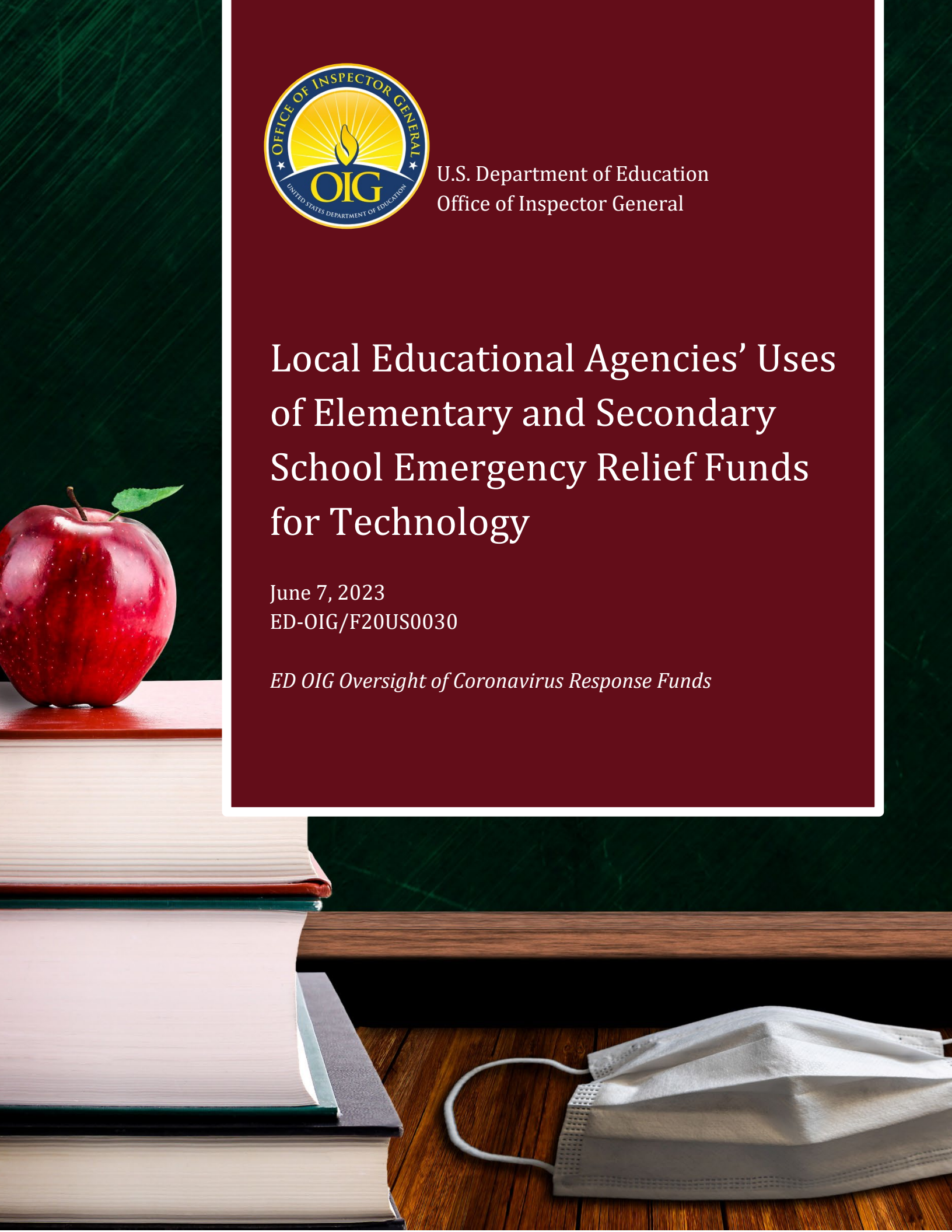

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Inspector General

Local Educational Agencies' Uses of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds for Technology

June 7, 2023
ED-OIG/F20US0030

ED OIG Oversight of Coronavirus Response Funds

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Audit Services

June 7, 2023

TO: Dr. James Lane
Delegated Assistant Secretary
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

FROM: Bryon S. Gordon /s/
Assistant Inspector General for Audit

SUBJECT: Final Report, "Local Educational Agencies' Uses of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds for Technology," Control Number ED-OIG/F20US0030

Attached is the subject final report that consolidates the results of our review of local educational agencies' uses of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funds for technology purposes. We have provided an electronic copy to your audit liaison officer. We received your office's comments on the draft of this report and considered them as we prepared the report.

We appreciate your cooperation during this review. If you have any questions, please contact me at (202) 245-6051 or bryon.gordon@ed.gov.

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Results in Brief

Purpose

This report presents information describing local educational agencies' (LEA) uses of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds for technology purposes. It describes the (1) types of educational technology that LEAs purchased with their ESSER funds, (2) challenges that LEAs experienced when using ESSER funds for educational technology, and (3) impact the educational technology had on student learning. The report is informational and, therefore, does not contain any recommendations.

What We Did

We surveyed a nationwide sample of LEAs about their experiences using ESSER funds to purchase educational technology to continue student instruction during the coronavirus. We selected a nationally representative sample of 344 LEAs to project to a universe of 17,360 LEAs about their experiences using ESSER funds to purchase educational technology to continue student instruction during the coronavirus. We achieved an 87 percent response rate based on 300 completed surveys. The estimated percentages presented throughout this report were projected with a 95 percent confidence level for our population of LEAs and subpopulations of traditional and charter LEAs.

Each LEA reported whether it received an ESSER Fund subgrant and used ESSER funds to purchase educational technology, its geographical designation, student enrollment, and percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch under the National School Lunch Program. We used these data sets to create subgroups within the survey results to identify notable variations between categories across subgroups. We also conducted four post-survey case study interviews with four judgmentally selected LEAs to further explore the responses to survey questions and provide critical contextual information.

What We Found

LEAs nationwide generally reported using ESSER funds to purchase educational technology to continue student instruction due to the coronavirus. We estimate that 92 percent[1] of LEAs used ESSER funds to purchase hardware, software, connectivity, or

[1] In Appendix C, we present the 95 confidence intervals for the estimated percentages and the associated survey questions used throughout the report.

related products or services to continue instruction remotely during the coronavirus.[2] LEAs reported that they initiated or expanded to programs that provided all students in their schools or districts access to digital devices for schoolwork and purchased hotspots that resolved or mitigated the challenges of ensuring that all students and teachers had adequate internet access. Additionally, they purchased instructional software that offered teachers flexibility when creating remote learning environments and technology-related training that was both a challenge and an unexpected opportunity to improve teacher and student use of technology.

LEAs nationwide reported on challenges that they addressed with educational technology purchased using ESSER funds (ESSER-funded technology), including resolving or mitigating challenges they faced while continuing student instruction during the coronavirus, and experienced when using ESSER funds to purchase educational technology. We asked LEAs about the most significant challenges they experienced when using ESSER funds for educational technology. We estimate that 79 percent of LEAs experienced significant challenges when using ESSER funds for educational technology. We then asked LEAs how they resolved or mitigated the challenges they experienced. LEAs most frequently reported experiencing challenges due to (1) shifting the method of instruction to remote, hybrid, or in-person; (2) ensuring students and teachers had adequate internet access; (3) purchasing educational technology; and (4) maintaining or repairing educational technology. We asked LEAs about any ongoing or future challenges that they anticipated related to using ESSER funds for educational technology. LEAs most frequently reported the need to sustain ongoing costs when ESSER funds are no longer available as an anticipated future challenge.

ESSER-funded technology enabled LEAs nationwide to continue instruction remotely during shutdowns due to the coronavirus. We asked LEAs to provide their opinions about the degree (i.e., great, some, or none) to which ESSER-funded technology enabled their schools to provide remote instruction for different student populations. We estimate that 68 percent of LEAs were enabled, to a great degree, by ESSER-funded technology to provide remote instruction for the general student population. Further, LEAs most frequently reported being enabled by ESSER-funded software, to a great degree, then hardware and connectivity to provide remote instruction.

LEAs nationwide generally reported experiencing lost instructional time and using ESSER-funded technology to address the academic impact that their student

[2] LEAs that did not use ESSER funds to purchase educational technology most frequently reported that they used other funds to purchase educational technology and used ESSER funds for other expenditures assigned a higher priority.

populations experienced during the coronavirus. We estimate that students in almost all LEAs (95 percent) experienced lost instructional time due to the coronavirus during the 2019–2020 school year, and that students in 68 percent of LEAs experienced lost instructional time during the 2020–2021 school year. We estimate that 46 percent of LEAs were able to address the academic impact of lost instructional time because ESSER-funded technology, to a great degree, facilitated activities during the 2019–2020 school year. This percentage increased to 50 percent of LEAs during the 2020–2021 school year.

What We Recommend

This informational report does not include any recommendations to the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE).

OESE Comments and Our Response

We provided a draft of this report to OESE officials for comment. OESE combined their technical comments with the Office of the General Counsel's (OGC) comments. We reviewed the requested revisions and made clarifying and technical edits to the report, where appropriate, based on the comments received.

Introduction

Background

The Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund grant was authorized by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, enacted on March 27, 2020, known as ESSER (Public Law 116-136); the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act, enacted on December 27, 2020, known as ESSER II (Public Law 116-260); and the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021, enacted on March 11, 2021, known as ARP ESSER (Public Law 117-2). Under the ESSER Fund, the U.S Department of Education (Department) awarded a total of $189.5 billion[3] to State educational agencies (SEA) to provide local educational agencies (LEA) with emergency relief funds to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the impact that the coronavirus has had, and continues to have, on elementary and secondary schools across the nation. Each Act allows LEAs to use the ESSER Fund grant to address a wide range of needs arising from the coronavirus, including purchasing educational technology to support remote learning for all students, addressing the needs of underrepresented students[4] and their teachers, planning for both school closures and reopenings, and implementing activities to address the academic impact from lost instructional time.

ESSER Fund Grant Administration

The Office of State and Grant Relations (SGR), in the Department's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE), administers the ESSER Fund. The SEA is primarily responsible for the State supervision of elementary schools and secondary schools.[5] LEAs filed local applications with their relevant SEAs, who were required to award at least 90 percent of their ESSER Fund grant to LEAs by formula. The SEA determined each LEA's ESSER allocation in proportion to the amount of funds the LEA received under Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Title I) in the most recent fiscal year. The SEA could reserve up to an amount equal to 0.5 percent of the total allocation for administrative costs, and the remaining funds were to be used

[3] The Department awarded $13.2 billion for ESSER through September 30, 2022, $54.3 billion for ESSER II through September 30, 2023, and $122 billion for ARP ESSR through September 30, 2024.

[4] Underrepresented students refer to each major racial and ethnic group, children from low-income families, children with disabilities, English learners, gender, migrant students, students experiencing homelessness, and children and youth in foster care.

[5] The definition of SEA is from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 section 8101(49).

for emergency needs as determined by the SEA to address issues responding to the coronavirus. Under the ARP, SEAs and LEAs were also required to reserve funds to address learning loss for evidence-based interventions that responded to students' social, emotional, and academic needs and addressed the disproportionate impact of the coronavirus on underrepresented students.

Use of ESSER Fund Grant

ESSER Fund grants were made available to LEAs for allowable expenditures incurred on or after March 13, 2020, the date the President declared the national emergency due to coronavirus. The CARES Act provided LEAs with considerable flexibility in determining how best to use ESSER funds to support their ability to continue to provide educational services to their students. The Department encouraged LEAs to target ESSER funding on activities that supported remote learning for all students, especially underrepresented students, and their teachers. Section 18003(d) of the Act provided a broad, permissive list of allowable LEA activities, including the purchase of educational technology (hardware, software, and connectivity) that aids in regular and substantive educational interaction between students who are served by the LEA and their teachers.

Data Collection and Analysis Process

We selected a nationally representative sample of 344 LEAs to project to a population of 17,360 LEAs[6] about their experiences using ESSER funds to purchase educational technology to continue student instruction during the coronavirus. This sample consisted of 150 traditional LEAs to allow for statistical projections to a 13,109 traditional LEA population and 194 charter LEAs to allow for statistical projections to a 4,251 charter LEA population. The estimated percentages presented throughout this report were projected with a 95 percent confidence level for our population of LEAs and subpopulations of traditional and charter LEAs.

We administered the survey on March 16, 2022. We requested that LEAs complete a survey covering the types of (1) educational technology purchased with ESSER funds, (2) challenges that they faced and expect to face in the future regarding the educational technology purchased using ESSER funds, and (3) impacts that the educational technology purchased using ESSER funds had on student instruction. If an LEA chose not to use its ESSER funds to purchase educational technology, the survey asked about the reason(s) why. The different types of educational technology purchased using ESSER

[6] In Appendix A, we present more information on our source of information and how we defined the universe of LEAs.

funds (ESSER-funded technology) we referred to throughout the survey are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Types of ESSER-Funded Technology

Types of Educational Technology	Description of Technology
Hardware	Digital devices (desktop computers, laptops, and tablets), assistive technology, adaptive equipment, and other peripheral devices but not connectivity-related devices.
Software	Instructional, administrative, online conferencing, and cybersecurity programs but not connectivity-related software.
Connectivity	Mobile hotspots, internet-connected devices (smartphones), and home internet that is paid for or managed by the LEA.
Other Products or Services	Service protection plans, insurance, training, and hiring vendors or staff.

