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

U.S. Department of Education

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Introduction

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

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

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

Instructions

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

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

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

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

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

Cover Page

Grantee and Contact Information

ARP ESSER PR Award Number (e.g., S425U2100XX): S425U210039

SEA Contact: Amanda Britt

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By signing this document, I agree to each of the assurances listed in Appendix C and further assure that: To the best of my knowledge and belief, all information and data included in this plan are true and correct.	
Chief State School Officer or Authorized Representative (Printed Name) **Johnny Key**	
Signature of Authorized SEA Representative	Date: June 30, 2021

A. Describing the State's Current Status and Needs

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

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

Response: Arkansas returned to in-person instruction in August of 2020. Arkansas utilized the Ready for Learning plan, comprehensive contact tracing and resource allocation to support the needs of students during the COVID-19 pandemic. The state was able to successfully reopen all schools to in-person learning by working with the Arkansas Department of Health to establish statewide guidance through the Arkansas Ready for Learning Plan and available LEA waivers. Each LEA was required to create their own Ready for Learning plan that focused on the safe return to in-person instruction by outlining the LEA's health & safety protocols and flexible options for student learning through virtual options. Ready for Learning plans were submitted and approved by the State Board of Education that described in detail the safety protocols for in-person instruction, but also provided families with the choice of remote instruction. Percentages of remote and in-person learning varied across the state. However, by winter 82% of students were onsite at least part of the time with the majority being on-site full-time.

The state also organized a comprehensive contact tracing network specifically for schools. This included collaboration with the Arkansas Department of Health, the Department of Human Services, as well as Department of Education. Actions included establishing a call center for schools, a point of contact at each LEA, regional contacts staffed by the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, and a systematic reporting protocol. The state created a data system for schools to report if a grade level or school had to pivot to remote instruction due to lack of staffing or number of quarantines due to close contact. Through the robust reporting and data system the state was able to pinpoint hot spots and set up additional testing sites where necessary. In addition, the state made educators a priority for testing and prioritized them right after health care workers for vaccinations. Arkansas educators were some of the first educators in the nation eligible for the vaccination by mid-January. Due to the strict protocols that were established for schools, the state also utilized CARES funding to pay for up to ten days of COVID leave for educators without having to use their personal or sick days.

Due to schools needing capacity to pivot quickly to remote learning, the state utilized CARES Act funding and partnered with approved digital providers. These partnerships provided digital content through Lincoln Learning or Virtual Arkansas (state sponsored virtual school). It also allowed districts to utilize two different Learning Management Systems, Buzz or Canvas. Additional funds were directly granted to districts to access digital content designed for students with significant cognitive disabilities. Access to digital content throughout the state provided a direct curriculum resource for educators early in the year when many were

balancing remote instruction for the first time. The state also provided, organized, and negotiated a reduced state price with vendors for Mi-fi devices statewide for identified students.
While Arkansas was opened in the fall for in-person instruction, it was extremely important for LEAs to utilize a digital formative assessment that would assist in monitoring student progress. The State provided the choice of 4 formative assessment options for K-8ᵗʰ statewide. LEAs could utilize iReady, I-Station, NWEA, or Renaissance. Arkansas is currently administering the summative ACT Aspire assessment and showing a high percentage of students participating. This comprehensive assessment system will provide LEAs the opportunity to determine each student's progress in order to develop a path to help students who might be struggling due to lost instructional time or other related COVID-19 factors.

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

Response: The most pressing priorities for the 2021-22 school year in Arkansas are student mental and emotional health and loss of instructional time due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Arkansas ranked 31st in the 2020 Mental Health America Report for youth having a higher prevalence of mental illness and lower rates of access to care in the state. Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Survey of Children's Health found that 21.5% of Arkansas children ages 2–8 have a diagnosed mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder. Arkansas tied with Kentucky for the highest rate in the nation. In addition to these factors, Arkansas children also are exposed to potentially traumatic experiences at substantially higher rates than the national average. For example, according to the National Survey of Children's Health, 27% of Arkansas children have experienced 2 or more potentially traumatic events (e.g., maltreatment, family domestic violence or substance abuse, natural disaster), compared to 20% of children nationally). The impact of COVID-19 has the potential to exacerbate these numbers. More students were at home during the pandemic due to virtual learning, quarantine, isolation, etc. and were potentially exposed to more traumatizing experiences because of this. It is unknown the exact impact that COVID has played, but it will be important to develop a state-wide program for helping students who have mental or behavioral illnesses in the state.

Another priority is loss of instructional time due to COVID-19. There are multiple factors that contribute to the impact of lost instructional time, including a loss in enrollment and lack of student engagement. K-12 enrollment for the state is down approximately 6400 students for the 2020-21 school year. In addition, PreK enrollment is down. In October 2019 pre-COVID-19, 95% of all available state funded PreK spots were filled and by May of 2020, 100% were filled. In contrast for the 2020-21 school year, as of October 2020, only 75% of spots were filled, and as of May 1, 2020, only 88% of slots were filled. Another concern impacting instruction, is a lack of student engagement. Of the students who are fully virtual, many have been disengaged throughout the year. LEAs have struggled with students not being present for online instruction, not submitting any work, or only being partially engaged. While LEAs have been working diligently to keep students engaged, the concern is that the students have not received the quality of education they would in a normal year due to COVID-related absences, lack of engagement, etc. Efforts to reach those most at-risk have already been under way during the 2020-21 academic year. LEAs around the state participated in the state initiative, Engage Arkansas, by

submitting 10,386 names of students who had the highest risk factors. Through partnerships the program was able to contact 5,811 of those students and have provided 102,087 interventions to date. These services were provided by utilizing CARES Act funds. The drop in enrollment, along with those students who were disengaged are missing valuable learning, which could exacerbate learning loss.

3. <u>Identifying Needs of Underserved Students</u>: Describe your State's 2-3 highest priority academic, social, emotional, and/or mental health needs for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year (if applicable) and for the 2021-2022 school year related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on each of the following student groups:
   i.   Students from low-income families,
   ii.   Students from each racial or ethnic group (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by race or ethnicity),
   iii.   Gender (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by gender),
   iv.   English learners,
   v.   Children with disabilities (including infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA")),
   vi.   Students experiencing homelessness,
   vii.   Children and youth in foster care,
   viii. Migratory students, and
   ix.   Other groups disproportionately impacted by the pandemic that have been identified by the SEA (e.g., youth involved in the criminal justice system, students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years, students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures, and LGBTQ+ students).

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

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

Response: Overall, the priorities for subgroups of students will be the same due to the academic impact of lost instructional time and emotional stress students experienced during the pandemic. Most students, no matter the subgroup, experienced lapses in instruction during the 2020-21 school year for reasons such as chronic absenteeism, lack of engagement, and quarantine and isolation protocol. In 2019, according to ACT Aspire summative assessments 41.27% of Arkansas students met or exceeded

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

standards in Literacy and 47.18% met or exceeded standards in Mathematics. Because 65% of Arkansas's students are low income, this includes the majority of Arkansas students. Of the other subgroups, Arkansas's African American students perform toward the bottom in the areas of Literacy and Math, with only 20% reading on grade level in the 10th grade, according to 2019 ACT Aspire data. These data demonstrate Arkansas students were at risk in the areas of Math and Reading. The DESE expects these data trends to continue due to interruptions in learning and lack of engagement. Due to the predominance of students who experience potentially traumatic events in the state and the number of students who are already identified as having a mental, behavioral, or cognitive disorder, it will be important to provide students with appropriate interventions to handle the added stress due to COVID-19. This affects students in all subgroups.

For students with disabilities, the two highest priorities are academic and functional behavior factors due to the loss of instructional time and chronic absenteeism. When Arkansas schools in March of 2020 were required to provide remote instruction only for the remainder of the school year, educators were not prepared to provide education in an entirely virtual environment. Educators were even less prepared to deliver special education and related services to students in a remote learning environment. LEAs worked diligently to increase their capacity to provide services but found it extremely difficult. The state developed guidance and support to help LEAs navigate this new terrain and delivered this information weekly through job-alike discussion groups. Through these weekly virtual discussion groups with special education supervisors, school psychology specialists, related service providers, and special education teachers it revealed that there were many challenges facing LEA's as they worked to serve students with disabilities according to the Individuals with Disabilities Act.

The American Institute for Research published The Challenges of Educating Students with Disabilities and English Learners during COVID-19 in October 2020. This report showed that 73% of LEAs said it was more difficult to provide appropriate instructional accommodations for students with disabilities, and 82% said it was more difficult to provide hands-on accommodations and services. 57% said it was more difficult to engage families for help with the requirements of a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), which outlines the goals for students with disabilities, and the supports and accommodations they should receive to meet those goals. AIR's Research Brief Spotlight on Students with Disabilities included the following summary – Analysis of survey data from the National Survey of Public Education's Response to COVID-19 showed that school LEAs found it more or substantially more difficult to provide services required by IDEA in the context of remote instruction. The similarity in responses across high- and low-poverty and rural and urban LEAs illustrates that the need to support LEAs and schools in educating students with disabilities is widespread. During the early months of the pandemic, LEAs used technology and human resources to create new ways to comply with the federal law. By generating ways to provide tiered systems of support and effective, evidence-based interventions virtually and asynchronously, schools have the potential to successfully support students with disabilities, regardless of whether

students with disabilities are able to engage in person or remotely with educators and service providers in SY 2020–21. Even with these innovations, all LEAs will need more support to serve students with disabilities appropriately and fully comply with IDEA. The DESE feel confident that this report mirrors what has happened in our state as well. To compound the impact on academic and functional behavior was the data we collected regarding referrals. In FY 2019, 20,253 students were referred for special education and related services and in FY 2020 that number decreased by 2,124 students to 18,129 students. Other referral trend data shows a decrease in consent to test (13.6%), decrease in evaluations completed within the 60-day timeline (15.9%), and a decrease in eligibility determinations made with in the 30-day timeline (16.2%) between the FY 19 and FY 20 school years. This data reveals that over 2,885 students had services delayed. Any delay in the evaluation and identification determination would inhibit an LEA from determining the services and supports a student may need through an IEP to receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education resulting in a negative impact in a student's ability to make adequate progress in academics and functional behavior. For English learners, increased mental health needs due to loss of income, instability, the increase of negative effects on minority families, and lack of opportunity and access are a major concern. Additionally, SY 2019-20 to SY 2020-21 data indicate that English language proficiency did not increase in any grades, decreased in grades 1-8, and 10-12; and remained unchanged in grades K and 9. In SY 2020-21, 1,058 fewer students were assessed, representing a 2.7% drop in the student number assessed. There is a need for explicit language development instruction for English Learners to accelerate language learning because of the lost instructional opportunities to date. ELPA 2021 data shows language development opportunities have been lagging more this last year due to parameters in place for COVID mitigation, such as mask wearing and being able to hear clearly.

During the pandemic, many students were disengaged or did not participate in online education and were at risk of failure or retention. The DESE made a concerted effort to engage these students by partnering Engage Arkansas with LEAs to identify those who were most at risk. Learning loss is a major concern, as is the graduation status of these and other disengaged students. The DESE will encourage LEAs to look at their individual student data and prioritize those subgroups who are most at-risk. The DESE will encourage districts to individualize strategies for these groups of students to close gaps in learning due to the loss of instructional time. The DESE is providing each district with access to the SmartData dashboard, which will assist districts in identifying individual students who are at-risk, and help districts quickly identify why each student is at-risk. The SmartData dashboard will allow districts to intervene quickly when a student falls into the at-risk category.

Student group	Highest priority needs
Students from low-income families	Currently 473,004 students are enrolled in Arkansas Public Schools (K-12). Of those students 274,858 (56.11%) receive free lunches and 35215 (7.44%) students received reduced price lunches. 2019 Summative assessments indicate 41.27% of students in Grades 3-8 are reading at ready or exceeding. It is anticipated that the number not reading at grade level will increase due to lost instructional time, whether that learning was for the partial year or the entire year. These data demonstrate a great need for academic services annually.

