

**Joint Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Department of Education Orientation - Friday, January 22, 2021**

Questions and Answers

Question: What actions have been taken by the DOE to ensure the least amount harm (in terms of school funding) to our communities?

Answer: DOE released the ED 279s to the school administrative units on January 25, 2021. The subsidy printouts provided are based on the \$1.2 Billion in General Purpose Aid funding recommended for FY 2021-2022 in the FY 2022-2023 biennial budget. This includes an additional \$22.5 million from the enacted supplemental budget and reflects a commitment to increase the state's share of education funding. Additional information and allocations can be found, [here](#). The Commissioner has submitted budget language to provide for a one-year adjustment to the grade 1 – 5 student/teacher ratio in the EPS model to account for this. This change increases the elementary per pupil rate which helps to offset the pupil decline and the preliminary ED 279s reflect this proposal. Adjusting the student/teacher ratio provides stability in the total cost of education for all school units. Freezing current levels of funding for those school units which lost students, without additional state funding, would result in a higher total cost of education, a smaller state share percentage, and a higher local share requirement.

Question: Please provide more information regarding the GEER connectivity expenditures.

Answer: GEER funds were awarded to support a statewide connectivity initiative. Due to the urgent need for internet connectivity so that all students could access remote, online learning opportunities, it was determined (with input from local and national experts) that the most expeditious way to provide internet access was through cellular service. School administrators identified the service providers that have a strong signal in their catchment area and hotspots were distributed with monthly service through the preferred provider. US Cellular, AT&T, and Verizon are the current service providers under GEER. Initially, GEER funds were budgeted to cover 6 months of service and when it became clear that remote and hybrid learning would extend into 2021, DOE was able to offer an extension on all service contracts until June 30, 2021 to cover the school year.

Question: What is being done to minimize recertification coursework that is currently adding stress to educators during the pandemic?

Answer: An Executive Order allowed educators whose certificates were due to expire Feb -June 2020 an additional year for renewal coursework.

Question: What amounts of the GEER, CRF, and ESSER funds have been allocated for HVAC systems.

Answer: The Governor's Education Emergency Relief (GEER) funding was used to support connectivity and learning facilitators.

The Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF) applications remain available for updates by school administrative units (SAU) and eligible nonpublic schools needing to revise their applications. The funds were provided to districts in two installments. As of January 29, \$327,016,965 in CRF has been obligated by SAUs and eligible entities and approximately \$118 million of those funds have been utilized to address facilities needs related to air quality.

Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) I: The SEA received \$43,793,319.00 and allocated \$39,851,920.29 to SAUs. As of January 29, SAUs have obligated \$2,107,379 to address air quality, including HVAC systems.

ESSER 2: Maine received \$183,138,601.00 through the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act and allocated \$164,824,741 to SAUs (based on each SAU's share of funds received under Title I, Part A in 2020). Maine's ESSER 1 & 2 SAU allocation tables are available [here](#). The ESSER II application was released on Friday, January 29.

Question: What is being done to ensure educators, school and district leaders, and state education leaders have information regarding how students are fairing academically during SY 2020-2021?

Answer: The Department is in the final stages of contract negotiations with a national testing vendor in order to continue supporting schools, district leaders, and educators and their need for timely, actionable data to inform classroom instruction.

Question: How much funding and which funding streams are being used to support a statewide assessment for students in SY 2020-2021?

Answer: Throughout the current school year, DOE content specialists, Office of School and Student Support and Special Services specialists have been providing educators with ongoing resources and technical assistance to support remote learning and assessing students. Maine is required to administer the following assessments statewide:

- Math & ELA/Literacy
- MSAA (Alternate Assessment) Math & ELA/Literacy
- Maine Science
- MSAA – (Alternate Assessment) Science
- ACCESS (English Language Proficiency)
- Alternate ACCESS

Federal assessment grant funds are insufficient to support the assessments implemented in Maine and as a result, these federal funds are augmented with state funds. Federal funds for the period of 7/1/2020-9/30/21 is \$3,719,699.00. State funds allocated for assessment for the period of 7/1/2020 – 9/30/2021: \$2,017,556. Total federal and state funds allocated for assessment: \$5,737,255.

Question: How is the DOE addressing vaccination planning?

Answer: The latest guidance provided by the DOE for SAUs is available [here](#).