

Responding to the Changing Needs of Private School Students

A Guide for WI School Districts on Equitable Participation During COVID-19

Many aspects of school have changed to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic, and ESEA equitable participation in your district may need to change as well. You can and should make adjustments to plans if they are no longer viable and addressing current needs. In this time of stress and change, equitable participation programming may be more important than ever.

For funding questions, refer to this [COVID-19 school finance FAQ document](#).

☐ *Reach out and consult with schools.*

Any changes in the use of ESEA equitable participation funds should respond to the unique needs of private school students, staff, and families. Meaningful and ongoing consultation between the district and private schools remains key. You may also want to consider sending a survey out to private schools to gather information about their needs and challenges, current strategies, and initial thoughts about changes in ESEA Title programming.

Topics to discuss with private school officials:

- What is the private school's approach in providing instruction during the pandemic?
- What support is the private school able to provide to its English learners right now?
- How is it going—what are they noticing?

A note about the CARES Act: CARES Act grants, which DPI anticipates will be available to LEAs by July, include funds for equitable participation. While separate affirmation forms are required for ESEA and CARES, the funds from each grant may be used to address the same needs, and a single consultation process can include both programs. The CARES act funds can be used to address needs outside of what would be allowed under ESEA. Keep this in mind when consulting and documenting your consultation. Private schools may participate in CARES, ESEA, or both.

☐ *Understand what the needs are now.*

Almost everyone's needs have changed, and understanding current needs is the first step to meeting them. This doesn't necessarily mean conducting a formal needs assessment. Simply reaching out to families and looking at whatever data you have will help you make more effective decisions. The relationships that private schools have with students and families are an asset in gathering information. Educator needs have changed as well and are worth investigating.

Topics to discuss with private school officials:

- Do you know the current needs of the families? If not, who should reach out?
- What data do you have about how things were going before the pandemic?
- What virtual options do you have?
- Would providing a particular type of support make things harder instead of better?
- What types of professional learning do private school educators need in order to meet current student needs?
- How could Title IV be used to supplement virtual instruction?

❑ **Put a plan in place to monitor and adjust as things change.**

Continuing to follow a plan that's not working doesn't support student success. The ability to assess and adjust as you go is critical in a time when needs may change quickly and without warning. It's difficult to do this in the best of times without a plan. A regular schedule of check-ins to reflect and adjust can support success. Use whatever data you have—qualitative and/or quantitative. Write down what you notice—that's data you can use later.

Topics to discuss with private school officials:

- How often should we reflect and adjust?
- How will we know something needs to change? What might the indicators be?
- What's the best process to keep those involved communicating about how it's going?

❑ **Re-think evaluation, because progress may look different.**

It may be helpful to look at pre-pandemic supports and supports since the stay-at-home order separately. You may need to look at different data during the pandemic than you did before, and that's okay as long as you and the private school officials agree. Look at both program-level and individual student-level progress.

Pre-Pandemic	During COVID-19
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What data did you use to determine services?• What was your theory of action? What changes did you expect to see if the programming was successful?• How did you monitor progress?• What other data do you have?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What data are you using to determine services?• What is your theory of action?• How will you know student needs are being met? What changes (indicators) might you see if the programming is successful?• What academic data (e.g., student growth measures) or frequency data (e.g., contacts, information shared) can you gather?

Note: Slowing your process and adjusting your timelines for collecting data and planning 2020-21 ESEA services is okay, as long as private school services are not delayed and start at approximately the same time as public school services. Deadlines for submitting grant applications and obligating funds still apply.

❑ **Make sure to document and communicate.**

- Document your decisions.
- Update WISEgrants.
- Communicate changes to stakeholders. Relevant stakeholders may include educators, their supervisors, families of participating students, your bookkeeper, and others.

❑ **Keep connecting and collaborating.**

Before ending a consultation session, schedule the next meeting with your private school partners.

Sources: 20 U.S.C. §§ [6320](#), [7881](#) (2018) and Public Law [116-136](#), [134 Stat. 281](#)

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