



ARP ESSER Guidebook

A guide to federal emergency relief funding for Pennsylvania LEAs



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Tom Wolf, Governor

Department of Education

Noe Ortega, Acting Secretary

Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

Matthew S. Stem, Deputy Secretary

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) does not discriminate in its educational programs, activities, or employment practices, based on race, color, national origin, [sex] gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion, ancestry, union membership, gender identity or expression, AIDS or HIV status, or any other legally protected category. Announcement of this policy is in accordance with State Law including the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act and with Federal law, including Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

The following persons have been designated to handle inquiries regarding the Pennsylvania Department of Education's nondiscrimination policies:

For Inquiries Concerning Nondiscrimination in Employment:

Pennsylvania Department of Education
Equal Employment Opportunity Representative
Bureau of Human Resources
333 Market Street, 11th Floor, Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333
Voice Telephone: (717) 787-4417, Fax: (717) 783-9348

For Inquiries Concerning Nondiscrimination in All Other Pennsylvania Department of Education Programs and Activities:

Pennsylvania Department of Education
School Services Unit Director
333 Market Street, 5th Floor, Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333
Voice Telephone: (717) 783-3750, Fax: (717) 783-6802

Cover Photo by Allison Shelley for EDUimages

Table of Contents

LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY	4
OVERVIEW	6
PDE’S THEORY OF ACTION FOR IMPLEMENTATION	7
SUMMARY OF KEY ARP ESSER PROVISIONS	9
STATE-LEVEL RESERVATION	9
STATE-LEVEL REQUIREMENTS	10
CASE STUDY: LOGIC AND LEADERSHIP FOR ARP ESSER SUCCESS	12
LEA ALLOCATION	12
HOW THE LOCAL PORTION BREAKS DOWN.....	13
20 PERCENT RESERVE TO ADDRESS THE ACADEMIC IMPACT OF LOST INSTRUCTIONAL TIME.....	13
HOW CAN EQUITY CENTER A LOCAL PLAN FOR ADDRESSING LEARNING LOSS?	15
REMEDIATION VS. ACCELERATION	15
REMAINING 80 PERCENT OF FUNDS	17
SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR SCHOOLS OPERATING UNDER FEDERAL ACCOUNTABILITY DESIGNATIONS	17
ALLOWABLE USES UNDER ARP ESSER	17
SAFE, IN-PERSON SCHOOLING AND CONTINUITY OF SERVICES.....	18
FACILITIES & GROUNDS UPGRADES	18
SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING, TRAUMA-SENSITIVE SCHOOLS, HEALTH & WELLNESS	18
STAFF RECRUITMENT, SUPPORT, AND RETENTION	19
ACADEMIC RECOVERY AND ACCELERATION	19
SYSTEMIC EQUITY.....	20
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS.....	20
CAN ARP ESSER FUND FACILITIES IMPROVEMENTS?	20
CASE STUDY: STRATEGICALLY INVESTING NON-RECURRING FEDERAL FUNDS	22
HOW CAN ESSER FUNDS BE USED FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENT?	22
LEA MAINTENANCE OF EQUITY PROVISION	23
ACCESSING LEA ARP ESSER FUNDS.....	25
LEA APPLICATION FOR FUNDING.....	25
CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS	25
HOW DOES STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT WORK IN THE CONTEXT OF A PANDEMIC AND POST-PANDEMIC ERA?	26
PLAN FOR THE SAFE RETURN TO IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION AND CONTINUITY OF SERVICES	27
LEA PLAN FOR THE USE OF ARP ESSER FUNDS.....	28
HOW TO ACCESS FUNDS	29
TIMELINE	30
COORDINATION WITH OTHER FEDERAL FUNDS.....	31
INVESTING WITH TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	32
KEY TERMS.....	34
APPENDIX 1: RECOMMENDED RESOURCES	36
APPENDIX 2: ARP ACT EXCERPT EXPLAINING THE ALLOWABLE USE OF LEA FUNDS	37
APPENDIX 3: OTHER FEDERAL COVID-19 RELIEF FUNDING	39

A Message from the Department

Dear Colleague:

Thank you for your continued efforts to implement Pennsylvania's nearly \$5 billion share of the [American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief \(ARP ESSER\) Fund](#).

I know every education leader feels a moral and professional imperative to use these non-recurring resources well. The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) is committed to continuing to support you in this work with timely guidance, ongoing technical assistance, and targeted funding flexibilities.

As you work to develop local plans for ARP ESSER funding, please consider three guiding principles:

1. **Evaluate both short- and long-term needs.** Counting the Tydings Amendment provision, ARP ESSER funds will be available for obligation until September 2024. Recognizing that this may be the last round of Federal emergency aid, consider how your school entity can sustain these resources over the allowability period and how these funds can interact with other Federal support [and Federal funding flexibilities](#).
2. **Consult stakeholders.** Communication with your staff, parents and families, students, and broader community has been central to your local recovery efforts over the past year. Keep using those lines of communication to assess needs and build consensus around your school entity's use of ARP ESSER funding. These efforts will ensure compliance with the [American Rescue Plan Act's Safe Return to In-Person Instruction Plan requirements](#), elevate equity considerations in plan development and implementation, and generate evidence that supports the use of ARP ESSER funding for priority school facility repairs and improvements.
3. **Consider the research.** Are you receiving a steady stream of suggestions for investing ARP ESSER resources? The best way to evaluate any such proposal is by reviewing it against [PDE's Evidence Resource Center](#) (ERC)—a customized website, designed by Pennsylvania educators and some of the nation's foremost education scholars. The ERC identifies strategies backed by rigorous research and allows educators to filter these strategies based on Federal evidence tiers, school type or grade level, specific student groups, and other factors. Schools operating under Federal accountability designations, now extended through 2022, will be asked to assure that ARP ESSER plans reflect consultation of the Evidence Resource Center, and I encourage every school leader to do likewise.