Student group	Highest priority needs
	During the school year 2020-2021, LEAs opened for on-site instruction with many students living in poverty remaining in remote learning. Throughout the school year, many students (82% of total enrollment) returned to on-site instruction and/or hybrid instruction, however, during the time many were remote, they were disengaged or only partly engaged. According to Engage Arkansas data, of those who were contacted and accepted help, 83% had a grade below a C. We anticipate having to accelerate learning in order to get students caught up to be on track to graduate and reading on grade level.
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)	Of the primary racial subgroups in Arkansas, 58% of African American students were onsite at least partially as compared to 80% of Hispanic students and 81% of White students. According to 2019 ACT Aspire data, 26.45% of African-American students were reading on grade level and the graduation rate was 93.81%, which is 4.2% below the state average. Due to such a high percentage of African American students being off-site, it is anticipated that this gaps in this data could be exacerbated.
Students by gender – please add a row for each gender (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by gender)	Male: 242,454 Female: 230,550 Total: 473,004
English learners	Based on ELPA 21 Data - SY 2019-2020 to SY 2020-2021 indicate that proficiency did not increase in any grades; decreased in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12 ; and remained unchanged in grades K and 9. SY 2020-2021 is the year that COVID-19 interrupted face-to-face instruction with LEAs being 100% virtual instruction for all or part of the year; 1,058 fewer students were assessed, representing a 2.7% drop in the student number assessed. There is a need for explicit language development instruction for English Learners to accelerate language learning as a result of the lost instructional opportunities to date. Language development opportunities have been lagging more this last year due to parameters in place for COVID mitigation, such as mask wearing and being able to hear clearly. The needs are based on ELPA 21 data. There is an increase in mental health needs due to loss of income, instability, the increase of negative effects on minority families—financially and health wise—due to lack of opportunity and access. Arkansas is ranked 31ˢᵗ on the 2020 Mental Health America Report and youth have the highest rates of mental illness and lower access to mental health care. In addition, 21.5% of 2-8 year olds have been diagnosed with a mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder and 27% of kids have experienced two or more

Student group	Highest priority needs
	potentially traumatic events in their lives. Due to students being home more during the 2020 academic year, it is reasonable to consider that these numbers are actually higher than they were before the pandemic and the mental health fragility of Arkansas students is higher than previously reported.
Children with disabilities	The two highest priorities for students with disabilities are academic and functional behavior factors due to the loss of instructional time and chronic absenteeism. As March of 2020 arrived schools across our state were forced to close their doors. Educators were not prepared to provide education in this new format much less deliver special education and related services to students in a remote learning environment. LEAs worked diligently to increase their capacity to provide services but found it extremely difficult. The state developed guidance and support to help LEAs navigate this new terrain and delivered this information weekly through job-alike discussion groups. Through these weekly virtual discussion groups with special education supervisors, school psychology specialists, related service providers, and special education teachers it revealed that there were many challenges facing LEA's as they worked to serve students with disabilities according to the Individuals with Disabilities Act. The American Institute for Research published The Challenges of Educating Students with Disabilities and English Learners during COVID-19 in October 2020. This report showed that 73% of LEAs said it was more difficult to provide appropriate instructional accommodations for students with disabilities, and 82% said it was more difficult to provide hands-on accommodations and services. 57% said it was more difficult to engage families for help with the requirements of a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), which outlines the goals for students with disabilities, and the supports and accommodations they should receive to meet those goals. AIR' Research Brief Spotlight on Students with Disabilities included the following summary – Analysis of survey data from the National Survey of Public Education's Response to COVID-19 showed that school LEAs found it more or substantially more difficult to provide services required by IDEA in the context of remote instruction. The similarity in responses across high- and low-poverty and rural and urban LEAs illustrates that the need to support LEAs and schools in educating students with disabilities is widespread. During the early months of the pandemic, LEAs used technology and human resources to create new ways to comply with the federal law. By generating ways to provide tiered systems of support and

Student group	Highest priority needs
	effective, evidence-based interventions virtually and asynchronously, schools have the potential to successfully support students with disabilities, regardless of whether students with disabilities are able to engage in person or remotely with educators and service providers in SY 2020–21. Even with these innovations, all LEAs will need more support to serve students with disabilities appropriately and fully comply with IDEA 2004. This report mirrors what has happened in our state as well. To compound the impact on academic and functional behavior was the data we collected regarding referrals. In FY 2019, 20,253 students were referred for special education and related services and in FY 2020 that number decreased by 2,124 students to 18,129 students. Other referral trend data shows a decrease in consent to test (13.6%), decrease in evaluations completed with in the 60 day timeline (15.9%), and a decrease in eligibility determinations made with in the 30 day timeline (16.2%) between the fy 19 and fy 20 school years. This data reveals that over 2,885 students had services delayed. Any delay in the evaluation and identification determination would inhibit an LEA from determining the services and supports a student may need through an IEP to receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education resulting in a negative impact in a students ability to make adequate progress in the area of academics and functional behavior.
Students experiencing homelessness	Currently, 11,719 students are identified as experiencing homelessness. Utilizing the number of students identified as experiencing homelessness compared with the number of students living in poverty (free and reduced lunch) the percentage of poverty students experiencing homelessness is determined. The 2021 Cycle 6 data indicate 39 LEAs identify more than 10% of students. 55 LEAs identify 5-10% of students. 168 LEAs identify less than 5% of students experiencing homelessness. With the expectation that LEAs will identify approximately 5-10% of poverty students as experiencing homelessness. These data lead the SEA to infer that many LEAs may be under identifying and under serving students experiencing homelessness. The 2020 graduation rate for students experiencing homelessness was 77.56%.
Children and youth in foster care	Approximately 4,391 children reside in foster homes and 53% (2327) of those children are students in Grades K-12. The 2020 graduation rate for students in foster care was 64.64%.
Migratory students	Arkansas serves 5357 migrant students. The 2020 graduation rate for migrant students was 81.08%.
Other groups of students identified by the State (e.g., youth involved in the	During the pandemic, many students were disengaged or did not participate in online education and were at risk of failure or retention. The DESE made a concerted effort to engage

Student group	Highest priority needs
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)	these students by partnering Engage Arkansas with LEAs to identify those who were most at risk. Engage Arkansas reached out and has provided support for many of these students throughout the year. Although many students were reached, there were still many out there in LEAs who were unable to be reached or weren't as engaged as they should've been. Because of this, learning loss is a major concern, as is the graduation status of these students.

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

Response: The SEA will support LEAs by providing and encouraging multiple avenues for data analysis. The DESE will encourage LEAs to analyze different types of data such as attendance, discipline, grades, formative and summative assessment results, etc. to identify groups who might have suffered the most during the pandemic. Arkansas required all schools in the state to provide in-person instruction, it was extremely important to provide assessment tools for districts to utilize to assist in monitoring student progress throughout the year. The State provided the choice of 4 formative assessment options for K-8th statewide. LEAs will utilize iReady, I-Station, NWEA, or Renaissance assessments chosen by the district. Arkansas is currently administering the summative ACT Aspire assessment and showing a high percentage of students participating. This comprehensive assessment system will provide LEAs the opportunity to determine exactly where each student was in order to develop a path to help students who might be struggling due to lost instructional time or other related COVID-19 factors.

In addition to numbers, qualitative data such as counselor visits, teacher input, etc. should be utilized to help determine the highest areas of need among students, including student mental health and behavior. The COVID-19 crisis has raised additional concerns related to mental health, behavior and traumatic experiences. As the state continues to evaluate and anticipate the need for comprehensive and sustainable plans addressing increased equity gaps as a result of COVID-19, LEAs will be supported in identifying student risks based on engagement data as defined by school attendance and participation. The DESE will provide a SmartData dashboard that will help LEAs identify those students who are most at risk of dropping out, disengaging, failing, or even becoming a safety threat. The SmartData dashboard will pull data from multiple data sources and compile it into a score that will alert LEAs and identify students who are at risk.

5. <u>School Operating Status</u>: It is essential to have data on how students are learning in order to support the goals of access and equity, especially for student groups

that have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Describe the current status of data collection on operational status and mode of instruction of all schools in your State. This description must include:

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

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

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

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

Response: Each LEA in the State of Arkansas was required to be open for in-person instruction since August 24, 2020. LEAs also had the option to provide a full virtual or hybrid option for instruction in addition to in-person. Onsite instruction is traditional instruction where a student attends full-time (100%) of their time on campus. They may also offer a virtual option, in which students attend full-time off-site (either synchronous or asynchronous) and utilize technology resources for instruction. The last option for LEAs is a hybrid model where students combine virtual and on-site instruction and utilize a combination of resources. Arkansas is committed that all LEAs (except for fully virtual charters) will be open for on-site instruction but have the option of having a virtual or a hybrid model.

The state included a data collection process for the 20-21 school year to capture the mode of instruction for each student. This data will be collected regularly on the number of students who are on-site or virtual. LEAs will report with each Cycle Report (9 times throughout the school year).

For the 2021-2022 school year, 262 LEAs will offer a full-time on-site option, while approximately 150 districts have submitted a comprehensive digital learning application in order to also offer a digital option for some students. The DESE is currently reviewing all digital learning plans to determine if the plans are acceptable and well-thought out, each application is also assigned a risk score based on a risk assessment for monitoring purposes. Once the DESE has approved plans, the plans will go to the Arkansas State Board of Education for approval.

In some instances, LEAs will have a hybrid model for students who need some flexibility or students who are quarantined or isolated because of COVID-19.

Enrollment: Enrollment data is collected from eSchoolPLUS with each Cycle Report (9 times throughout the year) and will continue to be collected with each cycle

report ongoing. Data on the Insights website is collected daily from eSchoolPLUS and available to the public via the URL: https://insight.ade.arkansas.gov/?lea=AR

Attendance: Overall attendance data is only available by subpopulation but is not available by mode of instruction and subpopulation, according to Cycle reports, however, a. full report could be derived and pre-calculated.

> 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.

Response: The SEA will make data publicly available on the DESE website at https://insight.ade.arkansas.gov/ondemand

> 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.

Response: In the summer of 2021, LEAs will determine at the local level how summer instruction will be delivered in their respective LEA and whether it will be virtual, in-person, or a blended model.

In the 2021-22 school year, all LEAs will be open for in-person instruction, but in addition to in-person some districts will be approved to offer a digital learning model as well, depending on local needs and policies.

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.

Response: Prior to the return to school for the 2020-21 school year, DESE officials, in partnership with Arkansas Department of Health (ADH), compiled CDC guidance and provided it to schools in a Ready for Learning resource document. The document outlined re-entry guidance and walked LEAs through what they would need in order to return to schools safely. The document provided an outline of all the items LEAs should consider when returning to on-site instruction in August of 2020. It also included important links to different guidance and mandates on the Arkansas Department of Health's website. The document had the most current guidance on mask-wearing, physical distancing, handwashing, cleaning and disinfecting, etc, and was updated as guidance evolved, and in some cases, became mandates.

In addition to the Ready for Learning document, the DESE partnered with ADH to provide a COVID hotline that is specific to schools and daycares. A Hotline Coordinator/Liaison was hired to assist with communication between the departments and between LEAs and the departments. The hotline is open from 8:00 am-4:30 pm and allows for messages to be left and answered after hours. Hotline operators are available from ADE, ADH, and Division of Human Services (DHS) to answer COVID-related questions and guide LEA points of contact and superintendents to make informed decisions regarding the most recent guidance, including guidance for those who might need appropriate accommodations due to health or other concerns.

