

**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](mailto:Alabama.OESE@ed.gov)).

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

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

**Cover Page**

**Grantee and Contact Information**

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

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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.	
<b>Chief State School Officer or Authorized Representative (Printed Name)</b> Mohammed Choudhury	
<b>Signature of Authorized SEA Representative</b> 	<b>Date:</b> October 4, 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. Progress and Promising Practices: Provide your assessment of the top 2-3 strategies that have been most effective in supporting the needs of students in your State during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially for students most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Please include, if applicable, how your State will submit and encourage its LEAs to submit lessons learned and best practices to the Department's [Safer Schools and Campuses Best Practices Clearinghouse](#) so that they can be shared with other States and LEAs.

The most effective strategies that the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has employed during the COVID-19 pandemic to support the needs of students are:

- 1) Allocating funds to every LEA to provide and enhance technology supports (for example, supplying all students with laptops or other portable devices [to ensure one-to-one device access] and improving access to the Internet [by providing hot spots and paying for service plans] for both students and staff), thereby facilitating greater access to remote learning. (See CARES Act\_LEA Technology Application and Funding Allocation, GEER Fund\_LEA Application and Funding Allocation, and Coronavirus Relief Fund\_LEA Broadband Grant Distribution for the funding amounts allocated to each LEA in Maryland, totaling approximately \$118.7 million Statewide.)

As evidenced by the June 2020 data on connectivity and access to devices reported to the Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) (see [Maryland's Recovery Plan Update for the State Board 8.24.20](#), pp.17-18), in order to meet the needs of all students and staff during the pandemic, LEAs realized that they would have to create a system that allowed for the delivery of remote learning and which could house digital resources. Each LEA purchased devices and web conferencing software, ensured that digital safety measures were in place, communicated with parents, increased Internet access, adjusted curriculum, and provided professional learning for educators.

The MSDE provided guidance and professional learning opportunities through credit-bearing courses and a remote learning portal. Educator and parent resource documents were developed and posted on the MSDE's website (see [COVID-19 Educational Resources](#) webpage). As the MSDE on-boarded a new State learning management system (LMS), new online courses were being developed (see [Approved Student Online Courses for SY2020-2021](#)). Lessons learned in spring 2020 guided MSDE's online

course development to integrate social-emotional learning (SEL) and synchronized instructional time that help build relationships between educator and students and between classmates.

During fall 2020, the MSDE collaborated with the Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM) to develop a Statewide survey administered to LEA staff to identify and quantify technology gaps, including digital access. The results of this survey informed the MSDE's subsequent approach to technology issues for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year (see MSDE Technology Survey Results\_12.21.20). In fall 2021, the MSDE will conduct a follow-up survey with each LEA to ascertain the current status of robust home Internet connectivity, the availability of broadband, student-to-device ratios, virtual program enrollments, and available learning management platforms. Over the next two years, the MSDE will continue to develop online courses, identify and evaluate digital resources for stakeholders, and house them on the State LMS.

- 2) Distributing free meals to students, which helped ameliorate the stresses caused by food insecurity that many families experienced during the pandemic. The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) are the cornerstones of school meal services upon which nearly 900,000 school children in Maryland rely on daily. The sudden closure of schools on March 12, 2020, left only one business day for LEAs and school food service teams to pivot and prepare for a different model of meal service delivery, beginning on March 16, 2020.

The MSDE worked together with Maryland's 24 LEAs, 30 non-profit private schools, and other traditional summer meal sites (churches, community organizations, summer camps, etc.) to develop plans that met COVID-19 social distancing guidelines, while also reaching children in greatest need for meals. Within a week of school closings, and armed with the subsequent meal flexibility waivers issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, many innovations in meal services were firmly established. These included:

- Where meals were offered: Sites were chosen locally and could be modified or expanded to meet the needs of the community. Parents could pick up meals for their children and children did not need to eat the food on the premises. The MSDE established a resource webpage (see [School Meal Site Locator](#)) where Maryland residents could locate every site in the State distributing free meals to children under the age of 18.
- How meals were offered: Meals were distributed curbside. Sites were allowed to provide breakfast, lunch, dinner, and/or snacks at once, and many sites offered more than one day's worth of meals at one time.

- To whom meals were offered: Meal access was expanded beyond school-aged children to any child aged 0-18 years.

As a result, close to 18 million meals were served to Maryland youth during the 15 weeks of school closure during the 2019-2020 school year. These innovations continued throughout the summer and the 2020-2021 school year, as schools slowly reopened either virtually or with a hybrid model of virtual and in-person. As of June 2021, schools continue to offer a combination of curbside meals, grab-and-go kiosks at the door, classroom delivery of meals, and or multiple, socially distanced meal periods in the cafeteria.

The MSDE recently commissioned a study of school meal operations during the pandemic and will begin to evaluate operations as schools reopen fully and during the remainder of the COVID-19 public health emergency.

- 3) Engaging with stakeholders from the very earliest days of the pandemic to help shape the MSDE's response and inform the development of guidance and resources for LEAs. For example, the State Superintendent of Schools began immediately meeting weekly (through PSSAM) with Maryland's 24 local school superintendents in March 2020. These weekly meetings extended through March 2021, and changed to bi-weekly meetings just in the last quarter of the 2020-2021 school year. The purpose of these meetings was (and is) to discuss and seek input on pressing COVID-related issues.

Maryland was one of the first States in the nation to publish a comprehensive recovery plan (*Maryland Together: Maryland's Recovery Plan for Education*) in June 2020, which was the result of widespread engagement with stakeholders, and which continues to guide the MSDE's pandemic response. This plan detailed 13 criteria that LEAs had to adhere to as they developed their own recovery plans. Stakeholders included representatives from parents, students, collective bargaining units, professional organizations, higher education, LEAs, non-profits, and many others (see *Maryland Together: Maryland's Recovery Plan for Education*, pp.68-69, for a list of participating stakeholders). The stakeholders met multiple times from May through September 2020 to provide input on the recovery plan. With support from multiple MSDE divisions, the stakeholders were organized into five stakeholder groups from across the State to identify areas of need and solutions in designated areas such as: health and safety, instruction, baseline standards, grading and reporting, attendance, English learners (ELs), special education, students most in need, food services, transportation, and other critical topics related to schools.

Similarly, the MSDE sought input from the general public via a survey posted on the MSDE homepage regarding which proposed evidence-based strategies should be prioritized across the State to help address lost instructional time resulting from the pandemic (see [Addressing the Impact of Interrupted Instruction Presentation 3.22.21](#), slides 4-8; see also A.2 response for more details on this initiative). The State Superintendent of Schools also recently conducted a virtual student town hall on June 1, 2021.

The MSDE and the Maryland Department of Health have jointly conducted bi-weekly virtual meetings since early in the pandemic (and continue to do) with public and private school representatives on health and safety matters.

Additionally, the MSDE has communicated information to parents, educators, and the general public in a transparent and timely manner. For example, the MSDE created a central [COVID-19 Resources for Maryland Schools](#) hub on its website that houses numerous resources (categorized thematically), and which is easily accessible and navigable. Pandemic-related guidance and information are included and updated regularly on the [MSDE Homepage](#). An email address ([educationplan.msde@maryland.gov](mailto:educationplan.msde@maryland.gov)) is also listed on the homepage of the MSDE website to enable the public to submit comments on pandemic-related matters.

(See [ARP ESSER Presentation to State Board 6.22.21](#), pp. 118-122, for a summary of the MSDE's engagement, by division, with stakeholders by division during the COVID-19 pandemic. See also section C.1 for further information regarding the MSDE's engagement with stakeholders during the development of Maryland's ARP ESSER State Plan application.)

Upon conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year, the MSDE will ask local superintendents to summarize lessons learned and best practices for their LEAs and submit their analyses to the Department's *Safer Schools and Campuses Best Practices Clearinghouse*.

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

Following the recent passage of House Bill 1300 (2020) ([Blueprint for Maryland's Future – Implementation](#)) and House Bill 1372 (2021) ([Blueprint for Maryland's Future – Revisions](#)), the State is investing more than a billion dollars over the next 10 years in preK-12 education. Included in the Blueprint's priorities are commitments to invest in the following policy areas: early childhood education; high-quality and diverse teachers and school leaders;

college and career readiness pathways; provision of more resources to ensure that all students are successful; and governance and accountability. The Blueprint is designed to fundamentally reshape education in Maryland.

The impact of the pandemic, however, has only served to heighten the importance of re-thinking how education is delivered across the State and further highlighted many underlying core issues highlighted in the Blueprint that need addressing, such as closing opportunity and learning gaps among underserved student populations, ensuring equity, hiring more teachers and other professional positions (such as school social workers, counselors, and psychologists), etc. The MSDE believes that the provision of Federal funding through ARP ESSER and other Federal programs in response to the pandemic represents an unprecedented opportunity for Maryland to build upon and reinforce the commitments made in the Blueprint (for example, addressing local staffing shortages in high need areas through LEA ARP ESSER funding, utilizing evidence-based strategies to support learning and close the achievement gap among different student populations, etc.).

The most significant and immediate issues facing students and schools in Maryland as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic are: 1) speeding up the return to in-person instruction for all students in the 2021-2022 school year, while also providing the necessary supports, especially in the areas of technology/broadband access and outreach, to ensure that students and parents/families remain engaged; 2) addressing the mental health and SEL needs of students, particularly among underserved students most affected by the switch to remote learning, as well as parents/families and educators; and 3) addressing the impact resulting from the disruption to learning since the pandemic began. More specifically:

- 1) The State Board passed a resolution (see [State Board Resolution 4.27.21](#)) on April 27, 2021, stating that, “Beginning with the opening of schools for the 2021-2022 school year, local boards of education must permit all students to attend school for at least 180 actual school days and a minimum of 1,080 school hours during a 10-month period for in-person, in-school instruction, with the teacher in the classroom.” To encourage this return to in-person instruction in the 2021-2022 school year, the MSDE is providing grant incentives to LEAs to reopen schools, totaling approximately \$19.8 million Statewide (see columns titled ESSER Reopening and CSFRR Safe Reopening in Federal Funding\_LEA Allocations). Prior to the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year, the MSDE surveyed LEAs asking them to confirm whether they intend to reopen fully for in-person instruction (in accordance with the State Board resolution) in the 2021-2022 school year (see LEA Reopening Survey\_5.28.21).

The MSDE recognizes, however, that a State Board resolution and LEA written commitments to reopening schools for in-person instruction for the

next school year are in themselves no guarantees of success. Despite a concerted effort to reopen schools in spring 2021, in-person attendance rates in many individual LEAs and Statewide among many student populations still remained low at the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year (see LEA Reopening Weekly Status Report 6.25.21 and Appendix A, Table 2). There is a concern that students who experienced a “lost” year of learning may struggle when they return to school in-person in the coming school year, or that these students may drop out of schooling altogether. This is particularly the case for the most vulnerable student populations, such as low-income, homeless, and migrant students. Consequently, the MSDE will need to provide support and guidance to LEAs both prior to and during the early part of the 2021-2022 school year as they attempt to re-engage students and their parents/families and “bring them back into the fold.” Similarly, once engaged, these students and their parents/families will need ongoing support, such as SEL/mental health supports, to ease the transition back to school and ensure that they remain in school thereafter (see A.2, bullet 2 below for more information on the State’s new regional mental health program).

Finally, while Maryland anticipates that the vast majority of students will return to full-time in-person instruction for the 2021-2022 school year, some LEAs have indicated that they will continue to offer a fully virtual remote learning option for those students that elect it. Even for those students who do not engage in fully virtual remote learning, the pandemic has shown that the “old way” of doing things is obsolete. The increased reliance on technology in almost all areas of education is likely a permanent shift, and thus LEAs must be in a position to provide the necessary technology supports for all students and educators. Additionally, Maryland must remain prepared for the possibility of other disruptions to learning in the future (such as a significant weather event), but whose impact, as the experience of the pandemic has shown, can be mitigated to an extent through the use of technology. Consequently, while the MSDE can highlight many accomplishments with regard to the technology supports provided thus far during the pandemic (see A.1, bullet 1), there is still much work to be done to bridge the digital divide. The Governor has acknowledged the necessity of building up Maryland’s infrastructure, including allocating \$10 million from the Governor’s fund to build new cellular towers. However, there continues to be a pressing need to expand broadband Internet access across the State, as well as ensuring that the technology supports utilized keep pace with broader technological developments, and that all students and educators who require technology supports (such as laptops/portable devices) have access to these tools, and are properly trained to use them.

- 2) The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant negative impact on the lives of students, parents/families, and educators, particularly those from

communities of color. For over a year, students have experienced isolation, loss, and trauma while existing mental health and social issues such as housing insecurity, addiction, and racial inequities in services and access have been exacerbated by the pandemic and social unrest. Students have been disconnected from traditional home, school, and community-based resources and services and the impact on students and families has been overwhelming. Parents report that they have witnessed a decline in their children's emotional well-being and that their children are experiencing increased anxiety, depression, and behavioral challenges. Meanwhile, many educators have struggled to cope with the stresses brought on by the switch to virtual learning and the disruption to their everyday lives brought on by the pandemic.

For these reasons, the MSDE is in the process of implementing a Statewide mental health program, which will establish six regional crisis response and clinical support teams focused on the mental health and social-emotional needs of students, parents/families, and educators. The overall goals of the program are to: improve behavioral health services for children and youth; meet the mental health and social-emotional needs of children and their families; provide support and assist educators in the implementation of prevention and intervention strategies, including de-escalation and crisis mitigation; provide direct clinical support; and facilitate connections to home, school, and community supports and services. The regional teams will comprise multiple professional positions, including but not limited to: clinical psychologists, licensed clinical professional counselors, licensed certified social workers (clinical), school nurses, and family navigator(s) (tentatively two per team). Additional positions will include a clinical psychiatrist, substance abuse counselors, board-certified behavior specialists, and interpreters. (See [Social and Emotional Needs of Returning Students Presentation 4.27.21](#) and [Maryland Regional Crisis Response and Clinical Support Teams Presentation 5.25.21](#) for more information on this initiative.)

The MSDE and the regional teams will work closely with local superintendents, community-based mental health providers, the Maryland Department of Health, and other key agencies, partners, and stakeholders to design a comprehensive plan to provide crisis response and intervention, clinical support, and professional development for educators to meet the needs of all students, including students in early childhood programs, students with special needs, and other underserved student populations. The regional teams will also work very closely with parents/families to make sure that they are connected with the appropriate home, school-based, or community resources to ensure that they feel empowered to take the lead role in planning, advocating, and responding to their needs and the needs of their children.

Through the implementation of this mental health program, the MSDE seeks to build local capacity to provide mental health services and supports to students, families, and educators, particularly in critical shortage areas of the State (e.g. Maryland's Eastern Shore and Western Maryland). To accomplish this, the MSDE will establish partnerships with local universities, including Maryland's historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), to provide internship opportunities for students interested in the mental health field. It is important to note that the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (one of Maryland's HBCUs) is located in one of Maryland's critical shortage areas.

The MSDE recognizes that these regional teams are just one element of a multi-pronged approach to address the mental health and SEL needs of students, parents/families, and educators. Additionally, it is anticipated that LEAs will use ARP ESSER allocations to fund the hiring of additional professional positions in this field (for example, counselors, psychologists, school social and pupil personnel workers, etc.). Furthermore, in support this work, the MSDE has released a new guidance document to aid LEAs (see *A Trauma-Informed Approach for Maryland Schools*).

- 3) As outlined before the State Board, Maryland is committed to addressing the lost instructional time (or disrupted instruction, using the MSDE's terminology) that has occurred since March 2020 (see *Disrupted Instruction\_A Path Forward Presentation\_1.25.21* and *Addressing the Impact of Interrupted Instruction Presentation\_3.22.21*). These presentations lay out how the State intends to respond to the impact on students and learning caused by the pandemic, and highlight various evidence-based strategies that Maryland will employ to counter lost instructional time and how they will be evaluated. These include:
  - Utilizing high-intensity structured tutoring.
  - Providing extended day or extended year programs.
  - Offering summer school programs.
  - Implementing acceleration academies.
  - Utilizing formative assessments.
  - Sustaining early childhood programs.

The MSDE is also allocating approximately \$188 million to Maryland LEAs to fund various high-quality tutoring programs, and will engage with school systems to determine best practices for the implementation of these tutoring programs (see *Coronavirus Relief Fund\_Grants to LEAs*).

Another likely area of focus will be providing support to recent high school graduates who wish to pursue higher education but may not be ready to take college-level coursework because of lost instructional time during the pandemic. The MSDE will share this ARP ESSER State Plan application with the Maryland Higher Education Commission and local institutions of

higher education (IHEs) and look to facilitate conversations between these entities and LEAs to determine what measures (for example, summer remediation courses) can be taken to ensure this population is better prepared for college as they enter higher education.

