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

U.S. Department of Education

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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., S425U210042): Texas Education Agency

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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) **Cory Green, Associate Commissioner and Chief Grants Officer**	
Signature of Authorized SEA Representative *Cory Green, Associate Commissioner*	Date: 7/1/2021

A. Describing the State's Current Status and Needs

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

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

While Texas provided a wide range of supports to LEAs to support students during the COVID-19 pandemic, the most impactful three strategies were:

1. **Encouraging and supporting on-campus instruction**: from the start of the school year, Texas required all LEAs to offer in-person learning to their students, with exceptions at the start of the school year to allow for scaling in alternative campus operational configurations, short-term exceptions to respond to COVID outbreaks involving confirmed cases and exposed individuals, and exceptions for longer periods in areas with high COVID hospitalization rates in the fall. Barring these exceptions, parents could choose whether they wanted to access on-campus learning or virtual learning, based on their family's needs. LEAs were not required but could choose whether they wanted to offer virtual learning; many chose to offer it throughout the year.

   Texas supported on-campus instruction by disseminating public health guidance developed in consultation with public health experts, which gave LEAs additional authorities and applied additional requirements to keep students and staff safe. Texas also distributed 70 million masks and over a million other personal protective equipment (PPE) items, including thermometers, hand sanitizer and face shields, to schools to start the school year. TEA also provided resources to support operational drills and scenario planning prior to the start of the school year. Additionally, the Texas Department of State Health Services, in collaboration with TEA, collected and published information on COVID cases in schools among both staff and students throughout the school year, to provide transparency regarding case rates in school settings. And as soon as rapid tests were available, TEA in conjunction with the Texas Division of Emergency Management distributed rapid tests and logistical supports to schools to facilitate the use of rapid tests to support safe on campus instruction.

   Throughout the year, Texas saw very low rates of COVID on school campuses, and very few of those cases were considered to be a result of on-campus transmission. Texas also saw many more students learning on campus than other states, and preliminary data indicates that this policy decision prevented millions of students from falling further

behind during the school year than they would have otherwise done, academically and socially.

2. **Launching Operation Connectivity:** The "digital divide" pre-dated COVID-19 and is reflected in the fact that some students have access to Internet and digital learning technology at home to extend their learning, while other students do not. With COVID-19, this gap prevented students from learning at all. Operation Connectivity is a state-wide initiative aiming to connect students with keyboarded learning devices and hotspots for the 2020-2021 school year. Through Operation Connectivity, which included both direct bulk purchases and matching funds, Texas LEAs acquired more than 4.5 million e-learning devices and hotspots. Of these, almost one million were unlimited hotspots which provided broadband coverage through August 2021. This initiative essentially closed the digital divide related to devices for students in Texas and allowed them to better access both virtual and in-person campus instruction.

3. **Providing high-quality curriculum tailored to virtual and hybrid settings:** Through Texas Home Learning (THL), TEA provided high-quality digital curriculum to bridge on-campus and in-person learning, including a wide range of resources to meet student needs. In Spring 2020, THL launched as a set of optional, high-quality paper resources across a wide range of grades and subject areas that LEAs could provide, optionally and free of charge, to their students as take-home packets. The program expanded to provide summer learning resources, and beginning fall 2021, a suite of optional, digitally native high-quality instructional materials, technology tools, and professional development. Offerings include:

   - **Core instructional materials**, designed to cover 100% of Texas standards, across K-12 math, K-12 ELAR, K-5 SLAR, K-5 science, pre-kindergarten, and college-prep classes;
   - **Supplemental instructional materials** such as ST Math, which provides visual self-paced math learning to students at home and in the classroom;
   - **Special Education resources** such as Amplio, which provides remote speech-language instruction with support from speech language therapists;
   - **Technology tools** including two free years of a learning management system to support student engagement and instructional collaboration
   - **Training and planning resources** to support rapid improvements in implementing remote instruction and learning otherwise impacted by the pandemic. Supports included training for teachers and principals on remote and hybrid instruction, as well as general technical assistance and rapid-cycle planning supports to district leadership teams to improve the quality of remote and hybrid learning delivery, both at the district and campus level.
   - **Content- and technology-focused professional development** to support educators with implementation both in classroom and remote settings.

- **Mental Health focused professional development** to support educators with implementing evidence-based practices that help students improve their ability to respond to the stresses caused by the pandemic.

This comprehensive set of offerings provides LEAs with optional resources and supports designed to address learning loss and accelerate learning gains in the upcoming school year.

TEA will submit best practices to the Best Practices Clearinghouse and will encourage LEAs to do the same by including information on the Best Practices Clearinghouse in an upcoming To the Administrator Addressed letter, which is our system for formal communication to the field.

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 two biggest issues facing students and schools across Texas as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic are:

1. **Learning loss**: The evidence in Texas, consistent with evidence across the country, is that our students experienced extensive learning loss as a result of the rapid transition to virtual learning in March 2020. Our 2020-21 optional beginning of year assessment data showed us that students lost an average of 5.7 months of learning between March 2020 and September 2020, which is 3.2 additional months of learning loss compared to normal summer slide. Preliminary end of year state assessment data indicates substantial declines in academic proficiency for Texas students, which mirrors anecdotal reports from LEAs drawn from their local assessments. LEAs also anecdotally report that those students who primarily participated in virtual learning were disproportionately affected.

2. **Mental health challenges**: While there is no formalized data gathered from schools in Texas on student mental health, we have received a significant volume of anecdotal reports indicating that mental health will be a continuing challenge for children across Texas. Stakeholders shared outcomes of listening sessions indicating that many students and teachers are experiencing grief and the effects of trauma. Students have also suffered from a lack of connection to others this year, both in virtual school and due to social distancing in in-person classes. Broader research points to similar conclusions. For example, we have looked to the <u>CDC report</u> indicating the proportion of mental health–related emergency room visits among children increased 66% year over year from April 2019 to April 2020. We also know from previous large-scale disasters, such as Hurricane Harvey, that students experienced wide-ranging and at times, long-lasting mental health effects, particularly those experiencing grief and loss. These mental health effects have impact on student academics.

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.

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

Table A1.

Student group	Highest priority needs
Students from low-income families	Low-income students in Texas have experienced, in general, more lost instructional time due to absenteeism, lower student engagement, and have engaged more in remote learning than their higher-income peers. For example, low-income students were chronically absent at a rate of 9% in 2019-2020, as compared to 7% for all students. Additionally, based on Texas' data on student engagement in virtual learning during the 2019-2020 school year, low-income students were fully engaged at a rate of 84.5%, relative to a rate of 95.18% among higher-income peers. Finally, as of January 2021, 54% of low-income students were learning on-campus as compared to 60% of non-economically disadvantaged students. We also know that low-income students may have been more affected by economic challenges resulting from COVID, which we expect have,

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

Student group	Highest priority needs
	in many cases, brought about or exacerbated mental health issues such as depression or anxiety. Texas will focus on the following needs we anticipate among low-income students: 1. **Learning Acceleration**: Based on previous state assessment data and NAEP data, we know that low-income students were more likely to demonstrate below-grade-level proficiency than their higher-income peers. This achievement gap may have been compounded during the pandemic by the challenges outlined above. Texas is focused on learning acceleration for all students, and we believe that low-income students are likely to be in need of this additional support in many cases. Texas details our approach to learning acceleration, including our approach to supporting highest-needs students, in section D. 2. **Mental health support**: Texas will be providing support and guidance to LEAs on how to maximize existing and newly hired mental health professionals on their campuses, including resources and guidance on screening, connecting to local or regional mental health resources, and providing information and resources on the impacts of grief and trauma and trauma-informed care, including trauma-informed teacher training modules and supports for teachers. TEA will also build out the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework and the supporting diagnostics and accompanying tools to help LEAs assess needs within their schools and identify resources to fill gaps. These resources will be available to all LEAs for use with all students, with a recognition that low-income students may present additional risk factors for mental health concerns that schools will need to attend to.
Students from each racial or ethnic background used by the State for reporting purposes – please add a row for each racial or ethnic group (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by race/ethnicity)	African American and Hispanic students in Texas have experienced, in general, more lost instructional time due to absenteeism, lower student engagement, and have engaged more in remote learning than their peers of other races/ethnicities. For example, African American students in Texas were chronically absent at a rate of 9.4%, and Hispanic students at a rate of 7.7%, in school year 2019-2020, as compared to 5.3% among White students. Additionally, based on Texas' data on student engagement in virtual learning during the 2019-2020 school year, African American, Hispanic, and Hawaiian-Pacific Islander students were fully engaged at rates below 87%, relative to a rate of above 93% among White and Asian students.

