

Preface: What is ESSER III?

In March 2021, the American Rescue Act added \$123 billion to the Elementary and Secondary Education Relief (ESSER) fund in emergency pandemic relief aid for K-12 schools nationally. Funding has been distributed to state education agencies based on Title I formulae. ESSER III has a heavy emphasis on addressing the learning impacts of COVID-19, requiring local education agencies to use at least 20% of their funding for this purpose which may include supplemental interventions, summer programming, and after-school opportunities. However, a wide range of services and supports are allowable under the ESSER III grants, including direct operational responses to COVID, and any instructional, support, or professional development needs/responses that would be allowable under other federal K-12 education grants (i.e. ESEA, IDEA, Perkins, etc.) BVSD has been allocated \$12,568,794 in ESSER III funding. These funds may be used to cover COVID-related costs dating back to March, 2020, and through September 30, 2024. School districts must submit detailed plans/budgets in order to receive their ESSER III funding, but, due to the large size of the grant, the extended period for use of funds, and the many unknowns that school districts face, districts/schools will be allowed to revise their grants over the next three years. The following Funding Plan has been submitted to BVSD's Board of Education and the Colorado Department of Education, and approved by both.

Needs Assessment and Stakeholder Involvement:

BVSD students have manifested extended academic challenges and negative impacts due to school closures and reliance on on-line and blended instruction during the COVID pandemic. This can be seen in drops in grades, reading and math assessment scores, graduation and high school completion rates, and CMAS/PSAT/SAT scores in the 20-21 school year, when compared to 2019 and prior years. BVSD students were also impacted in their socio-emotional well-being, behavior, and mental health during this period, as evidenced by drops in attendance, increased referrals to principals and counselors due to student isolation, low motivation/class participation, social problems, and increased referrals for counseling and mental health services.

While this pattern is true for all students, BVSD students who are low-income, ELL, enrolled in Special Education, homeless, and students of color have experienced the impacts of lost instructional time to a greater degree. BVSD schools enrolling high percentages of FRL, ELL, SpEd, and minority students experienced disproportionate drops in enrollment during the COVID pandemic, reporting greater difficulty delivering online and blended instruction, and having disproportionate drops in grades, assessment scores, and/or grad/completion rates. Although most of these schools have seen their enrollment restored to near pre-pandemic levels in the 21-22 school year, the overall academic and behavioral needs in these schools are higher than those of other schools.

This needs assessment was conducted through review of district and school-level data, and information gained through consultation with teacher and principal groups, parent groups (e.g. District Parent Council, Latino Parent Council), surveys of all parents and students (individually), and testimony gained from ongoing forums (DAC, Board of Education meetings, budget forums, District Leadership Team). Based upon this assessment, BVSD plans to use ESSER III funding primarily as follows:

Spending Plan and Evaluation of Impact:

Therefore, the majority of BVSD's ESSER III funds will therefore be allocated to five high-needs/low-performing schools (four elementary, one middle, one high school) enrolling high percentages of children who are low-income, ELL, students of color, immigrant, migrant, homeless, in foster care, and/or children with disabilities. These targeted schools will use funding based upon an extensive individual plan, responding to the school's current/most recent student achievement, growth, and behavioral data and aligned with the district's Strategic Plan and UIP. School plans have been reviewed in detail and approved by district leadership (Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Executive Directors, Human Resources). Plans propose interventions and fundamental improvements to instructional/support goals, policies, practices, strategies and services

that specifically address the short and long term needs of low-performing and underserved students who have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID pandemic. The emphasis is on educational equity and therefore the subgroups listed above. Items in the district ESSER III budget that fund these schools include coaching and professional development for classroom teachers to provide greater differentiation of instruction and use of interventional methods; expanded time for teacher collaboration and review of student data; extra instructional staff, including interventionists, teachers and paraprofessional to support smaller classes and in-classroom groupings, and in some cases, added behavioral professionals providing SEL programs and family engagement specialists working with parents to access school academic systems and support their children at home with added reading, science and social studies enrichment, other academic and technology support, and college/career readiness. The immediate intention of these schools plans is to help all children, and particularly the highest-needs, most-impacted children, to catch-up academically and socially from losses incurred during the COVID pandemic, and to enable them to maintain and increase these gains over the longer term.

All targeted schools will implement research-based interventions in reading/literacy and math that are already employed in their classrooms and across the district, using ESSER III resources to strengthen, intensify and extend these approaches, and deliver them with greater rigor and fidelity to larger numbers of students. This includes Orton-Gillingham-based reading interventions (OG/Leopold; Institute for Sensory Integration, Take Flight, Really Great Reading, and Wilson OG), as well as the Levelled Literacy Intervention. Elementary students receive math intervention using Math Expressions Common Core Grades K-5, Dreambox, Connected Math 3 Grades 6-8, and Math in Context Levels 1-3+Algebra – all emphasizing math concepts as well as procedures; secondary students are enrolled in an extra math support class that employs Connected Math and Accelerated Math. BVSD's intervention programs and strategies were selected based on research review, expert recommendation, teacher input, and parent requests. Behavioral interventions to be employed include Second Step and Conscious Discipline, as well as enhanced counseling at some schools. More than 20% of these funds will be spent on services and supports that help student catch up academically.

The impact of this work with targeted schools will be measured at 90-day intervals and annually, using district formative academic assessments, student grades, CMAS/PSAT/SAT scores, graduation/completion rates, student attendance, school office referrals, and discipline rates. The district will also use a school climate survey to measure student engagement, social climate, academic support, and equitable practices in schools. Monitoring will be conducted by district leadership, including Assistant Superintendents, Executive Directors, program directors, and principals.

ESSER III funding has also been allocated proportionately to serve all BVSD charter schools. These five schools will develop new interventions and instructional supports to meet the needs of those of their students who were disproportionately impacted by the COVID pandemic. Some have adopted new academic interventions for use during the school day; others are providing extra teacher or tutor support during and after school; one school is exclusively addressing student socio-emotional health needs through mental health counseling. The impact of this work in charter schools will be measured by student grades, formative assessments, CMAS/PSAT/SAT scores, grad/completion rates, attendance, and discipline rates. Results will be assessed by school principals.

BVSD is also using ESSER III funding to support the immediate preparedness and response needs of the entire district: Protective health equipment and supplies; cleaning supplies, COVID testing, and extra nurses. The start-up costs of a elementary and middle-level online school (BU-LINK) are included to meet the needs of students who cannot attend in person (or elect not to) during or following the COVID pandemic, but need synchronous (vs. asynchronous) instruction. This school is not intended for students who are struggling academically. It will offer a full academic program with added social supports, and provide the same interventions as are employed in other BVSD elementary and middle schools. The school will be evaluated by district leadership based on enrollment numbers, student assessment scores, attendance, and school climate surveys.

