



EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY

Parent-Centered Policy Playbook

ExcelinEd Policy Toolkit - 2021

INTRODUCTION: WHY WE NEED PARENT-CENTERED POLICIES NOW

Since March, 2020, families across the country have collectively experienced [school closures and remote or hybrid learning](#). In an unprecedented year when many families were already dissatisfied with their educational options, others [came to understand](#) what it feels like when schooling doesn't live up to expectations or can't give their child what they need. The pain of lost schooling was compounded by a [childcare crisis](#), and the country finally had to admit that schools serve more than an education function: They also allow parents, [especially women](#), to work. The wealthy have been able to [creatively fill](#) education and childcare voids, but they make up a small portion of this country. The pandemic brought existing inequities into stark relief, then it exacerbated them. These inequities have social, emotional, and economic consequences.

Strategies for Parents and Policymakers Alike

Now is the time to halt learning loss and address the uneven education opportunities that preceded the pandemic. To move forward swiftly—and there is no time to waste—policymakers need new and clear options for reform, accompanied by new ideas. The ideas included in this playbook are designed to both empower parents and help inform and educate policymakers. They are guided by three principles:

Parents and students first: Systems that lock parents and students in to only one option exclude educational opportunities. Parents should be able to choose from multiple high-quality educational options because they understand what their children need.

Start with those who have been given the least and support them the most: To close learning gaps, both pandemic-induced and those that existed before COVID-19, states will have to focus on providing the resources and options to those who have had none, especially over the past year. Family income may be one indicator that students need additional funding or support, but it is not the only indicator. States may also want to focus on students with special educational needs, those who have had no opportunity for face-to-face learning (whatever the reason), and those who are most impacted by the digital divide.

Flexibility is imperative: Parents need multiple educational options, and they also need the flexibility to determine which of those options work for them. This means that states must invest in more nimble approaches to schooling—especially for families who are hesitant to send their children to a brick-and-mortar school. Giving parents the financial resources to hire a private tutor or teacher; building robust virtual school options; and supporting new providers, including tutors, childcare providers, and micro schools are all avenues that states should consider as they tailor their own educational opportunity agendas.

That is why we at ExcelinEd have been working various stakeholders to create new options for families and educators. In the pages that follow we offer several new ideas that states can consider adopting or adapting to their needs

The ideas captured here are only the beginning—a first attempt to learn from the lessons of the pandemic. In taking those lessons to heart and remembering them, we can create brighter and more equitable education for all children.



LEARNING EQUITY AND PROGRESS GRANTS

Policy Overview

LEAP grants are a new type of Education Scholarship Account, built to give parents and students aged pre-K to 12 the educational options they need in 2021. The LEAP framework guides states in determining who should be eligible for grants and the educational services and options families need. LEAP grants extend ESAs beyond “traditional” educational opportunities because educative childcare and a wider range of supplemental educational services are imperative to ensuring equality of educational opportunity.

Background: A growing demand for educational options

Over the past twenty-five years, programs providing students with more educational options have grown steadily. Education scholarship accounts, or ESAs, are the most recent innovation in educational opportunity. By allocating the state portion of education funding to qualifying students (those with special needs or who qualify for free-or reduced-price lunch), ESAs provide parents with money to spend (on average, \$6,000) on a range of state-approved educational services, including but not limited to educational therapies, technology, tutoring, and private school tuition. Much like health savings accounts, ESAs give those who use them the flexibility to purchase education services tailored to student needs.

Since the beginning of COVID-19 related school closures in March 2020, the number of education scholarship account programs in the U.S. has increased by 50 percent, from six programs to nine. These programs (in [Oklahoma](#), [Idaho](#), and [Texas](#)) are different than those that came before, because they provide qualifying families with a range of educational services and supports but do not allow funds to be used for private school tuition. All three new programs leverage federal stimulus funds (Governor’s Emergency Education Relief Funds), instead of allocating state education dollars to qualifying families. In the two states where these new programs are already operating, [parent demand](#) has been so high that legislators are considering how to make them permanent. Why are these programs so popular? The pandemic shone a bright light on existing education inequities that negatively impact the working- and middle-class. It has also revealed to more parents that their local public school, no matter how good for some kids, might not be the best option for all.

When schools across the country turned to remote learning in the spring of 2020, those who could afford it took the education of their children into their own hands. Wealthier families were able to access online tutoring, subscriptions to supplemental courses, and even hired teachers to service small “pods” of children. Each of these things serves more than just an education function: each also occupies students—especially older students—during a parent’s workday. When schools closed, parents who were unsatisfied with remote learning but couldn’t pay for tutor or pod lost more than the educational experience for their children, many also lost the only form of childcare they could afford.

As the pandemic continues predictions of learning loss are becoming more dire, especially for families who have no choice other than their local district. But these predictions don’t have to come to fruition. Embracing the flexibility and power that ESAs can provide parents and tailoring the ESA idea to address the access gap that the pandemic has highlighted are steps in the right direction.



LEAP Grants: Student and Family Eligibility Models

States should consider one or more of the models below to determine who is eligible for what amount of LEAP funding. These models could also be combined.

MODEL ONE: Focus on students who qualify for free- and reduced-price lunch

- A child must be eligible to enroll in pre-kindergarten (pre-K) or currently enrolled in any grade pre-K through 12.
- A child/family must be eligible for free- and-reduced-price lunch (FRLP), show proof of unemployment/employment furlough, or provide proof of eligibility for another government program, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP) program.
- States may consider evenly distributing the LEAP Grants among qualifying students or may choose to more heavily weight LEAP funding for qualifying students who also have IEP/504 plans.