After a year of unimaginable challenges, ARP ESSER funding presents a historic opportunity—along with a set of challenges all its own. Using the resources equitably and in a way that balances urgency and sustainability will ask more of each of us. Thank you for continuing to reflect the needs of those you serve in the design of your local plans. I am honored to work alongside you.

Sincerely,

Noe Ortega
Acting Secretary of Education

Overview

After a year of unimaginable challenges, the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021 Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ARP ESSER) presents a historic opportunity. At the state and local level, it will be critical to use the resources equitably and in a way that balances urgency and sustainability while maximizing stakeholder engagement and transparency.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education’s (PDE) approach to recovery from the crises of the past year emphasizes maximum flexibility for local education agencies (LEAs)¹ in assessing needs and in designing activities and interventions to meet those needs. Recognizing the differential effects of the pandemic and related challenges, all LEAs are encouraged to leverage ARP ESSER funding, as well as earlier rounds of federal emergency aid, to accelerate a return to in-person learning, while also planning for the long-term and considering the many impacts from this unprecedented challenge that have yet to emerge.

Through ARP ESSER funding we hope to promote safe school operations and equity-driven, sustainable, evidence-based programs to serve students—especially those who are the furthest from opportunity—and continue to strengthen teaching and learning. The next three-plus years—the period of allowability for ARP ESSER funds—provide an opportunity to center our schools on equity, stakeholder engagement, and evidence-based teaching and learning. Through a transparent process in which we will use progress monitoring to foster continuous learning and improvement, we intend to strengthen our learning communities as we recover, becoming more resilient, flexible, and inclusive.

The following guide is intended for LEAs as they plan for their use and oversight of LEA ARP ESSER funds. In addition, [Answers to Frequently Asked Questions](#) (FAQs) are available on the PDE website.

¹ Throughout this document, the term “local education agency” (LEA) refers to school districts and charter schools, the two types of entities eligible to receive ARP ESSER funding in proportion to the amount of funds they received under the Title I-A formula for the 2020–2021 fiscal year.

PDE's Theory of Action for Implementation

Consistent with PDE's theory of action for supporting and monitoring school improvement efforts, PDE, LEAs, schools, and communities will work together to create:

-  LEAs that are accountable and empowered to serve schools.
-  Schools and communities that are accountable and empowered to provide safe, in-person schooling and meet the social, emotional, mental health, and academic needs of students.
-  Students who are engaged, healthy, safe, and prepared for college, career, and citizenship.

If the Pennsylvania Department of Education:

- Sets priorities for public education;
- Provides guidance to LEAs;
- Deploys regional systems of differentiated resources and technical supports responsive to LEAs' and schools' highest priority needs;
- Fosters a culture of evidence-based policies and practices; and
- Provides ongoing oversight;

And each LEA:

- Strategically plans to meet both short- and long-term needs, allocating resources based on the needs of individual schools and their communities;
- Engages stakeholders meaningfully in the design of the LEA Health & Safety Plan and the LEA Plan for the Use of ARP ESSER Funds;
- Considers the research and evidence base in the selection of activities and interventions;
- Acts to advance equity, supporting schools and their communities in removing barriers and increasing opportunities to learn;
- Communicates with transparency; and
- Evaluates progress for continuous improvement;

Then schools and their communities can:

- Support effective instruction and opportunities to learn for all students;
- Foster collective responsibility for the academic, social, emotional, and mental health outcomes of all students;

- Cultivate a safe, positive, and supportive climate that is conducive to learning; and
- Provide high-quality professional learning opportunities for all administrators, teachers, and support staff.



Image Credit: Allison Shelley for EDUimages

Summary of Key ARP ESSER Provisions

ARP will provide Pennsylvania with more than \$4.9 billion in one-time emergency funding to support the long-term work of education recovery through the ESSER Fund.

ARP ESSER funding is intended to address the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on underserved students (e.g., students from low-income families, students from historically disadvantaged racial or ethnic groups, students from disproportionately impacted gender groups, English learners, children with disabilities, students experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, and migrant students). Funding will help schools invest in mitigation strategies consistent with the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's \(CDC\) Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools](#) to the greatest extent practicable; address the many impacts of COVID-19 on students including from interrupted instruction; implement strategies to meet students' social, emotional, mental health, and academic needs; offer crucial summer, afterschool, and other extended learning and enrichment programs; support early childhood education; invest in staff capacity; and avoid layoffs that would compound a pre-existing educator pipeline challenge.

Under ARP ESSER, at least 90 percent, or nearly \$4.5 billion², of Pennsylvania's ARP ESSER allocation will flow to eligible public school districts and charter schools, with each LEA receiving [an amount proportional to the federal Title I, Part A](#) (Title I-A) funds received in fiscal year (FY) 2020-21.

ARP ESSER funding may be utilized for allowable costs dating back to March 13, 2020, when the national emergency was declared. Funding is available for obligation by both PDE and subrecipients through September 30, 2023; and, under the Tydings Amendment (Section 421(b) of the General Education Provisions Act 20 U.S.C 1225(B)), any funds not obligated at the end of the federal funding period (i.e., September 2023) remain available for obligation for an additional period of 12 months. In effect, the allowable period for obligation of ARP ESSER funding is from March 13, 2020 to September 30, 2024, and all contract end dates under ARP ESSER must not extend beyond September 30, 2024.

State-Level Reservation

Consistent with the state reservation provisions under ARP ESSER, approximately 10 percent of the total funding allocated to Pennsylvania will fund state-level activities and interventions administered by PDE. ARP requires states to use the funding as follows:

² In Pennsylvania, the minimum to be distributed to LEAs is \$4,497,257,836.