For Fall 2020, LEAs designated a Point of Contact (POC) who was responsible for keeping track of all positive cases and close contacts in the LEA. The POCs were trained by hotline officials and provided with a frequently asked questions document that has the latest guidance and information available. Each time guidance is changed, it is immediately updated to reflect the most current CDC/ADH Guidance. In the beginning, the hotline did bi-weekly zoom meetings with POCs from across the state and began

monthly calls after January 1. POC virtual updates were attended by doctors and other professionals associated with ADH and ADE so POCs could ask questions and have the most up to date information. The virtual updates were recorded and included in the FAQ document for viewing if someone had to miss the live training.

Many LEAs were concerned about what factors would require LEAs to close. In order to help schools assess what modifications to make, the DESE published a <u>Response Levels for On-Site Learning</u> document which outlined considerations if schools saw increased transmission in schools. In addition, the Response Levels Document outlined that if a LEA was pivoting to remote learning for an extended period of time, they should consult with the ADH in order to do so. If LEAs needed to consult with ADH, they called the hotline and spoke with the Liaison or another operator who arranged the meeting between ADH officials and LEA officials. In the meetings, ADH would look at pertinent data to assess whether in-school transmission was taking place and give guidance on whether it made sense for the LEA to close for an extended period.

Questions were also posed from superintendents about normal school operations that the COVID hotline operators could not answer. DESE officials assigned schools in designated cooperatives to <u>DESE leadership points of contact</u>. These points of contact often answered questions related to COVID regarding academics, fiscal operations, etc. They were also involved if a school needed to have a consultation to determine an appropriate course of action regarding a potential COVID-19 outbreak. DESE POCs were in close contact with the ADE/ADH Liaison on a regular basis and often helped LEAs bridge the gap between the health and education guidance. DESE POCs met with DESE leadership and the ADE/ADH Liaison a minimum of two times weekly to be updated on changes and discuss what had been going on in their LEAs so that leadership could be informed and, if needed, ADH could be informed of potential issues.

Upon the announcement of receiving COVID testing for schools, the ADE/ADH liaison began communicating with administrators and POCs in the LEAs to inform them of the potential for screening tests. Of the LEAs in Arkansas, one hundred eleven (111) LEAs participated in some type of COVID-19 testing. Initially, there were two options schools could choose. They could choose to utilize a BD Veritor rapid testing system to test symptomatic students and teachers, they could utilize the BINAX testing kits to screen all faculty in their LEA on a weekly basis or they could sign up for both. Eventually, any school who had testing was offered the BINAX testing kits to screen all staff, symptomatic individuals, or to test those coming back for early return. The liaison has also been working with ADE/ADH officials to formulate a plan for screening of any staff/student beginning in the 2021-22 SY.

In April of 2021, Governor Asa Hutchinson lifted the mask mandate for the State of Arkansas. Some LEAs did not have policies in place and were utilizing the mandate as their policy for mask wearing. Because of this LEAs had to reconsider how they would handle the guidelines at the local level by continuing, modifying, or eliminating the adherence to ADH guidelines and encouraged them to think broadly on the topic and include a variety of situations, such as, buses, classrooms, lunchrooms,

hallways, activity and special event spaces when considering policies. The DESE issued a document that outlined end of year guidance for LEAs regarding the best practices that should be continued to ensure the safety of both students and educators while supporting a strong, in-person learning environment. The document included universal and correct wearing of masks, physical distancing, handwashing and respiratory etiquette, cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, and ventilation/air circulation. In addition, it outlined how the LEAs should start planning for the summer and beginning of next year by meeting with their ready for learning team, posting their plan online, and beginning to accept stakeholder feedback.

The liaison worked closely with ADH officials to promote vaccinations of those aged 16+ in schools and will continue to work closely as vaccines become available for younger students. DESE encouraged LEA officials to hold on-site vaccination clinics for students or provide incentives for those who got vaccinated. The DESE also encouraged LEAs to provide excused absences for students who were out due to getting vaccinated or reactions to the vaccine.

All resources mentioned above can be accessed from the DESE website at:

https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/communications/arkansas-ready-for-learning

https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/communications/covid-19-information

      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;

Response: All public school LEAs and public charter schools reopened to onsite instruction on August 24, 25 or 26, 2020, for a minimum of 178 student-teacher interaction days during the 2020-2021 school year. If a school or LEA needed to pivot during the school year due to COVID-19, the LEA was responsible for contacting their designated POC and documenting the pivot in LEA Insights. Through the hotline and social media, the SEA was able to monitor LEA implementation of facilities operations.

LEA Insights serves as a one-stop data portal for DESE's data reporting and analytics. LEA Insights gives the capability to gain an accurate and deep intuitive understanding of LEA data. LEA Insights has six principal core modules namely Overview: Enrollment and Demographics, Human Capital Planning Tool, Academics, Facilities and Transportation, Financial and CTE Data Portal. Additionally, LEA Insights has an integrated module, Modification of Onsite Instruction (MoOI), which collects and reports data on LEA pivots on a regular basis. The pivots can be captured and reported at Grade-level, School-level or by entire District-level.

It is not anticipated that the first day of school will be delayed for the 2021-22 school year. The DESE, in conjunction with ADH, will continue to put out guidance regarding safe operations as needed. Monitoring for the 2021-22 school year will continue as it was in the 2020-21 school year unless modifications need to be made.

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

Response: The SEA and LEAs consulted with Federal, State, and local officials on a regular basis. State officials were readily available during the regular and extended hours of the COVID Education Hotline. LEAs were assigned a DESE point of contact who the superintendent would consult with in the case they had an outbreak or had specific questions related to COVID. The superintendents and LEA POCs also had access to the COVID school hotline and the ADE/ADH Liaison, who would also communicate with the DESE POCs. The Liaison met with DESE leadership twice a week virtually to express concerns and update on any health-related changes. In addition, if a school needed more specific health-related help ADH doctors and epidemiologists were available for consultations to determine if spread was happening in or out of school. In the consultations, data would be reviewed, and LEAs were able to ask questions and give input on what the safest course of action would be.

LEAs were afforded the opportunity to implement testing in their LEA in two different ways. Federal Funds issued to the Arkansas Department of Health were utilized for each type of testing. One type of testing utilized BD Veritor machines and was first utilized for symptomatic individuals who happened to develop symptoms while at school. The second was BINAX testing kits which were originally sent to LEAs who wanted to test staff on a weekly basis for screening purposes. Eventually, all LEAs who were doing testing were instructed to utilize the BINAX testing kits for individuals who were at school and were symptomatic, quarantined individuals who wished to return to school after 7 days, and for screening of any willing faculty/staff member. Plans are also being made to utilize the latest round of funding to provide screening tests in schools. DESE officials are working with ADH to finalize details and roll out screening tests for summer activities in schools.

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

Response: The SEA will continue to offer guidance and support through the COVID Education Hotline, the COVID Resource Hotline and DESE POCs. The hotlines will be open for education-related calls for as long as they are still needed. The resource hotline will go to DESE officials so they can answer questions from parents and schools regarding issues that are more education specific. Updates and professional

learning will continue to be provided to POCs through monthly updates and guidance posted on the DESE website.

2. <u>Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plans</u>: Describe how the SEA will ensure that its LEAs that receive ARP ESSER funds meet the requirements in section 2001(i) of the ARP Act and the requirements relating to the ARP ESSER funds published in the Federal Register and available at https://oese.ed.gov/offices/american-rescue-plan/american-rescue-plan-elementary-and-secondary-school-emergency-relief/ (ARP ESSER requirements) to either: (a) within 30 days of receipt of the funds, develop and make publicly available on the LEA's website a plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services, or (b) have developed and made publicly available on the LEA's website such a plan that meets statutory requirements before the enactment of the ARP Act, including:
    i. How the SEA will ensure that each LEA plan includes, or will be modified to include, the extent to which it has adopted policies and a description of any such policies on each of the strategies listed in table B1;

Response: Initially, Arkansas LEAs provided on-site instruction during the 2020-2021 school year under their Ready for Learning Plans, which were based on guidance from the Arkansas Department of Health and posted on each LEA website for public review. After the passage of the ARP, new guidance was released on March 30, 2021 which aligned with ARP guidance for schools and instructed LEAs to develop a Plan for End-of-Year On-Campus Activities and Continuity of Instruction, stating:

As part of the American Rescue Plan Act, school LEAs must post for parents and the general public a summary of its plan for safe continuation of in-person learning and continuity of services. The summary should be developed in consultation with the LEA's Ready for Learning Committee to ensure the plan identifies safety measures for teachers, staff, and students during the final quarter of the school year, while taking into consideration the many end-of-school activities that take place both on and off school campuses. The summary should demonstrate how LEAs will continue to implement safe in-person instruction. It should also broadly address the major points in this guidance and include plans for school operations and extra-curricular activities. The LEA may choose to update their previously developed Ready for Learning Plan to meet this requirement. The summary does not have to be approved by the DESE but must address the decisions of the local board of education to continue, modify, or eliminate mask-wearing requirements.

The summary must be posted on the LEA's website by April 15, 2021. LEAs receiving American Rescue Plan Act funds also must request public comment and take such comments into account in the development/modification of the plan for summer and back-to-school activities.

In addition, the DESE will continue to provide guidance to LEAs via state-wide webinars and Commissioner's Memos. The webinar will include requirements to be

included in the LEA Plan for Continuity of Services to help combat the spread of the virus (COM-21-136). The webinar will address how LEAs will need to add to/modify their current plan to comply with the ARP Act.

    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;

Response: The SEA will monitor LEA websites for the Plan for Continuity of Services no less than twice per year. Staff reviewing plans will specifically check for necessary elements of the plan, including academic needs, social-emotional, mental health, and other needs.

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

Response: The SEA will continue to remind LEAs to periodically seek input, review, and update their summary of services through Commissioner's Memos. The SEA will create a schedule for monitoring plans on a 6-month cycle. The SEA provided continuous guidance throughout the 20-21 school year and school districts throughout the state successfully provided in-person instruction all year.

    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.

Response: Every LEA submitted a Ready for Learning Plan for the 2020-21 SY, updated it for summer 2021, and will archive their most current plan on their website. Every LEA will continue to post a Continuity of Services Plan on the LEA website through September 20, 2023.   The SEA will check for mitigation strategies when reviewing plans every 6 months. Schools will need to describe mitigation strategies including, physical distancing, mask-wearing, handwashing/respiratory etiquette, cleaning and maintaining

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

healthy facilities, including ventilation, contact tracing, testing/screening, vaccination efforts, and accommodations for children with disabilities.

The SEA will continue with the health department helpdesk which provides guidance to schools on mitigation strategies, including quarantine/isolation guidelines. The POC FAQ document will continue to be updated regularly with the most current guidance for LEA officials to refer to for current guidance.

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. <u>SEA Consultation</u>: 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.

Response: Prior to the start of the 2020-2021 school year in August, the DESE anticipated that instruction would need to be responsive to COVID-19 interruptions and surveyed all districts to determine the capacity of districts to offer blended learning instructional options. Based on the data, the SEA was able to utilize federal funds to provide online curriculum and a LMS for districts that needed this support. The DESE also gathered feedback from districts through a "Ready for Learning" survey in August to determine district readiness for the school year. Results for both surveys were available for the public to review. Please see the results of the **Arkansas Ready for Learning Surveys: Phase 1 and Phase 2.** In November 2020, the ADE also conducted a survey of teachers across the state and received more than 10,500 responses. Please see the **Teacher Survey Results**.