Additionally, throughout the pandemic, the MSDE has provided extensive professional development for teachers and pedagogical resources. For example, the MSDEs created multiple resource webpages devoted to different aspects of digital teaching and learning, including remote teaching (see [Expanding Online Professional Learning Opportunities](#) webpage), [Hybrid Teaching and Learning](#), instructional technology (see [Instructional Technology and School Library Media](#) webpage), and published resource guides (see [Teacher Resources March 2020](#) and [Hybrid Resources](#)). As Maryland transitions back to a traditional in-person instructional model in the 2021-2022 school year, the MSDE will prioritize the creation of similar professional development and resources for educators focused on addressing the impact of disrupted learning. For example, in summer 2021, over 250 educators have enrolled in 12 MSDE credit-bearing courses. The course topics include mathematics, gifted and talented education, physical education, book studies, and the pedagogy and strategies of how to effectively deliver online and/or blended content. Course offerings will continue each semester and will soon include newly developed courses in subjects such as data science, teaching EL students, social justice, learning differences, and SEL.

In support of these initiatives, the MSDE's funding set-asides for ESSER II and III, indicating priority initiatives for the State, were presented and approved by the State Board on May 25, 2021 (see ESSER State Set Aside\_5.25.21).

The MSDE is committed to ensuring that ARP ESSER funds are spent on allowable expenses that will maximize student learning in safe environments. The MSDE is also committed to ensuring transparency and accountability for the use of funds. As a result, over \$16 million will be set aside to support monitoring efforts. Funds will be used to establish an ESSER Compliance and Monitoring Branch within the MSDE's Division of Career and College Readiness; hire staff that is solely focused on monitoring; secure monitoring resources; report on the outcomes of monitoring; and provide stipends to monitoring teams consisting of representatives from LEAs, higher education, business, and non-profits (see [MSDE Monitoring Plan 6.22.21](#)).

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

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

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

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

In relation to the academic needs of underserved students, there are certain long-term data trends that are applicable across multiple student groups and which pre-date the start of the pandemic. For example, the results of Statewide standardized testing in mathematics and English language arts (ELA) demonstrate both a current and a historical/sustained need for a number of student groups (see 2019 MCAP [Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program] Results and Learning Loss and Learning Recovery Presentation 7.27.21 for various trend data). African American students, Hispanic students, male students, students with disabilities, ELs, and economically disadvantaged students have consistently lower performance on State standardized tests than other student groups.

Although the State did not engage in Statewide testing in 2020, there is no indication that the academic needs of these students did not persist (and in fact, likely grew) during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years. An initial snapshot of 2020-2021 assessment data from other States suggests that Maryland can anticipate a decline in student performance on Federally-

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

mandated Statewide assessments in the 2021-2022 school year (see Learning Loss and Learning Recovery Presentation\_7.27.21, pp. 11-12). Furthermore, a number of LEAs have conducted their own analyses on the impact of interrupted instruction (in the absence of Statewide testing). They determined that, based on local assessments and interim course grades, providing targeted, structured academic supports to underserved students remains a high priority.

Additionally, analysis of available data for 2020-2021 show that attendance for students with disabilities, ELs, economically disadvantaged students, Black students, and Hispanic students is markedly below attendance for White and Asian students (see First Term Performance Metrics, slides 8-9; Second Term Performance Metrics, slides 4-5; Third Term Performance Metrics, slides 4-5; and Fourth Term Performance Metrics, slides 5-6). Given that attendance is positively correlated with student learning, the MSDE anticipates that these student groups will have additional learning needs as a result of the pandemic.

Similarly, anecdotal evidence suggests that many of the SEL and mental health issues brought on by the pandemic – such as depression, suicidal thoughts, feelings of isolation – have disproportionately affected underserved student groups. While the creation of Regional Crisis Response and Clinical Support Teams, as outlined A.2, is an initiative spearheaded by the MSDE to improve SEL and mental health outcomes for all students, the expectation is that these regional teams will focus in particular on underserved student groups.

In addition to the broader trends outlined above, the specific high priority needs of select student groups are outlined in Table A1.

**Table A1.**

<b>Student group</b>	<b>Highest priority needs</b>
Students from low-income families	To help address issues of food insecurity, the Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS), in conjunction with the MSDE, has secured approval from the U.S. Department of Agriculture on its joint submission to operate a Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) Program (see USDA P-EBT Approval Letter and Maryland P-EBT State Plan_SY2020-2021). These benefits provide assistance to families in Maryland in purchasing food while schools are closed due to COVID-19.

Student group	Highest priority needs
	<p>Maryland has also continued to implement the community school strategy (see <a href="#">Community Schools</a> webpage) in 15 of its LEAs through distribution of State funding to schools located in communities with concentrated poverty. In expanding its implementation of the community school strategy, the State will reinforce the need to provide students, families, and communities with critical health, mental health, crisis support, enrichment, and other vital services as Maryland transitions out of the COVID-19 crisis.</p>
<p>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)</p>	<p>See above narrative and students by gender narrative below.</p>
<p>Students by gender – please add a row for each gender (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by gender)</p>	<p>In accordance with the recommendations of the Task Force on Achieving Academic Equity and Excellence for Black Boys final report, which the State Board endorsed on April 27, 2021, the MSDE will prioritize resources to support the achievement of Black male students (see the task force’s final report, <i>Transforming the Culture of Maryland’s Schools for Black Boys</i>). Although, as outlined above, the underachievement of Black male students in Maryland schools is an example of an issue that has long pre-dated the COVID-19 pandemic, the latter’s impact has served only to exacerbate these concerns. The task force, which convened monthly between July 2020 and March 2021, focused its recommendations in the final report on three main areas—social, emotional, and behavioral supports; recruiting and training skilled, competent teachers and administrators; and curricula and instruction—all of which are areas that are explicitly addressed in this ARP ESSER State Plan application. The final report also acknowledges the need for further discussion regarding strategies to mitigate the yet unknown long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Maryland’s students, and includes an addendum (see p.74) that lists highlights specific</p>

Student group	Highest priority needs
	recommendations to support Black male students in this context.
English learners (ELs)	<p>The MSDE’s Division of Curriculum, Instructional Improvement, and Professional Learning surveyed LEA EL/Title III supervisors in early May 2021 to identify highest priority academic, SEL, and/or mental health needs for ELs. Some of the key priorities highlighted from this survey were: 1) re-engaging with students who were absent for significant portions of the 2020-2021 school year so as to improve attendance for the next school year, and 2) addressing feelings of isolation and depression caused by the restrictions in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic (see Padlet_ Identifying EL Needs).</p>
Children with disabilities	<p>Narrowing the achievement gap between students with disabilities (totaling 112,855 Statewide as of October 1, 2019) and grade-level standards is a priority area, especially in light of the projected academic impact of lost instructional time due to the pandemic. One measure of this gap is student performance on Statewide assessments. In the last year for which data was available (2019), fewer than 10 percent of students with disabilities met proficiency standards on State assessments for both ELA and math at most grade levels, with fewer than five percent of students in middle school proficient in math. The gap between proficiency rates for non-disabled students and those receiving special education averaged around 35 percentage points in ELA and 26 percentage points in math.</p> <p>Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Maryland experienced a significant Statewide decrease in referrals to infant and toddler programs (ITPs). Contributing factors included parental choice in delaying the referral process and a reduction of referrals from pediatricians and childcare settings. In April 2020, there were 503 referrals, a decrease from 1,690 in April 2019. The MSDE’s Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services (DEI/SES) continues to support a series of public service announcements that began running in fall 2020 to remind Maryland’s families that ITPs were open across the State and available to address new</p>

Student group	Highest priority needs
	<p>referrals. As families returned to pre-pandemic activities, the number of referrals in April 2021 increased to 1,533. The MSDE hopes to continue seeing an upward trend in referrals, but recognizes the intensity of services and coaching to families will be significant in the wake of lost time receiving early intervention services.</p>
<p>Students experiencing homelessness</p>	<p>Each year, the MSDE collects data for Federal reporting and disseminates an Education for Homeless Children Survey. The 2019-2020 survey asked LEAs to share robust identification strategies implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. Program managers and homeless liaisons shared that the COVID-19 pandemic has left many students and families in transition feeling isolated and unable to access the technology, resulting in anxiety and stress. Families and students have been displaced and underserved due to school closures and virtual and/or hybrid models of learning. Not only are students failing to meet academic standards, they are also experiencing mental health concerns. LEA representatives have communicated that absenteeism and student service referrals are on the rise. Identification strategies included collaboration with community agencies, staff training, the use of social media and online platforms, and daily outreach via telephone and home visits.</p> <p>This spring, homeless education program managers and coordinators provided input on current needs, challenges, and priorities facing underserved children and youth undergoing housing instability. They were asked to rank the following priorities by need: academic, social-emotional, and mental health. Program managers and coordinators from LEAs provided narrative justifications that included quantitative and qualitative data.</p> <p>The COVID-19 pandemic has brought into focus the need for increased identification of students experiencing homelessness, the benefits of wrap-around services, and in-person learning. Maryland’s data indicates progress in providing support services to students undergoing housing</p>

Student group	Highest priority needs
	<p>instability. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, outreach to students and families continued due to increased social media awareness, home visits, school building accessibility, additional staffing, and training.</p> <p>High priorities for Maryland include increasing academic achievement and providing mental health services. School reopening plans are underway and, due to additional funding, transportation services, summer activity programs, and fall before- and afterschool tutoring services can be made available for an increased number of students and families in transition, while mental health assistance, training, and professional development can be provided for teachers and staff. Accelerated learning opportunities to address learning loss and low academic achievement scores can be implemented, along with the mental health services and training required to ensure students can maximize opportunities to learn provided through interventions, services, and supports.</p> <p>(For additional data, see Homeless Children Data Charts.)</p>
Children and youth in foster care	<p>Children in foster care are more likely than children and youth who are not involved in child welfare to have been exposed to trauma, more likely to have changed schools, more likely to have moved from one home to another, and less likely to have access to comprehensive assessments. As a result of these life experiences and system failures, children and youth in foster care are more likely to have difficulty in school than other children and youth. The COVID-19 pandemic has likely only served to reinforce these trends.</p> <p>The DHS indicates the numbers referrals for child abuse and neglect has decreased by approximately 28 percent since the pandemic began. (Note: The LEAs are the number one source of referrals to DHS.)</p>
Migratory students	Migrant students faced many obstacles during the 2020-2021 school year due to the COVID-19 pandemic that affected their personal, academic,

Student group	Highest priority needs
	<p>and social well-being. Many students experienced difficulty in transitioning to a virtual platform and engaging in remote learning each day. Frequently, students were not logging on, participating in lessons, and/or completing assignments. Due to students working virtually from home for a large portion of the school year, many older students in particular chose to work instead to support their family or became the caregivers during the day for their younger siblings, and thus were unable to attend to their academics. Some parents had to leave their jobs to take care of their children, which negatively impacted their family’s economic situation and caused some families to move in with other families or become displaced. Many migrant families lacked the resources for health care, food, and shelter, which greatly impacted their children’s mental health, social and emotional state of mind.</p> <p>Migrant recruiters were in constant communication with the families and teachers to help increase student engagement. Two high priorities emerged during the 2020-2021 school year for migrant students that Maryland will look to address: academic achievement and social-emotional well-being. In relation to the latter, the following approaches have been or will be utilized:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Migrant recruiters worked additional hours and flexed their schedules to meet with families to provide the needed resources and support for the social-emotional well-being of students.</li> <li>• Parent/family nights were held to discuss SEL, learn yoga, and breathing exercises, and how to manage stress.</li> <li>• An SEL curriculum will be used to support struggling students. A number of students have been at home and have SEL needs that have recently become apparent. Providing effective, daily lessons for students from an evidence-based program is a priority.</li> </ul> <p>Additionally, one specific subset of students within the migrant student population – unaccompanied minors – may require particular attention in the</p>

<b>Student group</b>	<b>Highest priority needs</b>
	<p>2020-2021 school year, as their numbers are expected to increase.</p> <p>(For additional data, see Migratory Children Data Charts.)</p>
<p>Other groups of students identified by the State (e.g., youth involved in the criminal justice system, students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years, students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures, LGBTQ+ students)</p>	<p>The Juvenile Services Education System (JSES) student population decreased drastically during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the need to limit close quarter contact among the students at residential facilities. However, the JSES continued to have a 98 percent in-person attendance rate during the pandemic, which is much higher than in Maryland’s LEAs. JSES teachers remained in-person in JSES buildings for most of the 2020-2021 school year and students were required to attend school at these facilities. Virtual instruction was supported by physical proximity to teachers and special educators during the week for most of the 2020-2021 school year, along with synchronous instruction and the ability for immediate feedback. Students released early or not adjudicated in the courts were less likely to attend school during the pandemic.</p> <p>Current JSES enrollment data shows a disproportionate number of African-American males (74 percent) enrolled in JSES schools. Some students enrolled in JSES schools also receive services from the Department of Social Services and may be less likely to be successful in a traditional school setting.</p> <p>The JSES also serves special education students, who are represented in the system at a higher rate than special education students in Maryland’s LEAs. Currently, special education students represent 30 percent of the JSES student population. The COVID-19 pandemic required that virtual instruction occur in residential settings. Additional supports were put in place to meet the unique needs of these special education students, including telephone conversation meetings for students on quarantine, additional case management time, and a special educator assigned to each teaching team. However, special education students</p>

Student group	Highest priority needs
	would benefit most from a full-time return to the classroom face-to-face setting.

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

### **Academic**

The MSDE is, to the best of its ability, using data collected at the State level to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The MSDE has analyzed attendance data during the 2020-2021 school year, which shows that attendance for students with disabilities, ELs, economically disadvantaged students, Black students, and Hispanic students is markedly below attendance for White and Asian students (see [First Term Performance Metrics](#), slides 8-9; [Second Term Performance Metrics](#), slides 4-5; [Third Term Performance Metrics](#), slides 4-5; and [Fourth Term Performance Metrics](#), slides 5-6). The MSDE has also analyzed student course grades during and prior to the pandemic, and there has been a large and concerning increase in course failure rates for middle and high school students in all subjects (see [Second Term Performance Metrics](#), slides 8-10; [Third Term Performance Metrics](#), slides 8-10; and [Fourth Term Performance Metrics](#), slides 10-12). While the MSDE is unable to conduct more detailed analyses due to the lack of standardized data across the State, the MSDE has been providing training, technical assistance, and research/data analysis capacity to LEAs on how to use local data to determine the impact of interrupted instruction on student learning (see [Using Local Data to Measure the Impact of Disrupted Instruction on Student Learning Presentation\\_1.29.21](#)).

The Federally-mandated Statewide 2020-2021 assessments that will be administered in early fall 2021 will provide information on student understanding on the previous year's content. Educators will have quick turnaround (within 48 hours) information on how each of their students performed. Aggregate information will also be made available, via various reports showing teachers and administrators how groups of students are performing, to help make determinations on areas of focus for upcoming instruction. All reports will be available online for quick and easy access for educators. Additionally, student-level reports will be sent home to families following the close of the assessment administration window.

Finally, as required by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Maryland publishes the [Maryland Report Card](#) in which available data is published at the

State, LEA, individual school, and student group level. This data is available on the website as data downloads for use in further analyses.

### **Social-Emotional and Mental Health**

Operating under the Regional Crisis Response and Clinical Support Teams initiative, as outlined in A.2, in addition to the clinical psychologist, clinical counselor, social worker, and nurse, family navigators (which are positions funded through ESSER) will assess family needs, including the stress level of parents and other challenges related to their child's needs; empower families through education and support to enable them to take the lead role in planning for and responding to their family's needs; assist families with navigating care, including the development of an action plan, and connect them to local community providers, partners, and resources; and assist with case management.

Furthermore, student support service teams will record referrals to teams for students with social-emotional and/or mental health needs. School counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists will keep informal records of students receiving supportive services for social-emotional and/or mental health needs. These informal records would be records or notes related to case management (for example, documentation of the names of the families/ students receiving services, documentation of home visits, services provided, and intervention outcomes). That information would remain confidential within the student support service team for record-keeping and analysis purposes.

Student services personnel will record students with suicidal ideation using the processes and protocols in each LEA for such events. Teams will record threat assessments using established procedures. Student services personnel and staff will report suspected child abuse to the DHS as required by law.

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

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

The MSDE has administered a performance metrics survey to LEAs on a quarterly basis during the 2020-2021 school year asking school systems to report various data points, including on instructional modes and attendance rates disaggregated by student sub-groups. The results of these surveys were shared with the State Board (see [First Term Performance Metrics](#); [Second Term Performance Metrics](#); [Third Term Performance Metrics](#)); and [Fourth Term Performance Metrics](#)). [Note: Due to formatting issues, the dataset displayed on pp. 17-36 of the Third Term Performance Metrics presentation is also attached as a separate Excel document – see Third Term Performance Metrics Dataset.] LEA plans for summer school programming were collected as part of the third quarter metrics survey. Additionally, in January-February 2021, the MSDE surveyed LEAs regarding their planned instructional modes for the spring semester (see March 2021 Return to Hybrid Learning\_LEA Summary), and subsequently required each LEA to provide a weekly update on the number of in-person instructional days offered to students and the overall in-person attendance rate for the period from March 2020 through the end of the 2020-2021 school year. A summary of this information was posted weekly on the MSDE website for public review (see [LEA Reopening Weekly Status Report 6.25.21](#) as an example).