- At least 5 percent (\$249,847,650) must be used to address the academic impact of lost instructional time by supporting the implementation of evidence-based interventions (e.g., summer learning, extended day, afterschool programs, extended school year) to support students' academic, social, and emotional needs and address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on underrepresented student subgroups, including each major racial and ethnic group, children from low-income families, children with disabilities, English learners, disproportionately affected gender groups, migrant students, students experiencing homelessness, and children and youth in foster care;
- At least 1 percent (\$49,969,530) must be used to implement evidence-based comprehensive after-school programs;
- At least 1 percent (\$49,969,530) must be used to implement evidence-based summer enrichment programs;
- Up to 0.5 percent (\$24,984,765) may be utilized by PDE to manage the costs of implementing and administering ARP ESSER funds throughout the term of the grant; and
- The remaining amount (\$124,923,825) may be utilized for any allowable uses under ARP ESSER. Please see "Allowable Uses under ARP ESSER" below.

PDE began its planning process for utilizing the state-level portion of funding by engaging in consultation with stakeholders, including State Board of Education members; district, charter and Intermediate Unit (IU) administrators; local school board members; and representatives of civil and disability rights community organizations, education associations, and parent and advocacy organizations. Stakeholder engagement was conducted through interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires.

Pennsylvania plans to utilize state reservations to support initiatives that can be designed, implemented, and resourced with greater economy of scale at the state level than would be possible or practical for LEAs to pursue individually.

PDE intends to use a portion of the state-level reserve to fund education entities that are not eligible for ESSA Title I-A funding and those that serve high-need student populations, such as IUs, Career and Technology Centers, entities that provide services for children and youth in local correctional institutions and community day programs, and other school entities.

State-Level Requirements

ARP ESSER, like earlier rounds of federal emergency aid, comes with important requirements for states to maintain their own investments in education and to distribute education aid in an equitable manner. These requirements include the following:

Maintenance of Effort for K-12 and Higher Education Funding from the State. Under this provision, states must continue to provide funding in both FYs 2021–2022 and 2022–2023 at a minimum of the average of investments when compared to total state spending from FYs 2016–2017, 2017–2018, and 2018–2019.

State-Level Maintenance of Equity for High-Need LEAs. State per-pupil funding for both FYs 2021–2022 and 2022–2023 for the neediest LEAs cannot be reduced by an amount that exceeds the overall decrease in per-pupil state funds. High-need LEAs include those with the highest percentages of economically disadvantaged students and those which collectively serve at least 50 percent of the state’s total student enrollment within LEAs.

State-Level Maintenance of Equity for Highest Poverty LEAs. Under this provision, funding must continue to be provided in both FYs 2021–2022 and 2022–2023 in the highest poverty LEAs at a level that is, at minimum, equal to FY2018–2019 levels (as calculated on a per-pupil basis). Highest Poverty LEAs include those with the highest percentages of economically disadvantaged students, and which collectively serve 20 percent or more of the state’s total student enrollment within LEAs.



Image Credit: Allison Shelley for EDUimages

Case Study: Logic and Leadership for ARP ESSER Success

Dr. Damaris Rau, Superintendent of the School District of Lancaster, has an ESSER rescue plan for her district. A new theory of action is guiding the district's leadership structure and work under ARP ESSER. Dr. Rau explains the theory of action as consisting of three parts: "If we (a) implement a standards-aligned curriculum with a focus on reading and math in grades K–3, math in grades 6–8, and equitable opportunities for students at the high school, (b) provide early and on-going interventions, and (c) establish a systemic approach to social-emotional learning for all students, then our students' academic growth and achievement will increase. The district is establishing teams based on these priority areas." The work is guided by [Pennsylvania Essential Practices](#) published by PDE.

These priority teams will provide leadership during the ARP ESSER grant period in relation to the assigned priority area, and team leaders will meet with the Superintendent who will provide oversight. Priority teams will develop benchmarks and activities aligned with their assigned priority area.

Next steps for the School District of Lancaster include engaging the district's multiple partners in support of the plan. Dr. Rau explains that the district was able to offer equitable support to students during the pandemic as a result of productive relationships with community partners. During school closures, the district worked to teach employees of partner organizations the district reading programs so that they were able to reinforce school day instruction during the closure and during after-school programming, secured free internet access for all students without internet access through a local foundation, and created learning hubs in each school to support students learning virtually.

LEA Allocation

Based on ARP requirements, at least 90 percent of ARP ESSER funds will be distributed to LEAs based on their relative share of Title I-A funding in FY 2020.

ARP ESSER is one-time emergency relief funding, and, as such, LEAs are expected to use this funding to ensure the safe return to in-person instruction as well as to meet students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs and address the opportunity gaps that existed before—and were exacerbated by—the COVID-19 pandemic. At least 20 percent of each LEA's allocation must be used to measure and address the academic impact of lost instructional time through the implementation of evidence-based interventions, such as summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs, or extended school year programs. Please see below for additional information about the 20 percent reserve.

In addition, the LEA must take educational equity into account in planning for and expending ARP ESSER funds, including but not limited to implementing an equitable and inclusive return to in-person instruction. Activities under ARP ESSER should specifically address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on certain groups of students, including:

- Students from low-income families;
- Students from each racial or ethnic group (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by race or ethnicity);
- Gender (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by gender);
- English learners;
- Children with disabilities (including infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA]);
- Students experiencing homelessness;
- Children and youth in foster care;
- Migrant students; and
- Other groups disproportionately impacted by the pandemic that have been identified by the LEA (e.g., youth involved in the criminal justice system, students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019–2020 and 2020–2021 school years, students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures, and LGBTQ+ students).

For school districts, the LEA Plan for the Use of ARP ESSER Funds should consider both individual schools and districtwide activities based on student need.

How the Local Portion Breaks Down

20 Percent Reserve to Address the Academic Impact of Lost Instructional Time

Section 2001(e)(1) of the ARP Act requires recipient school districts and charter schools to use an amount totaling not less than 20 percent of the LEA's total allocation of ARP ESSER funds to address the academic impact of lost instructional time through the implementation of [evidence-based interventions](#), such as summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs, or extended school year programs; and ensure that such interventions respond to students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs and address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on underrepresented student subgroups (defined above).