10,686 responses, which represents 32% of number of certified teachers
• Responses from all co-op regions and Pulaski County districts (co-ops represented in Pulaski County numbers)
• Teacher responses from all grade levels and years of experiences
• Data aggregated and reported at co-op level

Professional Challenges
• Teaching virtual and face-to-face students
• Mastering virtual instruction
• Engaging virtual learners
• Amount of additional time required much greater this year
• Teacher/Staff Well-being
• Absences due to illness/quarantines

Teacher Support
• Opportunities for input
• Targeted professional development
• Back to School Playbook

Since the passage of the ARP, the DESE has updated stakeholders with background on CARES and CRRSA and how the funds were spent and informed stakeholders about the American Rescue Plan and its requirements and goals. The DESE personnel presented at a variety of events such as the ADE state board meeting, which is livestreamed for the public, and other stakeholder groups, as documented. At the end of each presentation, stakeholders are invited to give feedback regarding the most pressing needs in Arkansas, including most pressing needs for Arkansas educators and which groups of students they feel like were most impacted by COVID-19. Short answer questions were included in the questionnaire for stakeholder to give more specific details. In addition to live presentations, a video is posted on the DESE website that includes a link for the public to complete the survey. In addition, the survey was sent to groups of stakeholders such as the NAACP, disability rights groups, etc. to insure input from all stakeholders. The DESE has not heard back from the NAACP, but will continue to reach out in hopes of receiving feedback. The DESE has provided information to district homeless liaisons and foster programs throughout the state. DESE provided information regarding homeless mini-grants and sought additional information to provide feedback to the department through informational webinar. The webinar and the mini-grants provided additional feedback to the DESE on needs for the state for homeless. DESE staff and State Board of Education members conducted an onsite visit to a central Arkansas organization that supports homeless families by touring a warehouse site that organizes resources for those in need. This provided the opportunity of authentic feedback and identifying real needs at the ground level. ADE has an existing relationship with Department of Human Services who oversees the states foster care and juvenile detention centers and seeks input on an on-going basis through regular state agency collaboration.

Currently, there are over 1700 responses to the survey. The most recent results are shown in the chart below.
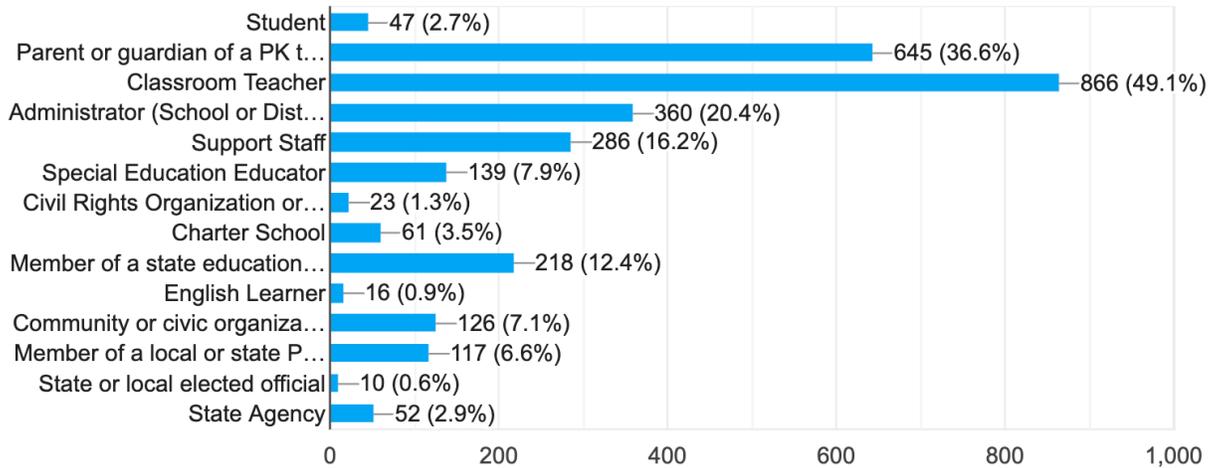
Data current as of: June 24, 2021

The DESE translated the survey into Spanish in order to engage the Hispanic/Latino families. Currently 17 stakeholder responses have been received that highlight loss of instructional time, mental and behavioral health, and more communication tools for non-English speaking parents. The DESE ESL unit and Migrant unit provided three opportunities including the survey to engage Migrant and EL educators, advocates and stakeholders through various internal communication through the Arkansas Public School Network (APSCN) and the ARKTESOL virtual conference. The DESE plans to continue providing the state presentation and survey regarding the use of ARP ESSER funding throughout the summer to all expected stakeholders.

Data from surveys showed that stakeholders are primarily concerned about lack of engagement, loss of instructional time, teachers teaching both in-person and online, and the mental health of both teachers and students.

What are the most pressing educational needs for students in Arkansas?
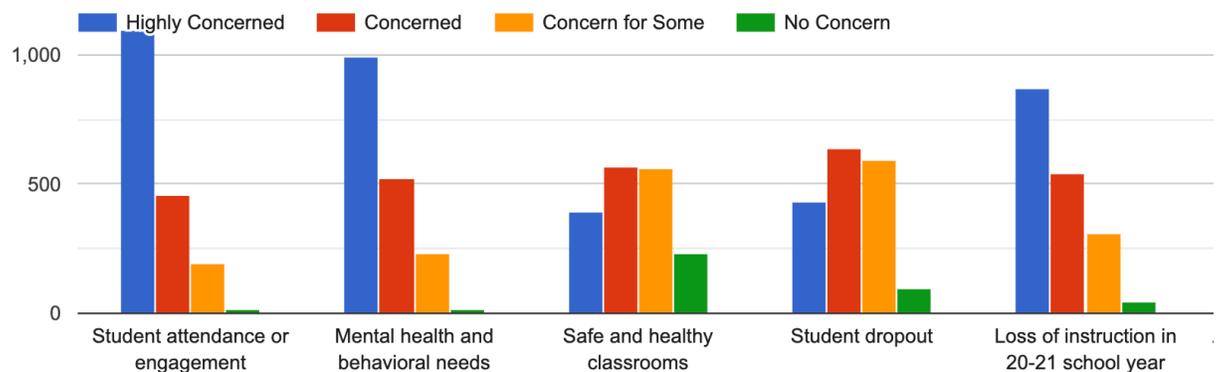
Stakeholder Survey Data, 2021

Our educational groups are considered "educational associations" not unions. Two education associations that ADE works closely with are Arkansas Educational Association and Arkansas State Teachers Association. Within the survey results, you can see this group represented. DESE will continue to solicit feedback from these two organizations as we move forward.

To address these priorities, the DESE plan includes:

Priorities from Stakeholders	State ARP Plan
Student attendance or engagement	• SmartData Dashboard (D.1.i)
Mental and Behavioral Health	• Mental and Behaviora Health State-wide Model (D.1.i) • PLC Process (D.1.i)
Loss of Instruction in the 20-21 School Year	• Readiness Model to Support and Accelerate Learning (D.1.i) • Arkansas Initiative for High Quality Instructional Materials (D.1.i) • High Quality Tutoring (D.1.i) • PLC Process (D.1.i) • SmartData Dashboard (D.1.i) • The DESE continues to consider applications for proposals to identify evidence-based interventions to address the unanticipated or emergency needs or additional projects to address the academic impact of lost instructional time.
Communication Tools for non-English Speaking Families	• TBD

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

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

    Complete the table below or provide a narrative description.

Table C1.

Funding source	Prior/current SEA and LEA uses (including funding amounts, if applicable)	Planned SEA and LEA uses (including funding amounts, if applicable)
ESSER I (CARES Act)	The SEA utilized ESSER I funds to provide digital learning opportunities to LEAs ($5.8 million) in order to maintain continuity of services at the beginning of the pandemic. In addition, the SEA bought PPE for LEAs ($1 million), provided interim assessments and test prep ($3.5 million), and focused on students who were disengaged and were at risk for dropping out ($1.5 million). The DESE also provided support to school LEAs in the areas of COVID guidance and digital learning support ($210,000).	All of ESSER I funds have been planned for and are currently in the process of being utilized.
GEER I (CARES Act)	Governor Hutchinson offered $10 million GEER Funds as an allocation that was intended to supplement student connectivity with the purchase of 20,000+ CIPA compliant internet hotspots. In addition, $14.8 million was leveraged for workforce training initiatives, another $500,000 was sent to our Deaf and Blind Schools to help support them during the Pandemic due to extra costs associated with them being residential facilities. The Governor appropriated $4.8 million to be combined with the state set aside funds used to purchase Lincoln Learning, an online platform for students for a two-year period. Higher ed was in need of PPE equipment. The governor allocated funds for PPE for higher ed and also almost $500k for broadband mapping to help with connectivity issues for our rural and underserved populations.	All of GEER I funds have been planned for and are currently in the process of being utilized.
ESSER II (CRRSA Act)	ESSER II funds have been allocated to meet the needs of a variety of populations. Because student engagement is an issue all across the state, $5 million has been set aside to help with student engagement and dropout prevention, focusing on those students who are most at risk of not graduating or dropping out. In addition, to support mental and behavioral health of students around the state, the DESE has set aside $11 million of state set-	All of ESSER II funds have been planned for and are currently in the process of being utilized.

Funding source	Prior/current SEA and LEA uses (including funding amounts, if applicable)	Planned SEA and LEA uses (including funding amounts, if applicable)
	aside funds to develop a comprehensive program to help meet the mental health and behavioral issues of students around the state. To help the special needs population in the state and to support the teachers in teaching digital learning, $4.25 million was set aside for teaching academies that will help teachers get certified to teach special education services and also to obtain a digital learning certificate to be more knowledgeable and competent when teaching virtually. These programs will be at no cost to the educators and will allow teachers to get endorsements on their license in each of these areas. $4.6 million was spent to help LEAs with emergency leave.	
GEER II (CRRSA Act)	$13.5 million was set aside for a variety of uses at the DESE. $1 million went to help fund projects at the Arkansas School for the Deaf and Arkansas School for the Blind. $2.5 million was budgeted to enhance the Computer Science and Computing initiative in the state. $10 million was allocated to be combined with ESSER II funds for the preK and mental health/behavioral support initiatives.	All of GEER II funds have been planned for and are currently in the process of being utilized.

> 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.

Response: All ESSER I funds designated for LEA subgrants have been awarded. All ESSER I funds designated for state use are obligated, except for "admin" funds which are used for internal costs and indirect cost recovery.

Fund	Total State Set-aside	Remaining State Set-aside	Total LEA Grant Amount	Total LEA Grant Remaining

ESSER I	$12,875,864	$6,247,927	$115,882,774	$17,586,753
ESSER II	$55,801,741	$50,984,214	$501,215,668	$465,234,138.2
ARP ESSER	$125,332,834	$125,332,834	$1,127,905,049	$1,127,905,049

The SEA is holding a small amount from ESSER 2 (5 million held in reserve) and ARP ESSER (10 million held in reserve) designated for LEA subgrants to complete final allocations for certain charters in FY22 that are funded on a current-year basis because they do not have a prior year Average Daily Membership. ESSER 2 funds designated for state use are currently being awarded to various entities and/or obligated via contracts and MOUs with other vendors.

eFinance does not have the capability to record LEA obligations not yet spent. We rely on actual expenditures recorded therein.

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

Response: State funding to schools and LEAs is secure in Arkansas. During the pandemic, there were no cuts to the foundation funding for Arkansas' schools. In addition to the continued full funding of education in the 2020-2021 school year, Act 614 raises the foundation funding amount for public schools from the current $6,899 per student to $7,182 per student for the 2021-2022 school year.

With the approved waivers (April 21, 2020, letter from Fank Brogan), LEAs were able to carryover federal program funds. This allowed LEAs to continue to serve the needs of students as noted in their federal programs applications.

Schools identified to receive 1003 funds utilized the funds to continue virtual professional development throughout the pandemic and benefited from the additional year of funding (due to no testing in 2020 and the state addendum to request extension to 2022 for the next ESSA identification).