Student group	Highest priority needs
	As of January 2021, 53% of African American students, 49% of Hispanic students, and 31% of Asian students were learning on campus, as compared to 75% of White students. We also know that African American and Hispanic communities suffered higher rates of COVID nationally, and higher rates of death from COVID-related causes. Detailed breakdown of each datapoint by race/ethnic group is below. Texas will focus on the following needs we anticipate among students of all races and ethnicities, noting that based in our data, some African American and Hispanic students particularly may have greater needs in these areas than their peers: 1. **Learning Acceleration**: Based on previous state assessment data and NAEP data, we know that African American and Hispanic students were more likely to demonstrate below-grade-level proficiency than their peers. This achievement gap may have been compounded by the challenges outlined above. Texas is focused on learning acceleration for all students, and we believe that African American and Hispanic students are likely to be in need of this additional support in many cases. Texas details our approach to learning acceleration, including our approach to supporting highest-needs students, in section D. 2. **Mental health support**: Texas will be providing support and guidance to LEAs on how to maximize existing and newly hired mental health professionals on their campuses, including resources and guidance on screening, connecting to local or regional mental health resources, and providing information and resources on the impacts of grief and trauma and trauma-informed care, including trauma-informed teacher training modules and supports for teachers. TEA will also build out the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework and the supporting diagnostics and accompanying tools to help LEAs assess needs within their schools and identify resources to fill gaps. These resources will be available to all LEAs for use with all students, with a recognition that students who are in a racial or ethnic group that has experienced disparate impact as noted above may present additional risk factors for mental health concerns that schools will need to attend to.
American Indian or Alaskan Native	- This group was chronically absent in 2019-2020 at a rate of 8% as compared to 7% overall. - This group attended on-campus instruction at a rate of 61% compared to 56% overall. - This group's engagement in virtual learning was not reported because of the small n-size.

Student group	Highest priority needs
Asian	• This group was chronically absent in 2019-2020 at a rate of 2% as compared to 7% overall. • This group attended on-campus instruction in 2020-2021 at a rate of 31% compared to 56% overall. • This group was fully engaged in virtual learning in 2019-2020 at a rate of 95.76% compared to 88.72% overall.
Black or African American	• This group was chronically absent in 2019-2020 at a rate of 9.4% as compared to 7% overall. • This group attended on-campus instruction in 2020-2021 at a rate of 53% compared to 56% overall. • This group was fully engaged in virtual learning in 2019-2020 at a rate of 83.13% compared to 88.72% overall.
Hispanic/Latino	• This group was chronically absent in 2019-2020 at a rate of 7.7% as compared to 7% overall. • This group attended on-campus instruction in 2020-2021 at a rate of 49% compared to 56% overall. • This group was fully engaged in virtual learning in 2019-2020 at a rate of 86.66% compared to 88.72% overall.
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	• This group was chronically absent in 2019-2020 at a rate of 7.9% as compared to 7% overall. • This group attended on-campus instruction in 2020-2021 at a rate of 55% compared to 56% overall. • This group was fully engaged in virtual learning in 2019-2020 at a rate of 86.90% compared to 88.72% overall.
Two or more races	• This group was chronically absent in 2019-2020 at a rate of 6.9% as compared to 7% overall. • This group attended on-campus instruction in 2020-2021 at a rate of 63% compared to 56% overall. • This group was fully engaged in virtual learning in 2019-2020 at a rate of 90.53% compared to 88.72% overall.
White	• This group was chronically absent in 2019-2020 at a rate of 5.3% as compared to 7% overall. • This group attended on-campus instruction in 2020-2021 at a rate of 75% compared to 56% overall. • This group was fully engaged in virtual learning in 2019-2020 at a rate of 93.65% compared to 88.72% overall.
Students by gender – please add a row for each gender (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by gender)	We have not noted substantive discrepancies associated with gender in engagement, chronic absenteeism, or remote attendance. We have noted a slightly higher rate of chronic absenteeism among male students as compared to female students (7.2% for males vs. 6.8% for females). We have not tracked engagement discrepancies or remote attendance discrepancies. As a result, we anticipate similar needs as noted for other student groups across both genders: 1. **Learning Acceleration**: Texas is focused on learning acceleration for all students. Texas details our approach to learning acceleration,

Student group	Highest priority needs
	including our approach to supporting highest-needs students, in sections D.1i and D.1ii. 2. **Mental health support**: Texas will be providing support and guidance to LEAs on how to maximize existing and newly hired mental health professionals on their campuses, including resources and guidance on screening, connecting to local or regional mental health resources, and providing information and resources on the impacts of grief and trauma and trauma-informed care, including trauma-informed teacher training modules and supports for teachers. TEA will also build out the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework and the supporting diagnostics and accompanying tools to help LEAs assess needs within their schools and identify resources to fill gaps.
Males	This group was chronically absent in 2019-2020 at a rate of 7.2% as compared to 7% overall.
Females	This group was chronically absent in 2019-2020 at a rate of 6.8% as compared to 7% overall.
English learners	The state of emergency brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately impacted English learners' (ELs) access to literacy development, among other academic areas. Current data shows that 50% of ELs participated in remote learning, yet linguistic accommodations, which support English proficiency, rely heavily on face-to-face instructional settings. Together, this indicates access to literacy development for ELs has been heavily impacted by remote learning environments. Preliminary end-of-year assessment data for EL students taking a Spanish-language assessment indicates those students experienced a rate of not meeting grade level that is roughly 1.5 times that of their peers taking an English-language reading assessment. Additionally, we know that ELs experienced 3% higher rates of disengagement than their peers during the pandemic. Learning loss during remote learning will widen the gap, as the meaningful formative assessments needed to differentiate content and language instruction are not feasible. This leaves teachers with inconsistent data preventing them from making sound instructional decisions. While 60% of Texas students are coded as economically disadvantaged, 85% of the EL population are coded as economically disadvantaged.
Children with disabilities	Students with disabilities were disproportionately impacted by chronic absenteeism and the loss of academic and related services throughout the pandemic. Students in this group experienced chronic absenteeism at a rate of 10.6%. This is higher than all but one other student group. The specially designed academic and related services determined necessary through the IEP development process for students with

Student group	Highest priority needs
	disabilities to access the curriculum, in most cases, require students to be present in schools for in-person learning. Prior to the pandemic, students with disabilities' performance on statewide assessments of both reading and mathematics were 32-35 percentage points below the 'all students' passing rates for the state. This disparity in performance will certainly be exacerbated significantly by the disproportionate impact on these students resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. TEA's highest priorities for serving students with disabilities are: 1) supporting LEAs in providing the appropriately ambitious academic and related compensatory services needed to support learning acceleration; and 2) to support LEAs in providing additional services to address mental health needs resulting from the pandemic. 3) Additionally, using previous funding sources, Texas has provided services for dyslexia and speech therapy directly to students across the state leveraging purpose-developed online learning platforms and has provided grants directly to parents to obtain supplemental services and materials for students with significant cognitive disabilities. All of this was intended to accelerate student learning and minimize impacts of the pandemic on the discreet student groups involved.
Students experiencing homelessness	Due to the impact of COVID-19, students experiencing homelessness experienced a higher rate of disengagement (15%) and uncontactable status (5%) compared to other highly mobile student populations, economically disadvantaged students, and their non-homeless counterparts for the 2019-2020 school year. Regular communication and engagement with students and families experiencing homelessness is a challenge given that there is a higher percentage of homeless students receiving instruction off-campus, 32% remote asynchronous (Jan 2021) and 5% synchronous (Jan 2021), compared to other highly mobile student populations. Identification of students experiencing homelessness has decreased from 78,926 (Oct 2020) to 57,811 (Oct 2021). **1. Priority #1 Learning Loss** Systematic processes are not in place to review and modify course curriculum, academic interventions, and credit recovery programs to mitigate the impact of learning loss due to COVID-19, summer slide, high mobility, and unstable housing conditions of students experiencing homelessness. **2. Priority # 2 Mental Health Support** LEAs have been unable to consistently communicate and provide mental health services and support to students and families