LEAs are strongly encouraged to develop local plans based on consultation of [PDE's Evidence Resource Center](#) (ERC)—a customized website, designed by Pennsylvania educators and some of the nation's foremost education scholars. The ERC identifies strategies backed by rigorous research and allows educators to filter these strategies based on federal evidence tiers, school type or grade level, specific student groups, and other factors. An LEA operating under federal accountability designations, [now extended through 2022](#), will be asked to assure that its LEA Plan for the Use of ARP ESSER Funds reflects consultation of the Evidence Resource Center. Appendix 1 includes additional sources for evidence-based reviews, including the What Works Clearinghouse, Evidence for ESSA, and other health- and safety-focused review resources.

In planning for the 20 percent reserve, LEAs are encouraged to follow a process similar to [comprehensive planning](#) and [school improvement planning](#), including conducting a needs assessment; establishing evidence-based, standards-aligned instructional programs; supporting schools and their communities in removing barriers to learning; customizing support systems to meet local needs and the context of individual schools; implementing data-informed human capital systems; and allocating resources based on the needs of individual schools and their communities. Throughout the grant period, the process should continue in a cycle of improvement focused on results for students, and especially those students disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.



Image Credit: Allison Shelley for EDUimages

How can equity center a local plan for addressing learning loss?

Equity begins by listening carefully to students and their families. Student and family surveys and focus groups can provide information on student social and emotional wellness and mental health that can augment needs assessment data collected by schools. The degree of unfinished learning and educational harms caused by the COVID-19 pandemic will vary by individual student, subject area, and grade level.

High-quality, evidence-based interventions are the surest path to supporting students to help them reach and exceed grade-level standards and develop social and emotional competencies. Students will need access to interventions, supports, and opportunities, and they must be supported by adults who care for their well-being and who take the time to build trusting relationships with them and with their families.

As opportunities for accelerated learning are designed, important principles for equitable scheduling should be followed:

- Refrain from scheduling tutoring or other supports at times when students would need to miss opportunities for enrichment and critical and creative thinking in order to participate. Rather, create *more* opportunities for disproportionately impacted students to close opportunity and access gaps.
- Take care not to make students feel inferior because of their participation in interventions to address educational harms.
- Avoid punishing students by taking away their recess, specials, or other social activities to gain learning time.
- Provide opportunities for students to be immediately successful with accelerated learning activities. Build on student strengths.
- Ensure that school time is used especially well to maximize learning time. Extended learning time can only be effective if time during the regular school day is also used as effectively as possible.

Increasing opportunity and access to programs that address learning loss and providing accelerated learning in an equitable way will enable schools to meet the needs of students disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

Remediation vs. Acceleration

PDE's [Accelerated Learning Toolkit](#) mitigates learning gaps and emotional health concerns through an accelerated learning system that includes a focus on high-quality academics, supportive learning environments, healthy system conditions, and a system of scaffolded supports. This new resource provides a systematic process and technical support for school leaders and communities to make key decisions for the start of the new school year.

The U.S. Education Department also emphasizes the importance of learning acceleration for pandemic recovery in its [ED COVID-19 Handbook, Vol. 2](#).

There is a key distinction between traditional remediation and learning acceleration that necessitates a shift in thinking when providing supports to students. Accelerated learning concentrates on providing instruction to students in their grade-level curriculum with built-in opportunities to capture any missed skills or concepts from the previous year. Through accelerated learning, students can overcome any gaps in their learning while engaging in new learning, ultimately mitigating any learning loss. Table 1 outlines the various mindset shifts that facilitate true learning acceleration that enables students to learn at grade level, expanding educational opportunities for the students furthest behind.

Table 1: Shift in Thinking, from Remediation to Acceleration

Remediation	Acceleration
Teachers focus on filling gaps in missed learning—catching up	Teachers focus on enabling students to achieve grade-level skills—keeping up
Coverage of missed curriculum is paramount	Student mastery of essential skills is paramount
Focus on what students do not know	Build on what students know as a way to access new learning
Classroom teachers instruct students on the same skill at the same time	Classroom teachers enable multiple instructional modalities so each student can focus on the skills needed to accelerate
Focus is on drilling isolated skills that may not be related to the current curriculum	Vertical alignment of priority standards is used to provide on-ramps for student to meet current curriculum demands
Students who are deemed furthest behind are the furthest removed from the current curriculum	Acceleration allows students to preview new concepts before their classmates even begin
Continue remediating until all missed content is covered	Provide acceleration services as needed to enable students to succeed with grade-level content

Remaining 80 Percent of Funds

Beyond the 20 percent reserve to address the academic impact of lost instructional time, LEAs may use ARP ESSER funds for a wide range of activities to meet needs arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, including any activity authorized by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins CTE), or subtitle B of Title VII of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. ARP ESSER funds may be used to develop strategies and implement public health protocols including, to the greatest extent practicable, policies that reflect CDC guidance on reopening and operating schools to effectively maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other staff.

Special Instructions for Schools operating under Federal Accountability Designations

On March 26, 2021, Pennsylvania received a [waiver](#) from the U.S. Education Department, pausing federal school accountability determinations until Fall 2022. As a result, schools currently designated for comprehensive support and improvement (CSI), targeted support and improvement (TSI), and additional targeted support and improvement (A-TSI) will: (1) maintain these designations through the 2021–2022 school year; and (2) continue to receive appropriate supports and interventions. To implement Pennsylvania's waiver, PDE will require LEAs with one or more CSI or A-TSI schools to verify, via the ARP ESSER application, consultation of the [Evidence Resource Center](#) in developing the LEA Plan for the Use of ARP ESSER Funds and provide a justification when an intervention that is not supported by [tier 1, 2, 3, or 4 evidence](#) is selected.