We achieved an 87 percent response rate (294 completed surveys)[7] consisting of 145 traditional LEAs and 149 charter LEAs. We performed quantitative and qualitative analyses regarding the topics covered in the survey and LEA survey responses. We noted differences in traditional and charter LEA responses, which are presented throughout this report, that may reflect other factors that we did not measure, such as preexisting LEA resources. Each LEA reported whether it received an ESSER Fund subgrant and used ESSER funds to purchase educational technology.[8] Further, we asked LEAs to report their geographical designation, student enrollment, and percentage of students eligible

[7] We computed the response rate based on 300 completed surveys, but we used 294 completed surveys in our analyses. Of the six completed surveys not used, three LEAs did not receive ESSER funds, one LEA did not complete the survey correctly, and two LEAs responded for multiple schools.

[8] There were 20 LEAs that reported receiving ESSER funds but did not purchase educational technology using ESSER funds.

for free or reduced-price lunch under the National School Lunch Program.[9] We used these data to create subgroups within the survey results to identify notable variations between categories across subgroups. For example, throughout the report, we indicate whether a category of LEAs was more likely to report specific responses to survey questions than its counterparts. We relied on these data sets because they were the most current and complete for the purpose of our review. We did not independently verify the accuracy of the LEAs' self-reported information, but we took a series of steps—from survey design through data analysis and interpretation—to minimize potential errors and problems.

Lastly, we conducted post-survey case study interviews with four judgmentally selected LEAs that competed the survey in order to further explore the responses to survey questions and provide critical contextual information.

Methods of Instruction

After the national emergency was declared, LEAs closed for in-person instruction, re-opened, and modified instructional methods to address the significant disruptions and obstacles created by the coronavirus. At the beginning of the 2019–2020 school year, we estimate that 91 percent[10] of LEAs instructed students via in-person instruction.[11] Then, at the beginning of the 2020–2021 school year, we estimate that 60 percent of LEAs instructed students via hybrid[12] or remote[13] instruction before returning to in-person instruction (91 percent) during the 2021–2022 school year. As shown in Figure 1, traditional LEAs were notably more likely than charter LEAs to begin each school year with in-person instruction.

[9] The survey defined geographic designation as urban, suburban, or rural; and poverty level as low (less than 25 percent), mid-low (25–50 percent), mid-high (50–75 percent), or high (greater than 75 percent). We requested that each LEA report its student enrollment and used it as a proxy for their size as small (2 to 2,429 students), medium (2,560 to 9,900 students), or large (10,099 to 435,958 students).

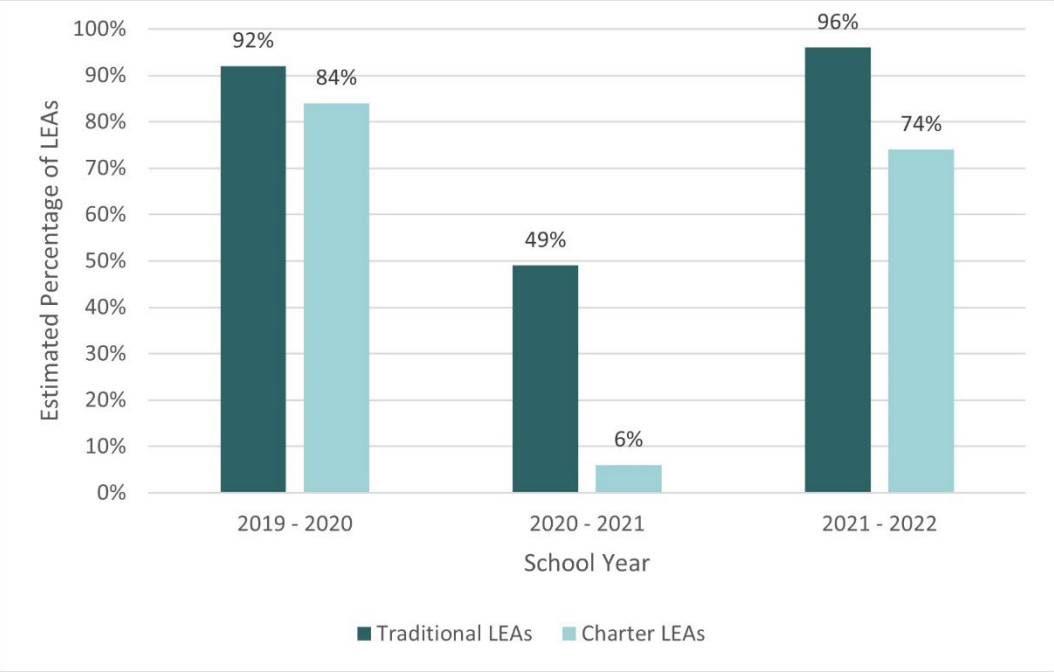
[10] In Appendix C, we present the 95 confidence intervals for the estimated percentages and the associated survey questions used throughout the report.

[11] In-person is when students receive instruction at school.

[12] Hybrid is when some students receive instruction at school and some students receive instruction at home. Both groups of students may receive instruction together in real-time, or students may receive instruction part of the week at school and part of the week at home.

[13] Remote is when students receive instruction virtually or at home.

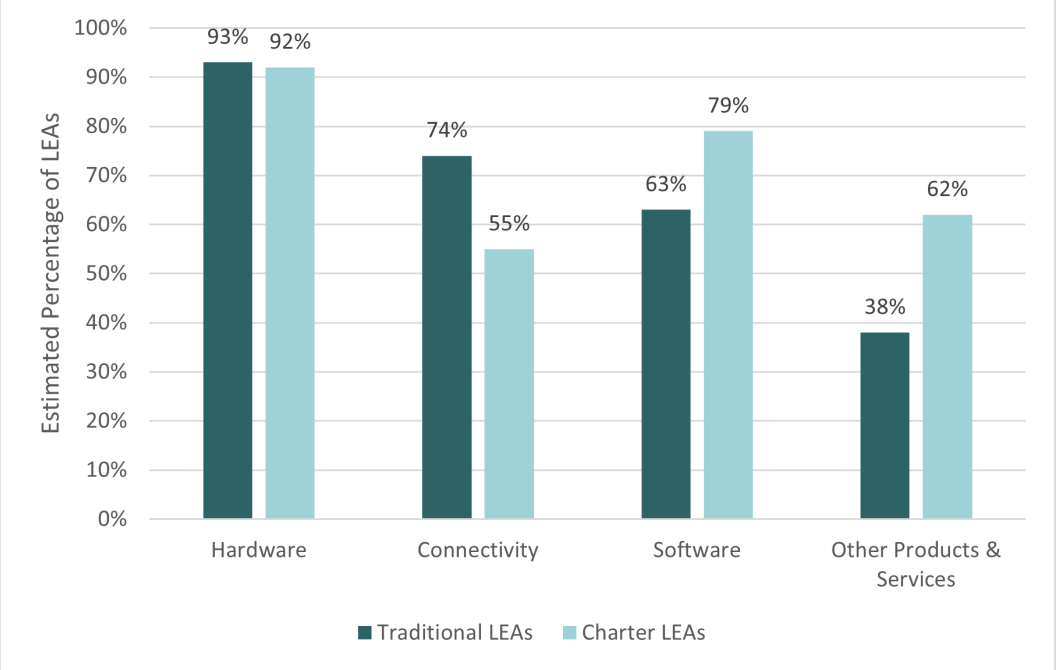
Figure 1. Estimated Percentage of LEAs' Instructing In-Person, by School Year



ESSER Funds Were Used to Purchase Educational Technology to Continue Instruction

LEAs nationwide generally reported using ESSER funds to purchase educational technology to continue student instruction during the coronavirus. We estimate that 92 percent of LEAs used ESSER funds to purchase hardware, software, connectivity, and related products or services to continue instruction during the coronavirus.[14] We noted that 93 percent of LEAs used ESSER funds to purchase hardware to continue instruction. ESSER funds were also used for connectivity (70 percent), software (66 percent), and other products and services (43 percent) such as training. Except for hardware, we identified notable differences between traditional and charter LEAs' responses for how ESSER funds were used to purchase educational technology.

Figure 2. Estimated Percentage of LEAs that Used ESSER Funds to Purchase Educational Technology by Category



As shown in the figure above, traditional LEAs were more likely to use ESSER funds to purchase connectivity and charter LEAs were more likely to use ESSER funds to purchase software and other products and services. Further, we noted through our analyses that urban LEAs, high poverty LEAs, and small LEAs were more likely to use ESSER funds to

[14] LEAs that did not use ESSER funds to purchase educational technology most frequently reported that they used other funds to purchase educational technology and used ESSER funds for other expenditures assigned a higher priority.

purchase educational technology when compared to their counterparts. In the sections below, we summarize the survey responses and highlight notable variations between types of LEAs and each category of ESSER-funded technology.

LEAs Used ESSER Funds for Chromebooks, Instructional Software, Mobile Hotspots, and Training

LEAs reported the specific types of hardware, software, connectivity, and other products and services purchased using ESSER funds. We created a word cloud as a visual representation of the estimated number of LEAs that used ESSER funds to purchase each type of educational technology. The most frequently purchased types of technology appear bigger and bolder compared to the other types of technology shown around them. As shown in Figure 3, LEAs reported using ESSER funds to purchase Chromebooks, instructional software, and mobile hotpots more than other types of ESSER-funded technology.

Figure 3. Word Cloud Illustrating Types of Educational Technology Purchased Using ESSER Funds

ESSER Funds Provided Students Chromebooks for Schoolwork

Laptops (Chromebooks)[15] were the most frequently reported type of hardware that LEAs purchased using ESSER funds, as shown in Figure 3. LEAs reported that they

[15] In the survey, we did not differentiate laptops from Chromebooks. However, we learned during a case study interview that an LEA purchased laptops, not Chromebooks, for their teachers because they needed a digital device with more advanced capabilities.

initiated or expanded to programs that provided all of their students access to digital devices for schoolwork.

- A small rural high poverty traditional LEA noted that it used ESSER funds to purchase devices for all students and transitioned to a program so each enrolled student could use a digital device to access the internet, digital course materials, and digital textbooks.
- A large urban mid-low poverty traditional LEA noted that ESSER funds made it possible to send a Chromebook home with each of its students.
- A small urban high poverty charter LEA noted that it used ESSER funds to purchase laptops for its students to complete courses through remote instruction.

ESSER Funds Supported Mobile Hotspot Purchases

Mobile hotspots were the most frequently reported type of connectivity that LEAs purchased using ESSER funds. We also noted that charter LEAs were more likely than traditional LEAs to purchase mobile hotspots. LEAs also reported that they purchased hotspots to resolve or mitigate the challenge of ensuring that all students have adequate internet access.

- A small urban high poverty charter LEA noted that it invested in wireless hotspot services for students who did not have reliable home internet connections, which allowed the students to stay connected with their teachers and classes during remote instruction.
- A large urban mid-high poverty traditional LEA noted that it partnered with a network operator to purchase mobile hotspots for students who did not have internet access.
- A small rural mid-low poverty traditional LEA noted that it leased mobile hotspots to ensure all students and staff always possessed internet access.

ESSER Funds Supported Instructional Software Programs

Instructional software was the most frequently reported type of software that LEAs purchased using ESSER funds. The instructional software purchased by LEAs offered teachers flexibility when creating remote learning environments to continue instructing students remotely.

- A large urban high poverty traditional LEA noted that the ESSER funds enabled the district to procure instructional platforms in English or language arts and mathematics for students to stay connected, access materials during remote

instruction, and receive additional support during remote and in-person instruction.

- A large urban mid-high poverty traditional LEA noted that purchased software allowed teachers to differentiate between students' reading and math performance. This LEA added that it administered assessments to identify student learning gaps during the coronavirus pandemic.

ESSER Funds Supported Training for Students, Teachers, and Parents

Training was the most frequently reported type of other products or services that LEAs purchased using ESSER funds. LEAs noted the importance and positive impact of providing training for staff and students on how to use the technology. LEAs also noted that technology-related training was both a challenge and an unexpected opportunity to improve teacher and student use of technology.

- A large urban high poverty traditional LEA noted that new educational technology required training and support at all levels, depending on teacher and student technical literacy.
- A large rural high poverty traditional LEA noted that its teachers and students learned new skills that will continue to be used to engage students and improve instruction, such as creating slideshow presentations, leading virtual tours, developing class schedules, using virtual manipulatives, and attending Zoom meetings and online training.
- A small rural mid-high poverty charter LEA noted that its students adapted to using technology, but there was a significant gap of technological skills in teachers and staff when working remotely, as well as providing remote or hybrid instruction.

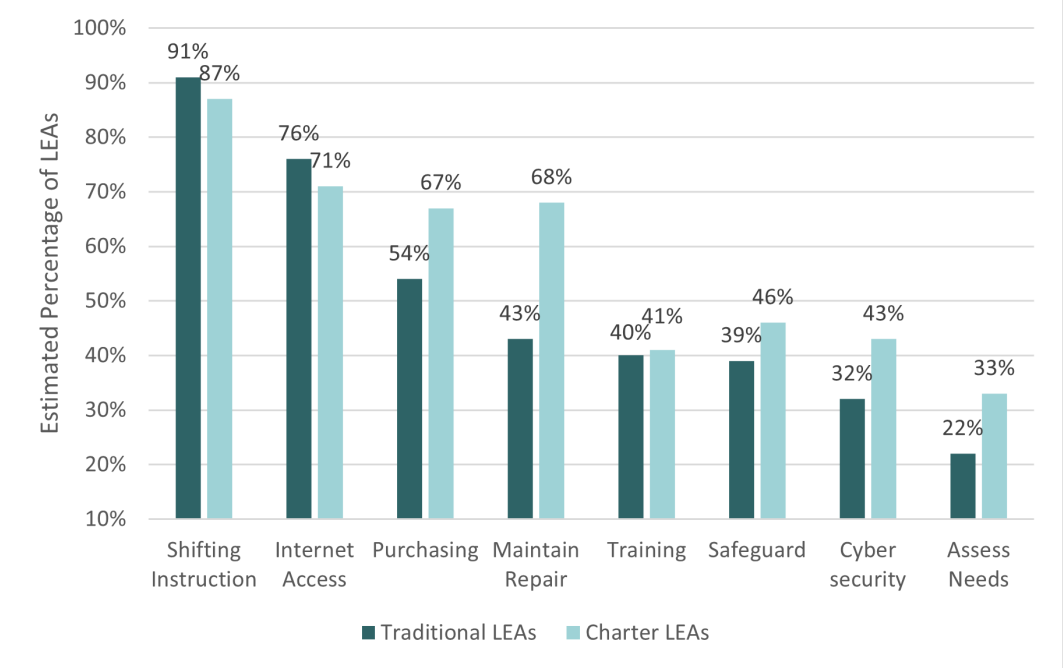
OESE Comments

OESE requested that OIG clarify that LEAs could have used other funds to purchase educational technology. We reviewed the requested changes and made a clarifying change to the report based on the comments received.