MODEL TWO: Focus on students enrolled in a public schools

- A child must be eligible to enroll in pre-kindergarten (pre-k) or currently enrolled in any grade pre-K through 12
- Families are eligible regardless of income, but grants could be distributed on a sliding scale, based on income. For example:
- Families making less than \$100,000 per year could be eligible for the full amount of the LEAP Grant.
- Families making \$100-200,000 per year could be eligible for 50% of the full amount of the LEAP Grant.
- Families making above \$200,000 per year could be eligible for 25% of the full amount of the LEAP Grant.
- Students with special educational needs (defined as an IEP or 504 plan) should receive the full amount of the grant (or more, according to “weight”), regardless of income.

MODEL THREE: Focus on all students in a state

- A child must be eligible to enroll in pre-kindergarten (pre-K) or currently enrolled in any grade pre-K through 12.
- Families are eligible regardless of income, but grants could be distributed on a sliding scale, based on income. (see example in Model One above).
- Students with special educational needs (defined as an IEP or 504 plan) should receive the full amount of the grant (or more, according to “weight”), regardless of income.

Funding and Allowable Uses

Families could use LEAP Grants for a wide variety of state-sanctioned education, health, and child-care related expenses, including but not limited to:

- Computer hardware and software
- Internet connectivity
- Tutoring or supplemental education services
- In-home education and/or care
- Private school and/or daycare tuition/expenses
- Special education and education-related telehealth services (including mental and socio-emotional health services)
- Approved out-of-school learning experiences, including summer programs

State legislatures may also choose to from one or a combination of the funding mechanisms below:

- Use emergency funding and or new state funding to assist qualifying families for at least one full academic year following the (state-defined) resolution of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Enact legislation that redirects funds from the state funding formula to LEAP grants
- Enact a tax-credit scholarship program that uses private donations to fund LEAP grants
- Create part-time enrollment legislation that allows eligible students to take up to 50% of their classes from LEAP-approved private providers that become contractors to the school district. Under this model, the school district pays approved private providers using no more than 50% of the state and local funds it receives for the eligible student.



STATEWIDE TUTORING CORPS

Policy Overview

Personalized tutoring is an evidence-based solution that can bring immediate relief to students and should become an engrained aspect of future schooling. One way for states to maximize the impact of personalized tutoring is to establish a statewide tutoring corps, which can be a state-funded program that scales private tutoring services by leveraging a “corps” of qualified individuals to provide tutoring.

Background

As states grapple with the effects of COVID-induced learning loss, one strategy pursued by [governors](#) and [philanthropists](#) and recommended by [researchers](#) is personalized tutoring. Affluent families often use personalized tutoring to improve their student’s performance in a specific course, as well as rigorous test prep for college admissions. Too often, families of less means cannot provide their students with the same opportunity. The pandemic highlighted and exacerbated the pre-existing educational disparities between the haves and have nots that plague America’s schools.

The idea of a tutoring corps is not new. In 1997, President Bill Clinton tried to establish a “well-trained, coordinated army of a million volunteers” to teach children. In the 1990s, a new crop of high-performing charter public schools attributed their success, in part, to providing “high dosage/high impact tutoring to students. These programs [are unique](#), as they integrate tutoring into the school day and curriculum, and tutors work closely with classroom teachers. Taking a cue from these schools, in 2015, Matthew Kraft, then a graduate student at Harvard, posed the question, “[What If Every Struggling Student Had a Tutor?](#)”; Kraft outlined the benefits of tutoring and examined what it would take to fund and implement tutoring at scale. Since that time, a number of high-profile tutoring initiatives have grown, including Saga Education, a non-profit that provides personalized, in-school tutoring for students which [projects to reach over 4,500 students](#) in the 2020-2021 school year.

Could the COVID-19 crisis finally elevate widespread tutoring as a proven mechanism for stemming learning loss and closing opportunity gaps? Perhaps, but it will take bold action from state leaders. There are number of key questions states need to consider as they contemplate creating tutoring corps. They include:

1. How should the state fund the tutoring corps?
2. Which students should states focus on providing tutors?
3. Who would provide the tutoring?
4. How will tutors be recruited, retained, and trained?
5. How can states ensure safety during virtual/and or in-person sessions?
6. How should states measure the learning outcomes?



How should the state fund the tutoring corps?

Option 1: State could consider leveraging stimulus funds to create statewide tutoring corps. North Carolina and Maryland are both examples of states that have utilized the Governors Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funds from the [previous federal stimulus](#) to bolster existing programs or create entirely new programs. Maryland used [\\$100 million of GEER funds](#) “for local systems that implement tutoring and learning programs designed to help students in need”, with a focus on at-risk students. North Carolina used its GEER funds to create the [North Carolina Education Corps](#). This program aims to “provide emergency relief to public schools by employing talented community members—including current college students and recent graduates experiencing financial strain or loss of employment—to provide wraparound services to K-12 students across NC.”

Option 2: States could also consider establishing a competitive grants process for private and nonprofit tutoring providers.

Option 3: States could provide direct grants to students/families that are seeking out tutoring services utilizing an Education Savings Account or a Learning, Equity, and Progress (LEAP) grant.

Who should receive tutoring?

Most students, regardless of background, have experienced learning loss as a result of pandemic-induced school closures. With constrained resources, states should prioritize students who have suffered the greatest learning loss. Research from [McKinsey](#) suggests that low-income students (defined as students who are eligible for the Free and Reduced Lunch Program) disproportionately had lesser access to adequate remote learning, which directly hurt their ability to continue learning while schools were physically closed. The same students were more likely to perform below grade level prior to the pandemic.

If lieu of a means-tested approach, states could use diagnostic assessments to determine which students are furthest behind compared to their grade-level and peers. Students with the lowest proficiency in core subject areas would be the best candidates for tutoring.

Who would provide the tutoring?