Student group	Highest priority needs
	experiencing homelessness. LEAs do not consistently have the staff capacity to provide wraparound services to address the challenges that homeless students and families have experienced during the pandemic. **3. Priority # 3 Identification** Identification of students experiencing homelessness has been challenging due to remote learning instruction. LEAs do not have the staff capacity needed for identification and targeted dropout recovery efforts of students experiencing homelessness.
Children and youth in foster care	Students in Foster Care have been adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the 2019-2020 school year, students in foster care experienced a higher rate of disengagement (10%) and uncontactable status (3%) compared to their peers. Prior to the pandemic, students in foster care had the lowest graduation rates (63%) and highest dropout rates (25%) of all student groups in Texas public schools. Compounded traumatic experiences, high mobility, and instability in both home and school environments are contributing factors to the learning loss and challenges to academic achievement that require specialized and intentional resources, programs, and supports. **1. Priority #1 – Learning Loss** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 10% of students in foster care were not engaged in school, as compared to 7% of all students statewide who were not engaged. Similarly, 3% of students in foster care were non-contactable, as compared to 2% of all students statewide. Lack of participation and engagement creates additional barriers and learning loss for students. In a DFPS study administered in September 2021, caseworkers and caregivers reported that students experiencing learning loss faced the following barriers: lack of understanding of work assigned, lack of support in virtual settings, lack of peer interaction, lack of access to technology, and an inability to focus. Similarly, caregivers reported need for more individualized training and support to address learning loss and related academic and social challenges experienced by their students. **2. Priority # 2 – Mental Health Support** Each stakeholder group interviewed in the DFPS study shared the significant strain of the COVID-19 pandemic on student mental health and overall emotional well-being. Students in foster care are adversely impacted by trauma. The compounding impacts of new challenges experienced due to the pandemic, coupled with previous traumatic events and unstable home and school environments, greatly impact a student's ability to focus and learn. Lack of peer interaction and social connection was also noted as a barrier to academic achievement. **3. Priority #3 – Identification** LEAs have reported challenges with identifying students in foster care. Barriers to communication between child welfare and education systems exist. The added challenges of communication in virtual and remote settings between

Student group	Highest priority needs
	education and child welfare systems has impacted LEAs' ability to provide individualized support to students and caregivers, impacting academic achievement overall for this group. Data comparison studies conducted prior to the pandemic revealed Texas schools identify 1/3 of the actual numbers of students in foster care, in comparison to Texas Department of Family and Protective Services reported counts.
Migratory students	The Texas Migrant Education Program (MEP) enrolls approximately 27,000 eligible migratory students. The state's migrant program is the fourth largest in the country and is administered at the local level through the LEAs and regional ESCs. Texas migratory students and their families migrate annually to 48 other states in the country, making Texas home to the largest interstate migrant student population in the US. The largest concentration of Texas migrant families, approximately 61%, resides in the Rio Grande Valley. The priority needs for Migrant students are: 1) Learning Loss - processes are not in place to review and modify course curriculum, academic interventions, and credit recovery programs to mitigate the impact of learning loss due to COVID-19, summer slide, high mobility, and unstable housing conditions of migrant students. 2) Mental Health Challenges – Migrant students exhibit significant strain from COVID-19 on student mental health and overall emotional well-being. Students in foster care are adversely impacted by trauma. 3) These needs are worsened for migrant students by the need for electronic devices for remote instruction and the corresponding internet access. Many households do not have internet capabilities and due to their migratory lifestyle, finding internet access while moving around is a challenge for the students.
Other groups of students identified by the State (e.g., youth involved in the criminal justice system, students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years, students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures, LGBTQ+ students)	In Texas, 20% of students attend a rural LEA. We understand that students from rural districts may have unique needs. While stakeholders in these areas cited learning loss and mental health needs in many cases, as identified above, districts also report additional challenges such as: • Ongoing connectivity challenges related to lack of broadband internet in rural areas, which we anticipate federal broadband programs will help address. • Concerns with accessing mental health resources in areas where providers may be less readily available. The Texas Child Health Access Through Telemedicine (TCHATT) program is intended to increase access to mental health services for students across the state and has proven particularly important in many rural communities. • Pre-existing challenges with staff recruitment in rural areas compounded by increased retirements in some areas. While this challenge is not broadly reflected in the data Texas has collected through SY 2019-2020, we will continue to monitor this need as we look at data for SY 2020-2021.

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

Texas LEAs have several data sources for identifying the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student learning. These include:

1. **Summative assessment data** from the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR): STAAR was not administered in school year 2019-2020 but was administered in school year 2020-2021. While the assessment window is not yet closed, early data suggests that April participation rates were approximately 85%, which will provide schools with summative learning data on the majority of their students.

2. **Optional interim assessment data**: TEA has created optional online interim assessments that align to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Test questions for the STAAR Interim Assessments are developed with Texas teachers and include some former STAAR items. These assessments are available at no cost to LEAs, and they are not tied to accountability. These tests can be administered on-campus or virtually.

3. **Optional formative assessment data:** TEA has created an optional online formative assessment resource that aligns to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). This tool is available at no cost to districts and charter schools and is not tied to accountability. The Texas Formative Assessment Resource (TFAR) is an assessment tool designed to inform teaching decisions and improve instructional supports. TFAR can be administered on-campus or virtually.

All of these resources, separately and collectively, can be used to identify individual student academic needs, and can be used to identify the academic needs of particular student groups as well.

TEA will encourage LEAs to use data sources such as local school climate surveys, which are not collected at the state level but are administered by some LEAs. TEA also has shared or promoted student mental health screening tools that can be helpful to districts in assessing individual student mental health needs. Additionally, every Texas school is required to convene a behavioral threat assessment team responsible for ensuring that all students who are exhibiting mental health concerns are connected to appropriate mental health resources. TEA will provide guidance on how the data reported by those teams can provide helpful insight into patterns of referral and the needs of students.

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

    i. A description of to what extent, and how frequently, the State collects now and will collect in the future data for all schools in your State on:

        a. Mode of instruction: The number of schools in your State that are offering fully remote or online-only instruction; both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid model); and/or full-time in-person instruction;

        b. Enrollment: Student enrollment for all students and disaggregated for each of the student groups described in A.3.i-viii for each mode of instruction; and

        c. Attendance: Student attendance for all students and disaggregated for each of the student groups described in A.3.i-viii for each mode of instruction.

TEA collected the following information related to virtual learning and student engagement during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years as a result of the pandemic.

1. Student-level data regarding level of engagement during virtual learning was collected one time at the end of the 2019-2020 school year.
2. Student-level data regarding the instructional method to which a student was assigned was collected three times, on September 28, 2020, October 30, 2020 and January 29, 2021.
3. Operational status and mode of instruction *offered* by each school was not directly collected. However, this information can be estimated from the crisis code data collected as described in item 2. Using data from the January crisis code collection will show actual numbers of campuses with students learning remotely or on-campus on January 29, 2021.
4. TEA modified the 2020-2021 student-level attendance collection to include number of days present on-campus, remote synchronous and remote asynchronous. The first submission of this data collection is due to the agency on June 17, 2021 with a resubmission due July 15, 2021. Year-round school attendance data is due no later than August 19, 2021.

 On a going forward basis, students enrolled in a full-time virtual school in Texas are coded as such and tracked distinctly.

    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.

This data described in items a and b will be posted on the TEA website no later than June 21, 2021:

(a) **Number of schools in your State that offered each mode of instruction or learning model described in Table 1 from Appendix A**. The data published will be based on the January 29, 2021 crisis code collection indicating the number of campuses that had either all students learning remotely, all students learning on-campus or a hybrid on that date.