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

The State provided additional mini grants to LEAs to support students experiencing homelessness. Sixteen (16) LEAs applied for additional funding because of the numbers of students the respective LEAs identified ae number of students experiencing homelessness. The SEA also provided additional mini-grant opportunities to the 21 EHCY grantees to support summer programs for students experiencing homelessness.

The Nita M. Lowey 21st CCLC provided guidance and support to grantees to permit virtual, on-site, and blended services during the pandemic. To assist with lost instructional time, DESE extended the summer programs from the usual four hours per day for up to four weeks to up to eight hours per day for up to eight weeks.

The office of special education also provided guidance and support to assist LEAs in meeting the needs of students with disabilities through blended, remote, and virtual education environments. Job-alike virtual discussion groups for supervisors, teachers, related service providers, and evaluation personnel were held to provide networking opportunities and address issues such as progress monitoring, learning loss, recovery efforts, and compensatory education. Districts were invited to apply to participate in the Inclusive Practices Project which provided coaching support and intensive onsite job embedded professional development to increase educational outcomes for students with disabilities.

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. <u>Academic Impact of Lost Instructional Time</u>: 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;

Response: The SEA will address the impact of lost instructional time by providing all LEAs with access to an early warning system to identify at-risk students, determine needed interventions, and address disproportionalities within student sub-populations. The SEA will also support evidence-based summer and after-school programs through a partnership with the Arkansas Out-of-School Network, and support for high-quality tutoring by helping to establish a Tutoring Corps to provide statewide linkage of students to qualified tutors. The SEA plans to expand the PLC process through regional networks throughout the state, which will add over 50 additional schools to training and coaching. The state will also continue the commitment to supporting access to digital learning opportunities and professional development and access to high-quality instructional materials, accessible digital content and access to fully licensed teachers. The SEA developed an application for proposals to identify evidence-based interventions to address the unanticipated or emergency needs or additional projects to address the academic impact of lost instructional time. In the applications, the applicant is responsible for providing metrics that evaluate the intervention and its success. Those metrics will be reviewed by the SEA periodically based on the interventions which are selected.

The SmartData Dashboard and formative assessments provided to districts by the state will directly assist LEAs to identify students who are at-risk and provide the appropriate intervention based on the student's need. Providing wrap around services for students serves to address resource inequities and has a moderate to large effect size of .44-.77, or a Tier 3 intervention.

Arkansas DESE funded initiatives, TEAM Digital and Virtual Arkansas, are expanding digital learning opportunities and professional development for educators to assist with the continuity of learning and teaching utilizing a multifaceted approach for learners engaged in virtual, hybrid, and digitally enhanced classes and learning options. Digital learning incorporating the Quality Matters standards will continue to be the standard for this training for educators.

The DESE will continue to provide digital content and a learning management system thorough our partnership with Arkansas Public School Resource Center. These systems have in-built seamless integration with DESE's existing Student Management System.

Building on expansion of current state-funded partner Virtual Arkansas, the DESE will develop digital Readiness Modules to support and accelerate learning in grades K-8. The Readiness Modules will provide instructional lessons, resources and tools for grade-level prerequisites. This approach will support learning loss with the intent of closing the knowledge gap while building on grade level concepts and skills.

Accelerating learning to address learning loss will also be fostered through Arkansas' Initiative for Instructional Materials (AIIM). This work includes communicating, defining and signaling what is meant by High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM). Arkansas's vision for HQIM is to ensure every student in Arkansas has equitable access to high-quality materials, grade-level instruction, and responsive practices, leading to opportunities to reach college, career, and life goals. Additionally, all Arkansas educators will have strong foundations in pedagogical content knowledge and readiness to identify and skillfully implement HQIM. This work includes incentivizing LEAs to adopt HQIM, supporting teachers with training and coaching to skillfully use materials, and aligning EPPs competencies to prepare teachers with the knowledge and skills grounded in high-quality materials. This work will be important to determine learning loss and accelerating learning as high-quality materials consider the needs and experiences of diverse learners to support them to be actively literate, critical thinkers and engaged in the community. In-school acceleration will be supported by educators providing needed support for students within the context of grade-level work and within the classroom to address the disproportionate impact of COVID using high-quality assessments, and instruction on essential learning (effect size .60-.88, Tier 3).

> 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

Response: The interventions above promote in-school acceleration utilizing high-quality instructional materials and assessments (effect size .60-.88).

The SmartData system can be used by districts based on local data as an early-warning indicator that helps them focus appropriate resources on individual students or student groups. The SEA and LEAs will utilize these data to understand where and how resources should be allocated to address students access to opportunity to learn indicators (effect size .75-1.29).

The SEA will utilize a variety of data sources to determine the impact of programs on student groups, including information that can be pulled from the Statewide Information System and other data sources such as the Engage AR database. Data such as attendance, academic progress, graduation rate, etc. will be disaggregated by student group to account for the success of the intervention. Additional information such as qualitative surveys, the number of people who participate in a program, etc. may be collected as well, depending on the nature of the intervention. In the Fall, the SEA will analyze a variety of data, including statewide summative assessments, graduation rates, attendance rates, and/or student selected mode of instruction, to determine future interventions and/or needed revisions to address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on specific groups of students.

Arkansas established indicators within eSchool to identify individual students' mode of instruction (in-person, remote, hybrid) for the 20-21 school year. As well as providing a comprehensive through year online formative assessment for grades K-8; in addition to successfully conducting the statewide summative assessment for grades 3-10. Early data indicates that Arkansas tested around 95% of students for the summative assessment. While the state is currently meeting the critical instructional needs of educators and students, we are also well-positioned for data analysis that will occur throughout the summer and early fall that will have a direct impact on the use of funding and interventions provided.

Until state-wide summative data are available, the DESE will utilize stakeholder survey data to provide evidence-based interventions that will specifically address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on prioritized groups of students – students living in poverty and students experiencing homelessness.

Evidence-based Intervention	Impact on Student Subgroups
Promote in-school acceleration utilizing high-quality instructional materials and assessments (effect size .60-.88)	High quality instructional materials (HQIM) and assessments will engage students living in poverty and students experiencing homelessness. Quality on-site instruction will support acceleration for these groups of students.
The SmartData Dashboard is an early-warning indicator system that helps LEAs focus appropriate resources on individual students or student groups to address	Allocation of resources such as staff, time, and interventions focused on identified students, including students living in poverty and students

students access to opportunity to learn (effect size .75-1.29).	experiencing homelessness, will accelerate learning.

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.

Response: The Arkansas Tutoring Corps will create a system to recruit, prepare, and support candidates to become qualified tutors who provide instruction or intervention for students to meet academic needs of at-risk learners, or students most impacted by lost instructional time. A system will connect the bank of prepared candidates with organizations seeking to utilize their acquired training skills as needed to support student academic needs. The Arkansas Tutoring Corps project will enhance learning experiences of students due to **loss of instructional time and address gaps in foundational skills** in mathematics and literacy by:

- Preparing tutors for the purpose of providing academic support to small groups of students in areas identified as high risk through pre/post assessments in mathematics and literacy.
- Recruit, train, and retain tutors statewide to support students' academic needs.

Professional Learning Community (PLC) Regional Network is intended to broaden the scope of PLC work in the state, which will help schools utilize data to determine which students need intervention. Through Professional Learning Communities, the state will build the capacity of leaders and teachers to support professionals in addressing learning loss and improving student achievement with evidence-based practices by extending the work to create the Professional Learning Communities Regional Network. The PLC Regional Network will provide a platform for a network of professionals to collaborate and receive job-embedded professional development. The training will include activities to address learning loss, including high-quality assessments to determine academic needs, evidence-based interventions, and assistance to parents and families on how to support students. The professional development will address the unique needs among low-income students, English learners, racial and ethnic minorities, homeless students, disabled students, and youth living in foster care. In addition, the network provides principals and other school leaders with the resources and partnership necessary to address the needs of their individual schools.

2. <u>Evidence-Based Summer Learning and Enrichment Programs</u>: Describe how the SEA will use the funds it reserves under section 2001(f)(2) of the ARP Act (totaling not less than 1 percent of the State's total allocation of ARP ESSER funds) for evidence-based summer learning and enrichment programs, including those that begin in Summer 2021, and ensure such programs respond to students'

academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. The description must include:

     i.   A description of the evidence-based programs that address the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of students (e.g., providing intensive or high-dosage tutoring, accelerating learning) the SEA has selected, and the extent to which the SEA will evaluate the impact of those programs;

Response: The DESE will partner with the Arkansas State University Acting by and through its Arkansas Out-of-School Network (Network) to grant the funding set aside for evidence-based summer learning and enrichment programs. Programs approved by the Network can include academic programs, specialty programs, social-emotional support programs, future-ready work opportunities, and multi-purpose programs that provide an array of activities. All subgrants awarded by the Network must meet the criteria for evidence-based summer-learning and enrichment programs. The Network will serve as the entity to oversee sub-awards for after-school, summer school, and extended-year learning programs. The Network will periodically collect data from the sub awardees to determine the effectiveness of the program. The Network will report such findings to the SEA no less than yearly.

The DESE partnered with Arkansas PBS at the end of the 2020 SY and into the Summer of 2020 to provide grade band content utilizing previous Arkansas Teachers of the Year paired with learning guides, and quality programming. This was a success in the state and well received by schools, parents, and community partners. The DESE will continue this partnership with Arkansas PBS to provide a full summer educational program for elementary aged students during the summer months to help with lost instructional time. The programs will include essential content standards in addition to social, emotional, and mental health material. Arkansas PBS will provide data regarding number of viewers and number of downloads of instructional materials for evaluation of the program.

     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

Response: The Network will give preference to programs that address academic impact of lost instructional time, provide summer and enrichment and/or comprehensive afterschool programs that address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on student subgroups identified in the American Rescue Plan, specifically students living in poverty and students experiencing homelessness. In addition, preference will be given to those programs that are developed collaboratively, contain accountability systems and measurable outcomes, increase access to comprehensive academic, social-emotional, and

wraparound services, and operate in communities with the greatest need for programs measured by:

1) The percentage of children and youth living in poverty as reported by the Cycle 2 data submission.
2) The availability of existing after-school or summer school programs within communities.

        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.

Response: The Network will work with potential applicants to provide programs that are engaging to the local population. Each grant recipient will be required to document strong community engagement and collaboration to create a community learning environment. Potential grantees will also sign a statement of assurances guaranteeing the entity's compliance with state and federal law, grant guidelines, data collection, and reporting requirements. Grants which identify as serving students who have missed the most in-person instruction and who did not consistently participate in remote instruction will be given priority in receiving funds.

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

Response: The DESE will partner with Arkansas State University acting by and through its Arkansas Out-of-School Network (Network) the Out of School Network (Network) to grant out the funding set aside for evidence-based comprehensive after school programs. Programs approved by the Out of School Network can include academic programs, specialty programs, social-emotional support programs, future-ready work opportunities, and multi-purpose programs that provide an array of activities. The Network will serve as the entity to oversee sub-awards for after-school, summer school, and extended-year

learning programs. The Network will periodically collect data from the sub awardees to determine the effectiveness of the program. The Network will report such findings to the SEA no less than yearly.

> 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

Response: The network will give preference for programs that address academic impact of lost instructional time, provide summer and enrichment and/or comprehensive afterschool programs that address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on student subgroups identified in the American Rescue Plan, specifically students living in poverty and students experiencing homelessness. In addition, preference will be given to those programs that are developed collaboratively, contain accountability systems and measurable outcomes, increase access to comprehensive academic, social-emotional, and wraparound services, and operate in communities with the greatest need for programs measured by:

1) The percentage of children and youth living in poverty,
2) The availability of existing after-school or summer school programs.

> 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.