- ii. *The data described in A.5.i.a. and b. using the template in Appendix A (and to the extent available, the data described in A.5.i.c.) for the most recent time period available. Please note that this data can be submitted separately within 14 calendar days after a State submits this plan. The SEA must also make this data publicly available on its website as soon as possible but no later than June 21, 2021, and regularly provide updated available information on its website. The Department will periodically review data listed in A.5.i on SEA websites.*

The MSDE has collected and published data since the very earliest days of the pandemic. Long before any guidance relating to data collection was released by the Department, the MSDE requested that LEAs collect and share data on mode of instruction, enrollment, and attendance by select student groups at the local system level, but not by individual school. Given the mode of the data collected thus far, the MSDE will continue to collect these same mode of instruction, enrollment, and

attendance data metrics from LEAs for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year. The MSDE has posted publicly (in accordance with the June 21, 2021, deadline) the most recent available data from each LEA on mode of instruction, enrollment, and attendance (see [ARP ESSER Fund](#) webpage), which is also attached in Appendix A, Table 2.

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

The MSDE anticipates that all LEAs will return to normal operations for summer 2021 and for the 2021-2022 school year (i.e., full-time in-person instruction in the classroom five days a week, except for those students who may continue virtual instruction based on the availability and procedures established by the LEA).

#### ***B. Safely Reopening Schools and Sustaining their Safe Operations***

*The Department recognizes that safely reopening schools and sustaining their safe operations to maximize in-person instruction is essential for student learning and student well-being, and especially for being able to address the educational inequities that have been worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. In this section, SEAs will describe how they will support their LEAs in this vital area.*

- 1. *Support for LEAs: Describe how the SEA will support its LEAs in safely returning to in-person instruction and sustaining the safe operation of schools. This description must include:*

- i. *How the SEA will support its LEAs implementing, to the greatest extent practicable, prevention and mitigation policies in line with the most up-to-date guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) for the reopening and operation of school facilities to effectively maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other staff;*

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

The MSDE has developed, frequently in collaboration with the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), numerous resources aimed at assisting LEAs in safely reopening schools in accordance with CDC and other Federal and State guidance. To promote these resources, the MSDE has created a designated webpage ([COVID-19 Resources for Maryland Schools](#)) on its website that provides the latest information and materials categorized by different topics.

In the area of health and safety, the MSDE has collaborated with MDH to provide various general guidance documents:

- *COVID-19 Guidance for Maryland Schools* (January 27, 2021).
- *COVID-19 Guidance for Maryland Schools* (updated April 2021).
- *COVID-19 Guidance for Maryland Schools* (updated May 2021).

Additionally, since the COVID-19 pandemic began, the MSDE has convened multiple stakeholder meetings to share technical assistance and the latest guidance. For example, since November 2020, the MSDE and MDH have jointly conducted bi-weekly virtual meetings (and continue to do so) with public and private school representatives on health and safety matters (see Sample School Guidance Updates Presentation\_5.19.21). As long as the pandemic remains a pressing concern, the MSDE will continue with these outreach efforts to LEAs and to develop and update (as needed) guidance documents and other resources/materials in support of school reopening in accordance with the latest CDC and other State and Federal guidelines.

Table B1 below details various resources developed by the MSDE or which the SEA has promoted in relation to specific mitigation strategies.

**Table B1.**

<b>Mitigation strategy</b>	<b>SEA response</b>
Universal and correct wearing of masks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>School Health Services Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)</u> (updated May 18, 2021).</li> <li>• <u><i>COVID-19 Guidance for Maryland Schools</i> (updated May 2021)</u> (Updated guidance on face coverings – see item #19 on page 9).</li> <li>• <u>Governor’s Executive Order Requiring Use of Face Coverings in Certain Circumstances</u> (Issued May 14, 2021).</li> <li>• <u>Maryland Department of Health Amended Directive and Order Regulating Certain Businesses and Facilities &amp; General Directives Concerning Limiting the Spread of COVID-19</u> (Issued May 14, 2021).</li> </ul>
Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u><i>COVID-19 Guidance for Maryland Schools</i> (updated May 2021)</u> (Updated definitions – see</li> </ul>

Mitigation strategy	SEA response
	item #1 on page 2 and item #21 on page 10 for physical distancing on the school bus).
Handwashing and respiratory etiquette	<p>The MSDE has directed stakeholders to CDC webpages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Hand Hygiene Recommendations</a>.</li> <li>• <a href="#">Coughing and Sneezing</a>.</li> </ul>
Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">COVID-19 Guidance for Maryland Schools (updated May 2021)</a> (Updated definitions – see item #5 on page 3).</li> </ul>
Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Response to a Confirmed Case of COVID-19 and Persons with COVID-19 Symptoms in Schools (updated May 20, 2021)</a>.</li> <li>• <a href="#">COVID-19 Guidance for Maryland Schools (updated May 2021)</a> (Updated definitions – see item #1 on page 2; items #12, #13, #14, and #15 on pp. 6-8; and item #17 page 9; also see item #16 on page 9 related to families traveling).</li> </ul>
Diagnostic and screening testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Maryland Department of Health Resource/Guidance Webpage for Schools</a>.</li> <li>• <a href="#">Recommendations for Mandated School Hearing and Vision Screening During the COVID-19 Pandemic (March 25, 2021)</a>.</li> <li>• <a href="#">COVID-19 Guidance for Maryland Schools (updated May 2021)</a> (Updated definitions – see item #18 on page 9 and item #23 on page 11).</li> </ul>
Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible	<p>The MSDE has been able to track Statewide vaccination efforts through various data sources. For example, the MDH shares a daily Statewide vaccination status report with the State Superintendent of Schools, with data disaggregated by various population subgroups, including children aged 12-18 disaggregated by county, gender, and race/ethnicity (see <a href="#">Sample Maryland Vaccination Status Report_5.27.21</a>). The State has achieved high vaccination rates among educators. As of late March 2021, 75 percent of Maryland LEAs reported that at least 97 percent of all eligible staff members (teachers, administrators, support staff) who had requested a vaccine (see <a href="#">Maryland LEA Staff Vaccination Data_3.25.21</a>) had been vaccinated.</p> <p>Additional resources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Vaccine Opportunities for Educators and Child Care Providers</a>.</li> </ul>

Mitigation strategy	SEA response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u><i>COVID-19 Guidance for Maryland Schools</i></u> (updated May 2021) (Updated definitions – see item #4 on page 3).</li> </ul>
<p>Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies</p>	<p>Beginning in March 2020, the MSDE’s Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services (DEI/SES) enhanced its existing technical assistance model in order to provide targeted technical assistance focused on the eventual safe return to in-person learning for students with disabilities to all LEAs and public agencies, including the Maryland School for the Deaf and the Maryland School for the Blind. This technical assistance model will continue to be implemented in order to support LEAs and public agencies in safely returning students with disabilities to in-person instruction. This intensified model of technical assistance includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsive Conversations for Solutions – virtual meetings with birth-21 special education leadership from each LEA and public agency and the Assistant State Superintendent. Topics include prevention and mitigation strategies consistent with CDC guidance as it is released and implications for students with disabilities. These meetings occurred weekly and now occur monthly, with a focus (supported by data) on the safe reopening of schools for students with disabilities.</li> <li>• Ongoing regional technical assistance focused on system and State-identified needs, including feedback and collaboration in the development of reopening plans.</li> <li>• Release of written guidance focused on safely reopening schools for students with disabilities. This guidance is driven by local need and includes topics such as mask-wearing for students with disabilities, the safe delivery of occupational therapist and physical therapist services, and addressing logistical challenges related to in-person learning for students with disabilities. Written guidance continues to be issued as the DEI/SES learns of local need and is applied through the ongoing regional technical assistance model.</li> </ul>

Mitigation strategy	SEA response
	<p>Additional resources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">COVID-19 Continuity of Learning for Maryland Schools Frequently Asked Questions Special Education (April 2020)</a>.</li> <li>• <a href="#">COVID-19 Guidance for Maryland Schools (updated May 2021)</a> (Updated definitions – see items #6 and #7 on page 4).</li> <li>• <a href="#">COVID-19 Planning Considerations Students with Special Health Needs</a> (developed by the Kennedy Krieger Institute).</li> </ul>

- 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;*

As indicated earlier in the ARP ESSER State Plan application, on April 27, 2021, the State Board approved a resolution to return all students to in-person, in-school instruction for the 2021-2022 school year (see [State Board Resolution 4.27.21](#)).

### **Reopening Plans**

All 24 LEAs have previously developed continuity of learning plans and recovery plans (also termed reopening plans by LEAs; see [Maryland Local School System Reopening Plans](#) webpage). Continuity of learning plans described the process school systems implemented to support remote learning. Recovery plans described the process school systems implemented to maximize student learning in safe environments within school buildings. [The Maryland Together: Maryland’s Recovery Plan for Education](#) detailed required criteria for recovery plans. Criteria included developing a plan with stakeholders, grounding this plan in equity, adhering to health guidance from the CDC, aligning interventions to Maryland College and Career Ready Standards, identifying and addressing instructional gaps, preparing a path for instructional success and recovery, and ensuring students receive accommodations. Both continuity of learning plans and recovery plans were reviewed by a team from the MSDE using a rubric that evaluated the level of completeness and the degree to which content in the plans met stated requirements. Plans that did not earn a rating of acceptable were revised by the school system and reassessed by MSDE until all plans were deemed acceptable.

(For more information regarding SEA support for LEAs regarding the development of safe return/continuity of service plans, see B.2.)

### **Monitoring**

The MSDE has launched a comprehensive monitoring process. The purpose of monitoring is to:

- Provide support to school systems in the implementation of practices that have been proven effective.
- Hold school systems accountable for addressing the impact of interrupted instruction due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Foster transparency in the expenditure of funds and implementation of effective practices.

The MSDE partnered with the Region 4 Comprehensive Center Network to develop a research-based approach to monitor the fidelity of implementation and intervention outcomes.

Monitoring consists of three phases. The first phase of monitoring is readiness. The purpose of readiness monitoring is to ensure that structures are in place to implement identified interventions as intended. Readiness monitoring includes reviewing the fund expenditure plan, data targets, implementation plan, materials, and personnel. A readiness tool has been developed to provide a consistent approach to assessing the preparedness of school systems to implement identified interventions. The tool identifies the readiness category, readiness indicators, and evidence required to demonstrate readiness. Readiness monitoring is facilitated at the school system level.

The second phase of monitoring is implementation. The purpose of implementation monitoring is to ensure interventions are being implemented as intended. Implementation monitoring occurs at the school level and consists of observing interventions in action, reviewing implementation data, and assessing progress towards meeting benchmark and intervention goals.

The third phase of monitoring is analysis and recommendations. During the third phase of monitoring, intervention outcomes are assessed and recommendations are made for improvement as necessary. Monitoring reports detailing promising practices, opportunities for growth, and recommendations for improvement are provided to school systems after each monitoring visit. LEAs are required to address recommendations for improvement provided by monitoring teams.

Monitoring is led by the MSDE and includes representatives from higher education, business, non-profits, and LEAs. Monitors participate in training, engage in virtual and on-site monitoring visits, and collaborate to develop monitoring outcome reports. Monitoring will occur in at least 20 percent of all schools that are using ESSER funds to implement interventions. Monitoring outcomes are shared publicly and used to inform technical assistance and Statewide guidance provided by the MSDE (see [MSDE Monitoring Plan 6.22.21](#)).

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

As outlined in response to B.1.i, the MSDE has consulted extensively with State and local health officials, most notably the MDH, and developed and published multiple materials in accordance with CDC and Federal guidance.

The Maryland Department of Health COVID-19 Testing Task Force (TTF) is implementing a voluntary diagnostic testing program in partnership with the MSDE. The program provides free COVID-19 tests for school systems and nonpublic schools as an additional resource to support schools that are open, or plan to reopen, from March 2021 through the end of 2020-2021 school year. Through this program, the State provides both rapid antigen point-of-care (POC) tests and polymerase chain reaction (PCR) specimen collection supplies proportional to the number of students and staff returning for in-person learning, based on the anticipated number of students and staff that may need diagnostic testing. Additional details on this program can be found in the [K-12 COVID-19 Testing Program Guidebook](#).

The TTF is currently developing a voluntary school screening program. The program is anticipated to start in fall 2021 and will utilize recent funding awarded from the CDC to provide free COVID-19 tests for school systems and nonpublic schools through contracted vendors providing full-service, end-to-end screening testing. Contracted vendors will plan, implement, manage, and report on screening testing programs at the request of the State's LEAs and any other school.

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

In addition to the resources outlined already in response to B.1.i, since the beginning of the pandemic, the MSDE has developed numerous guidance documents and provided professional learning and technical assistance to LEAs – and will continue to do so as long as the pandemic and the consequences thereof persist. For example, monthly meetings are held with Directors of Career and Technical Education (CTE) from all 24 LEAs. Meetings are used to share effective practices, provide guidance, and build capacity for implementing effective CTE systems. Guidance is provided and resources are shared on how to implement virtual CTE instruction (see [Career and Technical Education\\_Virtual Resource Guide](#)) and work-based learning experiences (see [Work-based Learning Continuum](#) webpage). Additionally, guidance is provided on transitioning CTE students from the virtual environment to in-person learning.

Quarterly meetings are held with Principal Supervisors from all 24 LEAs. Meetings support the implementation of effective leadership practices. An informational webinar series was facilitated on strategies and tools principals and other school leaders can use to support ongoing distance learning, maintaining a strong school community, and instilling best practices for all learners in the virtual classroom (see [Virtual Support for School Leaders: Informational Webinar Series](#) webpage). Support is also provided on effective evaluation practices that enhance the professional practice of educators to improve student outcomes (see [Teacher and Principal Evaluation](#) webpage).

In preparation for the 2021-2022 school year, the MSDE English Learners/Title III office will provide guidance on screening potential ELs for English as a second language (ESL) services. Due to COVID-19, remote screening was the only tool available during the 2020-2021 school year; however, the remote screening tool will be discontinued in the 2021-2022 school year. The office will continue to support LEA staff by providing weekly office hours for LEAs to ask questions, share concerns, and seek guidance. There also will be Statewide EL/Title III briefings offered to LEA ESL coordinators.

As a response to sudden changes in school operations due to the pandemic, the English Learners/Title III office created a Google folder to share resources, innovative practices, and essential information with ESL coordinators. The office will continue to utilize this folder to connect with LEA ESL coordinators. As the needs of ELs' have changed over the pandemic, the English Learners/Title III office has and will continue to support LEAs

with grant amendments to use the funding to provide summer learning opportunities to ELs and purchase supplemental instructional materials for use over the summer and beyond to accelerate learning for ELs. The office has facilitated professional learning sessions to address the needs of ELs in juvenile detention centers, to share strategies that promote content and language learning for ELs, and to increase ESL teacher capacity for implementing the English language development standards. The MSDE will continue to offer professional learning opportunities for LEA educators to support the growth of English language proficiency and academic achievement.

The MSDE's Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services (DEI/SES) continues to meet monthly with LEA and public agency leadership. This includes birth-21 Responsive Conversations for Solutions (special education directors and preschool special education coordinators) and the Assistant State Superintendent's Advisory Council and State-Local Steering Committees. Technical assistance, professional learning opportunities, and guidance continue to be developed and offered consistent with the DEI/SES regional technical assistance model. (See also Table B1 for more information on technical assistance provided.)

The MSDE's Title I Office held several parent/family engagement express events for LEAs to share best practices on how they were engaging with families throughout the pandemic. These opportunities will continue through the 2021-2022 school year, as will monthly outreach to LEAs.

Other examples of guidance, professional learning, and technical assistance are attached for reference (see also sections A.1, bullet 3, and C.1 for additional information on stakeholder engagement).

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

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

All 24 Maryland LEAs have been provided guidance on plan requirements prior to the development and submission of their safe return/continuity of service plans, which are due for submission to the MSDE by August 13, 2021 (see LEA Safe Return Plan Memo\_7.8.21 and Strategies for Reopening Process\_Monitoring Form). The memo included a link to the complete set of requirements outlined in the Federal Register. Per the guidance provided by the MSDE, LEAs have the option either to create and submit a new safe return/continuity of service plan or update their existing recovery plan (which was previously developed for the 2020-2021 school year, and which would now serve as the safe return/continuity of service plan for the 2021-2022 school year), provided that it fully aligns with all the ARP ESSER requirements.

Throughout plan development, the MSDE staff will provide customized support to LEAs to ensure their safe return/continuity of service plans adhere to Federal and State requirements. All LEAs will be required to submit signed assurances certifying that they have adhered to all Federal and State requirements, such as the adoption of policies and description of policies for each strategy listed in table B1 (included as a requirement of the ARP ESSER Use of Funds Application Template developed by the MSDE, see pp.3-5). LEAs will also be required to indicate (using the Strategies for Reopening Process\_Monitoring Form, see items 7 and 8) where in their safe return/continuity of service plans they have addressed health and safety strategies.