Allowable Uses Under ARP ESSER

Following are allowable uses of ARP ESSER funds, grouped into major categories. The list is intended to convey the wide range of allowable uses and is not exhaustive. For the text from the ARP Act regarding allowable expenditures, see Appendix 2. While ARP ESSER funds have a wide variety of allowable uses, all ARP ESSER expenditures must be in line with all required cost principles of the Uniform Grant Guidance, including being reasonable, necessary, and allocable.

In determining how to prioritize funds, an LEA should consider how to use those funds to safely reopen schools for full-time instruction for all students, maintain safe in-person operations, advance educational equity, and build capacity. An LEA may provide services directly or enter into an agreement (e.g., a contract or interagency agreement consistent with procurement requirements or otherwise legally authorized) for allowable activities under ESSER. An LEA is not authorized to award subgrants with ESSER funds.

Safe, In-person Schooling and Continuity of Services

- Coordinating preparedness and response efforts with public health departments to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19, including the development and implementation of procedures and systems to undertake such efforts
- Training and professional development on sanitizing and minimizing the spread of infectious diseases
- Implementing infection prevention and control protocols
- Aligning school reopening with public health guidance
- Satisfying other short-term needs associated with the pandemic
- Planning for or initiating activities during long-term closures, including providing meals to eligible students and providing technology for online learning
- Improving cybersecurity infrastructure

While these funds can also be used for maintaining the operation and continuity of LEA services, including to employ existing or hiring new LEA and school staff, it is important to consider how staffing will be impacted when federal funding is no longer available.

Facilities & Grounds Upgrades

- Repairing and improving school facilities to reduce risk of virus transmission and exposure to environmental health hazards, and to support student health needs
- Improving indoor air quality, including installation of mechanical ventilation and/or advanced filtration systems and/or upgrading HVAC systems
- Undertaking the remediation of mold, lead, and other sources of poor indoor air quality
- Replacing windows to allow for improved intake of fresh air
- Upgrading facilities to comply with American Disabilities Act requirements
- Repairing or replacing roofing in certain circumstances
- Replacing plumbing to ensure safe drinking water
- Undertaking priority school facility repairs and improvements that will accelerate a safe return to in-person learning
- Creating outdoor classroom spaces and/or outdoor eating areas

Please note that prior written approval is required by PDE before the LEA may use the funds for remodeling, renovation, or new construction.

Social-Emotional Learning, Trauma-Sensitive Schools, Health & Wellness

- Providing mental health supports to students and staff, including through the implementation of evidence-based, full-service community schools and the hiring of counselors
- Performing regular mental health screenings and providing referrals to counselors for students who need extra support
- Partnering with mental health organizations to provide extra assistance for students who need it
- Implementing restorative practices, such as restorative circles, as an alternative to traditional discipline
- Establishing policies and practices that avoid the over-use of exclusionary discipline measures (including in- and out-of-school suspensions)
- Creating a positive and supportive learning environment for all students

Staff Recruitment, Support, and Retention

- Creating new teacher leader roles such as multi-classroom leaders, to enable highly effective educators to extend their reach
- Maintaining school staff and providing professional training
- Adopting robust professional learning plans to build teacher capacity
- Utilizing innovative staffing models that employ school counselors, mental health professionals, psychologists, substitutes, student teachers/teacher residents, institutions of higher education, tutors, or other educational agencies
- Rebuilding the educator pipeline with a focus on diversifying the workforce
- Providing retention bonuses for teachers in high-need subject areas and/or schools or increases to teacher salary to support retention efforts
- Improving working conditions

Academic Recovery and Acceleration

- Purchasing educational technology (including hardware, software, connectivity, assistive technology, and adaptive equipment) for students that aids in regular and substantive educational interaction between students and their classroom instructors
- Purchasing books, art supplies, play equipment, and other supplies to improve learning opportunities
- Establishing or expanding summer bridge programs
- Planning and implementing additional activities related to summer learning, supplemental after-school programs, and extended school day/year
- Supporting and protecting LEA-sponsored PreK/early childhood programs

- Reconnecting with truant students
- Conducting diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments to measure learning
- Reviewing each student’s academic and attendance record during the COVID-19 pandemic to determine needs and develop “individual learning plans” including goals and progress benchmarks
- Providing tutoring services for every student in need
- Developing a streamlined curriculum with identified priority standards
- Creating or enhancing college and career readiness programs such as dual enrollment/early college, internships, and apprenticeships

Systemic Equity

- Conducting an equity analysis
- Making structural changes, e.g., in LEA administrative practices to distribute resources more equitably across schools within an LEA
- Strengthening multi-tiered systems of support
- Addressing the needs of children from low-income families, children with disabilities, English learners, racial and ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness, and children and youth in foster care
- Increasing opportunity to learn factors for underserved youth
- Developing culturally responsive curriculum
- Offering training on how bias and privilege affect classrooms and schools

Family and Community Partnerships

- Engaging in open, honest, two-way conversations with parents about how well their child is prepared for the next grade—and working with families to design plans to address learning loss
- Conducting home visits for teachers to meet families
- Connecting students, families, and teachers through games and art projects, small group discussions, and other activities
- Providing wraparound supports for students
- Developing community schools
- Creating an asset map to identify existing community-based supports and plan for expansion or creation of partnerships to meet student needs

Can ARP ESSER fund facilities improvements?

A [2019 synthesis](#) of 250 studies, spanning 30 years, by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health found that environmental issues in school buildings, from mold to poor ventilation to noise, lighting and more, can adversely impact learning. The authors conclude that “improving the school building may well be the most overlooked means of improving student health, safety and academic performance.”

In fact, a [2020 study](#) of Pennsylvania school facilities finds “widespread health and safety problems” stemming from facilities issues in Pennsylvania, particularly in low-income districts and those that enroll a high percentage of Black and Latinx students.