LEAs Addressed and Experienced Challenges Using ESSER Funds for Educational Technology

LEAs nationwide reported on challenges that they addressed with ESSER-funded technology, including resolving or mitigating challenges they faced while continuing student instruction during the coronavirus, and experienced when using ESSER funds to purchase educational technology. We asked LEAs about the most significant challenges they experienced when using ESSER funds for educational technology. We estimate that 79 percent of LEAs experienced significant challenges when using ESSER funds for educational technology. We then asked LEAs how they resolved or mitigated the challenges specified below in Figure 4. Comparing traditional and charter LEA responses, we noted that charter LEAs were more likely to experience challenges when using ESSER funds for educational technology.

Figure 4. Estimated Percentage of LEAs that Experienced Each Challenge When Using ESSER Funds to Purchase Educational Technology

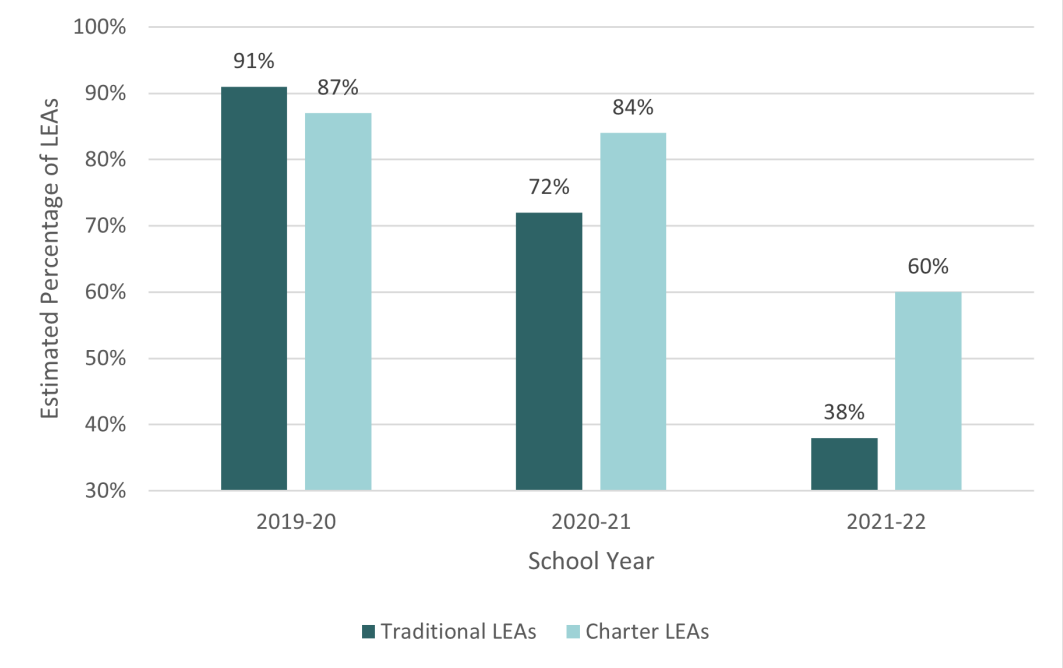


Further, urban LEAs, high poverty LEAs, and large LEAs were more likely to experience these challenges when compared to their counterparts. In the sections below, we explain that the most frequently reported challenges LEAs experienced were due to (1) shifting the method of instruction to remote, hybrid, or in-person; (2) ensuring students and teachers had adequate internet access; (3) purchasing educational technology; and (4) maintaining or repairing technology. In addition, we noted how the LEAs resolved or mitigated those challenges and the anticipated future challenges for LEAs.

Shifting Methods of Instruction was a Consistent Challenge Experienced by LEAs

We asked LEAs to consider their predominant methods of instruction at the beginning of each school year and report their opinions on whether it had been a challenge to shift to remote, hybrid, or in-person instruction during the 2019–2020, 2020–2021, and 2021–2022 school years.[16] At the beginning of the 2019–2020 school year, we estimate that 91 percent of LEAs instructed students in-person before shifting to remote or hybrid instruction in response to the coronavirus. We estimate that 90 percent of LEAs experienced challenges due to shifting their methods of instruction during the 2019–2020 school year. Specifically, we estimate that 80 percent of LEAs experienced challenges due to shifting to remote instruction, when compared to other methods of instruction. Further, we noted that LEAs' responses showed that shifting methods of instruction became less of a challenge during each successive school year for both traditional and charter LEAs but were always more of a challenge for charter LEAs than traditional LEAs. (See Figure 5.)

Figure 5. Estimated Percentage of LEAs that Experienced Shifting Methods of Instruction as a Challenge by School Year



[16] Each LEA had the option to report whether shifting methods of instruction "was not a challenge" and "not applicable—method of instruction did not change."

After the national emergency was declared, LEAs noted the importance of timing and planning when describing their challenges due to shifting methods of instruction.

- A large urban mid-high poverty traditional LEA noted that ongoing planning and long lead times were required to complete procurement, curriculum integration, teacher professional development, and student support activities.
- A small urban mid-low poverty charter LEA noted that one of its biggest challenges was developing an online teaching methodology and curriculum "on-the-fly."
- A small urban mid-high poverty charter LEA noted that it did not have sufficient time to determine its needs for remote learning but instead had to make quick decisions for remote learning. As a result, this LEA added that it scrambled to assess its needs and encountered circumstances it did not anticipate or didn't have time to evaluate.

At the beginning of the 2020–2021 school year, we estimate that 60 percent of LEAs instructed in hybrid or remote instruction. Fewer LEAs experienced challenges due to shifting their methods of instruction during the 2020–2021 school year than the 2019–2020 school year. We estimate that 75 percent of LEAs experienced challenges due to shifting instruction methods. Specifically, we estimate that 47 percent of LEAs experienced shifting to hybrid instruction as a challenge.

- A medium urban mid-high poverty charter LEA reported that during the 2020–2021 school year, its students experienced great difficulty staying connected to classroom activities while operating under a remote asynchronous method of instruction. The LEA added that it resulted in a significant decrease in student engagement and in many cases a lack of follow through on required coursework and incomplete assignments.

At the beginning of the 2021–2022 school year, we estimate that 91 percent of LEAs returned to in-person instruction. The percentage of LEAs that experienced challenges due to shifting their methods of instruction continued to lessen after the 2020–2021 school year. We estimate that 44 percent of LEAs experienced challenges due to shifting instruction methods. We estimate that 28 percent of LEAs experienced shifting back to in-person instruction as a challenge.

- A large urban high poverty traditional LEA devoted additional time and effort to train teachers and students' parents to use hardware devices and delayed starting the 2021–2022 school year by 30 days to train and prepare staff to instruct half of its students remotely and the other half in-person.

Ensuring All Students Have Adequate Internet Access

We asked LEAs whether ensuring that all students had adequate internet access was a challenge and how the LEAs had resolved or mitigated the challenge. We estimate that 75 percent of LEAs experienced challenges due to ensuring all students had adequate internet access to continue instruction. Rural LEAs noted difficulties with adequate internet access even when using a mobile hotspot because of poor cellular service in their regions.

- A small rural mid-low poverty charter LEA noted that internet access was not available to families without cellular service, which created challenges with student instruction, communication, and access to assignments. This LEA added that there was internet access at the schools, but students had transportation problems and could not get to the schools.
- A rural high poverty traditional LEA noted that, even though it purchased mobile hotspots for students, the mobile hotspots performed "not great" and the internet service in the community was "terrible."
- A medium rural mid-high poverty traditional LEA stated that hotspots generally did not work in many areas of the county because of a lack of good cellular service and broadband infrastructure, and many students did not have access to the internet.

LEAs most frequently reported that they resolved or mitigated challenges when ensuring that all their students had adequate internet access by purchasing additional mobile hotspots for students who did not have or had limited access to internet. We estimate that 81 percent of LEAs purchased additional mobile hotspots to resolve or mitigate challenges due to ensuring adequate internet access. We noted that purchasing additional mobile hotspots was not always sufficient to provide adequate internet access for LEAs within different subgroups (geographic designation, poverty level, and enrollment). LEAs reported that they used alternative approaches to support their students, families, teachers, and staff.

- The previously mentioned medium rural mid-high poverty traditional LEA bused students to schools to download and upload work assignments by utilizing the schools' external Wi-Fi and provided printed learning packets to students who did not have cellular or internet access.
- A large suburban mid-high poverty traditional LEA noted that it equipped buses with Wi-Fi to provide internet access in communities with poor connectivity.
- A large urban high poverty traditional LEA built its own cellular tower to increase broadband for communities in areas most impacted by a lack of internet access.

- A medium suburban high poverty traditional LEA noted that it improved its internet access and installed exterior Wi-Fi capabilities to each school building for students to always have access to the internet, even outside of the school day.

LEAs also collaborated with or sought assistance from other organizations to resolve or mitigate challenges to ensure that all of their students had adequate internet access.

- A medium urban mid-high poverty traditional LEA noted that it worked with local internet service providers to identify affordable internet service plans and informed families of available plan options.
- A large urban high poverty traditional LEA stated that it sought assistance from a local organization that installed exterior Wi-Fi devices on its buildings to provide students internet access.
- A large urban mid-high poverty traditional LEA partnered with the local cable company to have recorded lessons broadcasted over the local cable channel as well as streamed through its website and on social media.

Using ESSER Funds to Purchase Educational Technology

We asked LEAs whether using ESSER funds to purchase educational technology was a challenge and how LEAs mitigated and resolved the challenge. We estimate that 57 percent of LEAs experienced challenges when using ESSER funds to purchase educational technology. LEAs reported instances of limited availability of technology devices, excessive shipping delays, supply chain disruptions, and delays related to Federal policies.

- A large urban high poverty traditional LEA attributed the delays it experienced in purchasing products and services to Federal purchasing guidelines regarding single source purchasing and competitive bidding. The same LEA added that these delays were then lengthened further by supply chain issues.
- A medium rural mid-high poverty traditional LEA noted its frustration with trying to navigate the supply chain and delivery issues that resulted in the vendors either not being able to provide the educational technology or delays of up to 6 months before delivery.
- A large urban high poverty traditional LEA noted that it experienced 4 to 7 months of delays that continued to be a concern related to vendor solicitation and supply chain issues.
- A medium suburban mid-high poverty traditional LEA noted that supply chain issues led to the instructional software that it purchased arriving late in the 2020–2021 school year.

LEAs most frequently reported that they resolved or mitigated the challenges due to using ESSER funds to purchase educational technology by waiting through delays. We estimate that 58 percent of LEAs resolved or mitigated the challenges by waiting through delays. LEAs also resolved or mitigated their challenges due to purchasing educational technology by purchasing the educational technology from a different source, purchasing a different technology, or paying more for the technology than it would have cost before the coronavirus.

- A small urban mid-low poverty charter LEA stated that its biggest issues were the unavailability of hardware (i.e., Chromebooks) and long delays in receiving ESSER-funded hardware.
- A small urban high poverty charter LEA stated that it ordered Chromebooks from one vendor but, after a month-long delay, cancelled the order and purchased the devices from another vendor that had them in stock.

Maintaining or Repairing ESSER-Funded Technology

We asked LEAs whether maintaining or repairing ESSER-funded technology was a challenge and how LEAs mitigated and resolved the challenge. We estimate that 48 percent of LEAs experienced challenges when maintaining and repairing ESSER-funded technology. LEAs experienced difficulties related to staffing or supply chain issues that made repairing or replacing educational technology more challenging.

- A medium urban mid-high poverty traditional LEA noted that it underestimated the number of staff needed to set up, deploy, and manage devices; track devices distributed to students and maintain accurate inventory; and process, repair, and re-deploy returned devices.
- A large urban mid-low poverty traditional LEA noted that it was overwhelmed with the cost and time to maintain devices and it was unable to replace damaged devices.
- A large urban mid-high poverty traditional LEA noted that supply chain issues "exasperated" its technology needs related to tracking and replacing broken devices.
- A medium rural mid-high poverty traditional LEA noted that supply chain issues made it difficult to find replacement parts and devices.
- A large urban mid-high poverty traditional LEA noted that the rate at which its students damaged devices outpaced its technician's ability to repair devices. The same LEA noted that it experienced challenges with maintaining or repairing devices due to the limited availability of replacement parts and the increased cost of those parts.

LEAs most frequently reported that they resolved or mitigated challenges due to maintaining or repairing ESSER-funded technology by assigning existing staff and resources to maintain and repair ESSER-funded technology. We estimate that 55 percent of LEAs assigned existing staff and resources to maintain or repair their ESSER-funded technology. LEAs also resolved or mitigated their challenges due to maintaining or repairing ESSER-funded technology by establishing new procedures or modifying existing procedures and hiring additional staff to maintain or repair ESSER-funded technology.