All safe return/continuity of service plans submitted by LEAs will be reviewed by a cross-agency team at the MSDE to assess the level of completeness and the degree to which content in the safe return/continuity of service plans meet Federal and State requirements. The Strategies for Reopening Monitoring Form outlines 13 elements that must be included in each safe return/continuity of service plan, and against which all LEA plans will be reviewed by the MSDE monitoring team. LEA safe return/continuity of service plans that are not approved by the MSDE will receive feedback to inform modifications. LEAs will be required to resubmit all modified safe return/continuity of service plans to the MSDE for review and approval (see MSDE

Monitoring Plan 6.22.21 – this document also serves as supporting evidence for B.2.ii-iii).

- 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;*

These safe return/continuity of service plans (whether they are new plans entirely or updated recovery plans) will identify services to address student academic needs; the SEL/mental health needs of students and staff; as well as other needs, which could include a focus on student health, food services, and facilities upgrades (such as HVAC installation/improvements). The MSDE will provide guidance to LEAs on using data to identify evidence-based interventions that address identified needs. Throughout the safe return/continuity of service plan development, the MSDE staff will provide customized support to LEAs to ensure plans adhere to Federal and State requirements. All LEAs are required to submit signed assurances certifying that they have adhered to all Federal and State requirements (included as a requirement of the ARP ESSER Use of Funds Application Template developed by the MSDE, see pp.3-5).

All safe return/continuity of service plans submitted by school systems will be reviewed by a cross-agency team from the MSDE. The MSDE review team will assess the level of completeness and the degree to which content in the safe return/continuity of service plans meet Federal and State requirements. The Strategies for Reopening Process\_Monitoring Form outlines 13 elements that must be included in each safe return/continuity of service plan, and against which all LEA plans will be reviewed by the MSDE monitoring team. LEA safe return/continuity of service plans that are not approved by the MSDE will receive feedback to inform modifications. LEAs will be required to resubmit all modified safe return/continuity of service plans to the MSDE for review and approval.

Once safe return/continuity of service plans are approved, LEAs will participate in a readiness monitoring visit. The purpose of readiness monitoring is to ensure that structures are in place to implement identified interventions as intended. Readiness monitoring includes reviewing the fund expenditure plan, data targets, implementation plan, materials, and personnel. Readiness monitoring is facilitated by a team at the MSDE using a readiness

tool to provide a consistent approach to assessing the preparedness of school systems to implement identified interventions. The tool identifies the readiness category, readiness indicators, and evidence required to demonstrate readiness. Outcome reports are developed and shared with LEAs identifying areas of promise, opportunities for growth, and recommendations for improvements. LEAs are held accountable by the MSDE for addressing recommendations for improvements.

LEAs must participate in implementation monitoring once they begin to implement components of their approved safe return/continuity of service plan. Implementation monitoring is facilitated by a team of trained experts representing higher education, business, non-profits, LEAs, and others with expertise in identified interventions. The purpose of implementation monitoring is to ensure interventions are being implemented as intended. Implementation monitoring occurs at the school level and consists of observing interventions in action, reviewing implementation data, and assessing progress towards meeting benchmark and intervention goals. Outcome reports are developed and shared with school systems identifying areas of promise, opportunities for growth, and recommendations for improvements. LEAs are held accountable by the MSDE for addressing recommendations for improvements. Readiness and implementation monitoring outcomes are shared publicly and used to inform technical assistance and Statewide guidance provided by the MSDE.

- iii. *How the SEA will ensure that the LEA periodically reviews, no less frequently than every six months for the duration of the ARP ESSER grant period (i.e., through September 30, 2023),<sup>2</sup> and revises as appropriate, its plan, and how the SEA will ensure that the LEA 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*

The MSDE will implement a robust monitoring program that consists of regularly reviewing data and interventions in action; sharing outcomes of monitoring visits; and providing guidance and technical assistance informed by monitoring outcomes. Monitoring will be ongoing and scheduled to ensure all 24 LEA engage in frequent monitoring cycles no less than every six

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

months for the duration of the grant period. Monitoring will consist of three phases.

The first phase of monitoring is readiness. The purpose of readiness monitoring is to ensure that structures are in place to implement identified interventions as intended. Readiness monitoring includes reviewing the fund expenditure plan, data targets, implementation plan, materials, and personnel. A readiness tool has been developed to provide a consistent approach to assessing the preparedness of school systems to implement identified interventions. The tool identifies the readiness category, readiness indicators, and evidence required to demonstrate readiness. Readiness monitoring is facilitated at the school system level. Outcome reports are developed and shared with school systems identifying areas of promise, opportunities for growth, and recommendations for improvements. LEAs are held accountable by the MSDE for addressing recommendations for improvements. All 24 LEAs will engage in readiness monitoring shortly after approval of the safe return/continuity of service plans.

The second phase of monitoring is implementation. The purpose of implementation monitoring is to ensure interventions are being implemented as intended. Implementation monitoring occurs at the school level and consists of observing interventions in action, reviewing implementation data, and assessing progress towards meeting benchmark and intervention goals. All 24 LEAs will engage in several implementation monitoring visits throughout the school year.

The third phase of monitoring is analysis and recommendations. During the third phase of monitoring, intervention outcomes are assessed and recommendations are made for improvement as necessary. Monitoring reports detailing promising practices, opportunities for growth, and recommendations for improvement are provided to school systems and schools after each monitoring visit. LEAs will be required to revise their safe return/continuity of service plans to address recommendations for improvement provided by monitoring teams.

Monitoring is led by the MSDE and includes representatives from higher education, business, non-profits, and LEAs. Monitors are organized into regional teams. Monitoring calendars are developed to ensure multiple visits to different schools within a school system over the course of a school year. Monitors participate in training, engage in virtual and on-site monitoring

visits, and collaborate to develop monitoring outcome reports. Monitoring will occur in at least 20 percent of all schools that are using ESSER funds to implement interventions.

The proposed monitoring plan ensures that all 24 LEAs are reviewed no less frequently than every six months for the duration of the ARP ESSER grant period.

As part of the communication to LEAs regarding safe return/continuity of service plans (see LEA Safe Return Plan Memo\_7.8.21), the MSDE notified local superintendents of the obligation to post their LEA plans (i.e., make publicly available), and further asked LEAs to provide the MSDE with a link to these safe return/continuity of service plans. The MSDE also reminded local superintendents in this memo of the need to engage in meaningful consultation with stakeholders as part of the plan development process, and of the requirement that LEA safe return/continuity of service plans be reviewed, and additional stakeholder input sought, at least every six months for the duration of the ARP ESSER grant period.

All Maryland LEAs have previously published pandemic-related continuity of learning and recovery plans on their websites, and the MSDE has provided links to these LEA plans from the SEA website (see [Maryland Local School System Reopening Plans](#) webpage). Consistent with this approach, the MSDE will provide links to LEA safe return/continuity of service plans from the SEA website, and has already created a webpage for this purpose (see [ARP ESSER Fund](#) webpage).

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

While the MSDE has periodically collected data relating to health protocols during the 2020-2021 school year (see select safety protocols data on [First Term Performance Metrics](#), page 19; [Second Term Performance Metrics](#), page 15; [Third Term Performance Metrics/Third Term Performance Metrics Dataset](#); and [Fourth Term Performance Metrics](#), page 14), the SEA does not currently collect data in relation to LEA implementation of each element listed in Table B1. As outlined in response to B.1, the MSDE has provided significant technical assistance to LEAs

and disseminated numerous resources based on CDC guidance, and will continue to do so (updating materials as necessary based on new guidance) as long as the pandemic persists.

### ***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.*

As outlined in response to A.1 and B.1.iv, almost every division within the MSDE has been actively engaged in consultation with various stakeholder groups since the start of the pandemic, and these communications and interactions have helped inform the decisions and actions taken by the SEA throughout this unprecedented period of disruption. For example, from March 2020 through May 2021, the MSDE received 12,138 pieces of correspondence from parents, educators, and other members of the public, averaging 809 pieces per month, which is four times the average monthly pre-pandemic volume of correspondence received by the SEA. An email address ([educationplan.msde@maryland.gov](mailto:educationplan.msde@maryland.gov)) is also provided on the [homepage](#) of the MSDE website to enable the public to submit comments on pandemic-related

matters. (See ARP ESSER Presentation to State Board 6.22.21, pp. 118-122, for a summary of the MSDE’s engagement, by division, with stakeholders by division during the COVID-19 pandemic.)

Maryland’s ARP ESSER State Plan application is the result of an extensive consultation process with stakeholders from across the State. A detailed summary of the MSDE’s engagement with stakeholders during the development of the plan is attached (see Stakeholder Engagement Report).

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

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

The MSDE’s Office of Finance held twice-weekly conference calls with LEA finance officials from March 2020 through September 2020, then shifted to weekly calls through April 2021, to discuss issues related to Federal COVID-19 pandemic funding. (Note: Since April 2021, these calls have been held every other week. This schedule is anticipated to continue through the foreseeable future.)

A total of \$2.73 billion in ESSER funds have been allocated to Maryland’s school systems. LEAs have submitted their ESSER I and ESSER II use of funds plans, which have been approved by the MSDE, and they will be completing their ARP ESSER use of funds plans in summer 2021. In June 2020, LEAs submitted applications for the \$187 million in ESSER I funds. The planned use of ESSER I funds included addressing technology, communication, continuity of learning needs, and infrastructure supports. LEAs used the funds to purchase devices and Wi-Fi hotspots, LMSs, enhanced cleaning services and supplies, personal protective equipment (PPE), and food service storage and packaging materials, to underwrite food service and transportation costs to sustain operations, and to provide equitable services to nonpublic schools.

In addition to the ESSER Funds, LEAs in Maryland received \$496.8 million in GEER I and II funds, Coronavirus Relief Funds, and Coronavirus State Fiscal Relief Recovery funds to address the impact of the pandemic on students, staff, and school communities. A total of \$118.7 million was allocated for technology needs. Maryland LEAs used these funds to purchase Chromebooks, iPads, and laptops ensuring a 1:1 device-student ratio across the State. Several LEAs purchased staff devices, which enabled teachers to deliver instruction remotely. LEAs also used these funds to procure Wi-Fi hotspot devices with service plans so that students and staff were able to access the Internet. In some cases, LEAs purchase exterior Wi-Fi antennas and installed them on school buildings so that students and families could access the Internet from a school parking lot. Finally, LEAs invested in enterprise systems to manage devices, ensure students and teachers were accessing instruction in a secure environment, and improve communication with parents, staff, and stakeholders.

The Federal relief funds that have been (and will be) allocated to LEAs are also intended to address the impact of COVID-19 on public charter school students and staff. Some LEAs have provided Federal relief funds to charter schools on a per pupil basis, and these charter schools have used these funds to procure goods and services on their own initiative. Other LEAs have allocated Federal relief funds to all students in all schools, including charter schools. Under the latter model, devices, intervention programs, system-wide technology tools, hotspots with service plans, etc., were purchased at the system level and distributed to schools and students/staff, including charter schools. The MSDE's Office of Finance has communicated with LEAs regarding the need to ensure that charter schools, and their students and staff, are treated equitably in any distribution of Federal relief funding. One LEA discovered a discrepancy in its allocation of two Federal relief grants and has subsequently taken action to address this issue.

In its upcoming review of LEA ARP ESSER fund applications, the MSDE's review process will ensure that public charter schools receive an equitable distribution of these Federal relief funds.

On top of ESSER and GEER funds, \$19.8 million has been allocated to support LEAs in safely reopening schools for all students. LEAs received \$9.8 million between November and April 2020 and will receive another \$10 million in June 2021. The planned use of these funds includes PPE, classroom air purifiers

and filters, social distancing signage, training on enhanced cleaning protocols, cleaning supplies, and peripherals such as power cords and headsets.

A total of \$321.5 million has been allocated to address lost instructional time through extended day and extended year programs as well as in-school tutoring. LEAs are providing stipends to teachers to support these initiatives as well as investing in evidence-based intervention programs, diagnostic assessments, compensatory services, enrichment opportunities, transportation, and food services. A further \$25 million has been allocated specifically to identify and support students experiencing trauma and behavioral health issues.

The MSDE's funding set-asides for ESSER II and III and a summary of each LEA allocation under the ESSER and GEER grants (parts I and II) are attached (see ESSER State Set Aside\_5.25.21 and Federal Funding\_LEA Allocations). For a description of how each LEA is using the ESSER II funding allocations, see ESSER Fund II\_LEA Applications Summary.

- 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.*

Maryland was awarded \$187 million in ESSER I funds in June 2020. The \$781.9 million in ESSER II funds was awarded in June 2021. Maryland released the LEA ARP ESSER application in late June 2021 and anticipates finalizing awards to LEAs by August 2021.

LEAs manage their own procurement processes and the corresponding obligations. Since the MSDE does not manage local procurement, the MSDE does not track obligations. The MSDE does track funding allocations to LEAs. For Federal funds and certain restricted State funds, the MSDE tracks expenditures on a monthly basis. The Federal ESSA requires States to publish school-level per-pupil expenditures for every school and school system in the State. The most recent fiscal year (FY) data is published on the [Maryland Report Card](#) website (see FY2020 Per Pupil Expenditures).

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

The MSDE is utilizing other Federal funding sources to support various initiatives.

### **Career and Technical Education**

Federal Strengthening Career and Technical Education (CTE) for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (Perkins V) funds were leveraged to support meeting the academic needs of students resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. State set-aside funds were used to purchase Statewide licenses for virtual CTE learning experiences and curriculum that supported building proficiency in skilled trades for students. All 24 Maryland school systems had the opportunity to access resources for CTE students at no cost. Professional learning experiences were facilitated to support the effective implementation of online resources. Funds were also used to facilitate a Statewide, three-week summer camp designed to retain and motivate 200 middle and high school students to complete their CTE program of study (see Junior Achievement Summer Program). Funds were also leveraged to support engaging students in Maryland-approved career and technical student organizations, which supported the continuum of CTE instruction beyond the school day.

### **Children with Disabilities**

The MSDE’s Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services (DEI/SES) uses a significant portion of Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Federal set-aside funds to create innovative grant opportunities for each birth through 21 LEA. Non-competitive discretionary grants are issued to:

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

- Provide local priority flexibility to craft solutions tailored to data-informed needs for results.
- Target State-identified priorities and initiatives.
- Focus resources and support to LEAs/public agencies of greatest need.

For example, Local Implementation for Results (LIR) Plans are intended to provide continuation funding to address systemic change priorities identified by LEAs and public agencies serving children and youth with developmental delays and disabilities, ages birth through 21, and their families. This work is evidence of State and local commitment to the DEI/SES' Strategic Plan (see *Moving Maryland Forward*) and its four action imperatives. Planning considerations include a comprehensive system review of performance data related to the implementation of FY 2020 and FY 2021 LIR Plans, the impact on personnel development and infrastructure, as well as improved outcomes for children and youth with disabilities in a birth through 21 service delivery model.

Family Support Systems Plans provide the opportunity for the LEA/public agency to construct a plan which fosters strong family partnerships. These partnerships support the school and community personnel in their effort to empower families to make informed decisions and contribute to their children's educational success.

IDEA set-aside funds are also sub-awarded to IHEs and non-LEAs for a variety of purposes, which include, but are not limited to:

- Authentic child and family assessment (for example, routines-based interview).
- Child outcomes summary (COS) process.
- Natural and inclusive learning practices (for example, routines-based intervention, pyramid model).
- Teaming practices (for example, inter-professional practices, primary service provider approach).
- Coaching practices (for example, reflective coaching, pyramid model).
- Instructional materials, training, and supports to build capacity to support social and emotional development, including developmentally appropriate expectations and adult responses to behavior challenges.
- Coaching and mentoring of paraeducators within systems of need to build capacity and prepare staff in the field to become special education teachers.

- Partnerships with systems of need to coach and mentor new and experienced special education teachers, with the development, implementation, and evaluation of specially designed instruction including visual/distance and remote instruction.
- Initial certification support and mentorship in areas of critical shortage across Maryland (teachers of the visually impaired, teachers of the deaf/hard of hearing, speech pathologists, etc.).
- Implementation of evidence-based practices that will increase inclusive opportunities for students with disabilities with attention to populations typically educated in restrictive settings, (i.e. students with autism, significant cognitive disabilities, emotional disabilities).
- Explore/study secondary transition models that focus on early career development access and specially designed instruction for students (ages 14-17) and their impact on work-based learning and positive post-school outcomes.
- Certificate or credentials for instructional assistants and/or teachers on job development/job placement/job coaching aligned with secondary transition models of best practice.
- Development and facilitation of cross-disciplinary professional learning opportunities with professional school counselors and CTE professionals on the secondary transition planning process.
- Development of inclusive postsecondary programs (after exit) for students with disabilities, offering them opportunities to continue their training and education after high school, and partnering with LEAs to offer inclusive transition programs on campus prior to exiting school.

