Supporting Students in Special Populations with Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Funds and Beyond

The COVID-19 outbreak has created a unique landscape in which many students encounter barriers to full participation and engagement in their education. Students may be experiencing changes in educational and basics needs during this time of interrupted traditional education and family loss of income. There may also be a new or increased lack of stability in housing, food insecurity, and difficulty gaining access to educational and social-emotional opportunities, supports, and resources.

ESSER Funds provide an opportunity for Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to address these barriers and support students in accessing resources while learning at a distance, participating in hybrid learning, and returning to in-person instruction. ESSER funds have been included in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Assistance (CRRSA) Act, and American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act federal legislation. ESSER legislation defines approximately twelve allowable use of funds that support students. Some of the allowable use of ESSER funds include a focus on supporting our special populations (Appendix A), including summer learning and enrichment, any activities under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (current reauthorization is Every Student Succeeds Act, ESSA), activities that address unique needs, and those that address learning loss.

This document provides suggestions for additional supports for each of the special populations. In this document, Special Populations include students experiencing homelessness, migratory students, English learner students, neglected and delinquent students, At-risk eligible students, and students experiencing Foster Care. The strategies and activities should be determined at a local level as student and/or program needs are based on a variety of data and stakeholder voices. As part of the continuous improvement process, this document includes a resource with program planning questions for consideration (Appendix B). In addition to the below recommendations, there are a variety of strategies available in the MiStrategyBank and the following guidance documents shared by the Michigan Department of Education:

- April 12, 2021: *Learning Beyond COVID-19: A Vision for Thriving in Public Education* Memo
  https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/NEA_AFT_Pivot_Report_722013_7.pdf
  - Priority 2: Meeting the Needs of Our Most Underserved Students
- April 26, 2021: *Gifts that Keep Giving* MDE Superintendent Dr. Rice Video Communication
  - Michigan's Top 10 Strategic Plan focus
    - Expand early childhood learning opportunities
    - Improve early literacy achievement
    - Improve the health, safety, and wellness of students
    - Expand secondary learning opportunities for students
    - Increase the percentage of students who graduate from high school
    - Increase the percentage of adults with a post-secondary credential
    - Increase the numbers of certified teachers in areas of shortage
    - Provide adequate and equitable school funding
  - Utilize influx of new funding in long-term investments for students

Suggested Activities by Special Populations

Important Terms:

Restart or renewal activities: These activities are suggested to help students get back in school, get schools up and running, and address any unfinished learning by supporting students through acceleration instead of remediation.

Sustainable Investment and Long term impact strategies/activities: Support staff and instructional practice through the adoption and implementation of curriculum, professional learning, and coaching and training of staff. Although the funding is a one-time appropriation and will not be recurring, these types of expenditures will have a long-term impact due to building capacity and systems.

English Learners (EL) Students		
Student and Program Needs	**Restart or Renewal Activities**	**Sustainable Investment Activities**
Professional Learning and Human Assets: Unfinished Learning	• Temporarily promote qualified teachers to EL coach positions or to teachers on special assignment who design model lessons for ELs • Extend co-planning time for EL and general education teachers	• Training of staff on the acceleration of instruction for ELs • Training for administrators focused on backgrounds of families and instructional considerations

Professional Learning: English Language Development		• Provide collaborative professional learning that:
		  o includes ELs in content-focused offerings
		  o supports general education teachers to scaffold and differentiate instruction for ELs in virtual settings
		  o provides coaching for general education teachers as they modify diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments for EL students