(b) **Enrollment and mode of instruction for the schools in your State described in Table 2 from Appendix A.** The data published will be based on enrollment data collected in the January 29, 2021 crisis code collection indicating the number of enrolled students by student group that attended remotely or on-campus that day.

(c) **Attendance and mode of instruction for the schools in your State described in Table 2 from Appendix A.** The agency is unable to provide attendance data until Fall 2021, once the annual attendance data collection is completed.

> 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.

Throughout this school year, a temporary framework was established to support widespread remote instruction. The framework required all LEAs to offer in-person instruction to all students whose parents chose in-person instruction, with a few exceptions, including if the LEA met certain criteria related to COVID hospitalization rates in their region or had an acute COVID-19 outbreak. Additionally, LEAs were permitted for a short time at the beginning of the school year, to require students to learn remotely to facilitate return to on-campus operations.

In the upcoming school year, Texas schools will be required to offer in-person instruction to all students. State law prior to COVID allowed for up to eight full time virtual campuses offering grades 3-12 and allowed for remote instruction to be delivered at any school as long as at least half of the instruction received during each day was in person. That law continues to remain in force moving forward.

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;

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

During the 2020-2021 school year, TEA provided public health guidance to school districts, drawn from a range of sources including CDC guidance and conversations with public health experts, based in statutory authority stemming from a gubernatorial executive order. This guidance applied additional requirements and recommendations for LEAs, their staff, and their students, in order to reduce viral spread.

As of June 3, 2021, TEA has revised this guidance for the upcoming school year. The new guidance requires ongoing reporting of any individuals with COVID who were present on a school campus but does not require any specific mitigation measures. Instead, the guidance refers school districts to CDC recommended practices.

In addition to this specific COVID guidance, all districts may continue to exclude students based on contagious illness (e.g., fever) according to Texas Education Code.

All LEAs will have optional access to screening testing, as outlined in section B.2 below. LEAs may, optionally, choose to offer COVID-19 vaccinations to eligible students and educators as a vaccine provider and/or in partnership with local health providers.

Table B1.

Mitigation strategy	SEA response
Universal and correct wearing of masks	See narrative
Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)	See narrative
Handwashing and respiratory etiquette	See narrative
Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation	See narrative
Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments	See narrative
Diagnostic and screening testing	See narrative
Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible	See narrative
Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies	See narrative

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;

All campuses are expected to be open for in-person instruction at the start of the school year, providing in-person instruction for all students.

TEA will use the same compliance monitoring and audit procedures to enforce implementation that the state uses to enforce other attendance and learning time requirements. This includes reviewing the annual submission of minutes of operation and instruction submitted by LEAs, which is subject to audit by agency auditors.

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

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Texas Education Agency established a partnership with the state's Department of State Health Services (DSHS) and the Texas Division of Emergency management (TDEM) to ensure a coordinated message to school systems.

While developing TEA's Public Health Guidance for school systems, the agency consulted published CDC Guidance and regularly communicated with Governor Abbott's Strikeforce to Open Texas medical advisors in addition to regularly communicating with epidemiologists at DSHS. As part of this guidance, TEA recommends that public school systems consult with their local public health authorities and local legal counsel before making final decisions regarding the implementation of the guidance.

In September 2020, Texas received over eight million Abbott BinaxNOW rapid antigen tests from the federal government to be deployed across the state. TEA partnered with TDEM, and in October 2020, established a K-12 COVID-19 Testing Program allowing private and public K-12 schools to apply for and receive Abbott BinaxNOW rapid antigen tests at no cost for administration at their school. 836 LEAs and private school systems participated in this optional program.

On March 17th, the Biden Administration announced the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) will invest $10 billion from the American Rescue Plan to states to enable schools to establish COVID-19 screening testing programs to support and maintain in-person learning. Texas receives $803,456,353 and the dollars flow to the state health department to administer. TEA, DSHS, and TDEM are collaborating on use of these funds to ensure school systems across Texas have access to molecular and antigen testing for the upcoming 2021-2022 school year.

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

TEA has dedicated multiple FTEs to coordination of our COVID response and technical assistance to the field on public health questions related to reopening. These individuals provide technical assistance, including webinars, office hours, and trainings, and support to school districts on COVID testing, public health guidance, and vaccinations. Additionally, the agency stood up a dedicated public health section of our website to provide best practices, examples from school districts, FAQs, and guidance to support effective in person learning on campuses. TEA also provided playbooks and guidance documents to help schools address operational challenges. We foresee this support and ongoing guidance creation to continue through school year 2021-2022 as the state supports COVID-19 testing and vaccinations at the LEA level.

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

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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.

support and technical assistance to implement strategies consistent, to the greatest extent practicable, with relevant CDC guidance.

TEA will hire additional staff in the Department of Grant Compliance and Administration to conduct program compliance monitoring of the ARP ESSER III grants to LEAs. Through this process, TEA will randomly select LEAs to validate compliance with the Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services (RIPICS) Plan as well as other program compliance indicators.

TEA has provided statewide training on the ARP ESSER III planning requirements and is conducting multiple live virtual question and answer sessions to assist LEAs in meeting the compliance requirements.

TEA staff will use a random validation process to perform targeted compliance checks on the following sample indicators:
1. Each LEA that receives ARP ESSER funds developed the required plan with the following components.
   - the extent to which it has adopted policies and a description of any such policies on each of the strategies to address CDC health and safety recommendations; how it will ensure continuity of services including but not limited to services to address the students' academic needs, and students' and staff mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services;
2. The RIPICS Plan is provided in an understandable and uniform format as required.
3. The LEA engaged in meaningful consultation with required stakeholder groups on the development of the plan.
4. The plan is posted to the LEA's website within 30 days of receiving its ARP ESSER III Notice of Grant Award from TEA.
5. The LEA reviews the RIPICS Plan every 6 months and makes appropriate revisions following the required process.

TEA will create data reporting systems and collect any data required by the Department of Education (ED) to be able to report that data in the timeline and format requested.

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.

TEA extensively engaged stakeholders on the ESSER plan. Engagement included:

- A publicly posted survey that collected feedback from all stakeholder groups, particularly students, families, and educators. The survey was widely shared through official communications and social media, including specifically with student groups. 3,185 submissions were received.
- Meetings with civil rights organizations, teachers' associations, charter school associations, and other advocacy groups. Several groups received outreach or were convened on specific topics, including student mental health, English Learners, children experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, migratory students, students with disabilities, and other underserved students.
- Superintendents, school board associations and other professional associations, and education service centers, were engaged both within wider groups and individually in existing forums (e.g., rural superintendents)
- A virtual feedback session was made open to all teachers and advertised through various teacher groups and through social media. 231 registered to attend with 39 attending.
- Additionally, a wide group of advocacy and professional group stakeholders was convened for general feedback.
- While TEA attempted to receive input from all stakeholder groups, none was received related specifically to incarcerated students. Staff from the Texas Juvenile Justice Department and Windham School System (the two state agencies who oversee incarcerated students in Texas) sit on the state's Title I, Part A Committee of Practitioners and are active participants in the committee work. ESSER grant information is shared regularly with the COP and the committee provides discussion and recommendations to TEA staff on the ESSER programs in addition to their normal Title I responsibilities

The input from stakeholders overwhelmingly aligned to the stated prioritization and needs around learning acceleration and mental health. Sections pertaining to student subgroups took

stakeholder feedback into account when considering how those needs might differentially impact student groups and the strategies used to address them.

2. <u>Coordinating Funds</u>: Describe to what extent the SEA has and will coordinate Federal COVID-19 pandemic funding and other Federal funding. This description must include:

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

   Complete the table below or provide a narrative description.

Table C1.

Funding source	Prior/current SEA and LEA uses (including funding amounts, if applicable)	Planned SEA and LEA uses (including funding amounts, if applicable)
ESSER I (CARES Act)	See Narrative	See Narrative
GEER I (CARES Act)	See Narrative	See Narrative
ESSER II (CRRSA Act)	See Narrative	See Narrative
GEER II (CRRSA Act)	See Narrative	See Narrative

TEA is coordinating ESSER I, GEER I, ESSER II, ARP ESSER III and ESF-REM funding to develop and provide the Texas Home Learning (THL) system of support to LEAs described above in Question A1.