### **Students Experiencing Homelessness and Students from Low-Income Families**

In an effort to support the needs of all students, including students experiencing homelessness, a waiver issued by the Department provided the MSDE with the flexibility to give grantees and subgrantees the ability to repurpose federally purchased equipment and supplies that were not currently in use by students receiving Title I services, and direct them instead to students in non-Title I schools. This flexibility provided students experiencing homelessness access to devices for virtual learning during the pandemic. Amendments were made to previously issued grants to allow for the purchase of mobile devices and hot spots to ensure that all students, including students experiencing homelessness, had access to electronic devices and the Internet. Amendments to extend grant periods were completed to ensure there was sufficient time for LEAs to obligate funds for Title I,

Parts A, C, and D, and McKinney-Vento, as well as for students who qualify for services across all Title programs.

Additionally, federal regulations under the ESSA require outreach to families as it relates to the development of State, local, and school level plans. All LEAs and Title I schools must conduct outreach to all parents/family members, and implement programs, activities, and procedures to support the involvement of parent, family, and community engagement activities. The MSDE's Title I Office conducted five parent/family engagement express opportunities for LEAs and Title I schools to dialogue as a community of experts to exchange ideas and strategies supporting parent/family engagement in Title I schools and at the school system level while operating in a virtual environment.

The MSDE has not currently set aside additional funds to support initiatives at the SEA level. If such mechanisms are not already currently in place – for example, consulting with existing Family Advisory Councils to obtain input from parents/families – it is expected that LEAs will establish appropriate procedures (and designate funding if needed) to engage stakeholders to provide meaningful consultation and collaboration in the development of each LEA's ARP ESSER use of funds plan.

## **Title II**

Federal Title II funds were leveraged to support school leaders in attending to the academic and social-emotional needs of students and engaging in effective teacher evaluations practices in the virtual environment. A webinar series and supporting resources were made available to school administrators throughout the State (see [Virtual Support for School Leaders: Informational Webinar Series](#) webpage). Additionally, a *Teacher and Principal Evaluation COVID-19 Guidance Document* was developed and shared to identify potential modifications to evaluation practices while students engaged in virtual or hybrid learning.

### **Title II, Part A**

The MSDE's Office of Professional Learning and Title II, Part A provided guidance and professional learning support to LEAs in order to accelerate learning for students who have experienced disruptions due to COVID-19 related school closures. Additionally, the office provided guidance on how Title II funds could be braided with Title III, Title IV, and supplemental grants to support accelerated learning. The office disseminated information through workshops, briefings, monthly newsletters, and office hours throughout the 2020-2021 school year. The

office has also worked with supervisors to suggest evidence-based programs and practices to drive programmatic decisions. (Examples of Title II, Part A guidance and professional learning support provided to LEAs are attached for reference.) These efforts and initiatives will continue as schools return to full-time in-person instruction during the 2021-2022 school year.

### **Title III/English Learners**

Maryland's available Title III headquarters funds are limited. Therefore, at the State level, Maryland was not able to utilize the funding to directly address the needs of ELs due to the pandemic, other than by funding administrative monitoring positions and by providing, via MSDE staff funded through Title III, ongoing technical assistance, guidance documents, office hours, and briefings for LEAs. Additionally, LEAs are using Title III funds to conduct the following activities to meet the priorities identified:

- Offering summer virtual learning to ELs.
- Offering summer in-person learning to ELs.
- Offering summer tutoring to address learning disruption.
- Offering summer enrichment art and social-emotional development programs for ELs.
- Offering tutoring and extended learning opportunities for ELs throughout the school year to address learning disruption.
- Offering professional development on how to work with ELs to ensure academic success.
- Purchasing home language materials to promote literacy.
- Purchasing online learning platforms to supplement language development programs.
- Hiring additional bilingual staff to assist ELs and families of ELs.
- Offering virtual parent nights focusing on technology and academic skills.

### **Title IV, Part A: Waivers and Amendments**

The MSDE applied and was approved for the original CARES Act waivers in March 2020. The approved waivers allowed any LEA receiving a Title IV, Part A allocation of less than \$30,000 to waive the following for FY 2019 and FY 2020 awards:

- Needs assessment requirements in section 4106(d) for the 2019-2020 school year.
- Content area spending requirements in sections 4106(e)(2)(C), (D), and (E): the requirements to use a minimum percentage of Title IV, Part A funds for activities under sections 4107, 4108 and 4109 for FY 2019 funds and any available FY 2018 carryover funds.

- Spending limitation in section 4109(b): the 15 percent limit on the use of funds under section 4109 to purchase technology infrastructure for FY 2019 funds and any available FY 2018 carryover funds.

The MSDE applied and was approved for the waivers made available to the FY 2020 Title IV, Part A grant. Similar to the CARES Act waivers, these waivers (approved in January 2021) allowed LEAs to waive:

- Section 4106(d) of Title IV, Part A of the ESEA, related to LEA needs assessments for the 2020-2021 school year.
- Section 4106(e)(2)(C), (D), and (E) of Title IV, Part A of the ESEA, with respect to content-area spending requirements for FY 2020 Title IV, Part A funds.
- Section 4109(b) of Title IV, Part A of the ESEA, with respect to the 15 percent spending limitation for technology infrastructure for FY 2020 Title IV, Part A funds.

Maryland LEAs have utilized these waivers to reallocate Title IV, Part A funding to address device and connectivity shortfalls, transition schools to online learning platforms, and make school environments safe for when students and staff return to the building.

#### ***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 MSDE intends to award the full funding amount (totaling approximately \$97.6 million) it has reserved under section 2001(f)(1) of the ARP Act to LEAs to address the impact of lost instructional time (see ESSER State Set Aside 5.25.21, slide 3, row 1). As outlined before the State Board, the MSDE has identified evidence-based strategies that LEAs are expected to employ to counter lost instructional time (see Disrupted Instruction\_A Path Forward Presentation\_1.25.21), including:

- Utilizing high intensity structured tutoring.
- Providing extended day or extended year programs.
- Offering summer school programs.
- Implementing acceleration academies.
- Utilizing formative assessments.
- Sustaining early childhood programs.

These evidence-based strategies draw upon recent guidance provided by the Department (see Volume 2 of the ED COVID-19 Handbook, pp.18-24). LEAs will focus on acceleration strategies that support students, rather than remediation strategies, by providing more time in class, more dedicated attention in class, and exposure to grade-level learning (for example, see Accelerating ELA Presentation\_6.9.21).

Funding will be allocated to LEAs based on a Title I formula. In applying for these grant awards, LEAs must demonstrate in the application which evidence-based strategies they will utilize. Additionally, as part of the grant application process, LEAs will be required to indicate how they intend to use this reserved funding to serve students disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, including each of the student groups listed in question A.3.i-viii. The SEA will monitor LEA implementation of the evidence-based strategies to ensure they are being employed with fidelity.

- 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 MSDE will utilize various data sources to determine the impact of lost instructional time since March 2020 on different student groups – for example, the 2020-2021 course grade data

reported in the quarterly metrics reports produced by the SEA (see Second Term Performance Metrics, slides 8-10; Third Term Performance Metrics, slides 8-10; and Fourth Term Performance Metrics, slides 10-12) and the results of the Federally-mandated Statewide 2020-2021 assessments school year that will be administered in early fall 2021.

It is anticipated that many of the evidence-based interventions detailed in D.1.i will serve the needs of all student groups affected disproportionately by the COVID-19 pandemic. The MSDE will work with LEAs and other stakeholders to identify additional strategies to employ when more targeted interventions for specific student groups are needed.

For example, in order to address the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children with disabilities across the State, LEAs have implemented high-leverage evidence-based practices and interventions as required through Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs)/Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and/or compensatory education services. These practices and interventions include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Using data-informed decision-making to:
  - Develop a comprehensive understanding of students' strengths and needs and the impact of learning loss caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - Make eligibility determinations for compensatory education services.
  - Identify new or additional individualized special education services and specially designed instruction needed in response to additional challenges as a result of COVID-19.
- Supporting progress monitoring, including through:
  - Authentic assessment-interview of caregiver and age anchoring utilizing developmental milestones.
  - Early learning assessment.
  - Progress monitoring of IFSP outcomes/IEP goals/secondary transition activities.
- Collaborating with families, stakeholders, and partners by:
  - Implementing reflective coaching to build capacity for families and early learning providers to promote early childhood development and active participation in natural learning environments.
  - Engaging with local community programs to promote inclusion of students with significant support needs.
  - Utilizing partners to remediate loss of instruction and vocational experiences.
- Addressing SEL needs of children/students by:

- Implementing the Pyramid Model to build program and individual capacity to support young children who exhibit social emotional concerns and challenging behaviors.
- Integrating SEL lessons and content into programs with an academic focus.
- Emphasizing relationship-building and trauma-informed practices.
- Building capacity of school and district-based education leaders and families through ongoing professional development.

In order to measure the effectiveness of the evidence-based practices and interventions listed above, several sources of data are being analyzed at the State and local levels. These data sources include, but are not limited to, the following:

- IFSP/IEP progress monitoring data, including progress on outcomes, goals, objectives, and transition activities.
- Data collected through monitoring the implementation and student's response to delivered compensatory services, which are being tracked through both local and Statewide systems.
- Results of Statewide assessments to be administered in early fall 2021, as well as the results of locally selected screeners and assessments (e.g., MAP, iReady, ASQ-SE, Transition Planning Inventory) used to assess student learning during the pandemic and inform planning of supports and intervention.

- 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.*

Since the SEA intends to allocate the full funding amount it has reserved under section 2001(f)(1) of the ARP Act to LEAs, the MSDE has not dedicated any portion of this funding at the State level specifically to identify and engage these two categories of students. However, as outlined in section A.3, analysis of available data for the 2020-2021 school year shows that attendance rates for students with disabilities, ELs, economically disadvantaged students, Black students, and Hispanic students were lower than for other student groups. Consequently, LEAs will target these particular populations for engagement with the evidence-based interventions described in section D.1.i.

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 MSDE intends to award the full funding amount (totaling approximately \$19.5 million) it has reserved under section 2001(f)(2) of the ARP Act to LEAs to support evidence-based summer learning and enrichment programs (see ESSER State Set Aside 5.25.21, slide 3, row 2). Funding under this section was allocated to LEAs for summer 2021 programming on a Title I formula basis, and this same award model will be used in future years.

In delivering summer learning and enrichment programs in 2021 and beyond, these reserved funds will be used by LEAs to support intensive residential tutoring, accelerated learning, and social-emotional support for students. More specially, all LEAs are required to include daily academic instruction in reading and math that is aligned with the local county board of education’s curriculum; limit the number of students assigned to each teacher; establish partnerships to provide student experiences other than academic; prioritize enrollment for students with the greatest learning loss; administer an assessment at the beginning and end of the program for each child; and evaluate the effectiveness of the summer school program. These criteria align with the requirements of House Bills 0588 (*Budget Bill [Fiscal Year 2022]*) and 1372 (*Blueprint for Maryland’s Future – Revisions*) passed during the 2021 session of the Maryland State legislature. A summary of LEA summer programming for 2021 is attached (see Local School System Summer Programming 2021 Presentation).

In addition, the Division of Curriculum, Instructional Improvement and Professional Learning (DCIPL), in collaboration with other divisions and offices across the MSDE, has created a summer learning resource guide in response to the extended school closures resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic (see *Summer Learning Programs: Guidance to Maryland Local School Systems*). The guide was developed and distributed to

assist LEAs in designing evidence-based summer learning and enrichment programs.

When applying for these reserved funds to support summer learning and enrichment programs for summer 2021, LEAs had to describe the evidence-based strategies they intended to use. Additionally, as part of the grant application process, LEAs were required to indicate how they would serve those students disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, including each of the student groups listed in question A.3.i-viii. In December 2021, LEAs will submit evaluation reports to the MSDE on the summer learning and enrichment programs they delivered during summer 2021, which will help Maryland identify best practices for future years. This same application and evaluation process will be followed in 2022.

- 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*

As described in D.2.i, the MSDE has developed a summer learning resource guide designed to address the needs of all students (see *Summer Learning Programs: Guidance to Maryland Local School Systems*). LEAs will be able to use this resource guide to deliver summer learning and enrichment programs that support the following student groups in particular: English learners, homeless and migrant students, and Black boys.

The guide outlines the following suggested program types:

- Credit recovery.
- Tutoring programs.
- Acceleration (vacation) academies.
- Summer programs to support mental health and well-being.
- Summer bridge or transition programs.
- Programs for students with disabilities.
- Programs for ELs.
- Programs for CTE students.

In addition, LEAs are utilizing some of the State set-aside ESSER II and III funding to provide summer programming and tutoring/supplemental instruction to address the impact of disrupted instruction. A Tutoring/Supplemental Instructional Resource Guide was created by the DCIPL with input from other

divisions and offices from across the MSDE that describes the characteristics of high impact tutoring/supplemental programs. Again, while this guide is designed to support all student groups, it is specifically targeted at the following student groups: English learners, homeless and migrant students, and Black boys.

High impact tutoring/supplemental programs include the following elements:

- Customized instruction.
- One-to-one or small groups (three or four students).
- High doses sessions (three or more weekly sessions, two-three hours weekly).
- Sessions included during the instructional day.
- Duration (semester or yearlong).

### **English Learners**

Evidence-based summer learning and enrichment programs that address ELs' lost instructional time include credit recovery, native language support, and ESL and content tutoring for remediation and acceleration. LEAs are purchasing learning platforms that allow differentiation for students based upon their English language proficiency level. This will promote academic achievement by providing individual support to content teachers regarding academic gaps.

The extra instructional time and individualized evidence-based programs provided to ELs will facilitate their academic and language growth. To measure the impact of the pandemic on academic and language proficiency, LEAs are purchasing interim English language proficiency assessment tools. The early fall 2021 MCAP assessment data will serve as an indicator of academic achievement for ELs.

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future establishes a Workgroup on English Language Learners. This workgroup is composed of legislators and State and national experts, and represents a wide range of stakeholders from across Maryland. The workgroup will collect data on Maryland's ELs and on the recruitment and retention of bilingual staff, review methods of teaching and other services provided to ELs, and make recommendations on improving the education of ELs in Maryland's public schools. In addition, the workgroup is tasked with measuring and making recommendations to address ELs' learning loss as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Homeless and Migrant Students**

LEAs are planning summer programming, in combination with tutoring, extended day programs, wrap-around services, and the purchasing of instructional materials, to support the acceleration of learning and social-emotional development. In addition, funds will be used to provide professional learning to support the staff who work directly with homeless and migrant students.

In addition to the student groups highlighted above served by the two newly developed resource guides, many comments submitted during the MSDE's stakeholder engagement process emphasized a particular need to focus on children with disabilities. LEAs and public agencies are required to provide students with disabilities with a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). Summer programming that addresses a student's FAPE needs may include extended school year (ESY) services and/or compensatory education/recovery services. ESY services are the individualized extension of specific special education and/or related services that are provided beyond the normal school year, in accordance with the student's IEP. Compensatory education/recovery services are designed to address the loss of a FAPE stemming from extended school closures. ESY and compensatory education/recovery services may include tutoring and skills-focused summer school programs, etc.

For all the student groups listed above, multiple data sources will be used at the system level, along with the Maryland Report Card, to measure student success. The MSDE will work with LEAs and other stakeholders to identify additional strategies to employ when more targeted interventions for specific student groups are needed.

- 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.*

Since the SEA intends to allocate the full funding amount it has reserved under section 2001(f)(2) of the ARP Act to LEAs, the MSDE has not dedicated any portion of this funding at the State level specifically to identify and engage these two categories of students. However, as outlined in section A.3, analysis of available data for the 2020-2021 school year shows that attendance rates for students with disabilities, ELs, economically disadvantaged students, Black students, and Hispanic students

were lower than for other student groups. Consequently, LEAs will target these particular populations for engagement with the evidence-based interventions described in section D.2.i.

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

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

The MSDE intends to award the full funding amount (totaling approximately \$19.5 million) it has reserved under section 2001(f)(3) of the ARP Act to LEAs and community-based agencies via a competitive grant process to support evidence-based comprehensive afterschool programs (see [ESSER State Set Aside 5.25.21](#), slide 3, row 3). The MSDE released an ESSER Afterschool Program Request for Proposal (RFP) in July 2021 to solicit grant applications from LEAs and community-based agencies to develop or enhance afterschool programs (see [ARP ESSER\\_Afterschool Program RFP](#)). The RFP will be a competitive grant competition implemented over three years, culminating in August 2024. The MSDE will grant awards to support the creation of afterschool learning centers to provide academic enrichment opportunities during afterschool hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools. The programs will assist students to meet or exceed State and local student standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and math, and offer students a broad array of enrichment activities that can complement their regular academic programs. Community-based agencies and LEAs will develop partnerships to provide academic and enrichment services to ensure students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs are being addressed.

The ARP ESSER Afterschool Program RFP will require a program evaluation and dissemination component, which is an essential part of program implementation. The evaluation and dissemination section will include a plan for a professional, independent evaluation of the program. This evaluation will be conducted annually, culminating in a summative evaluation

reflecting the entire three-year project. This section will include specific evaluation questions, an evaluation strategy, and a description of proposed data sources and instruments, collection processes, and analytic methods. This section must reflect a plan to assess progress towards performance measures and indicators that are aligned with the original program goals. In addition, this section must show how the evaluation will be an integral element in the project's planning, design, and implementation, and explain how the evaluation will enable project managers to determine which strategies and activities have been successful, and those that need to be revised. Finally, this section will include a plan for the dissemination of evaluation findings, both to stakeholders and to broader, national audiences.