Family Engagement: Effective Communication	• Contract/hire family liaisons to support family re-engagement with virtual home visits for EL students • Provide opportunities for the parents of ELs to convene virtually with school staff	• Purchase communication platforms that translate into multiple languages are crucial resources that LEAs must have in place to effectively communicate with families
Curriculum and Instruction: English Language Development		• Purchase core English Language Development curriculum for K-12
Curriculum and Instruction: Extended Day and Year	• Provide summer learning for ELs focused on content and language supports • Offer an August pre-start/launch for newcomer ELs to focus on English language development in preparation for the upcoming school year	• Purchase reading materials in multiple languages at multiple levels
Curriculum and Instruction: Technology and Internet Connectivity	• Purchase internet connectivity for homes of English Learners	• Purchase additional technology devices to ensure that all students have the ability to connect to virtual learning opportunities • Supportive software can help bridge the comprehension divide for ELs. Consider investing in software that is available in multiple languages or that translates for students
Curriculum and Instruction: Develop Data Dashboards		• Develop data dashboards to facilitate attendance and academic outcome

		monitoring to ensure data can be disaggregated for ELs
Social-Emotional Learning: Counseling	• Provide additional time or expand contracts with counselors or social-emotional learning professionals and translators if necessary	

Students Experiencing Homelessness		
Student and Program Needs	**Restart Activities/Short Term**	**Sustainable Investment/Long Term**
Curriculum and Instruction: Extended Day & Year	• Prioritize students experiencing homelessness for in-person learning opportunities • Provide supplemental educational learning through software or online platforms through the summer for students experiencing homelessness • Coordinate summer school and other educational opportunities with shelters or other agencies serving students experiencing homelessness	• Purchase additional technology devices to ensure that all students have the ability to connect to virtual learning opportunities
Curriculum & Instruction: Unfinished Learning	• Review student transcripts and seek opportunities to award partial credit for work students have completed regardless of whether or not the full course was completed; Consider waiving any LEA assigned graduation requirements above what the Michigan Merit Curriculum requires • Provide virtual tutoring to support students in one-on-one, targeted instruction	
Social-Emotional Learning	• Ensure sensitive, trauma-informed, and culturally competent systems are in place to identify returning students who have experienced homelessness as well as students who are newly experiencing homelessness • Increase coordination between teachers and LEA McKinney-Vento (MV) liaisons to support identification and provision of needs of students experiencing homelessness to keep them engaged in school and ensure they have access to all resources needed for success • Provide time for counselors/social workers to support the mental health	• Partner with community mental health providers to support students virtually and/or on-site at schools. • Take extra steps to ensure that historically underserved students of color and LGBTQ+ youth have access to mental health supports • Ensure the multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) has the necessary supports to identify and support students experiencing homelessness • Provide professional learning on the trauma and long term effects of homelessness on mental, emotional, and behavioral health and including staff who support discipline

	needs of students experiencing homelessness • Consider contracting with local mental health providers for similar services	
Professional Learning	• Ensure MV liaisons have adequate capacity to identify students experiencing homelessness and ensure their enrollment, full participation, and equitable access to services due to the anticipated increase following the removal of the eviction moratoriums	• Train staff to recognize trauma-related behavior and institute restorative justice practices rather than punitive/disciplinary practices • Train MV liaisons in understanding universal screener data and grade level report card data to better identify barriers to success
Parent, Family & Community Engagement	• Actively reach out to known or suspected students, particularly those who have not been connected to education or attending regularly • Increase the time MV liaisons are provided to work directly with families, unaccompanied youth and students, including providing hours for liaisons to work in the summer months • Create schedules to allow MV liaisons to visit/check on families on a regular basis throughout the school year • Provide contracted support to partner agencies to create additional opportunities for referrals, connections and support to navigate the different social services	• Provide time for MV liaisons to meet regularly with families to share data on students' current academic levels, targeted next steps for learning, and resources for families to support coursework at home • Strengthen partnership networks to ensure students experiencing homelessness have adequate access to the internet, devices, meals, academic support, and adult mentorship

Migratory Students		
Student and Program Needs	**Restart Activities/Short Term**	**Sustainable Investment/Long Term**
Family Engagement	• Increase time for migrant education family liaisons to work directly with families, including in the evenings and on weekends	• Migrant education family liaisons should check in with families on a regularly scheduled basis, even when families leave the LEA
Human Asset	• Hire additional staff to serve as migrant education family liaisons	
Social & Emotional Learning	• Survey students & parents on ways to best engage students in school	• Partner with sending schools, both out-of-state and across Michigan, and leverage strategies that help students stay fully engaged in school