States should center their efforts on recruiting recent college graduates and/or current high-performing college students to fill the tutor roles. Research suggests that having a recent college graduate as a full-time tutor helped students [achieve notable academic progress](#) on a 10th grade English language arts assessment. States may utilize this approach to provide exposure to the teaching profession which could address the [teacher shortages](#) many states face. It also could provide economic opportunities to students who are facing a potentially [weaker job market](#) in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

How will states recruit, train, and retain tutors?

States should consider partnering with tutoring organizations that have the infrastructure to recruit recent college graduates and have an established training curriculum. This allows states to quickly launch a tutoring corps, rather than build one from scratch. Some examples of these organizations include Saga Education, which has taken its tutoring model to multiple large school districts around the country including Chicago, NYC, and Houston. Saga tutors are recruited and retained by highlighting an AmeriCorps partnership. Tutors serve through AmeriCorps and are eligible for stipends and Segal Education Awards. States can also partner with philanthropic organizations to provide tutors. For example, the Bill and Crissy Haslam Foundation working in collaboration with the Boys and Girls Club, launched the Tennessee Tutoring Corps, which recruited 1,000 college students to become tutors across the state of Tennessee.



How should states measure the outcomes of tutoring programs?

States will have the opportunity to utilize both academic and non-academic accountability measures to measure how programs are being implemented. States should compare academic proficiency and growth of students who are involved in the program compared to those who are not. Additionally, [research](#) shows that tutoring can lead to stronger school climate and improved non-academic skill development. States who measure school climate should build additional measures tied to tutoring into their accountability structures.

How can states ensure safety during virtual/and or in-person sessions?

States should consider having all tutors follow the same background check procedures (which may include but are not limited to: mandatory fingerprinting, criminal history, drug testing, etc.) that are required for teachers, school personnel, and/or other individuals who have contact with students. States can also require school districts to hire a tutoring coordinator—someone responsible for hiring and deploying tutors, monitoring their work, and ensuring that tutoring complements the curriculum taught during the school day.



PARENT-TEACHER COMPACTS

Policy Overview

A “Parent-Teacher Compact” is a written agreement between a parent and a teacher that would allow the teacher to directly oversee the public education of a student. There’s no principal, no school, no middle-man. Just the teacher and the parent. Education decisions are made in an equal partnership between the two.

In return, the teacher would receive the same amount of funding from the state that a public school would have received if the student were enrolled in their residentially assigned school. By developing Parent-Teacher Compact policy, state policymakers would create a new mechanism for connecting teachers and families directly.

For a brief explanation, see this [one-minute video](#).

Background

Skilled and experienced teachers are leaving the profession. The [Learning Policy Institute](#) estimates that **annual attrition in the profession is about 8 percent per year**. That means the nation loses hundreds of thousands of skilled teachers. This is a way to bring them back into the fold.

At the same time, too many families feel the pandemic has limited their children’s education options and learning engagement. According to Pew Research, [65 percent of parents](#) are concerned about their children’s screen time and falling behind while learning in-home.

Parent-Teacher Compacts can help families who aren’t ready to send their child back to campus, but still want to give their child an in-person school experience and keep them on track with learning.

Allows parents to contract directly with teachers.

- Allows parents and guardians to agree to a written compact with state-certified teachers to oversee the education of their school-aged children.
- Families meet with teachers and agree to the details and scope of instruction.
- Teachers and Parents review these written agreements, or compacts, to ensure high quality learning.
- Compensate teachers by the state, like all public school teachers, using state funds.

Creates new options for teachers.

- Attracts former teachers who would like to return to instructing students, but not in the traditionally structured school environment.
- Empowers teachers to serve students in new and innovative ways.
- Provides another professional opportunity for teachers.
- Teachers can customize their work by entering into one or more compacts.

Creates new options for families.

- Provides instructional flexibility for students and teachers that meets academic needs.
- Plans learning opportunities for time and location that fits a child’s unique needs.



OPEN DISTRICTS

Policy Overview

The Open District Model Policy is an **interdistrict policy** and is one part of open enrollment policy. Open enrollment policies allows students to attend public schools outside of their residentially assigned attendance zone. If districts adopted this policy, it allows any student in a state to attend any school district. While no resident of a district would be turned away, transfer students would be provided information and processes to make admittance to their choice districts much more likely. Parks and libraries are public institutions that are open to people without regard to their address. School districts should be open to everyone too.

Background: Why Open Districts?

Even before school closures due to COVID-19, students and families deserve the flexibility to change directions - to make a change that could result in a better fit and a more promising educational opportunity.

The pandemic has highlighted huge differences between wealthy districts and poor districts. For example, a recent analysis from [Georgetown University's FutureEd](#) found that students in wealthier districts are more likely to have access to the “safest in-person educational experiences.”

But these differences between wealthy school districts and poor school districts predate the pandemic. Recently, Tim DeRoche, released a book [A Fine Line: How most American kids are kept out the best public schools](#), that highlights the history about school boundaries and how they divide neighbors, excluding many from equal opportunities. As DeRoche points out, there is a neighborhood in Brooklyn where children on one side of the block attend a school where nearly 8 of 10 students read on grade-level, while children on the other side of the block attend a school where only 3 in 10 students read on grade-level.

Brooklyn is not alone. We see maps like this in Chicago, Los Angeles, and Dallas where school boundaries mirror the same redlined boundaries adopted by government agencies in the 1930's. For almost 100 years, they've separated communities who happen to live near each other. These attendance boundaries affected [generation after generation](#) of Americans.

Looking forward, we simply cannot afford exclusion and constraint. [Birth rates](#) continue to drop. By 2035, the number of middle-aged Americans are [projected to outnumber children](#) for the first time in U.S. history. In 15 or 20 years, our nation will rely more heavily on today's children more than maybe any generation before it.

How does an Open District Policy Work?