- 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 MSDE will ensure there is an accountability process and action to effect positive change in Maryland's lowest-performing schools. These schools will target groups of students not making progress and low graduation rates. Applicants will be required to develop and describe the steps they will take to ensure equitable access to participate in the project or activity to be conducted in order for special needs and EL students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries in order to overcome barriers to equitable participation.

The RFP will prioritize schools in the identified categories below to determine students most in need of afterschool services:

- Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools (lowest 5 percent of the Title I schools; high schools with graduation rates less than 67 percent; and School Improvement Grant (SIG) IV schools).
- Title I Schools that serve a high percentage (at least 40 percent) of students from low-income families.
- Other schools as determined by the LEA to be in need of intervention and support.

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

*and 2) students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures.*

The competitive ESSER RFP will provide priority points to applicants that propose to serve LEAs reporting the lowest percentages of students receiving in-person instruction in spring 2021 (when the data was collected). The priority points will be added to the overall score of the application. The applicant will provide a needs assessment that demonstrates the afterschool program targets students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures. The priority points will be added to the overall score of the application.

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

The SEA has reserved 2.5 percent of its total ARP ESSER allocation for emergency needs to support the following initiatives (see ESSER State Set Aside 5.25.21, slide 3, rows 4-7):

- Regional Crisis Response and Clinical Support Teams (\$10 million).
- Adverse Childhood Initiatives (approximately \$3.2 million).
- Achieving Academic Equity and Excellence for Black Boys Task Force Initiatives (\$2 million).
- Hold for Future Use (approximately \$33.2 million).

### **Regional Crisis Response and Clinical Support Teams**

As outlined under A.2, the MSDE will implement Regional Crisis Response and Clinical Support Teams, which will consist of professionals and paraprofessionals trained in clinical support and crisis intervention skills to ensure timely access to supports and services for students. In addition to helping to resolve crises, the regional teams will work with individual students, families, school-based staff, and community partners to identify and develop strategies for effectively mitigating and addressing future crises. (See Social and Emotional Needs of Returning Students Presentation 4.27.21 and Maryland Regional Crisis Response and Clinical Support Teams Presentation 5.25.21 for more information on this initiative.)

Implementation of this initiative will assist LEAs in identifying urgent areas of shortages by providing three years of supportive services to meet the backlog of mental health needs created by the pandemic. This will address the most

urgent needs for clinical and crisis support staff to supplement the student support services in schools across Maryland, giving the LEAs time to hire more staff in local areas of need.

In addition, this initiative intends to support the graduate work of rising school counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists by creating collaborative agreements between the MSDE and IHEs to help fund practicum/internships or other costs in order to provide a cadre of mental health providers for the future.

### **Adverse Childhood Experiences**

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are traumatic experiences that occur before the age of 18 and include sexual, physical, and emotional abuse; physical and emotional neglect; parental divorce or separation; incarceration of a close family member; witnessing domestic violence; and living with someone with substance use disorder and/or mental illness. Data from the Governor's Office suggests that there has been an increase in ACEs and childhood trauma since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Consequently, in support of the Governor's Office of Crime Control, Youth, and Victim Services program to provide mental health services and extracurricular activities for children with ACEs, the MSDE has awarded ARP ESSER grant funding to the Maryland Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs (Alliance) to deliver evidence-based youth development programs, mentoring, and other educational enrichment activities for youth and families that have deeply suffered as a result of the pandemic. The Alliance, comprised of local Boys & Girls Clubs from across Maryland, has established itself as a critical provider of services for youth and their families across the State and currently operates in more than 30 locations. Examples of Alliance programming, whose model is rooted in positive youth development, include:

- SMART Moves: Emotional Wellness helps young people develop foundational social emotional skills, such as self-regulation, impulse control, and stress management. Progressing through 10 sequential sessions, participants build a personal toolbox for self-management and coping skills. SMART Moves is the Boys & Girls Clubs cornerstone program in support of social-emotional wellness.
- Passport to Manhood consists of 14 sessions in one-hour modules for boys ages 8 to 17. Each session concentrates on a specific aspect of manhood through highly interactive activities and discussions that reinforce character, leadership, and positive behavior. Studies have consistently shown children and adolescents benefit greatly from the positive influence of caring adults in their lives.
- Torch Club provides teens and young adults with an opportunity to put their views and voices to work through small group civic and community engagement. Torch Clubs are chartered, small-group leadership and service clubs that serve as a powerful vehicle to help club staff meet the special

character development needs of adolescents at a critical stage in their life, while discussing and acting upon some of the most critical issues of the day.

- SMART Leaders focuses on adolescents and aims to change attitudes towards substance abuse and other risky behaviors. This is rated as a promising program in the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) model program guide as a result of participants demonstrating a statistically significant reduction in alcohol, marijuana, cigarette, and overall drug use; an increase in negative attitudes towards alcohol and marijuana; and an increase in knowledge of drug use and health consequences.

The Alliance will use the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality's Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQ-A), a validated, observational assessment tool designed to measure the quality of youth programs and identify staff training needs in the areas of safe and supportive environment, student-student and student-staff interaction, engagement, student centered policies and practices, and high expectations for students and staff.

While the programs offered through the Alliance are open to all youth, the expectation is that underserved student populations, who are more likely to have experienced ACEs, and particularly youth from low-income families, will be the main beneficiaries of these services.

### **Achieving Academic Equity and Excellence for Black Boys**

The COVID-19 pandemic has served to further highlight how Black boys in Maryland are disproportionately underserved and underperforming. As outlined in A.3, the Task Force on Achieving Academic Equity and Excellence for Black Boys has developed 16 evidence-based recommendations to address the inequities experienced by Black boys in eight LEAs across the State (see the task force's final report, *Transforming the Culture of Maryland's Schools for Black Boys*). Grant funding will be allocated to LEAs to implement the recommendations of the task force's report, focusing on the following three key components of a successful educational experience for Black boys: 1) social-emotional and behavioral supports; 2) recruitment and training of effective teachers and administrators; and 3) curricula and instruction.

### **Future Use**

The MSDE has yet to determine how it will allocate the set-aside funding reserved for future use (totaling approximately \$33.6 million). This funding may be apportioned in its entirety to one or more of the three required State set-aside areas designated under the ARP Act, or to another emerging area(s) of need, depending on the State's priorities. Given the appointment of a new State Superintendent of Schools on July 1, 2021, the SEA deemed it critical that funding be reserved to support future initiatives developed under the new Superintendent's leadership.

In addition, the SEA has reserved 0.5 percent of its total ARP ESSER allocation for administrative costs, totaling approximately \$9.8 million (see ESSER State Set Aside 5.25.21, slide 3, row 8).

***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;*

All LEAs have now received the ARP ESSER use of funds plan template created by the MSDE, and the SEA has set a deadline of July 30, 2021, for school systems to submit their applications (see ARP ESSER Use of Funds Application Template and Memo). The template provides guidance on the development of the ARP ESSER use of funds plan and identifies the required components of an approvable plan, including the requirement that LEAs detail how funds will be used to implement prevention and mitigation strategies in line with the most recent CDC. Throughout plan development, the MSDE will provide technical assistance to support school systems in adhering to plan requirements. All LEAs are required to submit signed assurances certifying that they have adhered to all Federal and State requirements (see ARP ESSER Use of Funds Application Template, pp.3-5).

All ARP ESSER use of funds plans submitted by LEAs will be reviewed by a cross-agency team from the MSDE. The MSDE review team will assess the level of completeness and the degree to which content in the ARP ESSER use of funds plans meets Federal and State requirements. LEA ARP ESSER use of funds

plans that are not approved by the MSDE will receive feedback to inform modifications. LEAs will be required to resubmit all modified ARP ESSER use of funds plans to the MSDE for review and approval.

All Maryland LEAs have previously published pandemic-related continuity of learning and recovery plans on their websites, and the MSDE has provided links to these LEA plans from the SEA website (see [Maryland Local School System Reopening Plans](#) webpage). Once approved by the MSDE, the SEA will communicate with each LEA reminding them to make their ARP ESSER use of funds plans publicly available on their website. The MSDE will also provide links to LEA ARP ESSER use of funds plans from the SEA website, and has already created a webpage for this purpose (see [ARP ESSER Fund](#) webpage).

- 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;*

The application for ARP ESSER Funds requires LEAs to identify evidence-based interventions and the evidence tier rating for identified interventions. LEAs will also be required to identify proposed measures of effectiveness for each intervention such as baseline and projected student outcome data. A team from MSDE will verify evidence tier ratings and determine the sufficiency of proposed measures of effectiveness through readiness monitoring. All LEAs are required to submit signed assurances certifying that they have adhered to all Federal and State requirements (see ARP ESSER Use of Funds Application Template, pp.3-5).

All ARP ESSER use of funds plans submitted by LEAs will be reviewed by a cross-agency team from the MSDE. The MSDE review team will assess the level of completeness and the degree to which content in the ARP ESSER use of funds plan meets Federal and State requirements. LEA ARP ESSER use of funds plans that are not approved by the MSDE will receive feedback to inform modifications. LEAs will be required to resubmit all modified ARP ESSER use of funds plans to the MSDE for review and approval.

- iii. *How the LEA will spend its remaining ARP ESSER funds consistent with section 2001(e)(2) of the ARP Act; and*

It is undetermined at this time how each LEA will spend its remaining ARP ESSER funds. However, included as part of the ARP ESSER use of funds plan template shared with LEAs is a requirement that each LEA outline its plans for spending ARP ESSER funds.

While the Maryland ARP ESSER State Plan application will serve as the yardstick for the LEA use of funds plans, the MSDE will communicate to LEAs that they will have a degree of flexibility in using non-reserved ESSER funds to meet local needs (for example, focusing on facilities upgrades [such as HVAC installation/improvements] or hiring new staff [teachers, counselors, psychologists, etc.] to address personnel shortages), provided that these initiatives align with the priorities outlined in the State plan application and adhere to all Federal ARP ESSER requirements.

- 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 use of funds plan template requires LEAs to identify interventions that address the academic impact of lost instructional time and describe how the school system will respond to the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of all students, focusing on those students disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. All LEAs are required to submit signed assurances certifying that they have adhered to all Federal and State requirements (see ARP ESSER Use of Funds Application Template, pp.3-5).

All ARP ESSER use of funds plans submitted by LEAs will be reviewed by a cross-agency team from the MSDE. The MSDE review team will assess the level of completeness and the degree to which content in the ARP ESSER use of funds plan meets Federal and State requirements. LEA ARP ESSER use of funds

plans that are not approved by the MSDE will receive feedback to inform modifications. LEAs will be required to resubmit all modified ARP ESSER use of funds plans to the MSDE for review and approval.

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

*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.*

The MSDE has communicated to LEAs that they must engage in meaningful consultation with the stakeholder groups listed under E.2 when developing their ARP ESSER use of funds plans (see Weekly Transmittal to LEA Superintendents\_7.2.21). LEAs may wish to consider utilizing existing mechanisms (for example, many school systems have established Family Advisory Councils) or creating new mechanisms to engage stakeholders in developing their ARP ESSER use of funds plans, gathering input, and informing plan content. All LEAs are required to submit signed assurances certifying that they have adhered to all Federal and State requirements (see ARP ESSER Use of Funds Application Template, pp.3-5).

All ARP ESSER use of funds plans submitted by LEAs will be reviewed by a cross-agency team from the MSDE. The MSDE review team will assess the level of completeness and the degree to which content in the ARP ESSER use of funds plan meets Federal and State requirements. LEA ARP ESSER use of funds plans that are not approved by the MSDE will receive feedback to inform

modifications. LEAs will be required to resubmit all modified ARP ESSER use of funds plans to the MSDE for review and approval.

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;*

See response to E.3.iii below.

- 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*

See response to E.3.iii below.

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

The MSDE has launched a comprehensive monitoring process (see MSDE Monitoring Plan 6.22.21). The purpose of monitoring is to:

- Provide support to school systems in the implementation of practices that have been proven effective.
- Hold school systems accountable for addressing the impact of interrupted instruction due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Foster transparency in the expenditure of funds and implementation of effective practices.

The MSDE partnered with the Region 4 Comprehensive Center Network to develop a research-based approach to monitor the fidelity of implementation and intervention outcomes.

Monitoring consists of three phases. The first phase of monitoring is readiness. The purpose of readiness monitoring is to ensure that structures are in place to implement identified interventions as intended. Readiness monitoring includes reviewing the fund expenditure plan, data targets, implementation plan, materials, and personnel. A readiness tool has been developed to provide a consistent approach to assessing the preparedness of school systems to implement identified interventions. The tool identifies the readiness category, readiness indicators, and evidence required to demonstrate readiness. Readiness monitoring is facilitated at the school system level. Outcome reports are developed and shared with school systems identifying areas of promise, opportunities for growth, and recommendations for improvements. School systems are held accountable by the MSDE for addressing recommendations for improvements.

The second phase of monitoring is implementation. The purpose of implementation monitoring is to ensure interventions are being implemented as intended. Implementation monitoring occurs at the school level and consists of observing interventions in action, reviewing implementation data, and assessing progress towards meeting benchmark and intervention goals. Benchmark and intervention goals must address how school systems are supporting students who have missed the most in-person instruction time, students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction during school building closures, and students most at-risk for dropping out of schools. Through implementation monitoring, evidence of effectiveness for each intervention will be collected from each school system. Effectiveness data that focus on student performance will be disaggregated by student groups listed in question A.3.i-viii. Disaggregating effectiveness data ensures that implemented interventions are able to demonstrate effectiveness at addressing the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on identified student groups.

The third phase of monitoring is analysis and recommendations. During the third phase of monitoring, intervention outcomes are assessed and recommendations are made for improvement, as necessary. Monitoring reports detailing promising practices, opportunities for growth, and recommendations for improvement are provided to school systems after each monitoring visit. LEAs are required to address recommendations for improvement provided by monitoring teams.

Monitoring is led by the MSDE and includes representatives from higher education, business, non-profits, and LEAs. Monitors

participate in training, engage in virtual and on-site monitoring visits, and collaborate to develop monitoring outcome reports. Monitoring will occur in at least 20 percent of all schools that are using ESSER funds to implement interventions. Monitoring outcomes are shared publicly and used to inform technical assistance and Statewide guidance provided by the MSDE.

In addition, the MSDE is providing training, technical support, and data analysis capacity to LEAs so that they can evaluate the implementation and outcomes of summer programming and extended day opportunities intended to address the impact of the pandemic. This support is in addition to the monitoring process and is designed to enable and empower LEAs to evaluate and adjust their own interventions to best serve student needs.

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*

The ARP ESSER grant includes a Maintenance of Equity requirement for LEAs. The MSDE will share with LEAs the recently released FAQs from the U.S. Department of Education for this component and provide advice as needed. Furthermore, the Code of Maryland Regulation (COMAR) establishes educational equity as a matter of policy and priority for all LEAs, including in the “identification and utilization of resources to provide equitable access to educational opportunities and services” for all students (see [COMAR 13A.01.06.04 Requirements—Educational Equity in Maryland](#)).

It is a priority for the MSDE to ensure educational equity is at the forefront in the development of LEA ARP ESSER use of funds plans. The MSDE has a strong foundation to support educational equity and will leverage existing resources to continue the implementation of equitable practices in the use of ARP ESSER funds. There is a Network for Equity and Excellence in Education led by the MSDE and comprised of representatives from all 24 school systems. Members meet monthly to develop materials and strategies to support equitable practices in Maryland schools. This group will be used to provide support to school systems on implementing additional educational strategies in alignment with the [Equity and Excellence: A Guide to Educational Equity in Maryland](#) resource and COMAR 13A.01.06 Educational Equity. There is also an equity plan tailored to meet the unique needs of

students in CTE. The Maryland Methods of Administration Plan and associated monitoring process (see Maryland Consolidated Perkins and Methods of Administration (MOA) Monitoring Program webpage) ensure equitable practices in CTE learning environments.

- 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.*

In addition to the resources/strategies outlined in section E.4.i, Maryland will focus on various approaches, many of which are initiatives that pre-date the start of the pandemic, to implement an equitable and inclusive return to in-person instruction.

### **Equitable Leadership Practices**

The MSDE's Office of Leadership Development and School Improvement is solely focused on fostering the growth of effective and equitable school leaders. This office will continue to align State support to lead professional learning experiences and provide technical assistance directly to assistant principals, principals, principal supervisors, and future school leaders to identify and implement equitable leadership practices. The office will also collaborate with the Maryland Associations of Elementary and Secondary School Principals to develop and implement professional learning experiences. All professional learning experiences are informed by data, research, and State priorities.