Many Texas LEAs reopened schools in Fall 2020 in hybrid in-person and remote instruction settings. While most will finish the school year utilizing the hybrid model, some have discontinued virtual learning throughout the year at the decision of the local board.

LEAs have and plan to continue utilizing ESSER I funds for a variety of the statutory uses. Preliminary plans for the LEA use of funds were submitted in their application for funding request; however, as of submission date of this report, the available uses of funds data from LEAs is only the data that has already been reported to ED in the Year 1 ESSER I Annual Report. Similar use of ESSER II funds data will be reported in the LEA's application for funding, and be available for the annual report, which is currently available to LEAs for

submission. The required LEA Uses of Funds ARP ESSER III Plan requirements have been incorporated into the LEA grant application that is currently available to LEAs. Additional uses of funds data will be collected from LEAs as required by ED for reporting purposes.

> 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 ESSER I funds were made available to LEAs in June 2020. All eligible LEAs applied and were awarded funds based on the preliminary allocations (after reserving a small amount of funding for the potential of new charter schools opening for the first time and becoming eligible, per ED methodology guidance). Final allocations were released in December 2020 and awarded by May 2021 based on submission date of the budget amendment by LEAs. As previously notified to USDE, 5 LEAs did not submit budget amendments to increase their award to their final allocation. A total of $16,441 was left unawarded by the 1-year deadline (May 15, 2021) to fully obligate and award funds.

TEA has full capabilities to track LEA expenditure amounts of ESSER funds. As of May 20, 2021, LEAs have expended $950,584,000.18 and have $206,697,016.82 remaining obligated but currently not expended. As of May 19, 2021, TEA has expended $122,219,098.33 and has $40,471.86 remaining obligated but currently not expended (not including administrative funds consolidated).

ESSER II funds have been released to LEAs as of June 3, 2021. LEAs are in the process of completing and submitting grant applications to TEA.

> 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.

TEA has implemented the full flexibility offered by waivers from USDE for LEAs to support students and staff in their return to in-person instruction for ESSA, IDEA, and Perkins fund sources. TEA has provided guidance and training on flexibilities under these programs to support LEAs prudent use of funds for effective and efficient planning and implementation. TEA implemented flexibility to LEAs in the application and amendment processes, within state procedures, giving LEAs the necessary tools to make changes to grant budgets and program plans to maximize benefit of numerous fund sources in response to the pandemic.

To date, the state has not finalized plans for the user of ARP ESSER HCY funds.

D. Maximizing State-Level Funds to Support Students

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

1. Academic Impact of Lost Instructional Time: Describe how the SEA will use the funds it reserves under section 2001(f)(1) of the ARP Act (totaling not less than 5 percent of the State's total allocation of ARP ESSER funds) on evidence-based interventions to address the academic impact of lost instructional time by supporting the implementation of evidence-based interventions, such as summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs, or extended school year programs, and ensure that such interventions respond to students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. The description must include:

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

The following evidence-based interventions are proposed to support LEAs with accelerating student learning to grade-level standards. These are grounded in learning supports that include innovation in curriculum and instruction, diagnosing student mastery, extended instructional time, and supports for teachers.

A. **High-dosage tutoring**: A continuum of support options available to all Texas LEAs including knowledge building webinars, implementation toolkits, planning and capacity building workshops, resources for tutor selection and training, tutoring platform with high-quality instructional materials, regional supports for implementation, and access to a network of vetted and trained tutors available to provide virtual and in-person high-impact tutoring.

B. **High quality instructional materials**: A full suite of optional, high-quality, innovative instructional materials including long term scopes and sequences, unit plans, unit

assessments, daily lesson plans, student activities, and additional supports for all learners through Texas Home Learning.

C. **Job-embedded professional learning**: Supports for teachers and instructional coaches including onboarding for curricular resources, job-embedded coaching and feedback, and ongoing communities of practice with the COVID Recovery Instructional Materials Support Initiative.

D. **Extended school day and year**: A design-thinking-based process to extend instructional time by redesigning the school calendar and school day to provide maximum planning time for teachers while increasing the length of the school year to limit summer slide through the Additional Days School Year initiative.

E. **Summer learning programs**: A supported planning process to design and align a strategically planned high-quality summer learning program to extend instructional time with high-quality, innovative instructional materials, curriculum-aligned, job-embedded PD to support teachers, and enrichment options for students.

TEA plans to build a streamlined diagnostic and application process that will allow LEAs to self-identify the unique needs of the LEA, their students, and specific student subgroups to engage in aligned supports and grant opportunities.

Evaluation of these interventions will occur in short-, medium-, and long-term cycles through ongoing stakeholder engagement, diagnosis of student mastery including data from state summative assessments, and, where applicable, third-party evaluation.

    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

The proposed evidence-based interventions will support prioritized special populations with learning supports that include innovation in curriculum and instruction, diagnosing student mastery, extended instructional time, and supports for teachers. Specifically, these interventions provide:

A. **High-dosage tutoring**: Individualized, low student-to-tutor ratio support for all learners, regardless of unique needs, delivered multiple times a week.

B. **High-quality instructional materials**: Rigorous, innovative instructional materials developed with the needs of all learners in mind, including differentiated supports for students with disabilities and supports for English Learners like a K-5 RLA: Spanish curriculum with Amplify Texas Lectoescritura en Español.

C. **Job-embedded professional learning**: Supports for teachers and coaches who directly work with students with special needs both within the context of a core curriculum as well as with supplemental tools like AmplioSpeech.

D. **Extended school day and year**: Extended instructional time, including extended school day, intersessional calendar, and summer programs which provide additional time in school for students with special needs.

E. **Summer learning programs**: Support for additional academic and non-academic time available to LEAs to extend instructional time for all students during the summer.
F. **Additional Supports for LEAs**: Evidence-based guidance for LEAs and educators to support students with mental and behavioral health, trauma-informed practices, healthy and positive relationships, and responsible decision-making.

Data sources TEA will use to determine the impact of lost instructional time include 2020-2021 student attendance, instruction from certified teachers, dual enrollment, student course completion data, and diagnosis of student mastery from the STAAR, end-of-course, and TELPAS exams, among others, all broken out by student group.

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.

As noted above, students from low-income backgrounds, African American students, Hispanic students, Asian students, and English Learners were less likely than their peers to learn on campus in the 2020-2021 school year. Students from low-income backgrounds, African American students, and Hispanic students were found to be less engaged in virtual learning in the 2019-2020 school year. The proposed evidence-based interventions described in section D.1ii will target these populations for the identified interventions.

2. Evidence-Based Summer Learning and Enrichment Programs: Describe how the SEA will use the funds it reserves under section 2001(f)(2) of the ARP Act (totaling not less than 1 percent of the State's total allocation of ARP ESSER funds) for evidence-based summer learning and enrichment programs, including those that begin in Summer 2021, and ensure such programs respond to students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. The description must include:
    i. A description of the evidence-based programs that address the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of students (e.g., providing intensive or high-dosage tutoring, accelerating learning) the SEA has selected, and the extent to which the SEA will evaluate the impact of those programs;

The proposed evidence-based summer and enrichment programs based on the ability of each intervention to address student academic and mental health needs include:

A. **High-dosage tutoring**; Additional educational opportunities for targeted students, providing experiences for individualized academic and non-academic support for all learners.
B. **Summer learning program design**: A supported planning process to design and align a high-quality summer learning program that extends the schools year, includes high-

quality, innovative instructional materials and high-quality enrichment opportunities for students.

C. **Extended school Year Redesign**: A supported planning and implementation process that provides LEAs with technical assistance, resources, and tools to design and implement school calendars that expand into the summer. The expanded school calendar includes a focus on learning acceleration – with high quality instructional materials and built-in time for aligned teacher professional learning – and the inclusion of enrichment programs within the school day that are selected or designed by the local district.