Free & Reduced Lunch Eligible Students		
Student and Program Needs	**Restart Activities/Short Term**	**Sustainable Investment/Long Term**
SEL, Family & Community Partnerships	• Parent and community town hall meetings to assess the need	• Hiring a parent, community liaison to maintain relationships
Community Partnerships	• Conduct survey with local businesses, community partnership organizations, non-profits to assess the level of involvement • Family liaisons to support family re-engagement with virtual home visits for students	• Recruit community, business partners to provide wrap-around program services, rewards, incentives for students/families; • Communication platforms that translate into multiple languages are crucial resources that LEAs must have in place to effectively communicate with families
Social-Emotional Learning	• Utilize any additional staff to minimize class sizes to increase supports to At-risk eligible students	• Training of staff on the acceleration of instruction for At-risk eligible students
Effective Tutoring Intervention Supports	• Review, revise tutoring program, protocol structures to maximize the amount of time students are in tutoring, for the least amount of time; increased collaboration between teachers & tutors;	• Create accelerated tutoring model, primarily during the day, with qualified staffing, in 8 to 9-week cycles of instruction; progress monitoring that informs classroom instruction and oppositely; scheduling
8th-grade transition program to secondary	• Survey parents, teachers for the need; • Use results to plan accordingly to demonstrated need indicated by stakeholders	• Establish a high school transition model to acclimate new 8th graders to the rigors of a new schedule, reading, and mathematics during extended learning opportunities
Prioritizing Learning Standards	• Host PLCs where teachers, coaches, support staff collaborate to map the priority standards of reading and mathematics for universal instruction	• Create/redesign pacing guide and assessments (formatives, summative, local benchmarks) to reflect collaborative planning of teachers and support staff for the academic year
Creating Anti-racist, Identity Safe Learning Environments	• Survey staff, students, and parent with school safety, climate, and culture survey/s	• Create/conduct professional learning series to support cultural awareness and competence training throughout the school year
Coaching & Professional Learning	• Explore with the LEAs' administrative team the need for reading/mathematics coaches; Consider growing the LEAs' own coaches through the selection of master teaching staff	• Establish a coaching model for reading, mathematics that will support the CIP cycle of professional learning in the LEA

Neglected & Delinquent Students		
Student and Program Needs	**Restart Activities/Short Term**	**Sustainable Investment/Long Term**
Curriculum and Instruction: Extended Day & Year	• Implement Intersessions, Summer Programming, Enrichment Camps or summer school, and hire qualified personnel	• Specialized summer school curriculum and instructional materials for acceleration, enrichment, and closing academic gaps
Curriculum & Instruction: Unfinished Learning	• Increase time available for instructional staff to assist students in small groups or one-on-one	• Purchase cross-curricular instructional materials focused on power standards,

		problem-solving, and project-based learning
Social-Emotional Learning	• Provide additional time with counselors, social workers, or other social-emotional learning professionals beyond the court order requirements	• Purchase a Social-Emotional curriculum that focuses on building competencies and skills • Student workshop series/enrichment camps focused on building SEL competencies, mindfulness, and executive functions/skills (This could include LEA personnel or contracted staff)
Professional Learning		• Training of staff on trauma-informed practices, building resilience, and executive functions/skills • Embedded and ongoing training series on the acceleration of learning • Provide coaching for teachers on utilizing a variety of assessments to guide instruction and modify instructional strategies for students in residential settings
Transition Services	• Increase personnel and the time that transition services are provided to work directly with students and families who are leaving the facilities and transitioning back to the LEA, other alternate or higher education, or community programs • Transition Services may include but are not limited to increased phone calls, emails, and virtual meetings with various stakeholders (students, parents, facility staff, LEA staff, higher education, community members or service providers) to ensure students are staying engaged in schooling and receiving other mental health and welfare services needed.	
Parent, Family & Community Engagement	• While in residential and during transition home, engage with parents in goal setting, student progress updates, and next step educational plans	• Coordinate vocational and career technology programming with community partners and implement programs