A parent or guardian will submit a written request to their current school district requesting transfer to their desired or receiving school district. The receiving school district will grant acceptance of the student unless the number of transfer requests exceeds the capacity of the receiving school district. If capacity is insufficient to enroll all potential transfer students, then the receiving district shall select students through a public lottery. If a request for transfer is denied, an appeal may be taken to the State Board of Education by the requesting parent or student.

School District Capacity and Transparency

Each local school board can establish the number of transfer students the school district has the capacity to accept in each grade level and school. As a measure of transparency, the number of transfers for each grade level and school the school district has the capacity to accept should be placed in a prominent and publicly accessible place on the school district's website. These numbers should also be shared with each state's Department of Education.



How does Funding and Transportation Work?

After the student is enrolled in their desired or receiving school district, that district will charge the sending school district tuition for each transfer student for every year the student attends the receiving school district. The receiving school district can offer to provide transportation for the student.



BROADENING DISTRICT FLEXIBILITY

Policy Overview

States can maximize school district flexibility by adopting **broad district contracting authority**. This allow districts to create new opportunities - for more supplemental or full-time online courses, for more pods, for closer relationships with after-school providers, and for parent-directed expenditures. As public education continues to evolve, states should look to break down the barriers that prevent these innovative partnerships and encourage districts to meet families where they are.

Background

Since March 2020, students and families created home schools, moved to private schools and sought alternative public schools in record numbers. Bellwether Education Partners estimated [3 million students](#) were missing from public schools. Many school districts have [gone the extra mile to find students](#), but more flexibility to partner with community organizations would help them meet students wherever they find them.

However, public schools can go *to* students and families. We've seen "Herculean efforts" in Indianapolis, [San Francisco](#), [Cleveland](#) and [Denver](#) where the district reassigned staff to set up pods and learning hubs. These efforts could be replicated in districts across the country, however there are often structural barriers to this kind of innovation. Even forward-thinking states like Colorado, Georgia, Indiana, Oklahoma, New Jersey, and Texas have provided **narrow flexibilities** for districts to directly employ charter networks to staff schools.

What does broad contracting authority look like in practice?

If a state were to adopt this policy, districts might be able and more likely to do the following and more:

7. Partner with a [charter school network](#) to staff a school
8. Partner with a microschool organization, like [Prenda](#), to offer in-home microschools
9. Partner with higher-education to provide [new postsecondary options](#)
10. Or partner with extracurricular providers and companies like [ClassWallet](#) to allow parents to direct educational funding (like Epic Charter's "[Learning Fund](#)")



LEAP GRANT MODEL POLICY

Section 1. {Title}

(A) This Act shall be named the “Learning Equity and Progress (LEAP) Grant Act.”

Section 2. {Definitions.}

(A) “Account” means a parent-directed grant account established pursuant to this article and composed of state funds deposited on behalf of a participating student and which may be used for qualified education expenses.

(B) “Account funds” means the funds awarded on behalf of a participating student.

(C) “Authority” means the government agency or non-profit organization(s) chosen to implement this program.

(D) “Curriculum” means a complete course of study for a content area or grade level.

(E) “Education service provider” means a person or organization, including private tutors and tutoring facilities (K); who provides qualified education expenses pursuant to this article and is not a participating school.

(F) “Eligible postsecondary institution” means a state or accredited community college, technical college, university or private postsecondary institution.

(G) “Parent” means a resident of this state who is a parent, guardian, custodian or other person with the authority to act on behalf of the child.

(H) “Participating school” means any private school that provides education to elementary and/or secondary students and has notified AUTHORITY of its intention to participate in the program and comply with the program’s requirements.

(I) “Participating student” means a student who receives an account pursuant to this act.

(J) “Program” means the LEAP Grant program created in this subchapter.

(K) “Private tutoring” means tutoring services provided by a tutoring facility or a tutor who is a teacher licensed in any state and/or who has taught at an eligible postsecondary institution, and/or who is a subject matter expert and/or who is otherwise approved by the Department of Education.

(L) “Qualified education expenses” are expenses listed in Section 3(B).



Section 3. {Basic Elements of the Education Scholarship Act.}

(A) A child is eligible to participate in the program if they are a pre-kindergarten, elementary or secondary student who is a resident of this state {and CHOOSE FROM THE OPTIONS BELOW}:

Eligibility Category	Description and Analysis
UNIVERSAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A child must be eligible to enroll in pre-kindergarten (pre-K) or currently enrolled in any grade pre-K through 12. • Students qualify regardless of current or prior enrollments in any public or private school, private tutoring program, or homeschool status. • Families are eligible regardless of income, but grants could be distributed on a sliding scale, based on income. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Families making less than \$100,000 per year could be eligible for the full amount of the LEAP Grant. ○ Families making \$100-200,000 per year could be eligible for 50% of the full amount of the LEAP Grant. ○ Families making above \$200,000 per year could be eligible for 25% of the full amount of the LEAP Grant. • Students with special educational needs (defined as an IEP or 504 plan) should receive the full amount of the grant (or more, according to “weight”), regardless of income.
MEANS-TESTED (FREE- AND REDUCED-PRICE LUNCH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A child must be eligible to enroll in pre-kindergarten (pre-K) or currently enrolled in any grade pre-K through 12. • Students qualify regardless of current or prior enrollments in any public or private school, private tutoring program, or homeschool status. • A child/family must be eligible for free- and-reduced-price lunch (FRLP) as of the 2019-20 school year or show proof of unemployment/employment furlough in calendar years 2020/21. <p>Under this model, states may consider evenly distributing the LEAP Grants among qualifying students and may choose to more heavily weight LEAP funding for qualifying students who also have IEP/504 plans.</p>
STUDENTS ENROLLED IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS DURING PERIODS OF LONG-TERM CLOSURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A child must be eligible to enroll in pre-kindergarten (pre-k) or currently enrolled in any grade pre-K through 12 • Families are eligible regardless of income, but grants could be distributed on a sliding scale, based on income. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Families making less than \$100,000 per year could be eligible for the full amount of the LEAP Grant. ○ Families making \$100-200,000 per year could be eligible for 50% of the full amount of the LEAP Grant.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Families making above \$200,000 per year could be eligible for 25% of the full amount of the LEAP Grant. • Students with special educational needs (defined as an IEP or 504 plan) should receive the full amount of the grant (or more, according to “weight”), regardless of income.
SPECIAL NEEDS	Student possesses an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) written in accordance with rules established by the state board of education; an Individualized Family Service Plan (ISFP) if entering Kindergarten; was determined IDEA eligible by a multidisciplinary evaluation team; possesses a 504 plan; or is medically diagnosed by a licensed physician in one of the IDEA disability categories under 20 USC 1401(3)(A) ⁱ .