TEA plans to build a streamlined diagnostic and application process that will allow LEAs to self-identify the unique needs of the LEA, their students, and specific student subgroups to engage in aligned supports and grant opportunities.

Evaluation of these interventions will occur in short-, medium-, and long-term cycles through ongoing stakeholder engagement, diagnosis of student mastery including data from state summative assessments, and, where applicable, third party evaluation.

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

The proposed evidence-based interventions will support prioritized special populations with learning supports that include innovation in curriculum and instruction, diagnosing student mastery, extended instructional time, supports for teachers. Specifically, these interventions provide:

A. **High dosage tutoring**: Individualized and differentiated supports for students, provided in small group or one on one settings for the students most in need. Tutoring supports are optimized with high dosage which includes both afterschool and summer school.

B. **Summer learning program design**: A design-thinking approach to planning and executing a summer learning program to extend instructional time that meets the academic and non-academic needs of all learners, including those most in need.

C. **Extended school day and year**: Supports, resources and funding dedicated to districts and schools extending instruction by expanding the school calendar. Extended day and year decreases the impact of summer slide which has the highest negative impact on the academic and non-academic outcomes of students from many of the identified groups from section A.3.

1. **Full year redesign option**: Supports schools in redesigning school day to extend instructional time for students throughout the year, additional time for social interactions with peers and brain breaks for students throughout the school day. Additionally, this redesign model allows for more time to differentiate supports for all students.

2. **Intersessional option**: Supports schools in designing an intersessional calendar to extend instructional time by which student groups, including those listed in

question A.3, are provided multiple intersession days or weeks to fill learning gaps and build non-academic skills.

Data sources TEA will use to determine the impact of lost instructional time include 2020-2021 student attendance, instruction from certified teachers, dual enrollment, student course completion data, and diagnosis of student mastery from the STAAR, end-of-course, and TELPAS exams, among others, all broken out by student group.

      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.

As noted above, students from low-income backgrounds, African American students, Hispanic students, Asian students, and English Learners were less likely than their peers to learn on campus in the 2020-2021 school year. Students from low-income backgrounds, African American students, and Hispanic students were found to be less engaged in virtual learning in the 2019-2020 school year. The proposed evidence-based interventions described in section D.2ii will target these populations for the identified interventions.

3. <u>Evidence-Based Comprehensive Afterschool Programs</u>: Describe how the SEA will use the funds it reserves under section 2001(f)(3) of the ARP Act (totaling not less than 1 percent of the State's total allocation of ARP ESSER funds) for evidence-based comprehensive afterschool programs (including, for example, before-school programming), and ensure such programs respond to students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. The description must include:
   i. A description of the evidence-based programs (e.g., including partnerships with community-based organizations) the SEA has selected, and the extent to which the SEA will evaluate the impact of those programs;

The following evidence-based programs have been selected based on their research-backed ability accelerate student learning to grade-level standards. These are grounded in learning supports that align to school-day supports, which include innovation in curriculum and instruction, diagnosing student mastery, extended instructional time, and supports for teachers.

A. **High quality enrichment:** A variety of engaging activities coordinated with the school day program and intentionally designed to address documented academic and other student needs, such physical and mental wellness. Programs will feature lower staff-to-student ratios than the school day, intentionally aligned engaging hands-on experiential enrichment activities, age-appropriate youth development, and a student voice and choice component. Partnerships between LEAs, CBOs or other eligible entities will be encouraged to increase local capacity to address an array of student and family needs.
B. **High-dosage tutoring**: A continuum of support options available to all Texas LEAs and their partners in this program including knowledge building webinars, implementation

toolkits, planning and capacity building workshops, resources for tutor selection and training, tutoring platform with high-quality instructional materials, regional supports for implementation, and access to a network of vetted and trained tutors available to provide virtual and in-person high-impact tutoring.

C. **Job-embedded professional learning**: Supports for job-embedded, initial, and ongoing staff training is available for program staff and leadership through Texas Home Learning.

D. **Extended school day and year**: Allow extended time for enrichment, including before school, after school, during an extended school day, intersessional calendar breaks, and summer programs to address the variety of student academic and other supporting needs.

E. **Encourage local partnerships**: Formal agreements between campuses and providers of high-quality out-of-school time programs that expand the capacity of the entities to attain shared goals. State and regional out of school time networks will continue to work with local providers on implementing program quality standards.

F. **Encourage local stakeholder involvement:** Local steering committee of stakeholders involved in planning and assessing progress toward implementation and outcomes and ultimately building sustainability in the local community.

Evaluation of these interventions will occur in short-, medium-, and long-term cycles through ongoing stakeholder engagement, diagnosis of student mastery including data from state summative assessments, and, where applicable, third-party evaluation.
Data sources TEA will use to determine the impact of lost instructional time include 2020-2021 student attendance, instruction from certified teachers, dual enrollment, student course completion data, and diagnosis of student mastery from the STAAR, end-of-course, and TELPAS exams, among others, all broken out by student group.

      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

The proposed evidence-based interventions will support the state's prioritized special populations – with additional emphasis on high-need campuses with no or inadequate access to high-quality enrichment programs – with additional time for aligned enrichment activities, youth development, and high-dosage tutoring programs. To encourage local sustainability, programs will feature local partnerships and stakeholder involvement in implementation and progress monitoring.

Data sources TEA will use to determine the impact of lost instructional time include 2020-2021 student attendance, instruction from certified teachers, dual enrollment, student course completion data, and diagnosis of student mastery from the STAAR, end-of-course, and TELPAS exams, among others, all broken out by student group.

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.

As noted above, students from low-income backgrounds, African American students, Hispanic students, Asian students, and English Learners were less likely than their peers to learn on campus in the 2020-2021 school year. Students from low-income backgrounds, African American students, and Hispanic students were found to be less engaged in virtual learning in the 2019-2020 school year. The proposed evidence-based interventions described in section D.3i will prioritize these populations for the identified interventions.

a. 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.

TEA's current plan for 2001(f)(4) funds is to use the remaining funds to support learning loss, summer enrichment programs, and after school programs. TEA reserves the ability to use a portion of these funds for other needs that may arise in the future.

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 ARP ESSER III Uses of Funds Plan required components were incorporated into the LEA's application for ESSER III funding. All four components required by the IFR are due to TEA, as part of the LEA application, by July 27, 2021 (90 days from the release of allocations by TEA).

TEA will hire additional staff in the Department of Grant Compliance and Administration to conduct program compliance monitoring of the ARP ESSER III grants to LEAs. Through this process, TEA will randomly select LEAs to validate compliance with the ARP ESSER III LEA Uses of Funds Plan as well as other program compliance indicators.

TEA has provided statewide training on the ARP ESSER III planning requirements and is conducting multiple live virtual question and answer sessions to assist LEAs in meeting the compliance requirements.

TEA staff will use a random validation process to perform targeted compliance checks on the following sample indicators:
1. Each LEA that receives ARP ESSER funds developed the required plan with the components outlined above in E(1) i, ii, iii, and iv.
2. The Use of Funds Plan is provided in an understandable and uniform format as required.
3. The plan is posted to the LEA's website within 30 days of receiving its ARP ESSER III Notice of Grant Award from TEA.

TEA will create data reporting systems and collect any data required by the Department of Education (ED) to be able to report that data in the timeline and format requested.

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.

TEA will hire additional staff in the Department of Grant Compliance and Administration to conduct program compliance monitoring of the ARP ESSER III grants to LEAs. Through this process, TEA will randomly select LEAs to validate compliance with the ARP ESSER III LEA Uses of Funds Plan as well as other program compliance indicators.

TEA has provided statewide training on the ARP ESSER III planning requirements and is conducting multiple live virtual question and answer sessions to assist LEAs in meeting the compliance requirements.

TEA staff will use a random validation process to perform targeted compliance checks on the following sample indicators:
1. The Use of Funds Plan is provided in an understandable and uniform format as required.
2. The LEA engaged in meaningful consultation with required stakeholder groups on the development of the plan.
3. The plan is posted to the LEA's website within 30 days of receiving its ARP ESSER III Notice of Grant Award from TEA.