Response: The Network will work with potential applicants to provide programs that are engaging to the local population. Each grant recipient will be required to document strong community engagement and collaboration to create a community learning environment. Potential grantees will also sign a statement of assurances guaranteeing the entity's compliance with state and federal law, grant guidelines, data collection, and reporting requirements. Grants which identify as serving students who have missed the most in-person instruction and who did not consistently participate in remote instruction will be given priority in receiving funds.

4. <u>Emergency Needs</u>: 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.

Response: It is still too early to identify emergency needs. The DESE will continue to monitor and survey stakeholders and gain feedback from LEAs. Because we do not fully understand the impact of COVID-19 in the coming year, the DESE will set back approximately 3% of the state set aside to be determined at a later date. Statewide summative assessment data is due to be back in the Fall. When data is received, the DESE will reassess where funds may be needed. In addition, enrollment numbers in the Fall will help with the identification of needs for students and schools throughout the state.

To build teacher capacity across the state to meet the needs of students with disabilities in core settings, the state will sponsor the Special Education Resource Teacher Academy in partnership with Higher Education Institutions. This program will be provided to prepare educators who are currently licensed in K-6, 4-8, or 7-12 ELA, Math, or Science to receive endorsement from DESE to teach the content area in which they are currently licensed to students with exceptionalities in an inclusive and/or resource setting. The Academy programs are designed to begin in the summer with on-going sessions/support throughout the school year. All participants could complete the entire program within one year of their acceptance to the Special Education Resource Academy. This will help provide more teachers throughout the state who can support students with disabilities.

In addition to the Special Education Resource Academy, the state is also supporting building the knowledge and skills related to online instruction by providing The Online

Teacher Academy. Educators will gain an in-depth understanding of effective digital instruction and knowledge of tools to be a teacher for online teaching with their school district for the benefit of all students now and in the future.

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

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

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

   i.   The extent to which and how the funds will be used to implement prevention and mitigation strategies that are, to the greatest extent practicable, in line with the most recent CDC guidance, in order to continuously and safely operate schools for in-person learning;

   ii. How the LEA will use the funds it reserves under section 2001(e)(1) of the ARP Act (totaling not less than 20 percent of the LEA's total allocation of ARP ESSER funds) to address the academic impact of lost instructional time through the implementation of evidence-based interventions, such as summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs, or extended school year programs;

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

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

Response: The SEA will require LEA applications for ARP ESSER funds to complete three parts for a complete LEA Application:

Part A: LEA Plan for Continuity of Services, ARP Section 2001(i)(1)	By April 15, 2021, posted on LEA website; updated every six months with public comments

| Part B: LEA Signed Assurances | By June 24, 2021, posted in ESSER folder in Indistar |
| Part C: LEA Plan for Use of ARP ESSER Funds, ARP Section 2001(e) | By August 15, 2021, posted in ESSER folder in Indistar and posted on LEA website |

The SEA will verify that all components of the ARP ESSER application have been provided to the SEA and/or public as requested. Support will be provided to LEA through memos, webinars, conferences, phone calls, and emails.

The SEA will require the LEA Plan for Use of ARP ESSER funds to include projected amounts and descriptions of activities for (1) creating safe and healthy learning environments, (2) addressing loss instructional time or loss of learning, and (3) supporting educator and staff stability and well-being. The plan must include how the LEA will monitor the implementation of evidence-based strategies and how the LEA will evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies.

2. <u>LEA Consultation</u>: Describe how the SEA will, in planning for the use of ARP ESSER funds, ensure that, consistent with the ARP ESSER requirements], its LEAs engage in meaningful consultation with stakeholders, including, but not limited to:
    i.   students;
    ii.   families;
    iii.   school and district administrators (including special education administrators); and
    iv.   teachers, principals, school leaders, other educators, school staff, and their unions.
The LEA must also engage in meaningful consultation with each of the following to the extent present in or served by the LEA:
    i.   Tribes;
    ii.   civil rights organizations (including disability rights organizations); and
    iii.   stakeholders representing the interests of children with disabilities, English learners, children experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, migratory students, children who are incarcerated, and other underserved students.
The description must also include how the SEA will ensure that LEAs provide the public the opportunity to provide input in the development of the LEA's plan for the use of ARP ESSER funds and take such input into account.

Response: To receive ARP ESSER funds, the LEA submits signed assurances that indicate the LEA will engage in meaningful consultation with the required stakeholders. The SEA will monitor LEAs archived documentation and websites for compliance with the meaningful consultation requirements.

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;

Response: The SEA will support LEA's implementation of evidence-based interventions through webinars, commissioner's memos, phone calls, conferences, documents, and emails. The LEAs are required to submit the evidence-based interventions that the LEA will utilize, the LEAs plan for monitoring the implementation of the interventions, and how the LEAs will evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions in the ARP ESSER Plan for Use of Funds. The SEA will monitor LEAs ARP ESSER Plan for Use of Funds application. Also, the SEA will utilize a tiered monitoring system and statewide data to monitor use and effectiveness of interventions.

   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

Response: The SEA will support LEAs in addressing the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 pandemic on student groups through webinars, SmartData Dashboard, commissioner's memos, conferences, phone calls, and emails. The SEA will monitor progress of the subgroups through the state-wide data system, school-LEA reporting, and the LEAs' ARP ESSER Plan for Use of Funds.

   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.

Response: LEAs will utilize the Smart Data Dashboard to monitor student attendance and other risk factors for student success. The SEA will monitor student success through the Smart Data Dashboard, statewide summative assessments, and the Arkansas ESSA School Index.

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

Response: The SEA will support LEAs in addressing educational equity through webinars, SmartData Dashboard, commissioner's memos, conferences, phone calls, and emails. Smart Data Dashboard will provide data tables for disproportionality of achievement and discipline. These data system will assist schools in identifying equity gaps.

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.

Response: Arkansas, as is consistent with the rest of the nation, is experiencing a shortage of qualified professionals in many areas, but particularly in the area of Special Education. Thirty five percent (35%) of special education teachers are certified teachers who are teaching outside their certified area and working toward certification in Special Education and twenty six percent (26%) of long-term substitutes are from the area of special education. In addition, approximately 270 special educators are classified as veterans who are preparing for retirement, while 411 are potential new hires. While Arkansas is working to try to encourage more teachers to get certified in Special Education, there is still a serious shortage that is only growing each year due to veterans retiring and others transitioning into the general education classroom.

Also related to special education services, some areas in the state are experiencing shortages of school psychologists, particularly the Delta and southern part of the state. Often timelines are missed in these areas due to the lack of school psychologists and educational examiners available to complete testing and provide reports.

Arkansas has a current 14:1 student/teacher ratio in the state. By comparison, assuming all licensed social workers were employed in schools, the student/social worker ratio is: 126:1. With a growing number of Arkansas students receiving special education for "emotional disturbance" this could pose problems in the future. In addition, in the 2017-18 SY, Arkansas is served under the national average of students under the Special Education designation, which could mean some of the populations are not receiving services from social workers in the state.

School nursing shortages are also a regional issue around the state. According to a regional survey provided by the Regional Community Health Nurse Specialists (CHNS), marginal school nurse staffing shortages exist in the Northwest and Southeast areas of the state. LEAs have

reported barriers to retaining school nursing staff, securing full-time nursing staff, securing full-time nursing staff, and ensuring all nursing staff have RN supervision. Lastly, turnover is reportedly almost double for the 2020-21 SY. The average turnover is 75 and there were 175 resignations for the 2020-21 SY.

STEM educators are still in a shortage, as they have been for many years. In Arkansas, 17% of STEM educators are non-licensed, 19% of emergency teaching licenses are from STEM subjects and 6% of the long-terms substitutes being in STEM. In addition to the shortage, there is also a discrepancy between those who are preparing and those who are veterans in the area, which could create a bigger shortage in the future.
Career and Technical Education (CTE) has 10% of teachers on an alternative licensure plan. The 10% of educators who are on alternative licensure plans is primarily due to a lack of CTE educator preparation programs throughout the state.

The areas of counseling, English as a Second Language, and early childhood are the least affected areas. Arkansas has a low number of non-certified teachers in elementary education classrooms currently. Only 60 counselors holding the position in the state are not certified.

> 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.

Response: LEAs in the State of Arkansas will face different challenges in hiring teachers, depending on region, makeup of the staff, etc. The DESE will assist LEAs with shortages by utilizing ESSER funds to provide pathways to licensure for those areas of online learning, computer science, and special education.

Teacher Academies

The DESE has formed partnerships with Arkansas universities to offer opportunities to current licensed public-school educators in grades K-12 to earn licensure endorsements and participate in job-embedded professional development while receiving graduate school credit hours - at no cost to them. These partnerships are the Online Teacher Academy and the Special Education Resource Teacher Academy.

The three universities approved for the 2021-2022 Special Education Resource Academy are Harding University, Henderson State University, and John Brown University. It is anticipated that all 200 available spots will be filled by qualified teachers. As of May 5, 2021, Arkansas has a total of 82 teachers with Elementary Education K-6 Resource, Math 7-12 Resource, or English Language Arts 7-12 Resource. Educators completing this academy and obtaining the endorsement will be able to provide special education services

within the general education classroom, as supplementary supports, or in special education classroom. This will expand the LEA's ability to consider and offer a variety of special education service delivery models. With the growing emphasis on inclusive practices, this opportunity will assist in providing Arkansas school LEAs with the skilled staff needed to lead the nation in student focused "inclusive" education.

The six universities approved for the 2021-2022 Online Teacher Academy are Arkansas Tech University, Henderson State University, John Brown University, University of Arkansas – Fayetteville, University of Arkansas – Little Rock, and University of Central Arkansas. It is anticipated that all 200 available spots will be filled by qualified teachers. As of May 5, 2021, Arkansas has one teacher with the online teacher endorsement (obtained via reciprocity). Educators completing this academy will be able to provide an in-depth understanding of digital instruction to their students, have the knowledge and tools to be a teacher leader for online teaching within their own LEA, and knowledge to pass the Online Teaching Performance Assessment.

$4.25 million of CRRSA funding will fund the Special Ed and Online Teacher Academies and $2.5 million of GEER II funds are being utilized to support the Computer Science Academy. In addition, $4.5 million of CRRSA funding went to support LEAs to be able to extend the COVID leave pay through the first semester. This helped teachers not have to use their own sick days.

> 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).

Response: To address the immediate need in Arkansas, the DESE waived licensure fees and provided expedited licensure for those teachers new to the profession and those who were seeking reciprocity. Between January 1, 2021, and April 1, 2021, a total of 328 candidates took advantage of the waiver. Seventy-three (73) of those were candidates who applied for reciprocity, while 255 were new teacher candidates.

In order to help teachers who are considering teaching in shortage areas, the DESE reimburses currently licensed teachers for licensure assessments when they add a chronically critical shortage area. From September 1, 2019-May 5, 2021, sixty-three (63) teachers were reimbursed for one hundred seven (107) assessments. The eligible licensure areas are Art (K-12), Chemistry (7-12), Computer Science (4-12), Family and Consumer Sciences (7-12), Library Media Specialist (K-12), Mathematics (7-12), Physics (7-12), Spanish (K-12), and Special Education (all areas). The DESE also reimburses all test takers, first-time licensure and endorsements, for Computer Science. Since May 2018, one hundred eighty-one (181) reimbursements for a total of $21,120.00 have been paid for both first-time and add-on licenses for computer science.

To recruit teachers, there are several financial incentives for prospective teachers sponsored by DESE. The ARFuture grant covers tuition and fees for qualifying associate degrees in Education. In addition, the Career Pathways initiative is a partnership between community colleges, workforce development agencies, employers, and social service providers. The Career Pathways Initiative (CPI) provides low-income individuals with the higher education skills and credentials they need to gain immediate entry into targeted occupations, such as teaching--ultimately leading these individuals to economic self-sufficiency. The Arkansas Geographical Critical Needs Minority Teacher Scholarship provides up to $1,500 per year for bachelor's degree candidates who agree to teach in the Delta or a geographical area of the state with a critical teacher shortage. State Teacher Education Program (STEP) provides up to $4,000 for a maximum of three years for teachers in geographical or subject shortage areas and the Teacher Opportunity Program (TOP) reimburses up to $3,000 per year to educators wishing to continue their education.