(A) Parents participating in the program shall agree to only use the funds deposited in their participating student’s accounts for the following qualified education expenses:ⁱⁱⁱ

- (1) Tuition, fees, and required textbooks and uniforms at a participating school or provider;
- (2) Private tutoring;
- (3) Textbooks, curriculum, or other instructional materials, including, but not limited to, any supplemental materials or associated online instruction required by either a curriculum or an education service provider;
- (4) Educational services and therapies for students with disabilities from a licensed or accredited practitioner or provider, including but not limited to occupational, behavioral, physical and speech-language therapies;
- (5) Computer hardware, software, or other technological devices/Internet connectivity devices that are used solely for a student’s educational needs and approved by the AUTHORITY or licensed physician;
- (6) Tuition and fees for an approved non-public online learning course or program;
- (7) Fees for national norm-referenced examinations, Advanced Placement examinations or similar courses, fees associated with state-recognized industry certification exams and any examinations related to college or university admission;
- (8) Tuition, fees and instructional materials at a career and technical education provider;
- (9) Tuition, fees and required textbooks at an eligible postsecondary institution;
- (10) Contracted educational services provided at a public school, public school district, charter or magnet school, including but not limited to, individual classes and extracurricular activities and programs;



- (11) Fees for transportation^{iv} paid to a fee-for-service transportation provider for the participating student to travel to and from an eligible education service provider as defined in this section, but not to exceed \$1,000^v per school year;
 - (12) Tuition and/or fees for summer education programs and specialized after-school education programs; including before and after school childcare or childcare/education programs during periods of long-term school closure; such programs may be provided by a school, a district, a private tutor/tutoring facility or education service provider;
 - (13) Any other valid education expenses approved by the AUTHORITY
- (A) The state may choose from several different models to finance LEAP grants. To maximize educational opportunities for students and parents, the state should aim to provide equivalent to 90 percent of the calculated amount the student would have received in the district school to which he or she would have been assigned in the resident school district. This equals the base student allocation in the state funding formula multiplied by the appropriate weights provided for the student.^{vi} Funds shall be distributed to parents on a quarterly basis. Funding models include:

Funding Model	Description and Analysis
STATE FUNDED, STATE PER-PUPIL ALLOCATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where a LEAP program allows students to meet compulsory education requirements by choosing a private school, homeschooling, or a similar arrangement, at least 90% of the state’s portion of per-pupil funding should be allocated to the student to use on approved services. • A state may also consider providing the full 90% to students who prove they are meeting compulsory education requirements outside of a district or charter school and a lesser amount (50%) to students who choose to remain enrolled in a district or charter but qualify for a LEAP grant to use toward supplementals services.
STATE FUNDED, NEW PROGRAM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • States may choose to use federal stimulus money to create a LEAP program and/or to allocate new state funds toward a LEAP program.
TAX-CREDIT FUNDED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • States could leverage existing or new tax-credit programs, allowing individual and corporate donors to receive a 100 percent tax-credit for donations to not-for-profit scholarship granting organizations that would, in turn, match eligible students with LEAP grants.
PART-TIME AND OTHER ENROLLMENT MODELS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • States may allow students to remain enrolled in their district, private, or home education program but take up to 50% of



	<p>their core and/or supplemental classes with an approved private provider that becomes a contractor to the district.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• For example, if an eligible student enrolled in a public school district or charter school wanted to take math or music classes with an approved provider, the district would use the students state and local allocation to pay the approved provider for services.• Districts would pay up to but no more than 50% of the state and local funds allocated to the eligible student, and students would have to meet all state requirements for graduation and/or promotion through a mix of courses from the school in which they are enrolled and approved private providers.
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- (B) The funds in an account may only be used for educational purposes. Any refund or rebate for goods or services purchased with a student’s account funds shall be credited directly to the student’s account.
- (C) Parents will be allowed to make payments for the costs of educational programs and services not covered by the funds in their accounts. Personal deposits into an account are not permitted.
- (D) Funds received pursuant to this section do not constitute taxable income to the parent of the participating student.
- (E) For purposes of continuity of educational choice, the program payments made under this section shall remain in force until a student participating in the program participates in any of the prohibited activities specified in this chapter, graduates from high school or attains 22 years of age, whichever occurs first.
- (F) Funds saved over the course of an entire school year are eligible to roll over to the following year. If a parent removes a child from the program before the end of the school year, any remaining funds from that school year shall return to the state and be allocated to fund other accounts.
- (G) Accounts shall remain active and account funds usable until any of the following occur:
 - (1) Funds are revoked by AUTHORITY for misuse;
 - (2) A student graduates from a postsecondary institution; after four consecutive years after high school graduation in which a student is not enrolled in a postsecondary institution unless active-duty military; a student turns 25 years of age; or
 - (3) After two consecutive years of account inactivity.

Section 4. {Parent Application and Re-application.}

- (A) A parent may apply to the AUTHORITY to establish an account.