Professional learning experiences focused on equitable practices will be included in the Promising Principals' Academy, Leading for School Improvement Institute, and Statewide convenings with principal supervisors. The Promising Principals' Academy is a year-long professional learning experience designed to equip future principals with the skills and knowledge to successfully transition to the principalship. The Leading for School Improvement Institute provides customized support to current school leaders to improve school performance. Participants engage in a multi-year, job-embedded professional learning experience grounded in effective practices for school improvement. Participants in the Promising Principals' Academy and Leading for School Improvement Institute are provided leadership coaches to support the implementation of effective

practices at the school level. The Office of Leadership Development and School Improvement will continue to add resources to the [Virtual Support for School Leaders](#) website that focus on equitable leadership practices and continue to lead in-person, Statewide convenings. In particular, in the upcoming school year, the office will promote leadership practices that specifically address the academic impact of lost instructional time and the mental health and SEL needs of students, parents/families, and educators, with specific attention to the needs of underserved students and populations of color most affected by the pandemic.

### **Community Schools**

Maryland has substantially expanded its community school strategy through passage of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future legislation, which provides funding for schools in areas with high concentrations of poverty (see Community Schools webpage). The MSDE supports the effective implementation of the community school strategy, which is deeply rooted in equity, by offering coursework, professional learning, ongoing technical assistance, and a variety of resources for stakeholders in schools, school systems, partnering organizations, etc.

### **Maryland Guideline for a State Code of Discipline**

The Maryland Guideline for a State Code of Discipline has been updated and projected for release to the LEAs prior to the 2021-2022 school year. The MSDE guidelines have been revised to include more specific language around equity and addressing disproportionality for out-of-school suspensions. The guidelines call for a more restorative and rehabilitative approach to student discipline where students have opportunities to learn from their mistakes and understand the importance of their decisions and their actions in a non-punitive, supportive environment. The guidelines advocate that LEAs avoid exclusionary discipline practices unless the safety of staff and students is compromised or if a behavior causes severe disruption to the instructional setting of a school.

### **Reducing and Eliminating Disproportionate Out-of-School Suspensions**

The MSDE will continue to provide professional development and technical assistance to LEAs on reducing and eliminating disproportionate out-of-school suspensions of students with disabilities and students of color. Approaches include the use of root cause analyses, development of response/action plans, and sharing exemplars of best practice. The MSDE has formed a partnership with the Mid Atlantic Regional Educational (REL)

Laboratory (see [About REL Mid-Atlantic](#) webpage) to assist the SEA in gathering information on related evidence-based and promising practices, to create tools and strategies for educators, and to develop training for Maryland school leaders. The MSDE believes that this work, in concert with the implementation of the updated Guidelines for a State Code of Discipline, will reduce exclusionary discipline overall and reduce and ultimately eliminate disproportionate out-of-school suspensions.

### **Educational Equity: Federal Title Programs**

All applications relating to Federal Title programs have been revised to include an educational equity component. For example, the Title IV, Part A application requires a needs assessment and explanation regarding how LEAs will prioritize funding in an equitable manner to meet the needs of the neediest and hardest-to-serve student groups.

## ***F. Supporting the Educator Workforce***

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

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

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

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

Please note that Maryland is a locally controlled education State, and, as such, each individual LEA is the employer (where applicable) for the various categories of educators listed in the table below. Consequently, while the MSDE can assume a lead role in devising Statewide educator recruitment campaigns (as described in F.1.iii below), and may allocate ESSER monies to fund certain Statewide positions, the SEA will primarily serve a supporting role to LEAs in the area of recruitment. It is

anticipated that many LEAs will use ARP ESSER allocations to local address personnel shortages (whether for positions as such teachers, counselors, etc.), but the ultimate responsibility for these hiring decisions will be at the discretion of each individual school system.

Please also note that for all those areas listed in the table below which the U.S. Department of Education has designated as a critical shortage area in Maryland for the 2021-2022 school year, students preparing to teach in these critical shortage areas may apply for State grants and scholarships. Additionally, Maryland LEAs may rehire an unlimited number of retirees from the Maryland teacher retirement system in these critical shortage areas without restricting the amount of income the retiree may earn while reemployed.

**Table F1.**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Data on shortages and needs</b>	<b>Narrative description</b>
Special educators and related service personnel and paraprofessionals	<p>In 2019, there were 10,257 full-time equivalent (FTE) special education teacher positions in Maryland. One critical area of need is teachers of the visually impaired (TVI). There are currently 10 total TVI vacancies, with an additional 33 expected vacancies over the next five years.</p> <p>Maryland educator preparation programs produced 367 special education program completers in 2019 and 340 in 2020. In 2020, Maryland alternative educator preparation programs produced 146 special education program completers.</p> <p>The Department has approved special education, grades pre-kindergarten through 12, as a critical shortage area in Maryland for the 2021-2022 school year.</p>	<p>The production-levels for special education are reduced from prior years but still result in special education remaining the second-highest producing certification area Statewide behind elementary education. 110 of the 146 alternative educator preparation completers are dually-certification in special education and a content area. It should be noted that Maryland imports approximately 50 percent of its teacher workforce from other States. Requirements for paraprofessionals are determined at the local level.</p>

Area	Data on shortages and needs	Narrative description
Bilingual educators	N/A	Maryland does not have a bilingual certification.
English as a second language (ESL) educators	<p>Maryland approved programs produced 52 ESL program completers in 2019 and 45 program completers in 2020. Maryland approved alternative preparation programs produced eight ESL program completers in 2020.</p> <p>The Department has approved ESL, grades pre-kindergarten through 12, as a critical shortage area in Maryland for the 2021-2022 school year.</p>	In the past 10 years, Maryland has experienced a 95 percent increase in its EL population, growing from 47,896 to 93,250 students. The largest influx is at the elementary school level, which requires an increase in staffing needs.
STEM educators	<p>Maryland approved programs produced 155 STEM program completers in 2019 and 143 program completers in 2020 (74 and 69 in math; 75 and 68 in science; four and zero in computer science; and two and two in technology education for each year respectively).</p> <p>Maryland approved alternative preparation programs produced 94 resident teachers (48 in math, 46 in science, and 2 in technology education) in 2020.</p> <p>The Department has approved mathematics, advanced mathematics, computer science, and technology preparation as critical shortage areas in Maryland for the 2021-2022 school year.</p>	There have been an additional three computer science programs approved in the past two years, with two more proposals expected in the coming year to increase the teacher pipeline.
CTE educators	The Department has approved CTE, grades 7 through 12, as a critical shortage area in Maryland for the 2021-2022 school year.	Due to the specialization of these teaching areas, the State Board promulgated the adjunct certificate to enable skilled professionals to be employed as a teacher on a part-time

Area	Data on shortages and needs	Narrative description
		basis. Additionally, the State Board reduced testing requirements for those seeking the professional and technical education (PTE) certification.
Early childhood educators	<p>Maryland approved programs produced 288 early childhood education program completers in 2019 and 277 program completers in 2020. Maryland approved alternative preparation programs produced 54 resident teachers in 2020.</p> <p>The Department has approved early childhood education, grades pre-kindergarten through 3, as a critical shortage area in Maryland for the 2021-2022 school.</p>	Maryland House Bill 1300, passed in the 2020 legislative session, and more commonly known as the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future, dramatically expands pre-kindergarten in the State. The phase-in plan for universal pre-kindergarten will require more certified early childhood educators in each LEA.
School counselors	Maryland approved programs produced 270 school counseling program completers in 2018-2019 and 2019-2020.	As of October 2020, Maryland LEAs employed 2,655 school counselors across the State.
Social workers	In Maryland, social workers are licensed by the Maryland Department of Health.	As the SEA does not track this data, the MSDE is not the relevant agency to comment on this area.
Nurses	In Maryland, nurses are licensed by the Maryland Board of Nursing.	As the SEA does not track this data, the MSDE is not the relevant agency to comment on this area.
School psychologists	Maryland approved programs produced 75 school psychology program completers in 2018-2019 and 2019-2020.	There is no further narrative to report at this time.

- 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.*

### **Identifying the Most Urgent Areas of Shortages or Potential Shortages**

The MSDE is required to certify and submit critical teacher shortage area data to the Federal government on an annual basis. The list of critical shortage areas, approved by the Department, serves as a resource for recent graduates of educator preparation programs and trained teaching professionals about potential opportunity areas in Maryland classrooms. Additionally, the list serves as a resource in the process of advising Federal student financial aid recipients of the potential to reduce, defer, or discharge student loan repayments by teaching in certain areas. Finally, in accordance with the State Personnel and Pensions Articles of the Maryland Annotated Code, §22-406 and §23-407, Maryland LEAs may rehire an unlimited number of retirees from the Maryland Teacher Retirement System in critical shortage areas, as well as up to five supporting school personnel, without restricting the amount of income the retiree may earn while reemployed.

Each summer, the MSDE disseminates the list of projected critical teacher shortage areas for the upcoming school year to LEAs. After the Governor declared a state of emergency in Maryland in March 2020, the MSDE sent additional memoranda to LEAs regarding the “Retire/Rehire” program in an effort to address anticipated hiring needs for the 2020-2021 school year. The MSDE will continue to facilitate this information at several points during the year to ensure each LEA is aware of the program and its potential advantages (see Teacher Shortage Area Report for 2021-2022 projections).

A separate Maryland law, Education Article §18-708, establishes a program of Workforce Shortage Student Assistance grants for students who pledge to work in fields of critical shortage in Maryland on the completion of their candidacy. This program is managed through the Maryland Higher Education Commission. Maryland’s teacher preparation programs have continued to develop new programs to address critical shortage areas around the State. For example, in collaboration with the Maryland Center for Computing Education, new computer science programs have been developed in all regions of the State to increase pathways into the profession. Alternative preparation programs have

responded to LEA needs particularly with new pathways in middle school education, ESL, and special education.

In addition to declaring a state of emergency, the Governor subsequently issued an Executive Order extending the expiration date of those Maryland Educator Certificates that must be renewed during the state of emergency to June 30, 2021. This allowed educators an additional six to 12 months to complete their renewal requirements. The MSDE disseminated information pertaining to the Executive Order to all individuals holding a Maryland Educator Certificate due to expire through the MSDE Educator Information System.

In response to LEA concerns regarding the extent to which the pandemic may affect their hiring pool, the State Board approved an emergency amendment on May 26, 2020 (see COMAR 13A.12.01.14—Waivers and Special Certifications Provisions Emergency Regulations). The amendment outlines the conditions of an emergency certificate issued during a state of emergency at the authorization of the State Superintendent of Schools. The purpose of this emergency certificate is to allow those educator candidates who have completed all of the requirements of certification, with the exception of assessments and/or clinical experiences, the ability to act as a teacher of record with a Maryland LEA, State institution, or nonpublic school approved under COMAR 13A.09.10—Educational Programs in Nonpublic Schools and Child Care and Treatment Facilities, as they complete the remainder of the professional certification requirements. Following the approval of the emergency amendment, the MSDE sent guidance to LEAs regarding its implementation (see Emergency Certificate Issuance, Documentation, and Reporting Procedures Memo\_7.6.20).

### **Providing High-Quality Professional Learning Opportunities**

To assist LEAs with delivering high-quality professional learning opportunities, the MSDE continued expansion of the Maryland Virtual Learning Opportunities (MVLO) - State Learning Management System. The MVLA provides online courses for Maryland educators and Maryland students in a virtual environment, of particular importance and need during this time.

The MSDE understood the immense work required of teachers across the State to adapt their lessons, instruction, and classroom management to a virtual environment. Recognizing that this challenge presented a genuine job-embedded professional learning opportunity for educators, the MSDE approved

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) credits for the successful participation in developing and implementing continuity of learning plans. These CPD credits may be used by educators towards the recertification of their Maryland Educator Certificate. Each educator has the potential to earn up to six CPD credits for implementing the continuity of learning plan, which fulfills the number of credits required to recertify (see Continuity of Learning Plan CPD).

Many educators have experienced “burnout” as a result of the demands placed on them during the pandemic, and consequently there is concern about low participation rates in professional development activities. Therefore, the MSDE will need to engage with LEAs and stakeholder groups representing educators to ensure that the activities/trainings delivered are designed to meet the professional learning needs of educators in response to the pandemic (for example, in areas such as parent/family engagement, trauma-informed instruction, etc.), and that educators are able to participate in and benefit from these opportunities. The provision of high-quality professional learning opportunities is an essential retention strategy if Maryland is to avoid seeing staff – the very personnel who are the cornerstone of Maryland’s recovery efforts in public education from the pandemic – leaving the profession at increased (and unsustainable) rates.

### **Addressing the Impact of Stress or Trauma on Educators**

Strongly tied to professional learning opportunities – and another vital component in addressing staff retention concerns – is a recognition that social-emotional and mental health trainings and supports also be made available to educators, particularly in relation to coping with the trauma/stresses brought on by the pandemic. The MSDE will need to engage with LEAs and stakeholder groups representing educators to ensure that the training and supports provided meet the needs of educators,

To support this work, in May 2021 the MSDE released a new guidance document to aid LEAs in addressing trauma, which focuses not just on students (and their families) but also staff well-being (see *A Trauma-Informed Approach for Maryland Schools*). Additionally, as outlined in A.2 (and elsewhere in this plan), the MSDE is in the process of implementing a Statewide mental health program, which will establish six regional crisis response and clinical support teams serving the mental health and social-emotional needs of educators (as well as students and families).

### **Other Federal Funding**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, LEAs used Federal COVID-19 funding to pay salaries for bus contractors and food service providers while schools were closed. Many LEAs are also paying bonuses/stipends to encourage teachers to participate in summer learning and afterschool programs and special education compensatory services.

- 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).*

### **Actions the SEA Will Take to Fill Anticipated Gaps in Certified Teachers for the Start of the 2021-2022 School Year**

The MSDE requires Maryland colleges and universities' educator preparation programs (EPPs) to submit annual reports known as the Traditional Programs Annual Report (TPAR, see 2019-2020 Report) and Alternative Programs Annual Report (APAR, see 2019-2020 Report). IHEs need to report differentiated certification data on program completers, admissions, retention, and employment. The reports aim to provide consistent and overlapping data that summarizes the year in full and helps to build longitudinal datasets across important fields of program quality. Each EPP articulates its efforts to meet high-need teaching areas, recruit teacher candidates of color, and prepare all candidates to teach all students. EPPs articulate how they are aligned and working each year to meet State needs with equity and diversity. EPPs should reflect on how data is improving their programs and how they are measuring their own impact. Programs are also required to report more complete performance-based and Praxis II data and indicate the steps taken to improve performance above the 80 percent threshold in certain content areas.

In response to LEA concerns regarding the extent to which the pandemic may affect their hiring pool, the State Board approved an emergency amendment on May 26, 2020 (see [COMAR 13A.12.01.14—Waivers and Special Certifications Provisions\\_ Emergency Regulations](#)). The amendment outlines the conditions of an emergency certificate issued during a state of

emergency at the authorization of the State Superintendent of Schools. The purpose of this emergency certificate is to allow those educator candidates who have completed all of the requirements of certification, with the exception of assessments and/or clinical experiences, the ability to act as a teacher of record with a Maryland LEA, State institution, or nonpublic school approved under COMAR 13A.09.10—Educational Programs in Nonpublic Schools and Child Care and Treatment Facilities, as they complete the remainder of the professional certification requirements.

The MSDE has offered extensive technical assistance training throughout the 2020-2021 school year for all of its traditional and alternative educator preparation programs. The sessions have been led by MSDE specialists and content experts and focused on working with diverse populations including English learners, gifted-talented students, and special education students. Statewide resources and information provided are expected to be incorporated into Maryland educator preparation programs to elevate the level of preparation and ensure candidates are prepared to enter Maryland’s diverse classrooms.

**Expanding the Educator Pipeline and Educator Diversity While Addressing the Immediate Needs of Students Disproportionately Impacted by the Pandemic (for example, recruiting teaching candidates to provide high-dosage tutoring or implementing residencies for teacher candidates)** House Bill 1300 (known as the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future), passed in the 2020 legislative session, seeks to reform education in Maryland. Its provisions include:

- A yearlong residency for teacher candidates prepared in Maryland educator preparation programs.
- Funding for academic support for struggling learners using evidence-based programs and strategies that meet the expectation of strong or moderate evidence as defined in the ESSA.
- Requiring the MSDE to assist teacher preparation programs in seeking and retaining highly qualified individuals, including those from groups historically underrepresented in the teaching profession.

Anticipating this legislation, the MSDE began drafting regulations in 2018 to align educator preparation and certification requirements with the Blueprint. As such, drafted regulations are in the process of being promulgated through the State Board and Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board.

The MSDE acknowledges that gaps exist in critical shortage areas across Maryland, and that these gaps are more prevalent in some areas than others. In April 2021, the MSDE's Office of Research presented a report of these findings in a presentation that was shared with various MSDE divisions involved in teacher recruitment, as well as with traditional and alternative Maryland educator preparation programs (see [Teacher Diversity in Maryland\\_April 2021](#)).