- A large suburban mid-low poverty traditional LEA stated during a case study interview that it planned to teach a small group of students how to maintain or repair ESSER-funded hardware and add it to their curriculum.
- A medium suburban high poverty traditional LEA stated during a case study interview that it was a challenge for existing staff to maintain the pace of technical support. The LEA added that it needs additional technicians for hardware repair and continued instructional support because hardware repair is an ongoing concern and instructional technology support for teachers is a rising issue.

Ongoing and Anticipated Future Challenges

We asked LEAs about any ongoing or future challenges that they anticipated related to ESSER-funded technology. We estimate that 80 percent of LEAs anticipated that they would face ongoing or future challenges related to ESSER-funded technology. We noted that charter LEAs (86 percent) were more likely than traditional LEAs (78 percent) to experience ongoing or anticipated future challenges. LEAs reported the need to sustain ongoing costs was an anticipated future challenge when ESSER funds are no longer available as well as hiring or retaining sufficient staff to manage ESSER-funded technology and training to enable teachers to effectively use the technology during instruction.

LEAs most frequently reported the need to sustain ongoing costs when ESSER funds are no longer available was an anticipated future challenge. We estimate that 66 percent of LEAs would experience this challenge. We noted that charter LEAs (78 percent) were more likely than traditional LEAs (63 percent) to experience the ongoing or future challenge of sustaining ongoing costs when ESSER funds are no longer available.

- A large urban high poverty traditional LEA noted that it would continue to experience many challenges without sustainable funding to maintain or replace the staff that were hired and the software, equipment, and devices that were purchased using ESSER funds.

- A large urban mid-high poverty traditional LEA noted that it was not adequately funded to cover the technology costs needed to provide and sustain these resources.
- A large urban mid-high poverty traditional LEA noted an enormous challenge to pivot all investments in education technology back to an in-person environment and adapting these investments to support its students.

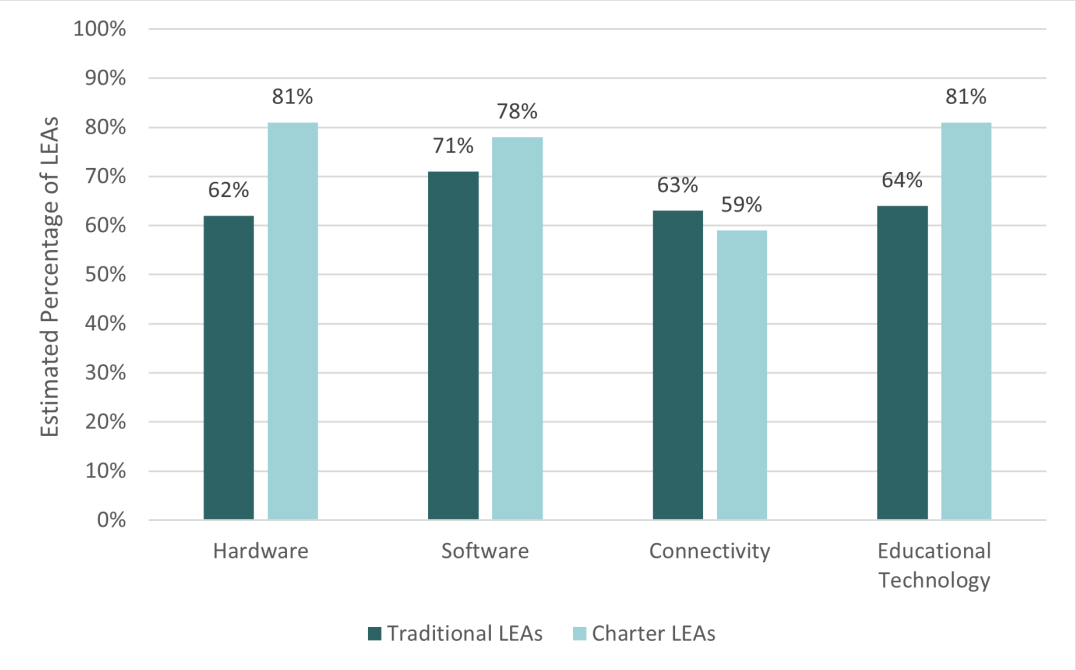
OESE Comments

OESE requested that OIG clarify that LEAs leveraged ESSER funds to address the challenges they faced during the coronavirus, not challenges they had using their ESSER funds. We reviewed the requested change and made clarifying changes to the report based on the comments received.

ESSER Funds Enabled LEAs to Continue Instruction Remotely

ESSER-funded technology enabled LEAs nationwide to continue instruction remotely during shutdowns due to the coronavirus. We asked LEAs to provide their opinions about the degree (i.e., great, some, or none) to which ESSER-funded technology enabled their schools to provide remote instruction to different student populations. We estimate that 68 percent of LEAs were enabled, to a great degree, by ESSER-funded technology to provide remote instruction for the general student population. LEAs most frequently reported being enabled by ESSER-funded software (73 percent), to a great degree, then hardware (66 percent) and connectivity (62 percent) to provide remote instruction. We also noted that, except for ESSER-funded connectivity, charter LEAs were more likely than traditional LEAs to be enabled, to a great degree, by ESSER-funded technology to continue instruction remotely. (See Figure 6.)

Figure 6. Estimated Percentage of LEAs' Enabled, to a Great Degree, to Continue Remote Instruction by ESSER-Funded Technology for General Student Populations



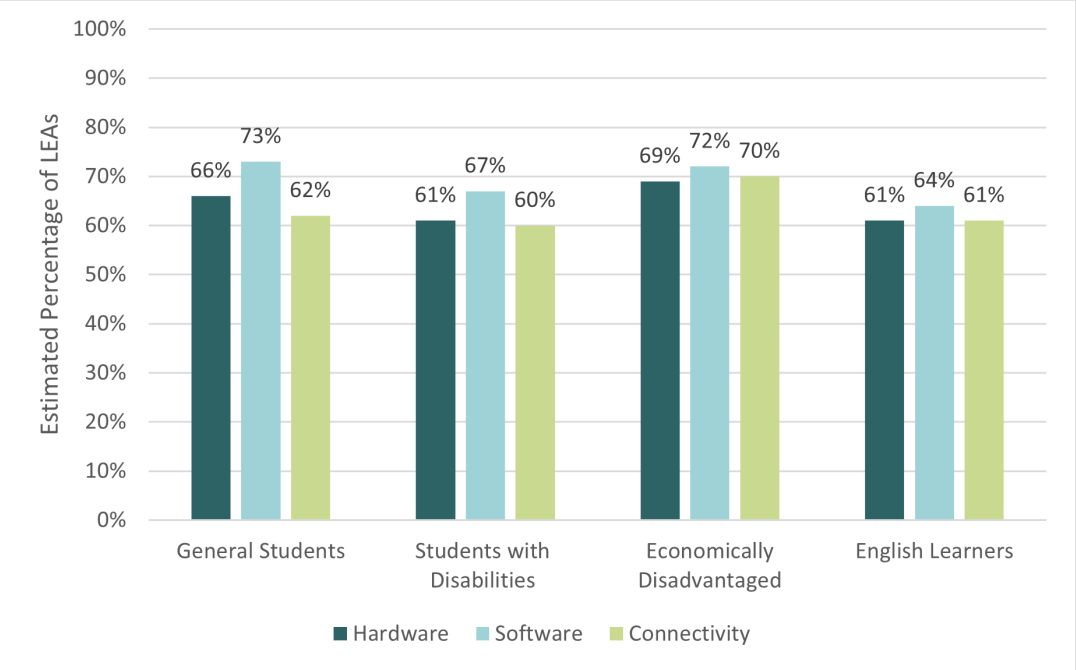
In addition, we noted that certain subgroups of LEAs were more likely than their counterparts to be enabled by ESSER-funded technology to provide remote instruction. We noted that urban LEAs, high poverty LEAs, and large LEAs were more likely to be enabled by ESSER-funded technology to continue instruction remotely. LEAs noted that ESSER-funded software offered teachers flexibility during instructional changes.

- A small urban high poverty charter LEA noted that its digital curriculum platform dramatically increased its reading support and ability to facilitate synchronous and asynchronous learning, discussion, and feedback. This LEA added that it also used a web-based application for virtual co-teaching, teacher-led learning modules for independent practice, access to engaging digital materials for students, and allowing students to make up for missed classes or finish incomplete work assignments.
- A small rural mid-low poverty traditional LEA noted that ESSER-funded technology enabled it to pilot a post-pandemic flexible schedule in the middle school and high school. These scheduling options will provide students opportunity to engage in virtual learning not regularly offered during the school day and allow students to engage in off campus learning activities and yet still have access to content they can engage at their convenience.
- A large suburban mid-low poverty traditional LEA noted that it leveraged its existing virtual school to create comprehensive virtual shell courses for elementary grade levels and for most secondary courses during their transition to remote instruction. This provided teachers with virtual lesson plans and course materials to use with their students through the existing instructional software. This LEA also provided ESSER-funded technology to students needing digital devices and internet access.

ESSER-Funded Technology Enabled LEAs to Continue Instruction Remotely Across Student Populations

ESSER-funded technology enabled LEAs to continue instruction remotely across student populations. To a great degree, LEAs reported that general student population (68 percent), economically disadvantaged students (69 percent), English learners (67 percent) and students with disabilities (62 percent) were enabled by ESSER-funded technology to continue instruction remotely. We also noted that ESSER-funded software was more likely than hardware and connectivity to enable LEAs to continue instruction remotely across student populations. (See Figure 7.)

Figure 7. Estimated Percentage of LEAs Enabled, to a Great Degree, to Continue Remote Instruction by Each Type of ESSER-Funded Technology for the Specified Student Populations



LEAs noted that ESSER-funded technology enabled them to successfully shift between methods of instruction during the coronavirus.

- A large urban high poverty traditional LEA noted that without ESSER funds, it would not have been possible to purchase and assign a Chromebook for every student, a hotspot for in-home internet-access (if needed), instructional software, and educational hardware in every classroom for students and teachers to be successful during instructional shifts. This LEA added that an unintended benefit of instructional shifts was the radical growth for most staff and students in the use of educational technology.
- A medium urban high poverty traditional LEA noted that providing internet-access, instructional software, and access to digital resources to economically disadvantaged families was critical for students and teachers to continue instruction during remote instruction.
- A small rural mid-low poverty traditional LEA noted that ESSER funds allowed it to purchase software necessary to address learning loss and to enhance systems already in place.

OESE Comments

OESE requested that OIG remove or use their suggested revision to replace a sentence stating that, "We also noted that ESSER-funded software was more likely than hardware and connectivity to enable LEAs to enable remote instruction." We reviewed the requested change and made a clarifying change to the report based on the comments received.

LEAs Experienced Lost Instructional Time and Used ESSER Funds to Address the Academic Impact of Lost Instructional Time

LEAs nationwide reported experiencing lost instructional time and using ESSER-funded technology to address the academic impact that their student populations experienced during the coronavirus. We asked LEAs to provide their opinions about the degree (i.e., great, some, or none) to which different student populations were academically impacted, and the degree to which ESSER-funded technology facilitated activities that addressed the academic impact of lost instructional time.[17] In the sections below, we highlight notable differences between traditional and charter LEAs and variations between applicable student populations, and also include LEA perspectives about using ESSER-funded technology.

Fewer LEAs Experienced Lost Instructional Time During the 2020–2021 School Year

We estimate that 95 percent of LEAs experienced lost instructional time during the 2019–2020 school year due to the coronavirus. However, notably fewer LEAs experienced lost instructional time during the 2020–2021 school year (68 percent). We noted that traditional LEAs were more likely than charter LEAs to experience lost instructional time during the 2019–2020 school year. Conversely, charter LEAs were more likely than traditional LEAs to experience lost instructional time during the 2020–2021 school year. Further, we noted that the decline from the 2019–2020 to the 2020–2021 school year in traditional LEAs (30 percent) that experienced lost instructional time was notably more than charter LEAs (15 percent) as shown in the table below. (See Table 2.)

[17] The term "academic impact of lost instructional time" is used in place of "learning loss" experienced by students as a result of the coronavirus, which is the term that is used in the ARP and the CRRSA Acts.

Table 2. Estimated Percentage of LEAs that Experienced Lost Instructional Time by LEA Type and School Year

LEAs	2019–2020 School Year	2020–2021 School Year	Difference
Traditional	96%	66%	-30%
Charter	89%	74%	-15%
All	95%	68%	-27%

LEAs noted that they were able to provide instruction and more effectively address the academic impact of the coronavirus on student populations through purchasing educational technology.