LEAs that wish to expend ARP ESSER funds on facilities initiatives may be permitted to make facility upgrades to comply with American Disabilities Act requirements; upgrade HVAC systems; remediate mold, lead, and other sources of poor indoor air quality; install mechanical ventilation and/or advanced filtration systems; replace windows to allow for improved intake of fresh air, and replace plumbing to ensure safe drinking water—among other upgrades that improve the health and safety of school buildings.

All capital expenditures supported with federal funds must be pre-approved by PDE. Capital expenditures means expenditures to acquire capital assets (i.e., land, facilities, or equipment over \$5,000 per unit) or expenditures to make additions, improvements, modifications, replacements, rearrangements, reinstallations, renovations, or alterations to capital assets that materially increase their value or useful life.

As outlined in the Department’s initial guidance, a comprehensive analysis of existing facilities and environmental health needs, coupled with artifacts from local stakeholder engagement (e.g., meeting minutes, community and staff surveys, and annual school climate data) that document the role that capital improvements can make in ensuring safe in-person learning for the long-term, will help LEAs demonstrate prudent, allowable use of ARP ESSER funds. Further guidance on obtaining pre-approval of capital expenditures is forthcoming.

Case Study: Strategically Investing Non-Recurring Federal Funds

Uri Monson, Chief Financial Officer of the School District of Philadelphia, explains that having to make serious cuts is the second hardest thing to do in government budgeting. The first? Determining how to spend one-time funds responsibly.

The SDP experienced the funding cliff when monies from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 ran out. Monson explains that in SDP, 3,000 people were laid off in one year, including 50 percent of central office staff and all school nurses. He is adamant: “We do not want to do that again.”

To strategically invest ARP ESSER funds without creating a funding cliff, Monson is leading his team to create a one-year budget in the context of a five-year strategic financial plan and is layering the ARP funds over the plan to clearly indicate what will happen to funding after September 2024.

One important tip from Monson’s team is to make short-term investments that have long-term implications, aligning spending with four strategic focus areas: learning recovery, social and emotional learning, facilities readiness, and general education.

To make decisions related to ARP ESSER funding, the School District of Philadelphia released an online stakeholder survey asking stakeholders to rank ideas within priority areas. Approximately 12,000 responses were collected, with two-thirds of responses coming from families of enrolled students. In addition, the district held nine focus groups to listen to the voices of students, families, and community members.

How can ESSER funds be used for sustainability and long-term improvement?

- Set priorities within an overall vision that will drive learning forward
- Focus on durable, systemic change such as revamped schedules and staffing
- Invest in professional development to build staff capacity
- Devote energy to building community partnerships that last beyond the funding window
- Use one-time funds to develop curriculum and implement programs that may be sustained at a reduced cost through other, longer-term funding sources
- Fund interventions that address student academic or social or emotional needs
- Provide stipends to existing personnel for taking on additional responsibilities
- Invest in one-time infrastructure upgrades that support healthy, safe buildings



Image Credit: Allison Shelley for EDUimages

LEA Maintenance of Equity Provision

Not to be confused with the two state-level Maintenance of Equity provisions described on page 11, all LEAs receiving ARP ESSER funds are obligated to follow an LEA Maintenance of Equity provision during fiscal years 2021–2022 and 2022–2023. Under Maintenance of Equity, per-pupil funding from state and local sources and staffing levels for *high-poverty schools* may not be decreased by an amount that exceeds districtwide reductions in per-pupil funding and staffing levels for *all schools* served by the LEA. High-poverty schools are the 25 percent of schools serving the highest percent of economically disadvantaged students in the LEA as measured by Free and Reduced Meals as reported and certified by LEAs in the [Pennsylvania Information Management System](#) (PIMS).

This means that LEAs must track ARP ESSER funds by school.

An LEA is exempt from the Maintenance of Equity requirement if the LEA meets any one of the following requirements:

- Has fewer than 1,000 students;
- Consists of a single school;
- Serves all students in each grade span in a single school; or
- Demonstrates an exceptional or uncontrollable circumstance, as determined by the United States Secretary of Education.

As PDE receives further guidance from the U.S. Education Department on the Maintenance of Equity provision, it will be shared with LEAs.

Calculations:

Per-Pupil Funding = Total LEA funding (state & local), divided by the number of students enrolled.



Full-time equivalent (FTE) staff = Total FTEs, divided by the number of students enrolled.



These calculations should be completed for all schools in the LEA as well as for high-poverty schools in the LEA for both fiscal years 2021–2022 and 2022–2023. Compare the results to the average per-pupil funding and FTE staff in the LEA to the previous fiscal year. Reductions must not be greater for high-poverty schools than for all schools in the LEA.

Accessing LEA ARP ESSER Funds

To access ARP ESSER funds, LEAs must consult with stakeholders to develop their plan; apply for funding using the eGrants system; develop, post, and regularly review/revise their ARP-required Health and Safety Plan; post data on school operating status; and publish a public LEA Plan for the Use of ARP ESSER Funds.

LEA Application for Funding

Eligible entities will apply for ARP ESSER funds through the PDE [eGrants system](#). Eligible school districts and charter schools are encouraged to apply by September 1, 2021. Please note that the LEA does not need to wait until ESSER I and ESSER II funds have been expended before applying for or obligating ARP ESSER funding.

The application includes the following sections:

- Assessing Impacts and Needs
- Engaging Stakeholders in Plan Development
- Using ARP ESSER Funds to Plan for Safe, In-Person Instruction
- Proposed Budget and Timeline
- Monitoring and Measuring Progress
- ARP ESSER Fund Assurances

PDE's [Division of Federal Programs staff](#) support the application process by providing technical assistance to LEAs, reviewing grant applications, and overseeing the payment process throughout grant implementation.