TEA will create data reporting systems and collect any data required by the Department of Education (ED) to be able to report that data in the timeline and format requested.

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;

TEA will provide technical assistance grants to the 20 regional education service centers (ESCs) to build capacity of and provide technical assistance to LEAs through the agency's discretionary funds. Funds will support the state-level activities in this area to meet individual LEA needs and general technical assistance on grant requirements and compliance.

TEA staff will use a random validation process to perform targeted compliance monitoring of LEAs and the ESC grants, similar to the process described above.

TEA will create data reporting systems and collect any data required by the Department of Education (ED) to be able to report that data in the timeline and format requested.

    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

TEA will provide technical assistance grants to the 20 regional education service centers (ESCs) to build capacity of and provide technical assistance to LEAs through the agency's discretionary funds. Funds will support the state-level activities in this area to meet individual LEA needs and general technical assistance on grant requirements and compliance.

TEA staff will use a random validation process to perform targeted compliance monitoring of LEAs and the ESC grants, similar to the process described above.

TEA will create data reporting systems and collect any data required by the Department of Education (ED) to be able to report that data in the timeline and format requested.

    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:
        1. Students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years;
        2. Students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures; and
        3. Students most at-risk of dropping out of school.

TEA will provide technical assistance grants to the 20 regional education service centers (ESCs) to build capacity of and provide technical assistance to LEAs through the agency's discretionary funds. Funds will support the state-level activities in this area to meet individual LEA needs and general technical assistance on grant requirements and compliance.

TEA staff will use a random validation process to perform targeted compliance monitoring of LEAs and the ESC grants, similar to the process described above.

TEA will create data reporting systems and collect any data required by the Department of Education (ED) to be able to report that data in the timeline and format requested.

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.

LEAs have flexibility to address their locally identified needs for the uses of ESSER funding, to include addressing educational equity and equitable and inclusive return to in-person instruction. This has been addressed in the agency's ARP ESSER III FAQ document. TEA has stressed the broad consultation and needs assessment processes as well as the equitable access requirements of the grant program.

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.

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

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

Table F1.

Area	Data on shortages and needs		Narrative description
Special educators	*2021 Attrition*	*33.87%*	Attrition for Special Education Teachers held steady near average for the 2020-2021 academic year.
	Attrition Deviation From Prior Year	*0.35%*	
	Federally Identified Shortage Area	*Yes*	
Paraprofessionals	*2021 Attrition*	*24.36%*	Attrition for Paraprofessionals (Educational Aides) held steady near average for the 2020-2021 academic year.
	Attrition Deviation From Prior Year	*-1.55%*	
	Federally Identified Shortage Area	*No*	
Bilingual educators	*2021 Attrition*	*27.23%*	Attrition for Bilingual educators was slightly lower than average for the 2020-2021 academic year.
	Attrition Deviation From Prior Year	*-1.81%*	
	Federally Identified Shortage Area	*Yes*	
English as a second language educators	*2021 Attrition*	*39.45%*	Attrition for English as a second language educators held steady near average for the 2020-2021 academic year.
	Attrition Deviation From Prior Year	*0.41%*	
	Federally Identified Shortage Area	*Yes*	
STEM educators	*2021 Attrition*	*22.11%*	Attrition for STEM Educators was slightly lower than average for the 2020-2021 academic year.
	Attrition Deviation From Prior Year	*-2.48%*	
	Federally Identified Shortage Area	*Math, Computer Science*	
CTE educators	*2021 Attrition*	*23.75%*	Attrition for CTE Educators was slightly lower than average for the 2020-2021 academic year.
	Attrition Deviation From Prior Year	*-3.07%*	
	Federally Identified Shortage Area	*Yes*	
Early childhood educators	*2021 Attrition*	*19.01%*	Attrition for Early childhood educators was slightly lower than average for the 2020-2021 academic year.
	Attrition Deviation From Prior Year	*-2.15%*	
	Federally Identified Shortage Area	*No*	
School counselors	*2021 Attrition*	*12.13%*	Attrition for School counselors was slightly lower than average for the 2020-2021 academic year.
	Attrition Deviation From Prior Year	*-2.67%*	
	Federally Identified Shortage Area	*No*	
Social workers	*2021 Attrition*	*17.61%*	

	Attrition Deviation From Prior Year	1.33%	Attrition for Social Workers in schools held steady near average for the 2020-2021 academic year.
	Federally Identified Shortage Area	*No*	
Nurses	*2021 Attrition*	13.67%	Attrition for School nurses was slightly lower than average for the 2020-2021 academic year.
	Attrition Deviation From Prior Year	-6.15%	
	Federally Identified Shortage Area	*No*	
School psychologists	*2021 Attrition*	21.30%	Attrition for School psychologists held steady near average for the 2020-2021 academic year.
	Attrition Deviation From Prior Year	-1.34%	
	Federally Identified Shortage Area	*No*	

Overall, data indicate that Texas did not experience an exacerbation of shortages of teachers or support staff stemming from individuals leaving the profession during the 2019-2020 academic year or between the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 academic year. As noted on the table, Texas had previously identified Bilingual, ESL, Special Education, CTE, Computer Science, and Math teachers as shortage areas to the USDE. The attrition values for 2020-2021 support this continued designation.

While overall turnover was lower, challenges may exist where positions have been added, along with staff where full-time employment has varied, including bus drivers, child nutrition workers, and substitutes. While some individual campuses and LEAs encountered local hiring challenges, this aligns with state and regional data and is not an atypical phenomenon.

> 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.

TEA plans to build a streamlined diagnostic and application process that will allow LEAs to identify grant opportunities and available supports that will align to their specific needs, including needs related to support for educators. Available projects and grant programs that support educators include:

- **Additional Days School Year**: TEA will use funds to support LEAs in strategically redesigning schedules to allow teachers more time for planning, collaboration, and development.

- **Resilient Schools Support Program**: TEA will fund this grant program to assist schools in developing a comprehensive COVID recovery plan, including identifying teacher capacity and student learning needs, and assist LEAs in implementing learning acceleration strategies in their priority areas.
- **Texas Home Learning (THL)**: TEA used prior funding to support the development of this suite of optional, TEKS-aligned high-quality instructional materials for Prekindergarten, K-12 math and RLA (including RLA: Spanish for K-5), and K-5 science and social studies that are available at no cost to all Texans. THL instructional materials are developed for in-person, virtual, and hybrid instruction and includes curriculum-aligned professional learning resources for teachers.
- **COVID Recovery Instructional Materials Support Initiative (CRIMSI)**: TEA plans to fund LEAs to provide professional development and coaching for teachers to make use of high-quality instructional materials developed for Texas Home Learning.
- **Counseling, Advising, and Student Supports team**: TEA built this initiative to connect counselors with resources including a series of COVID-responsive guidance lessons and a training on trauma-informed school counseling.
- **Project Restore**: TEA utilized previously available federal funding to build this a trauma-informed training video series, designed to connect educators to relevant science and strategies that can help them address their own emotional needs as well the needs of their students and colleagues.

      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).

In the early stages of the pandemic, Texas temporarily suspended some certification requirements enabling educator candidates impacted by school and test center closures to receive limited term certificates. These actions also allowed for candidates at alternative certification programs to continue their preparation in the 2020-2021 academic year, and for the extension of one-year certificates for educators certified outside of the state and emergency credentials. These policies supported entry into the profession by a diverse cohort of over 10,000 additional teachers, and, along with admission to educator preparation programs that is up 19% year-to-date in 2020-2021 over the prior two years, indicate that Texas is on solid footing to address the impacts of COVID on the teacher pipeline.

To support these coming challenges, Texas plans to utilize existing and emerging initiatives that support educator preparation tailored to the needs of LEAs, building the status of the profession, and connecting tutors with students impacted by the pandemic. The planned programs include the following:

<u>Teacher Residencies</u>

When teachers are prepared in schools, learning the context, community, and students along with the content, they are ready to be successful from day one, and are more likely to be effective and retained. Towards this end, TEA will support high-quality preparation in year-long residencies by identifying EPPs with aligned programming and capacity, funding regional service centers to support EPP and LEA collaboration, and funding stipends for residents at LEAs for two years as they build and implement a sustainable model.