(1) The AUTHORITY shall accept and approve applications year-round and shall establish procedures for approving applications in an expeditious manner.

(B) The AUTHORITY shall create a standard form that parents can submit to enroll their child in the program and shall ensure that the application is publicly available and may be submitted through various sources, including the Internet.^{vii}

Section 5. {Responsibilities of the Authority.}

(A) The AUTHORITY shall establish quarterly enrollment periods for parents.

(B) The AUTHORITY shall maintain an updated list of participating service providers and other allowable expenses and shall ensure that the list is publicly available through various sources, including the Internet.^{ix}

(C) The AUTHORITY shall ensure that students eligible for the program and their parents are informed annually of their ability to participate in the program. Special attention shall be paid to ensuring that lower-income families are made aware of the program and their options.

(D) The AUTHORITY shall provide parents of participating students with a written explanation of the allowable uses of the accounts, information on selecting education service providers, the responsibilities of parents, the role of any private organizations that the AUTHORITY may contract with to administer the program and the duties of the AUTHORITY.

(E) The AUTHORITY shall compare the list of participating students who use funds to attend a non-public school with public school enrollment lists before each program payment to avoid duplicate payments.

(F) The AUTHORITY may bar a participating school or education service provider from the program if the AUTHORITY establishes that the participating school or education service provider has:

(1) Routinely failed to comply with the accountability standards established in this subchapter; or

(2) Failed to provide the participating student with the educational services funded by the account.

(3) If the AUTHORITY decides to bar a participating school or education service provider from the program, it shall notify affected participating students and their parents of this decision as quickly as possible.

(4) Participating schools and education service providers may appeal the AUTHORITY'S decision to bar them from receiving payments from accounts pursuant to the state's administrative hearing act

(G) The AUTHORITY shall develop a system for parents to direct account funds to participating schools and education service providers by electronic funds transfer, automated clearing house transfer or another



system that the office finds to be commercially viable, cost-effective and easy for parents of participating students to use. The office shall not adopt a system that relies solely on reimbursing parents for out-of-pocket expenses, but may determine certain qualified education expenses that must require reimbursement or preapproval for purchase. The AUTHORITY is authorized to qualify private financial management firms to manage the payment system. The AUTHORITY shall establish and provide reasonable fees for private financial management firms participating in the program based upon market rates.

- (H) The AUTHORITY shall seek to implement a commercially viable, cost-effective, and parent-friendly system for parents to publicly rate, review and share information about participating schools and education service providers, ideally as part of the same system that facilitates the electronic or online funds transfers.
- (I) The AUTHORITY may deduct an amount from the grants to accounts to cover the costs of overseeing the accounts and administering the program up to a limit of 10 percent^x.

Section 6. { Academic Accountability Standards }.

To allow parents and taxpayers to measure the achievements of the program:

- (1) In grades that require testing under the state's accountability testing laws for public schools, all participating students shall take either the state achievement tests or nationally norm-referenced tests identified by the AUTHORITY that measure learning gains in math and language arts, and provide for value-added assessment. Students with disabilities for whom standardized testing is not appropriate, as determined in the child's Individualized Education Plan or by a physician licensed in the state, are exempt from this requirement. The results of these tests are provided to the AUTHORITY or an organization chosen by the AUTHORITY on an annual basis. The student information is reported in a way that would allow the state to aggregate data by grade level, gender, family income level, and race. The AUTHORITY or an organization chosen by the state will be informed of the participating student's graduation from high school.
- (2) For participating students enrolled in participating schools, the participating school shall administer an exam pursuant to Section C(1) of this subchapter.
- (3) For participating students not enrolled in participating schools, the AUTHORITY shall create a process for students to be administered an exam pursuant to Section C(1) of this subchapter, with results reported to the state.^{xi}

Section 9. { Annual Report. }

- (A) In compliance with all student privacy laws, the AUTHORITY or an organization chosen by the AUTHORITY shall produce an annual report that is accessible via a state website. Student findings shall be aggregated by the students' grade level, gender, family income level, number of years of participation in the scholarship program, and race. The report shall assess:



- (1) Student performance on state achievement tests or nationally norm-referenced tests, including learning gains;
- (2) High school graduation rates;
- (3) Parental satisfaction via the survey pursuant to Section 4(E);
- (4) The percentage of funds used for each qualifying expense identified in Section 3(B); and

(B) The report shall:

- (1) Apply appropriate analytical behavioral science methodologies to ensure public confidence in the study; and
- (2) Protect the identity of participating students and schools by, among other things, keeping anonymous all disaggregated data.



STATEWIDE TUTORING CORPS MODEL POLICY

I. Short Title

This act shall be known and may be cited as the “Tutoring Corps Act,” (the “Act”).

II. Legislative Purpose

The purpose of this Act is to:

- a. Create a state-funded tutoring program for eligible schools and students.
- b. Provide tutors to eligible students who have experienced learning loss, are behind grade-level in core subject areas or otherwise determined to be an eligible student.

III. Definitions

- a. An “eligible student” means a student who
 - a. qualifies to participate in the federal free and reduced lunch program and/or
 - a. has demonstrated significant learning loss determined by a state-approved diagnostic assessment and/or
 - b. has not had access to in-person instruction at their assigned public school for a period of more than six consecutive months due to Covid-19 closures and/or;
 - c. has special needs, defined as having an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a 504 plan
- b. A “tutor” means a person with a bachelor’s degree or is currently a high performing college student that passes the background procedures as required by teachers, school personnel, and other individuals who encounter students.
 - a. A tutor can also include:
 - i. Recent retirees
- c. A “participating school district” is one that the State automatically requires to provide tutors to students based on predetermined criteria or one that chooses to opt-in to the tutoring program. These criteria could include but are not limited to:
 - a. A school district whose student population includes 50% or more of students who are eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch
 - b. A school district whose student population includes 50% or more of students who are reading below proficiency levels defined by State
- d. “Authority” means the government agency or non-profit organization(s) chosen to implement this program.