Consultation with Stakeholders

The [ARP ESSER Interim Final Requirements](#) (IFR) stipulate that LEAs must engage in meaningful consultation with stakeholders and give the public an opportunity to provide input in the development of the LEA Plan for the Use of ARP ESSER Funds. The past year, and the challenges of the next, make stakeholder engagement critical for a full and productive return to in-person learning and effective and equitable use of ARP ESSER funds.

Under ARP requirements, stakeholders include, but are not limited to, students, families, school and district administrators (including special education administrators), teachers, principals, school leaders, other educators, and school staff and their unions. In addition, the LEA must engage in meaningful consultation with each of the following to the extent present in or served by the LEA:

- a. Tribes;
- b. Civil rights organizations (including disability rights organizations); and
- c. Stakeholders representing the interests of children with disabilities, English learners, children experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, migratory students, children who are incarcerated, and other underserved students.

How does stakeholder engagement work in the context of a pandemic and post-pandemic era?

While virtual learning and physical distancing pose significant barriers to social engagement, they also provide new opportunities to engage families and strengthen relationships between school and home. To make engaging with the LEA accessible for stakeholders, LEAs may offer opportunities that are both in-person and virtual, and asynchronous (on stakeholders' own time) and synchronous (at a variety of times of day to accommodate families' schedules). To make engagement accessible on the basis of language, LEAs should be mindful of breaking down jargon when communicating questions and proposing plans. For stakeholders with a primary language other than English, LEAs may conduct meetings or provide materials in English with translation provided into other languages. LEA staff may also co-facilitate meetings that take place in a language other than English, with interpretation provided for staff whose primary language is English.

LEAs might consider soliciting input from existing advisory groups, conducting interviews, holding conferences (in-person and/or virtual), and sending out surveys to gather input from families and students. LEAs might identify that no advisory group exists for a group of stakeholders who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. The process of developing the LEA Plan for the Use of ARP ESSER Funds presents an opportunity to establish relationships and seek insights on the assets, needs, and proposed solutions of community members whose voices are less often heard.

To gather input equitably, LEAs should try to meet stakeholders where they are. LEA staff might meet with families at school meal pickup locations, community centers, and houses of worship. LEA staff might engage in listening sessions with students in student-centered spaces, for example, as guests of existing student and community youth organization meetings. LEAs should plan for engaging with diverse stakeholders, and keep in mind that one stakeholder is not representative of a group, especially in light of how the pandemic has impacted each person in different ways and to a different extent.

For more suggestions for effective family and community engagement, see [What Administrators Need to Know about Family Engagement](#) and [Framing Community Conversations](#).



Image Credit: Allison Shelley for EDUimages

Plan for the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services

Section 2001(i)(1) of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act requires each LEA that receives ARP ESSER funds to develop and make publicly available on the LEA's website a Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan, hereinafter referred to as a Health and Safety Plan. Each LEA must create a Health and Safety Plan that addresses how it will maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other school and LEA staff, and which will serve as the local guidelines for all instructional and non-instructional school activities during the period of the LEA's ARP ESSER grant.

An updated Health and Safety Plan must be posted to the LEA's public website and submitted to PDE by July 30, 2021, regardless of when the LEA submits its application for ARP ESSER funds.³ Each LEA will submit its updated Health and Safety plan and the URL to where the plan is located on the LEA website via eGrants.

³ Only school districts and charter schools that received federal Title I-A funds in FY 2020-2021 and that intend to apply for and receive ARP ESSER funding must develop, post, and submit a Health and Safety Plan and the associated URL to PDE by July 30, 2021. PDE will provide additional guidance in the event ARP ESSER funding is made available to other LEAs.

The Health and Safety Plan required to receive ARP ESSER funds will be different than the plans submitted by LEAs for the 2019-2020 school year. Under the ARP Act and U.S. Education Department rules, Health and Safety Plans must include: (1) how the LEA will, to the greatest extent practicable, support prevention and mitigation policies in line with the most up-to-date guidance from the CDC for the reopening and operation of school facilities to effectively maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other staff; (2) how the LEA will ensure continuity of services, including but not limited to, services to address students' academic needs, and students' and staff social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services; and (3) how the LEA will maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other staff and the extent to which it has adopted policies, and a description of any such policy on each of the following safety recommendations established by the CDC: (a) universal and correct wearing of masks; (b) modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing (e.g., use of cohorts/podding); (c) handwashing and respiratory etiquette; (d) cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation; (e) contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the state and local health departments; (f) diagnostic and screening testing; (g) efforts to provide vaccinations to school communities; (h) appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies; and (i) coordination with state and local health officials.

Updating the Health and Safety Plan allows LEAs to incorporate lessons learned over the past year and develop plans for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services within the LEA. As noted above, the public must have the opportunity to provide input in the development of the LEA's Health and Safety Plan.

The LEA's Health and Safety Plan must be approved by its governing body, posted on its publicly available website, and submitted to PDE by July 30, 2021. Plans must be posted online in a language that parents/caregivers can understand and available in an alternate translation or format when requested.

The ARP Act requires LEAs to review their Health and Safety Plans at least every six months during the period of the LEA's ARP ESSER grant. LEAs also must review and update their plans whenever there are significant changes to the CDC recommendations for K-12 schools. Like the development of the plan, all revisions must be informed by community input and reviewed and approved by the LEA's governing body prior to posting on the LEA's publicly available website.

Additional information, including a [template](#) that LEAs can use to update their Health and Safety Plans along with answers to [frequently asked questions](#), is available on the [PDE website](#).

LEA Plan for the Use of ARP ESSER Funds

The ARP Act requires that LEAs develop, approve, and make public an LEA Plan for the Use of ARP ESSER funds. Based on Pennsylvania's LEA application for ARP ESSER funds, LEAs will be able to satisfy the LEA Plan requirement through their eGrants submission, provided that the submission is tailored to the specific needs faced by students and schools within the LEA and

reflects the insights of diverse stakeholders, particularly students and those most impacted by the pandemic, as to the most pressing needs and the most effective strategies for teaching, learning, and day-to-day school experiences.