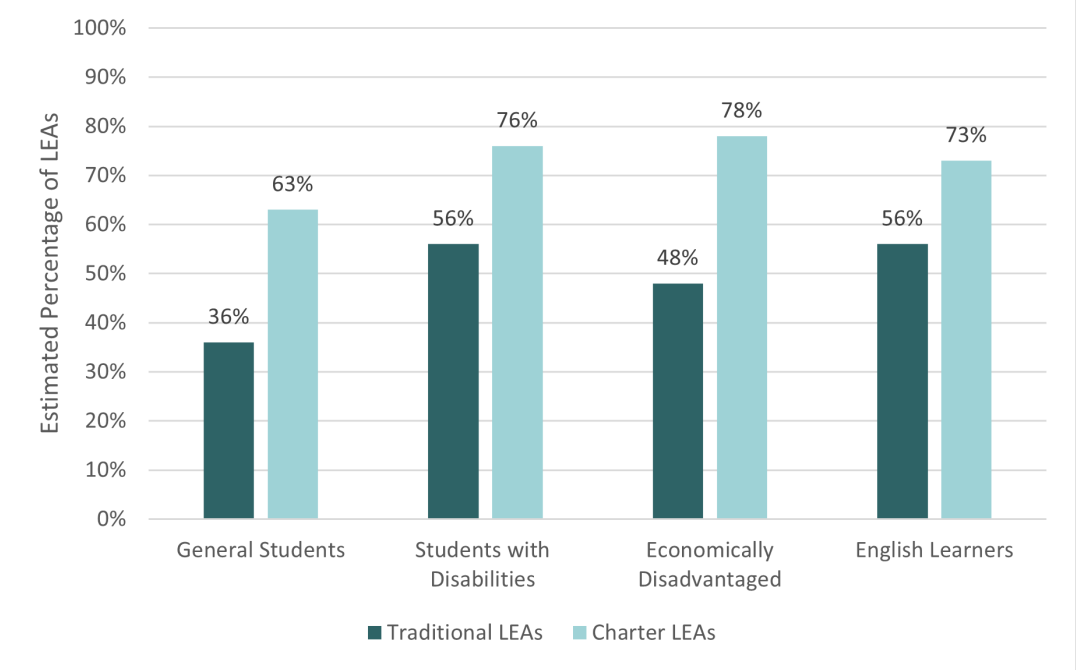
- A small urban high poverty charter LEA explained that remote learning was more effective in the 2020–2021 school year because it acquired the necessary technology, experience, and ability to implement an effective plan to shift methods of instruction.
- A large urban mid-low poverty traditional LEA noted that it was open for most of the 2020–2021 school year and purchased software that allowed its students to catch up academically.
- A large urban mid-high poverty traditional LEA noted that while it did not experience any lost instructional time during the 2020–2021 school year, the ESSER-funded technology enabled it to navigate the significant social-emotional impact on teachers and students as well as academic struggle due to the change in instructional modality (hybrid, remote).
- A medium suburban mid-high poverty traditional LEA noted that it purchased instructional software that created an audio-visual system designed for active learning. The LEA noted that the activities were designed by and for educators to help students foster social-emotional, physical, and intellectual skills to the fullest through immersive learning experiences. Further, the LEA noted that the experiences help students develop confidence, empathy, self-esteem, and interpersonal skills; and helped reduce anxiety and stress.

Student Populations Experienced a Great Degree of Academic Impact of Lost Instructional Time

We estimate that 42 percent of LEAs experienced a great degree of academic impact of lost instructional time for their general student populations during the 2019–2020 school year. Specifically, LEAs reported that students with disabilities (60 percent), English learners (59 percent), and economically disadvantaged students (54 percent)

experienced a great degree of academic impact of lost instructional time. We also noted that charter LEAs notably were more likely to experience a great degree of academic impact of lost instructional time than traditional LEAs across student populations, as shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Estimated Percentage of LEAs that Experienced a Great Degree of Academic Impact of Lost Instructional Time by LEA Type and Student Population for the 2019–2020 School Year



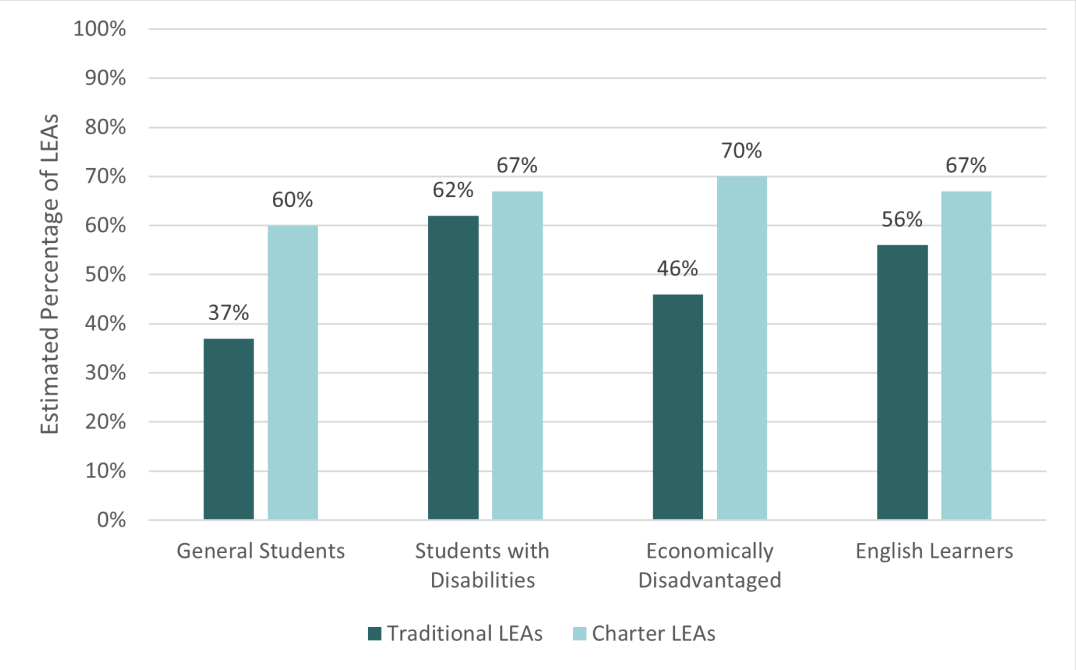
LEAs noted that students experienced academic impact because of lost instructional time and further noted that a lack of student attendance during remote instruction and the social and emotional effect of the coronavirus also added to the academic impact.

- A small suburban mid-high poverty charter LEA noted significant loss of instructional time because of a lack of consistency in student attendance during shifts between remote and in-person instruction, which made it difficult for students to retain information.
- A small urban high poverty traditional LEA noted that due to the hardships caused by the coronavirus, students were difficult to keep motivated and engaged. This LEA also experienced a teacher shortage because impacted teachers resigned from their positions during remote instruction.

Student Populations Continued to Experience Comparable Academic Impact of Lost Instructional Time

Although fewer LEAs experienced lost instructional time during the 2020–2021 school year than the 2019–2020 school year, LEAs reported that student populations continued to experience a comparable academic impact of lost instructional time. Like the 2019–2020 school year, we estimate that 42 percent of LEAs experienced a great degree of academic impact of lost instructional time for their general student populations during the 2020–2021 school year. LEAs also reported that students with disabilities (63 percent), English learners (58 percent), and economically disadvantaged students (52 percent) experienced a great degree of academic impact of lost instructional time during the 2020–2021 school year. As shown in Figure 9 below, we noted that charter LEAs were more likely than traditional LEAs to continue to experience a great degree of academic impact of lost instructional time across student populations.

Figure 9. Estimated Percentages of LEAs that Experienced a Great Degree of Academic Impact of Lost Instructional Time by LEA Type and Student Population for the 2020–2021 School Year



LEAs noted that the challenges that they faced in obtaining ESSER-funded technology reduced the effectiveness of the ESSER funds in addressing the academic impact of lost instructional time for student populations during the 2020–2021 school year.

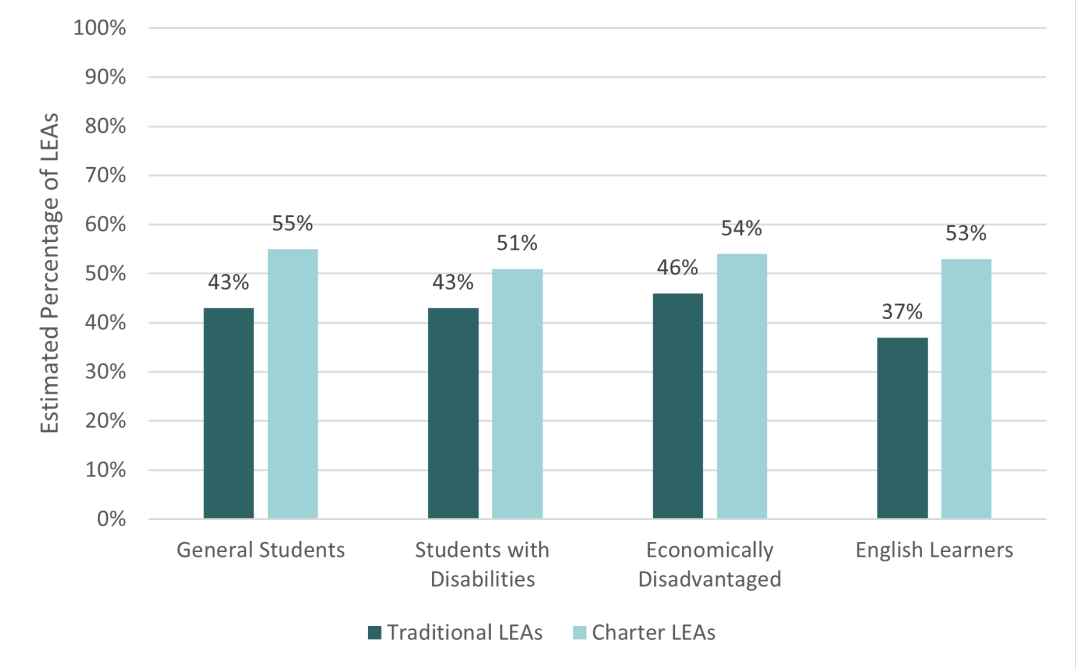
- A medium rural mid-low poverty traditional LEA noted that ESSER-funded technology had little impact during the 2020–2021 school year due to the timing of ESSER funds being available to make purchases and the wait time for hardware.

- A small urban mid-low poverty charter LEA noted that delays in receiving educational technology (e.g., Chromebooks) funded by ESSER in the 2020–2021 school year lessened the positive impact that these purchases otherwise would have had.

ESSER-Funded Technology Facilitated a Great Degree of Activities to Address the Academic Impact of Lost Instructional Time

During the 2019–2020 school year, we estimate that 46 percent of LEAs facilitated a great degree of activities with ESSER-funded technology to address the academic impact of lost instructional time for the general student population. LEAs reported that ESSER-funded technology facilitated a great degree of activities for economically disadvantaged students (48 percent), students with disabilities (45 percent) and English learners (41 percent). We noted that ESSER-funded technology was more likely to facilitate a great degree of activities for charter LEAs than traditional LEAs across student populations for the 2019–2020 school year, as shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10. Estimated Percentage of LEAs' ESSER-Funded Technology that Facilitated a Great Degree of Activities to Address the Academic Impact of Lost Instructional Time by LEA Type and Student Population for the 2019–2020 School Year



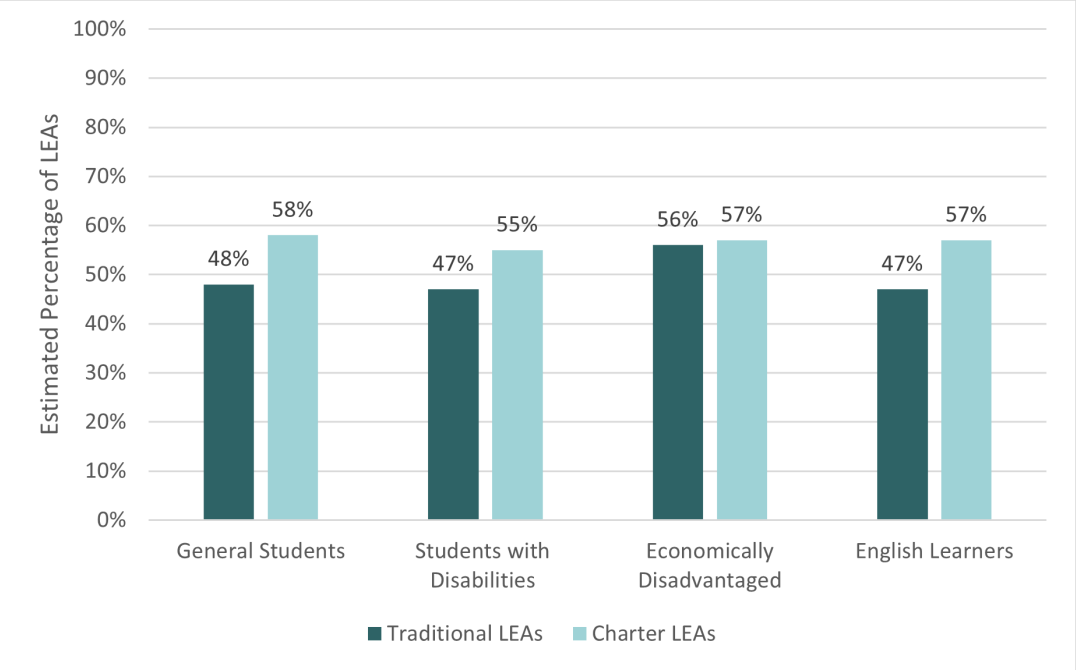
LEAs were able to address the academic impact of lost instructional time by using ESSER-funded technology for activities involving parents and families, and additional learning opportunities for students.

- A large urban high poverty traditional LEA provided after school virtual tutoring and 30-minute remediation twice a week for students during the school day.
- A small urban high poverty charter LEA noted that distance learning was a success because ESSER-funded technology facilitated schoolwide activities that maintained school culture and allowed parents to engage with their children's teachers.
- A small virtual mid-high poverty charter LEA noted that ESSER funds empowered it to extend learning opportunities throughout the school year and into the summer that it would have otherwise not been able to offer.