In an effort to diversify the Maryland teacher workforce, as well as to recruit Maryland's top high school students, House Bill 1415 (2018) established a Digital Recruitment Steering Committee. The steering committee, comprised of representatives from the Maryland Higher Education Commission, MSDE, Morgan State University, Coppin State University, Bowie State University, Maryland Department of Commerce, Maryland Public Television, Maryland Association of School Personnel Administrators, and Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center, approved the following recruitment initiatives, all of which were undertaken by the MSDE's Division of Educator Certification and Program Approval and Communications Office:

A website, [Teach.in.Maryland.gov](https://teach.in.maryland.gov), was established as a one-stop shop for those interested in the teaching profession, providing users with information from several different sources, including the MSDE, LEAs, Maryland educator preparation programs, community colleges, and Maryland high school CTE teacher academies. Included are personal stories from a diverse group of Maryland teachers, information regarding pathways to becoming a teacher, and a list of resources for those interested in pursuing teaching in Maryland. A newsletter is currently being developed for users to subscribe to when they enter the Teach in Maryland website. The newsletter will feature content of interest to potential future teachers.

In addition to the website, the MSDE identified and marketed a Maryland Educator Recruitment Slogan, #TeachinMD, which is promoted through digital media partnerships and social media platforms. The social media advertising campaign spans across Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Connected TV streaming services. The #TeachinMD campaign slogan and advertisements are currently displayed on digital and print billboards on the most-traveled highways in the eastern and western regions of Maryland, as well as on Maryland public transit vehicles, metro stations, and bus stop enclosures.

The MSDE has partnered with Radio One, a parent company of urban radio stations in the Baltimore and DC metro areas, to recruit high school students, college students, and potential career changers into the teaching profession. This partnership has included regular spots with popular DJ personalities on the air and on social media, targeted advertising, and special events such as a virtual prom and virtual talent show. During the 2020 virtual prom, sponsored exclusively by TeachinMD, over 2,500 high school students from the Baltimore and DC areas were in attendance. The 2021 virtual prom is scheduled for May 2021.

The MSDE hosted the 13<sup>th</sup> annual Teachers of Promise event in April 2021. Maryland's colleges and universities select at least five graduating teacher candidates to be recognized. The MSDE has invested in this event to promote teaching in Maryland and improve overall teacher quality and retention in the State. Awardees who will teach in Maryland for the first year are matched with an accomplished Maryland educator to guide and support their first year in the profession.

In addition to the recruitment efforts described above, the Teacher Collaborative Grant program was developed out of legislation that aims to elevate the teaching profession and attract individuals to the teaching profession by offering grants to partnerships consisting of teacher preparation programs, LEAs, and exclusive employee representatives. Grantees are currently piloting programs that redesign the practicum experience for candidates to better prepare them to enter the classroom with confidence, implement a career ladder that incentivizes teachers who gain expertise and move up the ladder, and provide professional education in international and national best practices in teaching. With the implementation of the career ladder, highly qualified teachers will be incentivized to move up the career ladder as they gain additional expertise and leadership, and will be compensated as such.

Additional examples of the MSDE's efforts to support LEAs in expanding the educator pipeline and promote educator diversity are attached as evidence (see Teacher Outreach and Digital Recruitment in Maryland: MSDE's Initiative to Increase the Educator Workforce in Maryland\_1.3.20; Supporting Diverse Populations: English Learners\_11.20.20; and A New Day in Educator Preparation: Specially Designed Instruction Across Varied Service Delivery Models\_3.9.21). The MSDE will draw on the various recruitment and retention initiatives outlined above

in support of the implementation of Maryland's ARP ESSER State Plan application.

### **Special Education**

The MSDE's Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services (DEI/SES) provides ongoing discretionary grant funding to several Maryland IHEs to support the preparation and retention of special educators. Goucher College, Hood College, and the University of Maryland, College Park partner with the DEI/SES to provide ongoing coaching and mentoring to pre-service and conditionally certified special education teachers across Maryland in the following LEAs and public agencies:

- Anne Arundel County Public Schools.
- Baltimore City Public Schools.
- Baltimore County Public Schools.
- Caroline County Public Schools.
- Frederick County Public Schools.
- Harford County Public Schools.
- Howard County Public Schools.
- Montgomery County Public Schools.
- Prince George's County Public Schools.
- Somerset County Public Schools.
- Worcester County Public Schools.
- The Maryland Juvenile Services Education System (JSES).

To support the retention of special education teachers who serve students with Autism Spectrum Disorders, the DEI/SES provides discretionary funds to the Kennedy Krieger Institute, Center for Autism and Related Disorders to provide ongoing technical assistance to early intervention providers and special education teachers focused on the implementation of evidence-based specially designed instruction in inclusive settings in the following systems:

- Anne Arundel County Public Schools.
- Caroline County Public Schools.
- Montgomery County Public Schools.
- Prince George's County Public Schools.
- Maryland School for the Deaf.

The DEI/SES provides ongoing discretionary grant funding to the Johns Hopkins University to address access, equity, and progress by providing intensive training for special education providers (mainly teachers and school psychologists). The project aims to support Maryland public school educators to participate in the ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) graduate certificate program at

Johns Hopkins University, with the MSDE providing partial tuition support for coursework and practicum courses. The coursework provides training on the essential core competencies and skills needed by LEAs to implement the evidence-based practice of ABA for children with disabilities, birth through age 21.

The DEI/SES provides ongoing discretionary funding to Sheppard Pratt Health Systems and the Mid-Atlantic PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) to address the needs of LEAs, support the implementation of a Statewide infrastructure for Integrated Tiered System of Supports (ITSS), and prioritize alignment and equity for all students, especially the most vulnerable populations. This integrated tiered continuum of supports serves as an integrated approach to addressing student social, emotional, and behavioral well-being and learning.

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

During the 2016 legislative session, the Maryland General Assembly passed Senate Bill 493 – The Teacher Induction, Retention, and Incentive Act (TIRA) of 2016, establishing a voluntary pilot program allowing first-year teachers 20 percent more time for planning, peer observation, and mentoring. To date, three LEAs have participated in the program. TIRA also required the MSDE to facilitate a workgroup of stakeholders, including representatives of primary and secondary education, higher education, and education policy experts, to determine effective ways to recruit, retain, and promote quality educators at all levels. The final report of this workgroup, which continues to guide Maryland’s efforts in this area, is attached for reference (see Teacher Induction, Retention, and Advancement Act of 2016 Workgroup: Final Report).

On February 12, 2021, House Bill 1300, Blueprint for Maryland’s Future, was codified into law redefining the schedule of teachers in Maryland. Subsection 6-1003 specifies that teachers teach in the classroom for no more than an average of 60 percent of their working time; and spend the remaining time improving instruction, working with and tutoring students who need additional help, working with the most challenging students and students living in concentrated poverty, and participating or leading professional learning.

Additionally, House Bill 1300 calls for LEAs to provide wraparound services, which include: (i) extended learning time, including before and after school, weekends, summer school, and an extended school year; (ii) safe transportation to school; (iii) vision and dental care services; (iv) establishing or expanding school-based health center services; (v) additional social workers, mentors, counselors, psychologists, and restorative practice coaches; (vi) enhancing physical wellness, including providing healthy food for in-school and out-of-school time and linkages to community providers; (vii) enhancing behavioral health services, including access to mental health practitioners and providing professional development to school staff to provide trauma-informed interventions; (viii) providing family and community engagement and supports, including informing parents of academic course offerings, language classes, workforce development training, opportunities for children, and available social services, as well as educating families on how to monitor a child's learning; (ix) establishing and enhancing linkages to Judy Centers and other early education programs that feed into the school; (x) enhancing student enrichment experiences; (xi) improving student attendance; (xii) improving the learning environment at the school; and (xiii) any other professional development for teachers and school staff to quickly identify students who are in need of these resources.

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

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

1. *Capacity for Data Collection and Reporting: It is important for an SEA to continuously monitor progress and make adjustments to its strategies, as well as to support its LEAs in making adjustments to LEA strategies, based on impact. Describe how the SEA will ensure its capacity and the capacity of its LEAs to collect data on reporting requirements, including but not limited to the examples of reporting requirements described in the SEA's Grant Award Notification (listed in Appendix B). Describe the SEA's capacity and strategy to collect data from its LEAs (disaggregated by student group, where applicable), to the greatest extent practicable, including any steps the SEA will take to build its capacity in the future (which may include the use of ARP ESSER and other Federal COVID-19 pandemic funds at the SEA and LEA levels), on issues that may include the following:*
  - i. *Student learning, including the academic impact of lost instructional time during the COVID-19 pandemic;*
  - ii. *Opportunity to learn measures (e.g., chronic absenteeism; student engagement; use of exclusionary discipline; access to and participation in advanced coursework; access to technology, including educator access to professional development on the*

- effective use of technology; access to high-quality educators; access to school counselors, social workers, nurses, and school psychologists; and results from student, parent, and/or educator surveys);*
- iii. *Fiscal data that is comparable across the State (e.g., per-pupil expenditures at the LEA and school levels);*
  - iv. *Jobs created and retained (by position type);*
  - v. *Participation in programs funded by ARP ESSER resources (e.g., summer and afterschool programs); and*
  - vi. *Other reporting requirements reasonably required by the Secretary (please refer to Appendix B of this template; final requirements will be issued separately).*

### **Data Systems**

The MSDE will implement a new Statewide system to collect school-level fiscal data from LEAs. Currently, aggregate data is collected in order to meet the requirements of reporting per-pupil expenditures and other State and Federal reporting requirements. Implementing a Statewide system will provide decision-makers with critical information on funding and resources. In addition, an enhanced system will provide school-level data for analyses with academic outcome data.

During the COVID-19 pandemic and the transition to virtual/hybrid education, the MSDE collected aggregate data from LEAs in order to have Statewide data on items including access to technology and connectivity, course grades, and participation in remote versus in-person learning. Although the MSDE was able to collect Statewide information, student group-level data was not available. Implementing a new student-level data collection system will provide critical information on gaps in students' opportunity to engage in and learn from instruction, as well as supporting the acceleration of learning.

The MSDE will also leverage existing networks to develop a strategy for enhancing existing data collection procedures and implementing a new Statewide system to provide student-level data on measures for critical opportunities to learn and school-level fiscal data. The MSDE intends to utilize ARP ESSER funds to build this enhanced data collection capacity.

### **Monitoring**

The MSDE is making significant investments to support continuous monitoring that assesses the effectiveness of interventions and identifies adjustments to strategies that are not identified as effective. An ESSER Monitoring and Compliance Branch is being established within the Division of Career and College Readiness at the MSDE. The purpose of the branch is to lead the Statewide monitoring program for ESSER. This includes providing support to LEAs in the identification and implementation of evidence-based interventions; assessing the effectiveness of interventions; providing

recommendations for improvement; and fostering transparency in the expenditure of funds, implementation of interventions, and performance of students. Through the monitoring process, LEAs will submit student participation, impact, and outcome data, disaggregated by student group for evidence-based interventions implemented using ARP ESSER funds. The MSDE will develop a monitoring platform that will share the outcomes of the monitoring, which will include outcome data.

### **Job Creation**

The MSDE understood the immense work required of teachers across the State to adapt their lessons, instruction, and classroom management to a virtual environment. Recognizing that this challenge presented a genuine job-embedded professional learning opportunity for educators, the MSDE approved CPD credits for the successful participation in developing and implementing continuity of learning plans. These CPD credits may be used by educators towards the recertification of their Maryland Educator Certificate. Each educator has the potential to earn up to six CPD credits for implementing the continuity of learning plan, which fulfills the number of credits required to recertify.

In response to LEA concerns regarding the extent to which the pandemic may affect their hiring pool, the State Board approved an emergency amendment on May 26, 2020 (see COMAR 13A.12.01.14—Waivers and Special Certifications Provisions Emergency Regulations). The amendment outlines the conditions of an emergency certificate issued during a state of emergency at the authorization of the State Superintendent of Schools. The purpose of this emergency certificate is to allow those educator candidates who have completed all of the requirements of certification, with the exception of assessments and/or clinical experiences, the ability to act as a teacher of record with a Maryland LEA, State institution, or nonpublic school approved under COMAR 13A.09.10—Educational Programs in Nonpublic Schools and Child Care and Treatment Facilities, as they complete the remainder of the professional certification requirements.

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

It is a priority of the MSDE to ensure that LEAs spend funds on allowable expenses within the defined timeframe. A comprehensive fiscal monitoring

process will be implemented throughout the course of the grant, beginning with the submission of ARP ESSER use of funds plans from school systems and continuing throughout the phases of monitoring. Described below are measures implemented to ensure the appropriate use of funds.

- Plan Review – Each LEA is required to submit an ARP ESSER use of funds plan containing an itemized budget detailing how ARP ESSER funds will be spent and the timeline for fund expenditure. Only ARP ESSER use of funds plans that adhere to CARES and CRRSA Act funding requirements will be approved.
- Readiness Monitoring – An essential component of readiness monitoring is reviewing the fund expenditure plan and ensuring that funds are used to support interventions that have been proven effective. Each LEA is required to justify the use of funds for each intervention. The itemized budget included in the ARP ESSER use of funds plans will be reviewed with school systems and verified by the MSDE during readiness monitoring.
- Implementation Monitoring – LEAs are required to demonstrate that funds have been spent on items identified in their approved ARP ESSER use of funds plan within the defined timeline. All LEAs will be held accountable for adhering to budgets and timelines identified in their approved ARP ESSER use of funds plans. LEAs that need to amend their budget must follow the MSDE’s established protocol for budget amendments.

The MSDE will increase capacity to engage in fiscal monitoring by establishing an ESSER Monitoring and Compliance Branch within the Division of Career and College Readiness and by hiring seven new team members to staff the branch. The sole focus of the ESSER Monitoring and Compliance Branch will be to provide support to LEAs in the implementation of ARP ESSER requirements, monitor implementation of approved ARP ESSER use of funds plans, and foster transparency in the expenditure of funds and implementation of interventions. There will be two finance administrators on the ESSER Monitoring and Compliance team that will solely focus on fiscal monitoring. Technical assistance will be provided to support school systems in addressing fiscal requirements (see MSDE Monitoring Plan 6.22.21).

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

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

**Table 1**

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

As outlined in section A.5.ii, this data is unavailable in the specific format requested (see [First Term Performance Metrics](#); [Second Term Performance Metrics](#); [Third Term Performance Metrics/Third Term Performance Metrics Dataset](#); [Fourth Term Performance Metrics](#); and [LEA Reopening Weekly Status Report 6.25.21](#) for the closest approximation of the data requested; see also [School Operating Status and Instructional Mode Data](#) published on the [ARP ESSER Fund](#) webpage).

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

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?*

Note: Table 2 is an estimation using most the most recent data available, including (1) LEA fall enrollment and 2020-2021 school year, all students, and student group disaggregations, and (2) LEA reporting of the percentage of students by learning mode as of the last day of each system's third marking period (approximately April 14, 2021).

<b>Student group</b>	<b>Total enrollment</b>	<b>Remote or online only</b>	<b>Both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)</b>	<b>Full-time in-person instruction</b>
Students from economically disadvantaged (directly certified) families	223,327	134,239	74,278	14,569
White, not Hispanic	304,212	142,175	114,910	4,717
Black or African American, not Hispanic	295,736	188,260	94,627	12,397
Hispanic, of any race	175,768	109,115	59,437	7,196
Asian, not Hispanic	59,668	34,785	22,238	2,643
American Indian or Alaskan Native, not Hispanic	2,286	1,306	828	150
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, not Hispanic	1,287	742	440	104
Two or more races, not Hispanic	43,581	22,650	16,121	4,805
Race/Ethnicity information not available	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

<b>Student group</b>	<b>Total enrollment</b>	<b>Remote or online only</b>	<b>Both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)</b>	<b>Full-time in-person instruction</b>
English learners	96,442	61,980	32,295	2,157
Children with disabilities	101,209	57,398	35,253	8,494
Students experiencing homelessness	7,276	4,087	2,443	739
Children and youth in foster care	2,011	1,200	638	169
Migratory students	100	36	51	13

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

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

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

## Appendix C: Assurances

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

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

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

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

## Appendix D

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

### NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS

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

#### To Whom Does This Provision Apply?

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

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

#### What Does This Provision Require?

Section 427 requires each applicant for funds (other than an individual person) to include in its application a description of the steps the applicant proposes to take to ensure equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Maryland's Compliance with the GEPA Requirement**

The Code of Maryland Regulation requires that the SEA “shall establish systems of structure and support for school systems, students, teachers, and other stakeholders that ensure educational equity and excellence” (see COMAR 13A.01.06.04 Requirements—Educational Equity in Maryland). Furthermore, the Maryland State Department of Education does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry/national origin, color, disability, gender identity/expression, marital status, race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation in matters affecting employment or in providing access to programs and activities, including grant-funded activities. All LEAs are required to address equity in their safe return/continuity of service plans and a cross-agency team at the MSDE will review these plans to ensure that they meet this requirement.

For example, when allocating the State's set-aside funding to address the academic impact of lost instructional time, the MSDE will require applicants to demonstrate as part of the grant application process that they will adhere to Section 427 of GEPA by ensuring equitable access to, and participation in, the grant program for students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries with special needs. Applicants who are unable to comply with this requirement will not be considered for funding.

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

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