounting reports. Requested documentation may include items such as: employee time distribution records, employment contracts, copies of vouchers with invoices attached, property records, etc. The SEA will check this documentation to verify that the expenditures are an appropriate and allowable charge to the program. If irregularities are discovered on the sample audited, the SEA may request additional information or conduct an on-site audit.

Appendix A: School Operating Status and Instructional Mode Data Template

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

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.

Explanation
The data in Table 1 represent the month of May 2021. The data on virtual learning represent the spring semester. These data are preliminary from the department's year-end COVID Impact Survey. The data is for public schools only.

The modes of instruction mentioned in this section are defined below.

> **Virtual learning** – Virtual learning is a long-term distance learning arrangement (i.e., a quarter, a semester, or a full school year) that utilizes either the South Dakota Virtual School or an online curriculum purchased specifically for learners participating in this method (i.e. Edgenuity, Odysseyware, k12.com, Acellus, etc.). The online curriculum is different than the curriculum that would have been used in the classroom.

> **Remote learning** – Remote learning can be a short- or long-term distance learning arrangement that utilizes district curriculum materials. It seeks to re-create the traditional classroom environment through use of technology and/or take-home packets.

> **Hybrid learning**– Hybrid learning takes place when learning is done in a combination of in-person and remote learning.

> **In-person learning** – In-person learning takes place when students and teachers can be physically present in a traditional learning environment.

The table below shows how many schools offered a full-time virtual option for each instructional level.

School Type	All schools	Offered virtual learning
All	679	422
Elementary	329	186
Middle	155	110
High	188	124

The tables below describe the number of schools that had at least some students participate in remote, hybrid, or in-person learning in the month of May.

All Schools

Mode of Instruction	All schools	Schools that had students participate
Remote	679	330
Hybrid	679	101
In-person	679	645

Elementary Schools

Mode of Instruction	All schools	Schools that had students participate
Remote	329	157
Hybrid	329	40
In-person	329	315

Middle Schools

Mode of Instruction	All schools	Schools that had students participate
Remote	155	77
Hybrid	155	22
In-person	155	149

High Schools

Mode of Instruction	All schools	Schools that had students participate
Remote	188	94
Hybrid	188	39
In-person	188	177

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?

Explanation

South Dakota's student information system does not capture enrollment by mode of instruction. As explained previously, the department is exploring options for capturing certain data by mode of instruction moving forward. The department will continue to examine its data collections in light of emerging needs and what is practicable to gather.

The data in Table 2 come from a variety of sources with different time periods. Enrollment numbers for the racial and ethnic groups, English learners and students from low-income families come from the fall enrollment census on the last Friday in September 2020. The numbers for children with disabilities come from the December 1st Child Count (2020). The foster care data is from Oct. 10, 2020. The data is for public schools only and includes grades K-12.

Number of students	Total enrollment
Students from low-income families	48668
White, not Hispanic	97911
Black or African American, not Hispanic	4429
Hispanic, of any race	9617
Asian, not Hispanic	2320
American Indian or Alaskan Native, not Hispanic	14521
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, not Hispanic	164
Two or more races, not Hispanic	6998
English learners	6547
Children with disabilities	19775
Students experiencing homelessness	*
Children and youth in foster care	1052
Migratory students	*

*Data for 2020-21 school year is not yet available.

Appendix B: Reporting Language Included in the Grant Award Notification ("GAN")

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

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

Appendix C: Assurances

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

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

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

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

Appendix D

NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS

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

To Whom Does This Provision Apply?

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

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

What Does This Provision Require?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ARP ESSER-specific assurances include that recipients will comply with all state and federal rules and regulations regarding nondiscrimination on the basis of gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age.

To assist districts in ensuring they are in compliance with GEPA, as part of the state's ARP ESSER application process, all recipients must provide a written GEPA statement that pertains to the recipient that explains how its intended use of funds will be all-inclusive. To assist recipients in the creation of these statements, the department provides an example statement that recipients can refine to reflect their unique local requirements and needs. The example explains that the recipient must provide a specific explanation of the recipient's proposed use(s) of grant funds and a specific explanation of how the recipient will use grant funds in a way that addresses barriers to access and does not discriminate on the basis of any federally protected category.

Estimated Burden Statement for GEPA Requirements

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