ESSER-Funded Technology Continued to Facilitate Activities to Address the Academic Impact of Lost Instructional Time

During the 2020–2021 school year, LEAs continued to report that their ESSER-funded technology facilitated a great degree of activities to address the academic impact of lost instructional time across student populations. We estimate that ESSER-funded technology facilitated a great degree of activities for the general student population of LEAs from 46 percent during the 2019–2020 school year to 50 percent of LEAs during the 2020–2021 school year. We noted that LEAs continued to report that ESSER-funded technology facilitated a great degree of activities for economically disadvantaged students (56 percent), students with disabilities (49 percent) and English learners (49 percent). We also noted that ESSER-funded technology was more likely to facilitate a great degree of activities for charter LEAs than traditional LEAs across student populations for the 2020–2021 school year, as shown in Figure 11.

Figure 11. Estimated Percentages of LEAs' ESSER-Funded Technology that Facilitated a Great Degree of Activities to Address the Academic Impact of Lost Instructional Time by LEA Type and Student Population for the 2020–2021 School Year



LEAs continued to address the academic impact of lost instructional time by implementing assessments to assist teachers in meeting student needs.

- A medium urban mid-low poverty traditional LEA noted that it implemented assessments to inform teachers' instruction to address the social, emotional, and academic needs of students for the 2021–2022 school year. This LEA added that this information will continue to inform instruction in the summer programs and will provide families with information to continue to support their students at home.
- A small urban mid-high poverty charter LEA noted that ESSER-funded technology provided educational tools for teachers to assess and identify each student's learning gaps and address those gaps through personalized programs for individual students. This LEA added that these ESSER-funded tools facilitated small groups for individual student instruction to ensure all students had the support they needed to meet or exceed academic standards.

Appendix A. Scope and Methodology

We surveyed a nationwide sample of LEAs about their experiences with using ESSER funds to purchase educational technology to continue student instruction during the coronavirus. Our survey covered the types of (1) educational technology purchased with ESSER funds, (2) challenges that LEAs faced and expect to face in the future regarding the educational technology purchased with ESSER funds, and (3) impacts that educational technology purchased with ESSER funds had on student instruction. We held an exit conference on February 6, 2023, and discussed our observations of the survey results with officials from OESE; the Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development; OGC; and the Office of the Chief Data Officer.

To achieve our objective, we gained an understanding of the CARES, CRRSA, and ARP Acts, and the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (2 C.F.R. Part 200). We reviewed the Department's guidance relevant to our objective, including the Department's ESSER I Frequently Asked Questions, ESSER II and ARP ESSER Fact Sheets, ESSER I Certification and Agreements, ESSER I and II Letters to Commissioners, ARP ESSER Letter to Chief State School Officers, and ARP ESSER Grant Award Assurances. We interviewed officials from OESE's SGR to gain an understanding of how OESE administers the ESSER Fund grant program. We also reviewed relevant documentation obtained from OESE, including CARES Act Monitoring Reports, Standard Operating Procedures, the ESSER Fund Recipient Data Collection Form, and the ARP ESSER Fund Technical Review Plan.

To develop our survey for our nationally representative sample of LEAs, we performed the following tests and revised the survey questions based on the test results and feedback:

- **Cognitive Testing.** When developing content and refining questions for the web-based survey, we consulted with OESE and two SEAs as subject matter experts (SME). We received feedback from the SMEs to address whether LEAs would understand the questions as intended and if they could provide accurate answers. If there were questions that LEAs might misunderstand or have difficulty answering, OESE and the SEAs advised us on how those questions could be improved prior to distributing the survey.
- **Feasibility Testing.** When determining the appropriate survey platform for the survey, we identified the necessary functionality needed to administer the survey and aligned those with the capabilities of the available survey platforms. After selecting a survey platform, we tested the feasibility by inputting the survey questions into the platform and the audit team completed the test

survey. We ensured that branching questions[18] and links functioned as intended, the questions input were updated after each revision, and the survey results were presented as intended.

- **Pretesting.** To ensure that questions would be interpreted in the way we intended, we distributed the pretest survey to 16 of the 344 sampled LEAs (eight traditional LEAs and eight charter LEAs) to check whether (1) questions were clear and unambiguous; (2) terminology was used correctly; (3) the survey did not place an undue burden on those responding; (4) the information could feasibly be obtained; and (5) the survey was comprehensive and unbiased. Of the 16 LEAs, 13 LEAs completed the pretest survey, and we reviewed the results to determine whether (1) the source was valid or reliable; (2) the categories were correct; (3) the categories represented the substance of the data; and (4) we could generalize beyond the raw data. We also conducted 3 follow-up interviews for feedback and obtained written feedback from 10 LEAs. The 13 LEAs' pretest survey results were included in the final data analysis and the LEAs were not administered the survey again.

To administer our web-based survey to our representative sample of LEAs, we performed the following procedures to achieve the desired survey response rate:

- We created SEA and LEA protocols that contained templates for email transmittals and talking points for telephone conversations to be used for SEA coordination and to distribute the survey directly to LEAs. This also included instructions and a fillable version of the survey for LEA officials to consult or collaborate with knowledgeable colleagues, as needed. These protocols included timeframes for the audit team to perform follow up with LEAs via emails and telephone calls. These protocols were also tested during pretesting to ensure effectiveness.
- We contacted OESE SGR officials to obtain the contact information for all 52 SEAs. We contacted SEAs to obtain the contact information for all selected LEAs, and confirmed whether the selected LEAs within each State received an ESSER Fund subgrant and whether the LEA was a fully virtual charter LEA. Further, we requested that the SEA assist in conducting the survey by (1) notifying the selected LEAs of their selection and the upcoming contact from

[18] A branching question is a change in the flow of the survey based on answers to prior question(s) in the survey, or other known information about the respondent (e.g., whether the LEA used ESSER funds to purchase hardware), allowing respondents to either skip or be directed to specific questions or sections in the survey.

OIG and (2) encouraging and reminding the selected LEAs to complete the survey in a timely manner. In addition, these SEAs informed us of whether an LEA was no longer operational because it closed or merged with another LEA.

- After excluding the pretest LEAs and LEAs that were no longer operational, we used the LEA protocol to successfully distribute the web-based survey to 321 LEAs on March 16, 2022. We received 300 LEA responses (87 percent response rate),[19] which exceeded our goal of a 70 percent response rate.

To complete our data analysis of the survey results, we performed the following procedures:

- We developed a detailed data analysis plan for quantitative and qualitative analyses of the survey results. We reviewed survey questions that addressed our objective as well as identified how many LEAs did and did not (1) receive ESSER funds and (2) used ESSER funds to purchase educational technology.
- We identified, analyzed, and compared the attributes across the subgroups (geographical designation, poverty level, and size) and populations (traditional and charter LEAs) to narrow our focus as well as any notable differences between the traditional and charter LEAs and drew conclusions to determine whether additional follow-up was necessary.
- We conducted four post-survey case study interviews with selected LEA survey respondents, which gave them the opportunity to elaborate on their survey responses and allowed us to obtain additional contextual information.

Sampling Methodology

Our initial population of 19,828 LEAs was based on the National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data (CCD) for the 2019–2020 school year. Because a data source did not exist that reported which LEAs received ESSER funds, we used Title I allocations as a proxy to estimate what LEAs may have received an ESSER Fund subgrant. However, Title I data was not available for the complete population. Therefore, we removed 2,441 traditional LEAs that did not have Title I data. In addition, we removed 24 LEAs that were included in an ESSER expenditures review initiated by OIG's Special Investigations Unit and 3 LEAs that were not awarded an ESSER Fund subgrant. The final sampling population was 17,360 LEAs. This sampling population was stratified into two subpopulations. The first subpopulation consisted of

[19] We computed the response rate based on 300 completed surveys, but we used 294 completed surveys in our analysis. Of the six completed surveys not used, three LEAs did not receive ESSER funds, one LEA did not complete the survey correctly, and two LEAs responded for multiple schools.

13,109 traditional LEAs with available Title I data. The second subpopulation consisted of 4,251 charter LEAs without Title I data.

We selected a total sample size of 344 LEAs to project to the universe of 17,360 LEAs. This sample was selected using two approaches according to the subpopulation type. We used a stratified random sampling design to allow for an attribute percent projection of the first subpopulation. Due to available Title I and geographic data, the first subpopulation was stratified into 13 strata:[20] 3 geographic locations (urban city, suburban, and rural) and 5 funding allocations (extra small, small, medium, large, and extra-large). The sample size was estimated to be 150 traditional LEAs to account for a 70 percent response rate using a 10 percent precision rate at a 95 percent confidence level.

We used a random sampling design to allow for an attribute percent projection for the second subpopulation. We did not stratify because we did not have the geographic information for the charter LEAs. The sample size was estimated to be 194 to account for a 70 percent response rate, with an additional adjustment of 75 percent,[21] using a 10 percent precision rate at a 95 percent confidence level. Throughout this report, we presented the estimated percentages with a 95 percent confidence level for our population of LEAs and subpopulations of traditional and charter LEAs.

Use of Computer-Processed Data

The use of computer-processed data was limited to identifying the LEAs that received an ESSER Fund subgrant based on the 2019–2020 Title I allocations and the CCD geographic data. To assess the reliability of this information, we contacted 44 applicable SEAs and requested that each SEA complete a spreadsheet. This spreadsheet included LEA contact information for all selected LEAs and each SEA confirmed whether the selected LEAs within its State received an ESSER Fund subgrant and whether the LEA was a fully virtual charter LEA. Further, we included questions within the survey asking the LEAs to self-report whether they received an ESSER Fund subgrant as well as their geographic designation, poverty-level, and size.

We determined that the data provided by the LEAs was reliable for the purposes of our review. We did not independently verify the accuracy of the LEAs' self-reported

[20] There were no LEAs in the strata "rural extra-large" or "suburban extra-large".

[21] The sample size for charter LEAs was adjusted a second time to account for the LEAs that may not have received the ESSER Fund grant. We computed 75 percent by selecting a random sample of 20 charter LEAs and determined that 15 (75 percent) charters LEAs were awarded the ESSER Fund grant.

information, but we took a series of steps—from survey design through data analysis and interpretation—to minimize potential errors and problems. To identify survey questions, we spoke with SMEs such as SEAs and OESE. To verify the clarity, length of time of administration, and understandability of the questions, we pretested the survey to 13 LEAs, 2 SEAs, and OESE. In addition, we examined survey responses for missing data and irregularities. We analyzed the survey data by calculating descriptive statistics of LEA responses.

Compliance with Standards

We conducted our work in accordance with the OIG's quality control standards and the Council of Inspectors General for Integrity and Efficiency's "Quality Standards for Federal Offices of Inspector General," which require that we conduct our work with integrity, objectivity, and independence. We believe that the information obtained provides a reasonable basis for the conclusions contained in this report.

Appendix B. LEA Demographics

For 274 LEA survey respondents that used their ESSER funds to purchase educational technology, we used demographic data provided by the LEAs to stratify the traditional LEA and charter LEA populations within each of 3 subgroups—geographic designation, poverty level, and size—and analyzed survey results for these subgroups. In addition to the type of LEA (traditional or charter), the tables below identify the strata for each subgroup and the corresponding number of LEAs.

Table 3. Number of LEAs by Type

Type	Number of LEAs	Percent of LEAs
Charter LEA	133	49%
Traditional LEA	141	51%
Total LEAs	**274**	**100%**

Geographic Designation. We defined each geographic designation in the survey and asked each LEA to report whether it was urban, suburban, or rural. Urban LEAs are located within a city or town of a metropolitan area. Suburban LEAs are located outside of a city or town of a metropolitan area but within the metropolitan area. Rural LEAs are in the non-urban area. Prior to distributing the survey, we asked the respective SEAs to identify whether the sampled charter LEAs were fully virtual before the coronavirus.

Table 4. Number of LEAs by Geographic Designation

Designation	Number of LEAs	Percent of LEAs
Rural	67	24%
Suburban	57	21%
Urban	146	53%
Urban, Suburban, Rural[22]	1	<1%
Virtual	3	1%
Total LEAs	**274**	**100%**

Table 5. Number of Charter LEAs by Geographic Designation

Geographic Designation	Number of LEAs	Percent of LEA Type
Rural	17	13%
Suburban	25	19%
Urban	87	65%
Urban, Suburban, Rural	1	1%
Virtual	3	2%
Total Charter LEAs	**133**	**100%**

[22] This charter LEA reported all three geographic designations.

Table 6. Number of Traditional LEAs by Geographic Designation

Geographic Designation	Number of LEAs	Percent of LEA Type
Rural	50	35%
Suburban	32	23%
Urban	59	42%
Total Traditional LEAs	**141**	**100%**

Poverty Level. We used the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch under the National School Lunch Program as a proxy for poverty level. Low poverty LEAs have less than 25 percent, mid-low poverty LEAs have between 26-50 percent, mid-high poverty LEAs have between 51–75 percent, and high poverty have more than 75 percent.

Table 7. Number of LEAs by Poverty Level

Poverty Level	Number of LEAs	Percent of LEAs
High	123	45%
Mid-High	61	22%
Mid-Low	66	24%
Low	24	9%
Total LEAs	**274**	**100%**

Table 8. Number of Charter LEAs by Poverty Level

Poverty Level	Number of LEAs	Percent of LEA Type
High	68	51%
Mid-High	20	15%
Mid-Low	28	22%
Low	17	13%
Total Charter LEAs	**133**	**100%**

Table 9. Number of Traditional LEAs by Poverty Level

Poverty Level	Number of LEAs	Percent of LEA Type
High	55	39%
Mid-High	41	29%
Mid-Low	38	27%
Low	7	5%
Total Traditional LEAs	**141**	**100%**

Size. We asked LEAs to enter the number of students enrolled and we classified the LEAs as small (2 to 2,429 students), medium (2,560 to 9,900 students), or large (10,099 to 435,958 students).