Students Experiencing Foster Care		
Student and Program Needs	**Restart Activities/Short Term**	**Sustainable Investment/Long Term**
Curriculum & Instruction	• Review student transcripts and seek opportunities to award partial credit for work students have completed regardless of whether or not the full course was completed. Consider waiving any LEA assigned graduation requirements above what the Michigan Merit Curriculum requires	• Include all appropriate personnel to review student records from previous schools and apply/assign credits or partial credits toward Michigan Merit Curriculum graduation requirements
	• Planning and implementing activities related to summer learning and supplemental afterschool programs and thoughtfully including foster student participation within this instruction to close learning loss and/or learning gaps due to COVID-19 learning disruptions and other separations from learning environments	• Provide additional staff to allow for smaller group settings for intensive learning opportunities
	• Purchase educational technology (including hardware, software, and connectivity) for students to allow for connectivity and access to virtual learning, extended learning, or tutoring opportunities	• Inform staff as students enter and exit the LEA to assure foster students have access and support
Curriculum & Instruction Extended Year	• Ensure any identified foster students are included in summer or extended learning opportunities	• Train staff in the identification of students experiencing foster care to ensure these students are considered for extended learning opportunities. The designation of "foster care" automatically qualifies this group of students for additional supports
	• Implementing evidence-based intervention ensuring such interventions respond to students' academic and social and emotional needs, and addresses the disproportionate impact of the Coronavirus	• Purchase evidence-based interventions targeting specific areas • Provide staff training to implement interventions
Social-Emotional Supports	• Allow additional time with LEA personnel (guidance counselors, Learning Coaches, School Social Workers, etc.) to make intentional connections and offer supportive environments	• Train staff on trauma-informed behavior and interventions. This should be a continuous program of supports to the professional staff to ensure understanding of students

Family and Community Engagement	• Connect foster families with Child Welfare Agencies and Community partners to align services, resources, and wrap-around supports	• Engage staff with DHHS and/or Child Welfare Agencies to intentionally connect education and instruction with Human Services actions
	• Engage with post-secondary agencies to align the connection between K-12 with post-secondary learning opportunities	• Assign counselors to support the connections between high school and post-secondary

Resources

CASEL. July 2020. *Reunite, Renew, and Thrive: Social and Emotional Roadmap for Reopening School.*
https://annenberg.brown.edu/sites/default/files/EdResearch_for_Recovery_Design_Principles_1.pdf

Council of the Great City Schools. June 2020. *Addressing Unfinished Learning After COVID-19 School Closures.*
https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/313/CGCS_Unfinished Learning.pdf

Education Elements. 2020. *Capture the Opportunity: Steps to Redesign School-Level Systems for Equity.*
https://www.edelements.com/capture-the-opportunity-redesign-for-equity

Education Elements. 2020. *The New School Rules: How Thriving Responsive Teams Get Work Done.*
https://www.newschoolrules.com/?__hstc=105741404.79f848fbe6f166bbbf4af77cf5e4f061.1614048434304.161520353 5082.1615303412291.3&__hssc=105741404.2.1615303412291&__hsfp=2289783843

EdResearch For Recovery. February 2021. *Accelerating Student Learning with High-Dosae Tutoring.*
https://annenberg.brown.edu/sites/default/files/EdResearch_for_Recovery_Design_Principles_1.pdf

National Education Association (NEA) and American Federation of Teachers (AFT). March 2021. *Learning Beyond COVID-19: A Vision for Thriving in Public Education.*
https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Learning_Beyond_COVID_web_722006_7.pdf

TNTP reimagine teaching. *5 Essentials for Engaging Families and Community Partners In Reopening Efforts.*
https://tntp.org/assets/covid-19-toolkit-resources/5_Essentials_for_Engaging_Families_and_Community_Partners_in_Reopening_Efforts.pdf