Innovative Staffing Models
New modalities of teaching, along with shifting settings and new tools can enable approaches to staffing that are different from the traditional standard. TEA will make available resources to LEAs to plan for and implement innovative staffing models, ensuring support for all students. These models can support multiple initiatives, and in particular enable the establishing teacher leader roles, which allow for high quality teachers to have a greater impact in training new teachers while staying in the classroom.

Vetted Texas Tutor Corps
One-on-one learning can be a key to accelerating the learning of students who had their learning disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. TEA plans to build a network of statewide tutor provider organizations who are well-trained, using high-quality instructional materials, and implementing high dosage tutoring in alignment with research-backed principles, and support LEAs in accessing this network in partnership with regional service centers. TEA will support LEAs in building local systems to connect students who experienced learning loss through the pandemic with tutors, including educator preparation candidates and retired educators. TEA will also provide webinars, tools, and workshop-style support to LEAs to establish high dosage tutoring.

Grow Your Own Program
Students benefit from teachers who share their background, and who can serve as role models. To help alleviate teacher shortages, increase teacher quality, and close demographic gaps between students and teachers, Texas will continue to fund the Grow Your Own grant program. Grants support two pathways, including funds for campuses to offer CTE courses that put high school students on the pathway to becoming a teacher and funds for paraprofessionals to earn degrees and transition to being certified educators. These supports are structured to prioritize implementation at small and rural schools, which experience challenges to recruiting and retaining high-quality educators.

In addition to these programs, Texas will also continue to support and fund LEA implementation of the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA). TEA will support more LEAs in developing approved systems that allow LEAs to designate high-performing educators who in turn can generate allotments from $3,000 to $32,000 for their employing district. To support teachers in understanding this opportunity, TEA continues to highlight the program directly to teachers in partnership with the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, featuring it on our website and consistently responding to teacher inquiries. These designated teachers are able to further capitalize their designation upon moving to high-need or rural campuses.

Through these varied initiatives we plan to ensure a strong and expanded teacher pipeline while supporting the needs of our impacted students.

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

As noted in earlier sections, TEA is providing LEAs with support and guidance on how to maximize existing and newly hired mental health professionals and support staff on their campuses, including resources and guidance on screening, connecting to local or regional mental health resources, and providing information and resources on the impacts of grief and trauma and trauma-informed care, including trauma-informed teacher training modules and supports for educators. By helping educators and other school staff to identify when students are struggling, schools can build a stronger system of support for all 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.

a. <u>Capacity for Data Collection and Reporting</u>: 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).

i. TEA primarily relies upon the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) to gather information on student learning. STAAR was not administered in school year 2019-2020 but was administered in school year 2020-2021. While the assessment window is not yet closed, early data suggests that April administration participation rates were approximately 85%, which suggests the administration will provide TEA with summative learning data on the majority of students.

ii. Most student- and staff-level data collected by the agency is done through the Texas Student Data System (TSDS) which is based on the Ed-Fi data standard. Data collected from the LEAs must be reviewed via the data governance process. The TSDS data review committees are comprised of representatives from key stakeholder groups which include LEA and Regional data coordinators, executive directors and superintendents, software vendors and TEA staff.

In addition to data collected through TSDS, any data collected outside of TSDS such as surveys or data required for grant reporting would be reviewed by the internal TEA governance board which is comprised of staff from TEA departments.

Using the Ed-Fi data standard allows the agency the ability to expand the data model for new reporting requirements driven by legislative mandates. Additionally, representatives on the governance committees give the agency insight into the capacity at the local level to expand data collection requirements.

Once new data collections have been approved by the governance committees, the collection requirements are published in the Texas Education Data Standards. Source system vendors such as Student Information System vendors use the information provided in the data standard to update their systems. The vendors expand the systems for data input as well as data extractions which allows LEAs to readily comply with state data submission requirements.

Through this process TEA already collects many of the items listed in G.1.ii. Our current processes and technical capabilities allow us to expand and collect what we do not currently collect.

iii. Fiscal data that is comparable across the State (e.g., per-pupil expenditures at the LEA and school levels); TEA will develop a uniform expenditure reporting system to collect detailed information on ARP ESSER III expenditures across LEAs. This detailed information will be in

addition to our existing uniform eGrants Expenditure Reporting (ER) system. Comparable data will be collected and reported for all LEAs.

iv. TEA will collect jobs created and retained with ARP ESSER III funds on an annual basis as part of the LEA's compliance reporting to TEA. LEA compliance report data is submitted in the fall for the prior grant year. LEAs will report all FTEs that 1) received payroll from ESSER funds, and/or 2) received a stipend or bonus for added responsibilities caused by the pandemic.

v. TEA will build capacity of LEAs for participation in summer programs, after-school programs, and extended year programs through grants to the 20 regional ESCs. These grants will provide technical assistance to and guide LEAs through the planning processes. TEA will collect data from LEAs to monitor participation in ARP ESSER funded programs, including summer programs, after-school programs, and extended year programs, funded by either state discretionary funds or the LEA grants.

vi. TEA will use the current governance process and systems that are easily expandable to collect the data required based on the program needs once the final requirements are determined.

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

TEA's Division of Federal Fiscal Monitoring (FFM) has created a Specialized Monitoring Unit which will include ESSER fiscal monitoring. This unit will be responsible for the agency's fiscal monitoring and internal controls of ESSER funds as described below.

The Grants Administration Division staff's primary focus will be to conduct grant application reviews for allowability of costs. The grant application includes a list of requested allowable activities aligned to the ESSER statutes. Any activity entered as "other," not previously approved, and questionable to TEA staff may be forwarded to the USDE program office for a determination of allowability.

The FFM division staff's primary focus will be to conduct fiscal desk reviews of ESSER grants awarded to subrecipients. The completion of the activities discussed below will contribute towards satisfying the division's monitoring responsibility. Although the types of activities discussed below will be the primary focus of the division, the division is not limited to these activities and may conduct other work at the direction of the division's director and pursuant to immediate and changing circumstances.

The TEA program office will conduct random validations of various eligibility and program compliance requirements as described above.

The complete ESSER III Monitoring Plan is available upon request.

Appendix A: School Operating Status and Instructional Mode Data Template

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

This section will be submitted by the June 21st deadline.

Table 1

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

Add or change rows as needed

Number of schools	All schools	Offered to all students	Offered to some students	Not offered
Remote or online only	#	#	#	#
School buildings open with both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)	#	#	#	#
School buildings open with full-time in-person instruction	#	#	#	#

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

Table 2

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

Add or change rows as needed

Number of students	Total enrollment	Remote or online only	Both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)	Full-time in-person instruction
Students from low-income families	#	#	#	#
White, not Hispanic	#	#	#	#
Black or African American, not Hispanic	#	#	#	#
Hispanic, of any race	#	#	#	#
Asian, not Hispanic	#	#	#	#
American Indian or Alaskan Native, not Hispanic	#	#	#	#
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, not Hispanic	#	#	#	#
Two or more races, not Hispanic	#	#	#	#
Race/Ethnicity information not available	#	#	#	#
English learners	#	#	#	#
Children with disabilities	#	#	#	#
Students experiencing homelessness	#	#	#	#
Children and youth in foster care	#	#	#	#
Migratory students	#	#	#	#

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

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

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

Appendix C: Assurances

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

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

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

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

Appendix D

NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS

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

To Whom Does This Provision Apply?

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

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

What Does This Provision Require?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

All grant applications funded with ESSER funds contain TEA's standard GEPA, Section 427 questions. The application will not be eligible to be considered for funding in the absence of this information. In accordance with the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA), Section 427, applicants must develop and describe the procedures they will use to ensure equitable access to and equitable participation in the grant program. The barriers to such participation should be identified for all participants and potential participants during the needs assessment phase of the program planning and development. All applicants must address the special needs of students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries to overcome barriers to equitable participation, including those based on gender, race, color, national origin, disability, and age.

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.