Table 10. Number of LEAs by Size

LEA Size	Number of LEAs	Percent of LEAs
Large	60	22%
Medium	50	18%
Small	164	60%
Total LEAs	**274**	**100%**

Table 11. Number of Charter LEAs by Size

LEA Size	Number of LEAs	Percent of LEA Type
Medium	6	5%
Small	127	95%
Total Charter LEAs	**133**	**100%**

Table 12. Number of Traditional LEAs by Size

LEA Size	Number of LEAs	Percent of LEA Type
Large	60	43%
Medium	44	31%
Small	37	26%
Total Traditional LEAs	**141**	**100%**

Appendix C. Estimated Percentages of Survey Results

We designed the statistical approach to obtain responses allowing for the development of an estimate for the LEA population about their experiences using ESSER funds to purchase educational technology to continue student instruction during the coronavirus. The estimates presented throughout the report are the point estimates for each question, which is the projected value of LEAs in the universe of 17,360 LEAs or the 13,109 traditional LEAs and 4,251 charter LEAs. Each point estimate is accompanied with a confidence range (lower bound and upper bound), which is a range around the point estimate. We computed a 95 percent confidence interval for each point estimate to convey that the true value is within that range.

In the sections below, we present the confidence interval for each point estimate and the associated survey questions used throughout the report. The percent estimates were computed for "Yes" and "No" categories. The "Not applicable/non-respondents" were not included in the percent projections.

Section I. General Information

Question 5. Did your LEA use ESSER funds to purchase educational technology?

We estimated the percentage of LEAs based on all the selected LEAs that responded "Yes" to whether they used ESSER funds to purchase educational technology.

Table 13. LEAs that Used ESSER Funds to Purchase Educational Technology

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	79%	93%	98%
Charter	83%	89%	93%
All LEAs	83%	92%	97%

Section II. Using ESSER Funds to Purchase Educational Technology

Question 8. Did your LEA use ESSER funds to purchase hardware?

We estimated the percentage of LEAs based on all the selected LEAs that responded "Yes" to whether they used ESSER funds to purchase hardware.

Table 14. LEAs that Used ESSER Funds to Purchase Hardware

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	75%	93%	98%
Charter	86%	92%	96%
All LEAs	80%	93%	98%

Question 11b. For laptop computers (Chromebooks), who were the intended users (students only, teachers only, both, and not applicable) of the devices purchased using ESSER funds?

We estimated the percentage of LEAs based on all the selected LEAs that indicated any user (student only, teacher only, or both) of laptop computers (Chromebooks).

Table 15. LEAs that Used ESSER Funds to Purchase Chromebooks

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	72%	97%	100%
Charter	87%	93%	97%
All LEAs	83%	96%	99%

Question 16. Did your LEA use ESSER funds to purchase software?

We estimated the percentage of LEAs based on all the selected LEAs that responded "Yes" to whether they used ESSER funds to purchase software.

Table 16. LEAs that Used ESSER Funds to Purchase Software

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	45%	63%	78%
Charter	71%	79%	85%
All LEAs	51%	66%	79%

Question 19a. For instructional software, who were the intended users (students only, teachers only, both, and not applicable) of the software purchased using ESSER funds?

We estimated the percentage of LEAs based on all the selected LEAs that indicated any user (student only, teacher only, or both) of instructional software.

Table 17. LEAs that Used ESSER Funds to Purchase Instructional Software

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	59%	92%	99%
Charter	90%	96%	99%
All LEAs	69%	93%	99%

Question 21. Did your LEA use ESSER funds to purchase connectivity?

We estimated the percentage of LEAs based on all the selected LEAs that responded "Yes" to whether they used ESSER funds to purchase connectivity.

Table 18. LEAs that Used ESSER Funds to Purchase Connectivity

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	57%	74%	86%
Charter	46%	55%	63%
All LEAs	57%	70%	80%

Question 24a. For mobile hotspot with paid data plans (MiFi), who were the intended users (students only, teachers only, both, and not applicable) of the connectivity purchased using ESSER funds?

We estimated the percentage of LEAs based on all the selected LEAs that indicated any user (student only, teacher only, or both) of mobile hotspots.

Table 19. LEAs that Used ESSER Funds to Purchase Mobile Hotspots

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	58%	81%	93%
Charter	84%	93%	97%
All LEAs	64%	83%	93%

Question 26. What other products or services to support educational technology did your LEA purchase using ESSER funds?

We estimated the percentage of LEAs based on all the selected LEAs that responded to the question, except for "none of the above."

Table 20. LEAs that Used ESSER Funds to Purchase Other Products and Services

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	24%	38%	53%
Charter	54%	62%	70%
All LEAs	31%	43%	56%

We also estimated the percentage of LEAs based on all the selected LEAs that responded, "training for teachers, parents or students."

Table 21. LEAs that Used ESSER Funds to Purchase Training for Teachers, Parents or Students

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	14%	25%	39%
Charter	27%	34%	42%
All LEAs	18%	27%	38%

Section III. Challenges with Using ESSER Funds for Educational Technology

Questions 28. In your opinion, what has been the most significant challenge(s) that your LEA experienced when using ESSER funds for educational technology?

We estimated the percentage of LEAs based on all the selected LEAs that responded to the question but did not include "not applicable—the LEA did not experience any significant challenges when using ESSER funds for educational technology."

Table 22. LEAs that Experienced One or More Challenges When Using ESSER Funds to Purchase Educational Technology

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	61%	79%	90%
Charter	71%	79%	84%
All LEAs	65%	79%	88%

Question 29. In your opinion, was it a challenge to assess the educational technology needs for students or teachers?

We estimated the percentage of LEAs based on all the selected LEAs that responded "Yes" to whether it was a challenge to assess the educational technology needs for students or teachers.

Table 23. LEAs that Experienced Challenges When Assessing the Educational Technology Needs for Students and Teachers

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	12%	22%	36%
Charter	26%	33%	42%
All LEAs	15%	24%	35%

Question 32. If it was a challenge for your LEA to purchase educational technology (hardware, software, connectivity) using ESSER funds, how did your LEA resolve or mitigate this challenge?

We estimated the percentage of LEAs based on all the selected LEAs that responded to the question, but "none of the above" was not included.

Table 24. LEAs that Experienced Challenges Due to Purchasing Educational Technology Using ESSER Funds

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	37%	54%	71%
Charter	58%	67%	74%
All LEAs	42%	57%	70%

We also estimated the percentage of LEAs based on all the selected LEAs' most frequently reported response to how they resolved or mitigated the challenge, which was "waited through delays."

Table 25. LEAs that Waited Through Delays to Resolve or Mitigate Challenges Due to Purchasing Education Technology Using ESSER Funds

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	38%	56%	73%
Charter	54%	63%	71%
All LEAs	43%	58%	71%

Question 33. If it was a challenge for your LEA to safeguard hardware devices purchased with ESSER funds, how did your LEA resolve or mitigate this challenge?

We estimated the percentage of LEAs based on all the selected LEAs that responded to the question, but "none of the above" was not included.

Table 26. LEAs that Experienced Challenges Due to Safeguarding Hardware Devices

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	25%	39%	55%
Charter	38%	46%	54%
All LEAs	29%	40%	53%

Question 34. If it was a challenge for your LEA to maintain or repair educational technology (hardware, software, connectivity) purchased using ESSER funds, how did your LEA resolve or mitigate this challenge?

We estimated the percentage of LEAs based on all the selected LEAs that responded to the question, but "none of the above" was not included.

Table 27. LEAs that Experienced Challenges Maintaining or Repairing ESSER-Funded Technology

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	28%	43%	60%
Charter	59%	68%	75%
All LEAs	35%	48%	62%

We also estimated the percentage of LEAs based on all the selected LEAs' most frequently reported response to how they resolved or mitigated the challenge, which was "assigned existing staff and resources to maintain or repair technology."

Table 28. LEAs that Assigned Existing Staff and Resources to Resolve or Mitigate Challenges of Maintaining or Repairing ESSER-Funded Technology

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	28%	56%	81%
Charter	42%	52%	62%
All LEAs	35%	55%	73%

Question 35. If it was a challenge for your LEA to address cybersecurity issues that impact confidentiality, integrity, or availability of data, how did your LEA resolve or mitigate this challenge?

We estimated the percentage of LEAs based on all the selected LEAs that responded to the question, but "none of the above" was not included.

Table 29. LEAs that Experienced Challenges Addressing Cybersecurity

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	20%	32%	48%
Charter	35%	43%	51%
All LEAs	24%	35%	47%

Question 36. If it was a challenge for your LEA to ensure that all students have adequate access to internet, how did your LEA resolve or mitigate this challenge?

We estimated the percentage of LEAs based on all the selected LEAs that responded to the question, but "none of the above" was not included.

Table 30. LEAs that Experienced Challenges Ensuring Adequate Internet Access

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	58%	76%	88%
Charter	63%	71%	79%
All LEAs	61%	75%	85%

We also estimated the percentage of LEAs based on all the selected LEAs' most frequently reported response to how they resolved or mitigated the challenge, which

was "purchased additional hotspots for students who did not have or had limited access to internet."

Table 31. LEAs that Purchased Additional Hotspots to Resolve or Mitigate Challenges Ensuring Adequate Internet Access

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	59%	81%	93%
Charter	73%	82%	89%
All LEAs	65%	81%	91%

Question 37. If it was a challenge for your LEA to provide technology-related training, how did your LEA resolve or mitigate this challenge?

We estimated the percentage of LEAs based on all the selected LEAs that responded to the question, but "none of the above" was not included.

Table 32. LEAs that Experienced Challenges Providing Technology-Related Training

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	25%	40%	56%
Charter	33%	41%	49%
All LEAs	28%	40%	53%

Question 38. What was the predominant method of instruction (in-person, hybrid, or remote) at the beginning of 2019–2020 school year?

We estimated the percentage of LEAs based on all the selected LEAs' predominant response for each school year.

Table 33. Fall 2019 LEAs Predominantly Instructed In-Person

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	75%	92%	98%
Charter	77%	84%	90%
All LEAs	80%	91%	96%

Table 34. Fall 2020 LEAs Predominantly Instructed Remote and Hybrid

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	34%	51%	68%
Charter	88%	94%	97%
All LEAs	45%	60%	73%

Table 35. Fall 2021 LEAs Predominantly Instructed In-Person

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	83%	96%	99%
Charter	65%	74%	81%
All LEAs	85%	91%	95%

Question 39. Considering the predominant method of instruction at the beginning of each school year that you checked in the previous question [38] above, in your opinion was it a challenge for schools in your LEA to shift to remote, hybrid, or in-person instruction during 2019–2020 school year?

We estimated the percentage of LEAs based on the LEAs that indicated whether shifting to remote, hybrid or in-person was a challenge for each school year, but "not applicable—method of instruction did not change" were not included. Then, we estimated the percentage of LEAs based on the selected LEAs' most frequently reported response for each school year.

Table 36. LEAs Experienced Challenges Due to Shifting Methods of Instruction for the 2019–2020 School Year

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	67%	91%	98%
Charter	80%	87%	92%
All LEAs	74%	90%	96%

Table 37. LEAs' Most Frequently Reported Shifting to Remote Instruction for the 2019–2020 School Year

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	60%	80%	92%
Charter	73%	80%	86%
All LEAs	65%	80%	90%

Table 38. LEAs Experienced Challenges Due to Shifting Methods of Instruction for the 2020–2021 School Year

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	47%	72%	88%
Charter	77%	84%	90%
All LEAs	56%	75%	88%

Table 39. LEAs' Most Frequently Reported Shifting to Hybrid Instruction for the 2020–2021 School Year

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	29%	45%	62%
Charter	46%	54%	63%
All LEAs	34%	47%	61%

Table 40. LEAs Experienced Challenges Due to Shifting Methods of Instruction for the 2021–2022 School Year

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	21%	38%	59%
Charter	51%	60%	68%
All LEAs	30%	44%	60%

Table 41. LEAs' Most Frequently Reported Shifting to In-Person Instruction for the 2021–2022 School Year

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	14%	25%	41%
Charter	33%	41%	50%
All LEAs	19%	28%	41%

Question 40. In your opinion, what ongoing or future challenges does your LEA anticipate related to using ESSER funds for educational technology?

We estimated the percentage of LEAs based on all the selected LEAs that responded to the question for each school year, but "not applicable—the LEA does not anticipate any ongoing or future challenges related to using ESSER funds for educational technology" was not included.

Table 42. LEAs Anticipating Ongoing or Future Challenges Due to ESSER-Funded Technology

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	60%	78%	90%
Charter	79%	86%	91%
All LEAs	66%	80%	90%

Then, we estimated the percentage of LEAs based on the LEAs' most frequently reported response for ongoing or future challenges that the LEA anticipated related to ESSER-funded technology.

Table 43. LEAs' Most Frequently Reported Sustaining Ongoing Costs When ESSER Funds are No Longer Available

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	44%	63%	78%
Charter	70%	78%	84%
All LEAs	51%	66%	78%

Section IV. Impacts of Using ESSER Funds for Educational Technology

Question 42. In your opinion, to what degree has education technology (hardware, software, connectivity) purchased using ESSER funds enabled your LEA to continue to provide educational services remotely for the following student populations?

We estimated the percentage of LEAs based on the selected LEAs that indicated that the specified student population was enabled to a "great degree," but "not applicable" was not included.

