



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



June 19, 2020

Dear Superintendents,

I am pleased to inform you that the district application for Elementary and Secondary School Education Relief (ESSER) funds is open and available to you in the Department's eGMS system. Yesterday an email was sent to your District User Access Administrator requesting assignment of a district staff person to the role of LEA Grant Contact for the ESSER funds. Each districts' allocation has been preloaded into the system.

These funds are an important support for districts as you consider next steps in continuing to provide education in a way that is accessible, equitable and meaningful for the children you serve. We urge you to keep the following priorities in mind as you develop your ESSER fund budgets.

1. Ensuring that all students have access to appropriate technology and connectivity;
2. Accessibility to high-quality curriculum that addresses the needs of all learners including students with disabilities;
3. Addressing student learning gaps and safely reopening schools; and
4. Providing social and emotional supports for educators and students as they transition back to school.

Please know the Department is committed to an expedited approval process upon receipt of your application.

Equitable Services Update:

Please know the United States Department of Education (USDE) is seeking an expedited rule-making process for the equitable services guidance released by Secretary DeVos and USDE on April 30. As you are aware, the guidance provided by Secretary DeVos significantly broadens how "equitable services" are shared as compared to what is required under Title I and will require LEAs to direct considerable resources to nonpublic schools.

As we previously communicated, the grant application calculates the funding pursuant to Title I. However, for informational purposes, we will also be sharing with each district an estimated calculation of the equitable services funding in accordance with Secretary DeVos' guidance. **We encourage you to discuss with your local counsel whether it is appropriate to reserve additional funds in escrow for the purposes of equitable services while this continues to evolve.** Further, you may want to consult with counsel to ensure you are aware of any potential risk of litigation related to this approach.

As soon as a final decision on the equitable services calculation is communicated to the Department, we will share it with districts. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our Chief Financial Officer, Kathy Demsey, at kathy.demsey@ct.gov or at (203) 206-4885.

Sincerely,

Dr. Miguel A. Cardona
Commissioner of Education