

ARCHIVE: COVID-19 Superintendent Call

June 1, 2020

The following are questions asked by directors of schools during this call and the answers provided by the department. For additional guidance and up-to-the-minute supports, please check the TDOE website for more information:

<https://www.tn.gov/education/health-and-safety/update-on-coronavirus.html>.

ESSER and CARES

- Question: Can the ESSER grant be written contingent to school opening or closing?
 - **Response:** the ESSER grant application should be developed based on your LEA's current identified needs resulting from COVID-19. Should school opening/closure plans change in the coming weeks and months, you would simply need to go into ePlan and revise your application to align with needs as they emerge. Feel free to reach out to your assigned FPO regional consultant if this need arises and you need further support on this.
- Question: Is there list of all the grants and explanations?
 - **Response:** The Education Stabilization fund provides over 30 billion across three primary programs:
 - The Governor's Emergency Relief Fund or GEER funds: these funds are at the discretion of the Governor's office and can be utilized to support needs in K-12, higher education, or in the private sector to meet the state's emergent needs from COVID-19.
 - The Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief fund or ESSER funds is the primary K-12 program that was awarded based on each district's relative share of the state's Title I allocation. It has a broad use of funds (ESEA, IDEA, CTE, McKinney Vento, etc.) and is intended to provide relief funding to districts as they have responded to COVID-19 and plan for the provision of educational and student supports for the next school year.
 - The Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund or the HEER funds are relief funds to be awarded to institutions of higher education also greatly impacted by COVID-19. These funds are administered by TN Higher Education Commission.

Maintenance of Effort

- Question: Is there any discussion around Maintenance of Effort in our budgets for those pages that require MOE?
 - **Response:** Maintenance of effort requirements are dictated in state law, and so districts should be building their budgets to comply with those requirements. The department is providing information to various oversight stakeholders, including in the legislative branch, to inform any conversations

on the topic. We will continue to keep district leads updated on any developments on MOE requirements as applicable.

Private Schools

- Question: Will private schools be held to the rules and regulations of CARES Act funding?
 - **Response:** Nonpublic schools follow the same non-regulatory guidance as public schools. Meaning, the same allowability guidance (ESEA, IDEA, CTE, McKinney Vento, etc.) would apply to those schools, even if a nonpublic school has a need that is different from the public school.

Scheduling

- Question: Has the department considered setting a universal start date?
 - **Response:** TN law makes school start dates local decisions. Pursuant to § 49-6-3004 (f), “beginning with the 2010-2011 school year and every year thereafter, LEAs shall commence the school year no earlier than August 1 unless the LEA's board of education votes by a majority of its membership to establish a year-round or alternative calendar for all or any of the schools within its jurisdiction in accordance with department of education attendance policies.”
 - Page 18 of the department’s Student Membership and Attendance Manual provides the following:
 - IV-C. Year-Round Schools
 - Year-round schools shall:
 1. be based on a 200-day calendar that ends by June 30;
 2. submit to the local board of education approval of the year-round calendar;
 3. be in session on Dec. 1 to accommodate the Federal Census for Special Education;
 4. participate in the same testing windows for state-mandated tests; and
 5. submit all required state reports.