IV. State Responsibilities

- a. The state shall determine the eligible population students and notify all eligible students and parents of their eligibility.
- b. The state shall allow participating school districts to partner with a tutoring provider for its students to utilize or it may allow parents independently to choose a state-vetted tutoring service.
- c. **Academic Accountability Standards.** To allow parents and taxpayers to measure the achievements of the program.
 - a. All participating students shall take either the state achievement tests, or nationally norm-referenced tests identified by the state that measure learning gains in math and language arts.
 - b. The results of these tests should be provided to the (Authority) or an organization chosen by the (Authority) on an annual basis. The student information should be reported in a way that would allow the state to aggregate data by grade level, gender, family income, and race.
- d. **The state shall oversee the equitable distribution of funds for tutoring in accordance with pre-determined priorities. Tutoring programs could be funded using one or a combination of approaches, including but not limited to:**
 - a. Leveraging federal stimulus funds to fund the creation of a tutoring corps; and/or
 - b. Using existing AmeriCorps funds to fund the creation of a tutoring corps; and/or
 - c. Redirecting Title I dollars for Direct Student Services, found in Sec. 1003a of the Every Student Succeeds Act to create a statewide tutoring corps; and/or



- d. Philanthropic partnerships
- e. Corporate partnerships
- f. Tax-credit programs
- e. States shall require participating school districts to recruit and provide tutors to eligible students and/or schools. Each tutor must:
 - a. have a bachelor's degree and/or have a current GPA of 3.0 or higher;
 - b. successfully complete the background check procedure that licensed teacher undergo;
 - c. commit to at least one year of service with increased financial incentives for continuation
- f. By October 1 of each year, school districts shall report the average per pupil expenditure to the state's Department of Education.
 - a. This report should highlight the amount of funds each school district allocated for tutoring services.
- g. The state's Department of Education shall publish the data received from school districts under subparagraphs (b) and (e) under section V of this Act in a prominent and publicly accessible place on the department's web site.
- h. The state and district(s) shall provide initial training and/or ongoing professional development for tutors in both pedagogy and curriculum

V. School District Responsibilities

- a) The school district shall track student participation in the tutoring program.
- b) The school district shall provide a diagnostic assessment to measure student academic performance when relevant.
- c) The school district shall ensure that participating students have the requisite technology and/or physical location for the tutoring to take place.



PARENT-TEACHER COMPACT MODEL POLICY

I. Short Title

This act shall be known and may be cited as the “Parent-Teacher Compact Act,” (the “Act”).

II. Legislative Purpose

The purpose of this Act is to:

- a. Increase learning opportunities for students;
- b. Establish new flexibilities for teachers and families;
- c. Empower families to create education solutions that fit the unique needs of their children;
- d. Empower teachers to serve students and their families in new and different ways;
- e. Create new professional opportunities for teachers; and
- f. Facilitate written agreements between parents and teachers.

III. Definitions

- a. A “parent” means any person who is the legal guardian of a child who is entitled to receive a free and appropriate public education under state statutes.
- b. A “teacher” means any person who is properly certified to teach in a public school in this state.

IV. Parent-Teacher Compacts

- a. Parents who are residents of the state may agree to a written compact with a teacher to oversee the education of and provide educational services to children in their legal custody.
- b. Teachers who are residents of the state and are certified to teach in a public school in the state may enter one or more compacts with one or more families to serve one or more students.
- c. Parent-Teacher Compacts shall contain, but are not limited to, the following:
 - i. The name of the teacher and verification of their certification;
 - ii. The name of the parent and their address;
 - iii. The number of students who will be served by the compact;
 - iv. A list of students and their identifying information who will be served by the compact;
 - v. A description of the services to be provided, including special education services if applicable;
 - vi. A termination clause that allows the parent or teacher to terminate the compact for any reason at any time; and
 - vii. The term of the compact.
- d. Once a compact between the teacher and the parent has been agreed and signed by both parties, the teacher shall submit a copy of the written compact to the state education agency.
- e. In order to facilitate the development of Parent-Teacher Compacts, the state education agency shall draft and publish on its website a simple compact template that may be used by parents and teachers.



V. Status of Students being served by Parent-Teacher Compacts

[Option 1: Students are part of the public education program and are eligible for special education services.]

- a. A student being served under the authority of a Parent-Teacher Compact that has been submitted to the state education agency shall be considered fully enrolled in a public education program under the direction of a teacher. If applicable, the Parent-Teacher Compact shall describe the special education services to be provided to students.

[Option 2: Students are not part of the public education program.]

- a. A student being served under the direction of a Parent-Teacher Compact that has been properly submitted to the state education agency shall not be part of the public education program.



VI. Status and Duties of Teachers serving Students under a Parent-Teacher Compact

- a. The teacher shall maintain a portfolio of records and materials. The portfolio must consist of the following:
 - i. A log of educational activities that is made contemporaneously with the instruction and that designates by title any reading materials used.
 - ii. Samples of any writings, worksheets, workbooks, or creative materials used or developed by the student.
- b. Teachers who are serving one or more students under the authority of a Parent-Teacher Compact shall offer to administer a standardized summative assessment to the student or students being served.

[Option 1: Teachers are independent operators who still have access to the state-level teacher retirement system.]

- c. Teachers who are serving students under the authority of a Parent-Teacher Compact may participate as members of the state teachers' retirement system in accordance with applicable statutes and rules.

[Option 2: Teachers are employees of the state education agency only for the purposes of receiving benefits and still have access to the state-level teacher retirement system.]