In addition to those supported by DESE, the DESE promotes several other financial incentives for prospective teachers. The TEACH Grant provides $3,772 per year for IHE-based educator preparation program candidates who agree to teach in a high need field servicing low-income students for four years. The Teacher Loan Forgiveness provides up to $17,500 for teachers serving five consecutive years in a school serving low-income students. The Single Parent Scholarship Fund supports both part-time and full-time single-parent students pursuing a post-secondary education, including associate degrees, bachelor's degrees, and certificate programs. They also make referrals to additional services to help with other needs and offer developmental programs to help recipients be job ready. These scholarships not only help with school costs. They can be used for household expenses, daycare costs, commuting expenses, and more while the recipient is in school. The IMPACT Arkansas Fellowship is a leadership preparation program provided by the University of Arkansas and funded by the Walton Family Foundation. The fellowship's purpose is to prepare future administrators in low-income schools throughout Arkansas. The Arkansas Academy for Educational Equity strives to increase educational equity in Arkansas by preparing and supporting teachers in underserved LEAs. The Academy provides a fully subsidized Master of Education in Educational Equity from the University of Arkansas. SREB-State Doctoral Scholars Program provides multiple layers of support to minority Ph.D. students who seek careers as faculty on college campuses. This program not only provides financial assistance and research funding, but also career counseling, job postings and a scholar directory for networking and recruiting. Mentoring and advocacy for scholars is crucial, and support continues into early careers as graduates become faculty members.

Data shows 60% of teachers work 20 miles from where they graduated high school, so if the students in hard to staff LEAs are provided opportunities to begin a pathway to licensure early and are encouraged and supported along the licensure pathway, they are more likely to return to these LEAs and thrive in these communities. The Arkansas Department of Education, in partnership with school LEAs and institutions of higher

education (IHEs), has established a pathway for high school students to enter the educator workforce. It begins with career-focused education in high school and allows for participating students to receive an industry-recognized credentiAal as a <u>Certified Teaching Assistant (CTA)</u> upon completion of high school career coursework and passing the ETS ParaPro Assessment.

Step 1: <u>Pre-Educator Program of Study</u> provides high school students the opportunity to begin a pathway to educator licensure. Students who complete the Pre-Educator Program of Study and pass the ETS ParaPro Assessment will receive the CTA credential. The CTA meets all the Arkansas requirements for a paraprofessional and, in addition, has completed pedagogical coursework and up to 100 hours of field experience in a local school. LEAs can also partner with an IHE to jumpstart a student's licensure journey by offering the coursework in the program of study for concurrent credit. Schools can begin recruiting students into the Pre-Educator Program of Study as early as middle school by implementing the <u>Educators Rising model</u>. EdRising provides multiple levels of student engagement through a career and technical student organization (CTSO) for middle school through collegiate students and curriculum to support the Pre-Educator Program of Study. With 51% of student members being students of color, EdRising is focused on providing a clear pathway to increase teacher diversity and teacher quality.

Step 2: LEAs employ the CTA in an instructional support position and work with the CTA's IHE to support the CTA on their journey to licensure. LEAs may provide support to CTA by offering a flexible work schedule, access to LEA technology, etc. IHEs may support CTA by offering experiential credit, night/online coursework, mentoring, etc. Candidates can use the <u>ArFuture grant</u> to pay for an associate degree in Education and then transfer to 4-year IHE to complete their bachelor's degree.

Step 3: Provide opportunities to increase the job responsibilities of CTA. Several IHEs have worked with their local LEAs to develop models that provide paid internships. An example of this is University of Arkansas at Fort Smith's teacher apprenticeship program where a teacher leader is the teacher of record over two classrooms and student interns are employed as full-time paras in each classroom for a full year. Another example is the <u>Opportunity Culture</u> model, which restructures pre-K-12 schools to extend the reach of excellent teachers, principals, and their teams to more students, for more pay, within recurring school budgets. The model includes paid residencies that makes on-the-job learning possible before teaching and leading.

Step 4: The CTA is fully licensed and eligible for employment. They have been immersed in the school's culture and received on the job training for several years, making them learner-ready on day one.

2. <u>Staffing to Support Student Needs</u>: Describe the extent to which the SEA has developed or will develop strategies and will support its LEAs in increasing student access to key support staff within school buildings, including school counselors, special education personnel, nurses, social workers, and psychologists

(e.g., hiring additional personnel or freeing up these staff to focus on providing services to students).

Response: Students, educators, families, and communities experience trauma on many different levels. The grief and loss resulting from the COVID-19 Pandemic has only added to the concerns already present in our state. DESE is developing supports for school counselors and district teams on navigating grief and loss. In phase I, DESE hosted a two-hour interactive webinar for school counselors on grief basics – March 2021. In Phase 2, DESE will schedule bi-monthly/ quarterly meetings for school counselors will be to address topics of concerns - to begin this summer. In Phase 3, DESE will develop a 1-2-hour course on Planning Responses When Death Impacts Your School, The Dougy Center. – To be Finalized August 2021. DESE will follow up with live in-person sessions for schools to support the development of their own crisis intervention plan. In Phase 4, DESE will refresh the existing 1–2-hour credit course on Arkansas IDEAS Helping Young People Through Anxiety, Grief, and Loss. – To be Finalized January 2022.

Special Education Resource Teacher Academy programs are being provided to prepare educators who are currently licensed in K-6, 4-8, or 7-12 ELA, Math, or Science to receive endorsement from DESE to teach the content area in which they are currently licensed to students with exceptionalities in an inclusive and/or resource setting. The Academy programs are designed to begin in the summer with on-going sessions/support throughout the school year. All participants could complete the entire program within one year of their acceptance to the Special Education Resource Academy. This will help provide more teachers throughout the state who can support students with disabilities.

Arkansas AWARE hosted a virtual Emotional Decompression Session for educators focused on focused on self-care and managing their mental health. Multiple AWARE also developed podcasts related to face masks, responding to grief, and supporting virtual students in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Telehealth guidelines were relaxed regarding Medicaid-related services in order to provide access to more healthcare workers. The Medicaid in the Schools Team has provided guidance for districts regarding Medicaid service waivers in order to support schools in providing Telehealth services for their patrons.

The Coordinated School Health Program set up a Google platform to help virtual learners have better access to Physical Education and Health instruction resources and provided guidance for schools to implement physical activity for virtual learners. Forty social emotional curriculum mini grants were awarded to schools and 15 Arkansas AWARE mini grants were given to support trauma informed training for school personnel and mental health first aid training. These supports built capacity for mental health services in schools.

The student:nurse ratio in Arkansas schools is 450:1. The SEA encouraged schools to empower teachers to take care of minor needs in order to free nurses up to help with the more serious conditions, including COVID-19. The SEA will continue to encourage LEAs to utilize COVID

funds or find other ways to provide differentiated and targeted support personnel to support students with appropriate wraparound services.

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).

Response: The DESE will continue to ensure its capacity and the capacity of its LEAs to collect data on reporting requirements by maintaining the use of existing systems. Currently, the DESE uses the Statewide Information System (SIS) to allow districts to submit and certify data to the SEA. The SIS pulls nightly from eSchool Plus and eFinancePlus to ensure that every school district has access to comparable administrative computing systems and services with which to meet all local and state requirements, promote increased compatibility of the administrative records and data maintained by each district office and school site, and increase the accuracy and

timelines of data submitted by school districts to the ADE for state and federal reporting, program analysis, and evaluation. The result is a state level comprehensive and integrated database of information about students, programs, district personnel, and finances.

While the SEA can pull real-time data at any moment, certain data are collected during 9 cycle pulls throughout the year (Cycle Information). Cycle Data consists of items such as Arkansas Qualified Teacher (AQT) data, per pupil expenditures, salary information, expenditure reports, students taking upper-level courses, dropout data, medical information, etc. Data pulled from cycle reports is certified by each superintendent and disaggregated at the state level. In addition to Cycle Data, state testing data is pulled into the system and disaggregated. The data from multiple systems is then published in My School Info, which is available on the DESE website for public review.

LEA Insights pulls weekly to update information required by the American Rescue Plan such as attendance, enrollment, etc. Arkansas will continue to report all current information and work to add any additional information that may be needed by ARP ESSER, such as participation in summer and after school programs.

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.

Response: The DESE will provide technical assistance and training about ARP ESSER to LEAs through Commissioner's Memos, DESE website, webinars, email, phone calls, and on-site visits.

The DESE reviewed and updated the SEAs plan for monitoring funds and internal controls under the CARES and CRRSA Acts.

Arkansas ARP Act - ESSER funds - Internal Controls				
Objective	**Risk ID**	**Risk**	**Control**	**Functional Position**
Ensure compliance with Federal statutes, regulations, and guidance pertaining to the Federal Program award.	18-0000-030	A deficiency detected through an audit is not monitored to ensure the subrecipient has taken timely and appropriate corrective action.	Federal Programs Coordinator reviews Corrective Action Plans submitted by LEAs, as a result of an audit finding to address compliance anomalies. Federal Programs Coordinator follows up with a monitoring process to ensure any needed Corrective Action Plan(s) are implemented. Significant audit findings may result in onsite monitoring.	Federal Programs Coordinator
Ensure compliance with Federal statutes, regulations, and guidance pertaining to the Federal Program award.	18-0000-001	Activities performed, or approved for subgrantees to perform, are not allowable per grant guidelines.	Federal Programs Coordinator notifies LEAs of non-allowable activities or expenditures through letters uploaded into Indistar. All documents are archived in the Federal Programs share drive which is backed up by DESE.	Third Party | Federal Programs Coordinator
Ensure compliance with Federal statutes, regulations, and guidance pertaining to the Federal Program award.	18-0000-012	Amounts provided to eligible individuals or awarded to subrecipients is not properly approved; or proper documentation supporting eligibility of participants is not maintained.	Federal Programs Coordinator maintains a list of eligible LEAs. ARP ESSER funds are allocated by formula. Allocations are posted on the DESE website.	Federal Programs Coordinator
Ensure compliance with Federal statutes, regulations, and guidance pertaining to the Federal Program award.	18-0000-036	Changes made to issuances, policies, laws or regulations are not communicated to grant staff.	Federal and state guidelines, regulations, laws, etc. are communicated to the Federal Programs Coordinator through meetings, emails, phone conferences, video conferences, national and state conferences, phone calls, website, etc.	Federal Grants Management-PSA | Federal Programs Coordinator
Ensure compliance with Federal statutes, regulations, and guidance pertaining to the Federal Program award.	18-0000-032	Documentation of subrecipient monitoring is not sufficient.	Federal Programs Coordinator archives all monitoring documents in the Federal Programs share drive which is backed up by DESE.	Federal Programs Coordinator
Ensure compliance with Federal statutes, regulations, and guidance pertaining to the Federal Program award.	18-0000-003	Expenditures charged to a grant are not supported by the required documentation.	Federal Programs Coordinator approves all ESSER applications. LEAs are responsible for documentation of all expenditures for ARP ESSER. Fiscal Support Team will review expenditures weekly and notify Federal Programs of any potential issues. Federal Programs Coordinator approves reimbursement requests. Federal Programs Coordinator oversees the implementation of any Corrective Action required by the LEA. LEAs may repay funds if Corrective Action is not complete or timely.	Fiscal Support Team | Federal Programs Coordinator