Table 44. LEAs Reported that their General Student Population was Enabled, to a Great Degree, by ESSER-Funded Technology

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	44%	64%	79%
Charter	74%	81%	87%
All LEAs	52%	68%	80%

Table 45. LEAs Reported that their Students with Disabilities were Enabled, to a Great Degree, by ESSER-Funded Technology

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	39%	58%	75%
Charter	66%	74%	81%
All LEAs	47%	62%	75%

Table 46. LEAs Reported that their Economically Disadvantaged Students were Enabled, to a Great Degree, by ESSER-Funded Technology

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	45%	64%	80%
Charter	77%	84%	90%
All LEAs	53%	69%	81%

Table 47. LEAs Reported that their English Learners were Enabled, to a Great Degree, by ESSER-Funded Technology

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	44%	65%	82%
Charter	65%	74%	81%
All LEAs	50%	67%	80%

Question 44. In your opinion, to what degree have digital devices purchased using ESSER funds enabled the following populations of students to continue learning remotely?

We estimated the percentage of LEAs based on the selected LEAs that indicated that the specified student population was enabled to a "great degree," but "not applicable" was not included.

Table 48. LEAs Reported that their General Student Populations were Enabled, to a Great Degree, by ESSER-Funded Digital Devices (Hardware)

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	42%	62%	78%
Charter	73%	81%	88%
All LEAs	50%	66%	79%

Table 49. LEAs Reported that their Students with Disabilities were Enabled, to a Great Degree, by ESSER-Funded Digital Devices (Hardware)

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	38%	57%	74%
Charter	64%	73%	81%
All LEAs	45%	61%	74%

Table 50. LEAs Reported that their Economically Disadvantaged Students were Enabled, to a Great Degree, by ESSER-Funded Digital Devices (Hardware)

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	45%	65%	81%
Charter	73%	81%	88%
All LEAs	53%	69%	82%

Table 51. LEAs Reported that their English Learners were Enabled, to a Great Degree, by ESSER-Funded Digital Devices (Hardware)

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	37%	58%	76%
Charter	64%	74%	82%
All LEAs	44%	61%	76%

Question 46. In your opinion, to what degree has software purchased using ESSER funds enabled the following populations of students to continue learning remotely?

We estimated the percentage of LEAs based on the selected LEAs that indicated that the specified student population was enabled to a "great degree," but "not applicable" was not included.

Table 52. LEAs Reported that their General Student Populations were Enabled, to a Great Degree, by ESSER-Funded Software

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	45%	71%	88%
Charter	68%	78%	85%
All LEAs	53%	73%	86%

Table 53. LEAs Reported that their Students with Disabilities were Enabled, to a Great Degree, by ESSER-Funded Software

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	41%	66%	84%
Charter	60%	70%	78%
All LEAs	48%	67%	81%

Table 54. LEAs Reported that their Economically Disadvantaged Students were Enabled, to a Great Degree, by ESSER-Funded Software

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	45%	71%	88%
Charter	63%	73%	81%
All LEAs	53%	72%	85%

Table 55. LEAs Reported that their English Learners were Enabled, to a Great Degree, by ESSER-Funded Software

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	34%	61%	83%
Charter	60%	71%	79%
All LEAs	42%	64%	81%

Question 50. In your opinion, to what degree has connectivity purchased using ESSER funds enabled the following populations of students to access internet outside of the classroom when needed for remote learning?

We estimated the percentage of LEAs based on the selected LEAs that indicated that the specified student population was enabled to a "great degree," but "not applicable" was not included.

Table 56. LEAs Reported that their General Student Populations were Enabled, to a Great Degree, by ESSER-Funded Connectivity

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	39%	63%	82%
Charter	47%	59%	69%
All LEAs	43%	62%	78%

Table 57. LEAs Reported that their Students with Disabilities were Enabled, to a Great Degree, by ESSER-Funded Connectivity

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	37%	61%	81%
Charter	45%	56%	67%
All LEAs	41%	60%	77%

Table 58. LEAs Reported that their Economically Disadvantaged Students Enabled, to a Great Degree, by ESSER-Funded Connectivity

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	38%	68%	88%
Charter	64%	75%	83%
All LEAs	45%	70%	86%

Table 59. LEAs Reported that their English Learners were Enabled, to a Great Degree, by ESSER-Funded Connectivity

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	31%	62%	86%
Charter	44%	57%	68%
All LEAs	37%	61%	81%

Question 51. In your opinion, did students experience lost instructional time due to the coronavirus during school year 2019–2020?

We estimated the percentage of LEAs based on all the selected LEAs that responded "Yes" to whether they experienced lost instructional time during the 2019–2020 school year.

Table 60. LEAs Experienced Lost Instructional Time in the 2019–2020 School Year

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	82%	96%	99%
Charter	82%	89%	93%
All LEAs	87%	95%	98%

Question 52. In your opinion for school year 2019–2020, what was the academic impact of lost instructional time due to the coronavirus for the general student population?

We estimated the percentage of LEAs based on the selected LEAs that indicated that the specified student population experienced academic impact of lost instructional time, to a "great degree," but "not applicable" was not included.

Table 61. LEAs Reported that their General Student Populations Experienced Great Academic Impact of Lost Instructional Time in the 2019–2020 School Year

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	22%	36%	54%
Charter	54%	63%	72%
All LEAs	29%	42%	56%

Table 62. LEAs Reported that their Students with Disabilities Experienced Great Academic Impact of Lost Instructional Time in the 2019–2020 School Year

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	38%	56%	72%
Charter	67%	76%	83%
All LEAs	44%	60%	73%

Table 63. LEAs Reported that their Economically Disadvantaged Students Experienced Great Academic Impact of Lost Instructional Time in the 2019–2020 School Year

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	31%	48%	65%
Charter	69%	78%	84%
All LEAs	39%	54%	68%

Table 64. LEAs Reported that their English Learners Experienced Great Academic Impact of Lost Instructional Time in the 2019–2020 School Year

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	37%	56%	73%
Charter	63%	73%	81%
All LEAs	43%	59%	74%

Question 53. In your opinion for school year 2019–2020, to what degree did educational technology purchased using ESSER funds facilitate activities intended to address the academic impact of lost instructional time for the following student populations?

We estimated the percentage of LEAs based on the selected LEAs that indicated that the specified student population experienced academic impact of lost instructional time, to a "great degree," but "not applicable" was not included.

Table 65. LEAs Reported a Great Degree for their General Student Populations in the 2019–2020 School Year

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	24%	43%	64%
Charter	45%	55%	64%
All LEAs	30%	46%	62%

Table 66. LEAs Reported a Great Degree for their Students with Disabilities in the 2019–2020 School Year

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	21%	43%	68%
Charter	41%	51%	61%
All LEAs	27%	45%	64%

Table 67. LEAs Reported a Great Degree for their Economically Disadvantaged Students in the 2019–2020 School Year

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	24%	46%	70%
Charter	44%	54%	63%
All LEAs	30%	48%	67%

Table 68. LEAs Reported a Great Degree for their English Learner Students in the 2019–2020 School Year

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	17%	37%	64%
Charter	43%	53%	64%
All LEAs	23%	41%	61%

Question 54. In your opinion, did students experience lost instructional time due to the coronavirus during school year 2020–2021?

We estimated the percentage of LEAs based on all the selected LEAs that responded "Yes" to whether they experienced lost instructional time during the 2020–2021 school year.

Table 69. LEAs that Experienced Lost Instructional Time in the 2020–2021 School Year

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	47%	66%	81%
Charter	66%	74%	81%
All LEAs	53%	68%	80%

Question 55. In your opinion for school year 2020–2021, what was the academic impact of lost instructional time due to the coronavirus for the general student population?

We estimated the percentage of LEAs based on the selected LEAs that indicated that the specified student population experienced academic impact of lost instructional time, to a "great degree," but "not applicable" was not included.

Table 70. LEAs Reported that their General Student Populations Experienced a Great Degree of Academic Impact of Lost Instructional Time in the 2020–2021 School Year

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	20%	37%	57%
Charter	50%	60%	70%
All LEAs	28%	42%	58%

Table 71. LEAs Reported that their Students with Disabilities Experienced a Great Degree of Academic Impact of Lost Instructional Time in the 2020–2021 School Year

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	38%	62%	81%
Charter	57%	67%	76%
All LEAs	44%	63%	79%

Table 72. LEAs Reported that their Economically Disadvantaged Students Experienced a Great Degree of Academic Impact of Lost Instructional Time in the 2020–2021 School Year

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	26%	46%	68%
Charter	60%	70%	79%
All LEAs	34%	52%	68%

Table 73. LEAs Reported that their English Learners Experienced a Great Degree of Academic Impact of Lost Instructional Time in the 2020–2021 School Year

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	33%	56%	76%
Charter	56%	67%	76%
All LEAs	39%	58%	74%

Question 56. In your opinion for school year 2020–2021, to what degree did educational technology purchased using ESSER funds facilitate activities intended to address the academic impact of lost instructional time for the following student populations?

We estimated the percentage of LEAs based on the selected LEAs that indicated that the specified student population experienced academic impact of lost instructional time, to a "great degree," but "not applicable" was not included.

Table 74. LEAs Reported a Great Degree of Impact from ESSER-Purchased Technology on Lost Instructional Time for their General Student Populations in the 2020–2021 School Year

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	27%	48%	69%
Charter	48%	58%	68%
All LEAs	33%	50%	67%

Table 75. LEAs Reported a Great Degree of Impact from ESSER-Purchased Technology on Lost Instructional Time for their Students with Disabilities in the 2020–2021 School Year

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	26%	47%	70%
Charter	44%	55%	65%
All LEAs	32%	49%	67%

Table 76. LEAs Reported a Great Degree of Impact from ESSER-Purchased Technology on Lost Instructional Time for their Economically Disadvantaged Students in the 2020–2021 School Year

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	33%	56%	77%
Charter	47%	57%	67%
All LEAs	38%	56%	73%

Table 77. LEAs Reported a Great Degree of Impact from ESSER-Purchased Technology on Lost Instructional Time for their English Learner Students in the 2020–2021 School Year

LEA Type	Lower Bound	Point Estimate	Upper Bound
Traditional	25%	47%	70%
Charter	46%	57%	68%
All LEAs	31%	49%	68%

Appendix D. Acronyms and Abbreviations

ARP	American Rescue Plan Act of 2021
CARES	Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act
CCD	Common Core of Data
CRRSA	Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act
Department	U.S. Department of Education
ESSER	Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief
ESSER-funded technology	educational technology purchased using ESSER funds
LEA	local educational agency
OESE	Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
SEA	State Educational Agency
SGR	Office of State and Grant Relations
SME	subject matter expert
Title I	Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965

OESE Comments

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

April 28, 2023

Daniel P. Schultz
Director of Pandemic Relief Audits
U.S. Department of Education
Office of Inspector General
Daniel.P.Schultz@ed.gov

Dear Director Schultz,

Thank you for the opportunity for the U.S. Department of Education (Department) to provide comments on, and respond to the recommendations made in, the Office of Inspector General's (OIG) draft report entitled, *Local Educational Agencies Uses of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds for Technology* (ED-OIG/ F20US0030,). As Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE), I am pleased to respond on behalf of the Department. We note that many of our comments are revisions to ensure legal sufficiency. We have combined our comments with those from the Office of the General Counsel.

- The period of availability of funds for ESSER is September 30, 2022, ESSER II is September 30, 2023, and ARP ESSER is September 30, 2024. This includes an additional 12 months under the "Tydings Amendment," section 421(b) of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA). Please revise footnote 2 on page 4 to reflect the correct period of availability (i.e., ESSER funds are available through September 30, 2022 (not September 20, 2021); ESSER II funds are available through September 30, 2023 (not September 20, 2022); and ARP ESSER funds are available through September 30, 2024 (not September 30, 2023)).
- The report says "LEAs nationwide reported experiencing challenges due to using their ESSER funds to purchase educational technology" on page 2. However, the entire paragraph describes how school districts leveraged ESSERs funds to address the challenges they faced during the pandemic, not challenges they had using their ESSER funds. This is an important and substantive conflation of these two issues that should be addressed in revisions. The same is true in the relevant section on pages 13-18, with the exception of the one example referring to "delays related to Federal policies" on page 17. We suggest the following language: "LEAs nationwide reported using ESSER funds to purchase educational technology that addressed the challenges they faced related to teaching, learning, and operations in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic."
- On page 2 the report says, "We also noted that ESSER–funded software was more likely than hardware and connectivity to enable LEAs to enable remote instruction." However, hardware and connectivity are the necessary conditions for being able to leverage software. Without a device and connectivity, how would students and educators access

ESSER-funded software? We suggest removing this sentence and any related. If there is a desire to keep some of the sentence, we suggest the following: "LEAs used ESSER funds to purchase hardware, connectivity, and software to enable remote instruction in a variety of ways depending on their assessment of the needs of their local contexts."

- The universe of LEAs (17,360) was based on Title I data. Now that we know from our annual performance report that 16,884 LEAs received ESSER funds in Year 2, this could be added as a footnote.
- The report should make clear that LEAs could have used other funds to purchase educational technology. ESSER funds may have freed up State or local funds to allow LEAs to make other purchases. Thus, one should not conclude that LEAs that did not report using ESSER funds for technology purchases did not purchase and use technology using other available funds.
- On page 4, please make clear that the SEA is responsible for overseeing LEAs. The report says that SEAs oversee schools and that is incorrect.
- On page 41, the complete text for Question 16 has been cut off.

Thank you for your consideration of the Department's feedback to OIG's draft report.

Respectfully,

MARK WASHINGTON Digitally signed by MARK WASHINGTON Date: 2023.04.27 15:49:50 -04'00'

Mark Washington
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

cc: Phil Rosenfelt, OGC
Kala Surprenant, OGC