TNTP reimagine teaching. November 2020. *Learning Acceleration Guide: Accelerating Learning in the 2020-2021 School Year.* https://tntp.org/assets/covid-19-toolkit-resources/TNTP-Learning-Acceleration-Guide-Updated-Nov-2020.pdf

Vegas, Emiliana and Winthrop, Rebecca. *Beyond reopening schools: How education can emerge stronger than before COVID-19.* https://www.brookings.edu/research/beyond-reopening-schools-how-education-can-emerge-stronger-than-before-covid-19/

Appendices

Appendix A: ESSER Allowable Use of Funds for Special Populations

In the various COVID-19 legislation (CARES, CRRSA, ARP), which include the ESSER grants, there are many connections and allowable uses to support our students in special populations. As we adjust our LEAs, schools, classrooms, and programming to meet the needs of students, we need to ensure that we are utilizing these grants to provide restart, short-term strategies as well as sustainable programming investments. In the American Rescue Plan Act Section 2001 ESSER Fund law (ARPA ESSER Excerpts), you will find the following allowable uses that focus on supporting students identified in special populations. (Similar allowable uses are also defined in the previous ESSER fund laws.)

- A local educational agency that receives funds under this section— (1) shall reserve not less than 20 percent of such funds to address learning loss through 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, and emotional needs and address the disproportionate impact of the Coronavirus on the student subgroups described in section 1111(b)(2)(B)(xi) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.6311(b)(2)(B)(xi)), students experiencing homelessness, and children and youth in foster care; and [Section 2001
- Any activities authorized under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, IDEA, Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, and Adult Education and Family Literacy Act. Section 2001(e)(2)(A)(B)(C)(D)
- Activities that address unique needs of low-income children or students, children with disabilities, English learners, racial and ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness, and foster care youths, including how outreach and service delivery will meet the needs of each population. Section 2001(e)(2)(F).Planning and implementing summer learning and supplemental afterschool program activities, including providing classroom instruction or online learning during the summer months and addressing the needs of low-income students, students with disabilities, English learners, migrant students, students experiencing homelessness, and children in foster care. ARP Act Section 2001(e)(2)(M).
- Addressing learning loss among students, including low-income students, children with disabilities, English learners, racial and ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness, and children and youth in foster care, of the local educational agency, including by—
    - (i) administering and using high-quality assessments that are valid and reliable, to accurately assess students' academic progress and assist educators in meeting students' academic needs, including through differentiating instruction;
    - (ii) implementing evidence-based activities to meet the comprehensive needs of students;
    - (iii) providing information and assistance to parents and families on how they can effectively support students, including in a distance learning environment; and
    - (iv) tracking student attendance and improving student engagement in distance education. ARP Act Section 2001(e)(2)(N)

Additional information and resources regarding ESSER funds can be found at:

US Department of Education: Office of Elementary & Secondary Education: Elementary & Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund https://oese.ed.gov/offices/education-stabilization-fund/elementary-secondary-school-emergency-relief-fund/

- ARP ESSER Resources https://oese.ed.gov/offices/american-rescue-plan/american-rescue-plan-elementary-and-secondary-school-emergency-relief/

Appendix B: Program Planning Questions for Consideration

- ❖ During the various modes of learning during the pandemic, what was successful for students, parents, and staff? What did not work?
- ❖ What are common barriers (equity-based, academic and whole child/basic needs) experienced by students across special populations to fully engage in educational opportunities?
- ❖ What strategies or programs may be considered to meet underserved student needs?
- ❖ How will the LEA build on successful programming to accelerate learning over the summer?
- ❖ How are schools re-envisioning relationships and making a concerted effort to connect each student with a staff mentor or trusted adult who is supportive?
- ❖ How can these funding opportunities be used to address short-term unfinished learning needs as well as to create a long-term sustainable impact?