- c. Teachers who are serving students under the authority of a Parent-Teacher Compact may participate as members of the state teachers' retirement system in accordance with applicable statutes and rules.
- d. Teachers serving one or more students under a Parent-Teacher Compact shall be considered employees of the state education agency only for the purposes of health benefits and shall have access to the same benefits as other employees of the state education agency.
- e. The state education agency may charge teachers who are serving one or more students under a Parent-Teacher Compact an administrative fee for services of no more than or equal to one percent of state-level funds allocated to the teacher.

[Option 3: Teachers may be employees of the state-education agency, a public university, or non-profit for the purposes of receiving benefits. They would still have access to the state-level teacher retirement system.]

- c. Teachers who are serving students under the authority of a Parent-Teacher Compact may participate as members of the state teachers' retirement system in accordance with applicable statutes and rules.
- d. Teachers serving one or more students under a Parent-Teacher Compact may be considered employees of the state education agency, a public university, or a non-profit organization for the purposes of health benefits and shall have access to the same benefits as other employees, and may charge teachers an administrative fee for services of no more than or equal to one percent of the total of state-level funds allocated to the teacher.



VII. Funding

- a. For the purposes of funding, teachers serving students under Parent-Teacher Compacts that have been submitted to the state education agency shall be entitled to the same amount of state-level funding as a local education agency would receive if the students attended a public school in their district of residence.
- b. The state-level funding allocation for the Parent-Teacher Compact shall be distributed to the teacher by a public body or agency that distributes state-level funding.
- c. If the term of the Parent-Teacher Compact is less than a full academic year, then the amount of funding shall be prorated based on the number of days the compact is in effect.
- d. If the teacher or parent should terminate the compact for any reason, the teacher or the parent shall notify the parent and the state education agency in writing within five-business days of the date of the termination. The state education agency shall prorate funding to the teacher based on the number of days the compact was in effect.



OPEN DISTRICTS MODEL POLICY

I. Short Title

This act shall be known and may be cited as the “Open Districts Act,” (the “Act”).

II. Legislative Purpose

The purpose of this Act is to:

- a) Increase learning opportunities for students;
- b) Create new flexibilities for families and children;
- c) Ensure equal opportunity for all students to access the highest quality public education options.

III. Definitions

- a) A “parent” means any person who is the legal guardian of a child who is entitled to receive a free and appropriate public education under state statutes.
- b) A “sending school district” means the school district in which a potential transfer student resides.
- c) A “receiving school district” means a school district in which a potential transfer student does not reside, and a potential transfer student would like to attend.
- d) The “average per pupil expenditure” means the aggregate current expenditures of the school district divided by the total number of children enrolled in the district for whom they provide free public education.

IV. Open Districts Act

- a) Within seven (7) calendar days of receiving a written request from a parent, the transfer of a student from the sending school district to a receiving school district shall be granted by the receiving school district unless the number of transfer requests exceeds the capacity of the receiving school district. If capacity is insufficient to enroll all potential transfer students, then the receiving district shall select students through a public lottery.
- b) A student who transfers may continue to attend the district to which the student transferred and shall not be required submit any subsequent request for transfer unless the student begins to attend a district other than the receiving district.

V. Requiring school districts to establish policy and report capacity and expenditures

- a) The local school board shall adopt a policy to determine the number of transfer students the school district has the capacity to accept for each class, grade level, and school no later than sixty (60) calendar days after this Act is in effect. The policy shall be publicly posted on the school district’s website.
- b) By the first of each month, the local school board shall establish the number of transfer students the school district has the capacity to accept in each grade level and school.
- c) After establishing the number of transfer students the school district has the capacity to accept in each grade level and building, the local school board shall:
 1. publish the number of transfers for each grade level and school the school district has the capacity to accept in a prominent and publicly accessible place on the school district’s website; and



2. report the number of transfers for each grade level, each school, and the school district that the school district has the capacity to accept to the state's Department of Education.
- d) By October 1 of each year, school districts shall report the average per pupil expenditure to the state's Department of Education.
- e) The state's Department of Education shall publish the data received from school districts under subparagraphs (c) and (d) under section V of this Act in a prominent and publicly accessible place on the department's web site.

VI. Right to Appeal

If a request for transfer is denied, an appeal may be taken to the State Board of Education by the requesting parents or student, if commenced not more than ten (10) days after the denial. An appeal is commenced by mailing a notice of appeal by certified mail to the superintendent of the receiving school district and the State Board of Education. If the State Board of Education does not hear the appeal within sixty (60) calendar days of being commenced, then the transfer student's request to attend the receiving school district is approved with immediate effect. The state's Department of Education shall develop forms for this purpose, and the state's Department of Education shall assist the parents or student in the mechanics of commencing the appeal. The State Board of Education shall promulgate rules to establish the process for appeals.

VII. Funding & Transportation

- a) The receiving school district shall charge the sending school district tuition for each transfer student for every year the student attends the receiving school district. The annual tuition amount per student transfer shall be equal to the average per pupil expenditure of the sending school district divided by the number of school days and multiplied by the number of school days the student is enrolled in the receiving school district minus the sum of per pupil state-level funding and per pupil federal funding that would have been allocated to the sending school district for the transfer student.
- b) The receiving school district shall offer to provide for the transportation of the student.

VIII. Duties and Powers of Local Education Agencies

- a) The board of a local education agency may contract with a public or private entity for that entity to provide educational or administrative services for the local education agency.
- b) The educational services provided by a contracting entity may include but are not limited to the delivery of instructional service in core and noncore academic subjects to students enrolled in the local education agency at one or more school sites or parts of sites within the district pursuant to the terms of an educational services contract.
- c) For all purposes, including but not limited to funding from all sources, attendance and accountability, all students who are provided services by a contracting entity pursuant to an educational services contract shall at all times be and remain students of the local education agency.