Ensure compliance with Federal statutes, regulations, and guidance pertaining to the Federal Program award.	18-0000-026	Required reports are not submitted timely.	LEAs submit the completed forms by a targeted deadline communicated in the Indistar system, Commissioner's Memos, email, phone, conferences, etc. Records are maintained in Indistar and submitted to the Federal Programs Coordinator through the Academic Development Institute (ADI). All documents are archived in the Federal Programs share drive which is backed up by DESE.	Federal Programs Coordinator | Third Party
Ensure SEA properly complies with all laws and regulations related to the American Rescue Plan Act.		DESE risks being out of compliance with ARP Act regulations.	Federal Programs Coordinator reports data into the Consolidated State Performance Report (CSPR) or other data collection tool and maintains records as per Uniform Grants Guidance.	Federal Programs Coordinator
Ensure Federal funds are used to the fullest extent for specified purposes	18-0000-035	Deadlines for deliverables are not on schedule or are not met.	Commissioner's Memos, phone calls, face to face, Indistar, conferences, emails including guidance, video conference, are used to communicate applications, forms, deadlines, and deliverables by the Federal Programs Coordinator.	Federal Programs Coordinator
Ensure Federal funds are used to the fullest extent for specified purposes	18-0000-033	The full amount of the grant was not utilized.	Federal Programs Coordinator reviews grant balances quarterly.	Federal Programs Coordinator
Ensure that the individuals performing the work have the skills and capacity to do so, and to provide employees with appropriate supervision, monitoring, and training to reasonably assure that the office has the capability to carry out its work.	14-0500.PSA-614	All subprograms are complex and can result in a lack of understanding, employee conflict, poor decisions, and inadequate technical support, which can ultimately cause harm to the overall program.	Federal Programs Coordinator will provide the necessary guidance and training to help minimize errors and to ensure that staff understand all program regulations; clearly communicate the duties and responsibilities assigned to those performing the activities; and monitor, review and approve, as appropriate, the work of those performing the activity to ensure the work is performed correctly and that technical assistance/support is provided in a timely manner.	Federal Programs Coordinator

DESE Fiscal Monitoring Plan for ARP ESSER

	Team Responsible	Activity
Records Retention	OIT	establish drive for ESSER documentation- shared access by Leg. Audit, Fiscal Support and PSA
	Federal Program	identify person responsible for archiving correspondence in ESSER folder.

	Team Responsible	Activity
Communication	OIT	establish email account for ESSER communication with LEA and SEA.
	R/T	design webpage for CARES Act
	PSA	post Commissioner Memo - every six months to remind LEAs to update safe return plan.
	PSA	maintain updated communication on CARES, CRRSA, and ARP webpage

	Team Responsible	Activity
Professional Development	Federal Programs	provide PD for Federal Programs, Fiscal Support, and Federal Monitoring teams regarding SOP and internal controls.
	DESE	provide PD for all DESE team members regarding ARP ESSER.
	DESE	provide PD for LEAs regarding ARP ESSER

	Team Responsible	Activity
Assurances/ Application	Federal Programs	establish ESSER folder in Indistar
	LEA	upload completed, signed assurance/application.
	Federal Programs	review assurance/application and provide preliminary approval (or request additional information)
		enter data into spreadsheet (shared with Fiscal Support) - LEA and categories selected.
	LEA	upload 427 GEPA statement (if revised)
	LEA	uploads Accounts Payable Check Register and Payroll Detail Distribution Detail Report into Indistar in September, annually
	Federal Programs	review Accounts Payable Check Register and Payroll Detail Distribution Detail Report
	Federal Programs	archive assurance/application and Accounts Payable Check Register and Payroll Detail Distribution Detail Report in shared drive

	Team Responsible	Activity
Allocations	Federal Grants Management	utilize data to determine calculation of allocation for LEAs. Post allocations on DESE Website.
	Federal Grants Management	Monitor expenditures within period of availability.
	Federal Grants Management	Maintains a list of SAM registrations for all LEA and ensures that a LEA with expired registration receive no funds until registration is updated.

	Team Responsible	Activity
Pre-Approvals	DPSAFT	Pre-Approval Process for Buses. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1VQ15KxBAIwz5OWr0pWoZzpxZjsTsT0DzxNKZ47AXgjg/edit?usp=sharing
	DPSAFT	Pre-Approval Process for Capital Assets https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Es7bkYdV_R0JJ4H9OkzsZT3vUl59i8avDe2eZiAYdiA/edit

	Team Responsible	Activity
Desk Monitoring of Expenditures	Fiscal Support	run Accounts Payable Check Register, Payroll Detail Distribution Detail Report expenditure, check registers monthly.
	Fiscal Support	request supporting evidence based on spending threshold; spending pattern with a vendor; unknown vendor; unidentified expenditure.
	Fiscal Support	upload Accounts Payable Check Register, Payroll Detail Distribution Detail Report expenditure, audit trail, check registers, and additional requested evidence into LEA folder in shared drive
	Fiscal Support	log review on spreadsheet
	Fiscal Support	identify risks and notify Federal Programs.

	Team Responsible	Activity
	Federal Grants Management	**pull data from Data Warehouse on 2nd Saturday and send monthly reimbursement report to Federal Programs.**
	Federal Grants Management	**send file to Federal Programs for review of reimbursement requests.**
	Federal Programs	**send reimbursement requests file to Fiscal Support.**
Reimbursement	**Federal Programs** **Fiscal Support**	**desk monitor LEA folders monthly for allowability**
	Federal Programs	**request supporting evidence as needed.**
	Federal Programs	**identify risks and documents on LEA Review doc**
	Federal Programs and Fiscal Support	**review monthly reimbursement report by LEA for allowability and approve for reimbursement.**
	Fiscal Support	**LEAs with unallowable expenditures will be contacted and require movement of expenditure to another fund source. Expenditure disputes will be forwarded to Federal Programs.**
	Federal Programs	**LEAs with unallowable expenditures will be removed from reimbursement file.**
	Federal Programs	**send revised reimbursement file to Federal Grants Management for correction.**
	Federal Grants Management	**send final reimbursement file to Federal Programs.**
	Federal Programs	**send final reimbursement file for payment approval to Federal Grants Management**
	Federal Grants Management	**provide reimbursement; no reimbursement will be provided unless prior month revenue is receipted.**

	Team Responsible	Activity
Federal Programmatic and Fiscal Monitoring	**Federal Monitoring**	**Review spreadsheet monthly and consult with Fiscal Support and Federal Programs for identified risks.**
	Federal Monitoring	**request supporting evidence as needed.**
	Federal Monitoring	**Determine need for additional monitoring and/or on-site monitoring.**

	Team Responsible	Activity
Internal Controls	**PSA - Internal Control**	**Conduct yearly review of Standard Operating Procedures, including records retention, and internal controls. Report to Assistant Commissioner.**
	DESE Office of Internal Audit	**Conduct internal audit reviews of expenditures and internal controls at the SEA and LEA level. Report to Secretary of Education.**

The DESE will utilize a risk-based monitoring system:

Tier 1 (desk monitoring)	All LEAs submitting reimbursement are monitored monthly. Monitoring is documented.
Tier 2 (request additional information)	Additional documentation is requested as needed from the LEA. Please see Arkansas - American Rescue Plan - ESSER Funds - Standard Operating Procedures (Management Structure)

Tier 3 (deeper dive into data or evidence)	DESE completes a deeper dive into data and evidence for LEAs identified for risks, sampling, or request. DESE completes a written monitoring document. A written request for documents and other evidence is sent to the LEA.
Tier 4 (on-site monitoring)	After careful review of documents (Tier 3) any unanswered, undocumented, or unresolved issues will be investigated during on on-site monitoring visit (Tier 4). Monitoring visits are scheduled each month after the risk assessment is updated with the latest information.

Technical Assistance

The DESE will provide technical assistance to LEAs through Commissioner's Memos, DESE website, webinars, email, phone calls, and on-site visits.

Appendix A: School Operating Status and Instructional Mode Data Template

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

Response: May 24, 2021

Table 1

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

Add or change rows as needed

Number of schools	All schools	Offered to all students	Offered to some students	Not offered
Remote or online only	999	2	NA	NA
School buildings open with both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)	431	431	NA	NA
School buildings open with full-time in-person instruction	934	934	NA	NA
Totals	1,041	1,041		

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).

Response: Data for each instructional level is currently not published, but can be derived and pre-calculated.

Table 2

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

Add or change rows as needed

Number of students	Total enrollment	Remote or online only	Both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid)	Full-time in-person instruction
Students from low-income families	294802	54965	32871	206966
White, not Hispanic	280590	42579	38731	199280
Black or African American, not Hispanic	92383	27584	9054	55745
Hispanic, of any race	64604	9070	6429	49105
Asian, not Hispanic	8272	3197	801	4274

American Indian or Alaskan Native, not Hispanic	2736	461	206	2069
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, not Hispanic	4612	366	656	3590
Two or more races, not Hispanic	16431	2926	1560	11945
English learners	39041	4682	3759	30600
Children with disabilities	65948	11071	7712	47165
Students experiencing homelessness	11719	1657	1284	8778
Children and youth in foster care	2174	171	265	1738
Migratory students	3059	318	467	2274

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: GEPA

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.

Response: The Arkansas Department of Education – Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) plans to continue its current policies and practices that call for barrier-free programs.

- The DESE compliance with Section 427 of GEPA is based on these policies and adds program specific actions to further erase barriers. Section 427 of GEPA highlights six types of barriers that can impede equitable access or participation: gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age.
- The DESE and any subcontractors of the program will make special efforts to improve access through announcements of upcoming programs in a variety of methods and at varying locations throughout the state.
- Specifically, the DESE will continue to work with any subcontractors, educational partners, and organizations to make information on its programs available to all regions of the state.
- Specifically, the DESE will continue to work with stakeholders to make information on its programs available in Spanish and other languages as needed.
- Specifically, the DESE will continue to work with districts to make information on its programs available to Special Education teachers and administrators.
- Specifically, the DESE will continue to work with districts to make data available on its programs to the districts, schools, and the public to ensure equitable access and participation.

Estimated Burden Statement for GEPA Requirements

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

Appendix E: Glossary of Arkansas System Terms

System	Description	Links
Statewide Information System (SIS)	A web-based system developed by the Arkansas Department of Education's Office of Information Technology to enable school districts to submit and certify data to the State. The system is used by school districts using eSchoolPlus software. The system has the capability to pull data from various source systems like StudentPlus/eSchoolPlus and, FinancePlus districts pertaining to Student Management System (SMS) and Financial Management System (FMS) on a nightly as well as on-demand basis as required by school districts.	https://adedata.arkansas.gov/sis/
Cycle Report	The SIS Cycle Reports are the set of reports generated for the school districts for each cycle submission. There are 9 cycles of submission all through the school year. The Cycle Reports strictly follow ADE SIS Handbook/Data Dictionary for data collection and reporting. These are used for data accuracy and verification purposes and certified by the school district Superintendent prior to ADE: DESE submission.	https://adedata.arkansas.gov/sishandbook
eSchoolPlus	eSchoolPlus is the DESE's Student Management System.	
eFinancePlus	eFinancePlus is the DESE's Financial Management System.	
Insights	LEA Insights serves as a one-stop data portal for DESE's data reporting and analytics.	https://insight.ade.arkansas.gov/

	LEA Insights gives the capability to gain an accurate and deep intuitive understanding of one's LEA. LEA Insights has 6 principal core modules namely Overview: Enrollment and Demographics, Human Capital Planning Tool, Academics; Facilities and Transportation, Financial and CTE Data Portal. Additionally, it has an integrated module in the form of Modification of Onsite Instruction (MoOI) module that collects and reports data on LEA pivots on a regular basis. The pivots are captured and reported at Grade-level, School-level or, entire District-level.	
Commissioner's Memo	Arkansas Department of Education's official communication channel to school districts to provide regulatory guidance and official information to districts.	https://adecm.ade.arkansas.gov/