Once an eGrants application is approved by PDE, LEAs may choose to utilize the content directly from the eGrants application for their LEA plan or make revisions to language and formatting for maximum utility by diverse stakeholders.

In either case, LEA Plans must be made publicly available on the LEA's website, be written in a language that parents can understand, and be provided in an alternate format upon request by a parent who is an individual with a disability.

How to Access Funds

Consistent with the administration of other federal funds, including ESSER I and II, PDE will reimburse allowable costs monthly through the Financial Accounting Information (FAI) system. Costs will be paid monthly beginning the fourth Thursday of each month after the grant is fully executed for the applying school district or charter school.

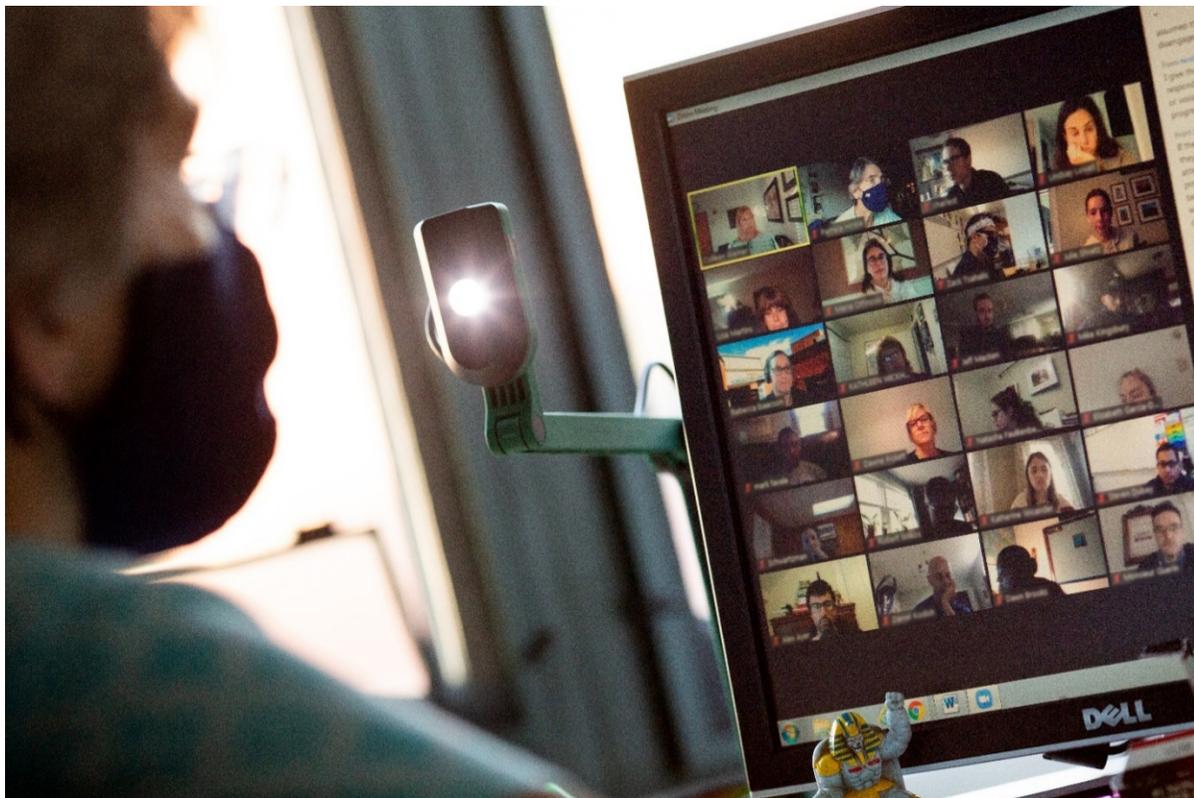


Image Credit: Allison Shelley for EDUimages

Timeline

The timeline below represents an overview of the funding windows for each of the three ESSER funds (including the Tydings Amendment period for each), along with special instructions regarding ARP ESSER requirements.



March 13, 2020: National emergency declared. Period of funds availability for ESSER I, II, & ARP ESSER begins.

March 27, 2020: CARES Act enacted (ESSER I).

December 27, 2020: CRRSA Act enacted (ESSER II).

March 11, 2021: ARP Act enacted (ARP ESSER).

July 30, 2021: Updated Health and Safety Plans due to PDE. This plan must be reviewed every six months through September 30, 2024.

September 1, 2021: LEAs encouraged to submit application for LEA ARP ESSER Funds.

September 30, 2022: End of Funds Obligation window for ESSER I.

September 30, 2023: End of Funds Obligation Window for ESSER II.

September 30, 2024: End of Funds Obligation window for ARP ESSER.

Coordination with Other Federal Funds

LEAs are advised to consider how ARP ESSER funding might interact with other federal funding to ensure strategic and sustainable use of these one-time funds. LEAs are reminded to braid funding sources and think strategically about what money can be used for which activities. Take care, however, not to pay for items/activities twice using two different sources of grant funding.

A [Comparison of ESSER Fund \(CARES Act\), ESSER II Fund \(CRRSA Act\), and ARP ESSER \(ARP Act\)](#) table provided by the U.S. Education Department outlines the primary differences between the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) Fund under the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act 2021, Public Law 117-2, enacted on March 11, 2021; the ESSER II Fund under the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act, enacted on December 27, 2020; and the ESSER Fund under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act enacted on March 27, 2020. Beyond the 20 percent of LEA funds set aside to address the academic impact of lost instructional time, the remaining ARP ESSER funds may be used for the same allowable purposes as under ESSER I and ESSER II.

Other funding sources to consider braiding with ARP ESSER funds include, but are not limited to, IDEA, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, Perkins CTE, and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. See Appendix 3 for additional funding sources that may be leveraged by LEAs.

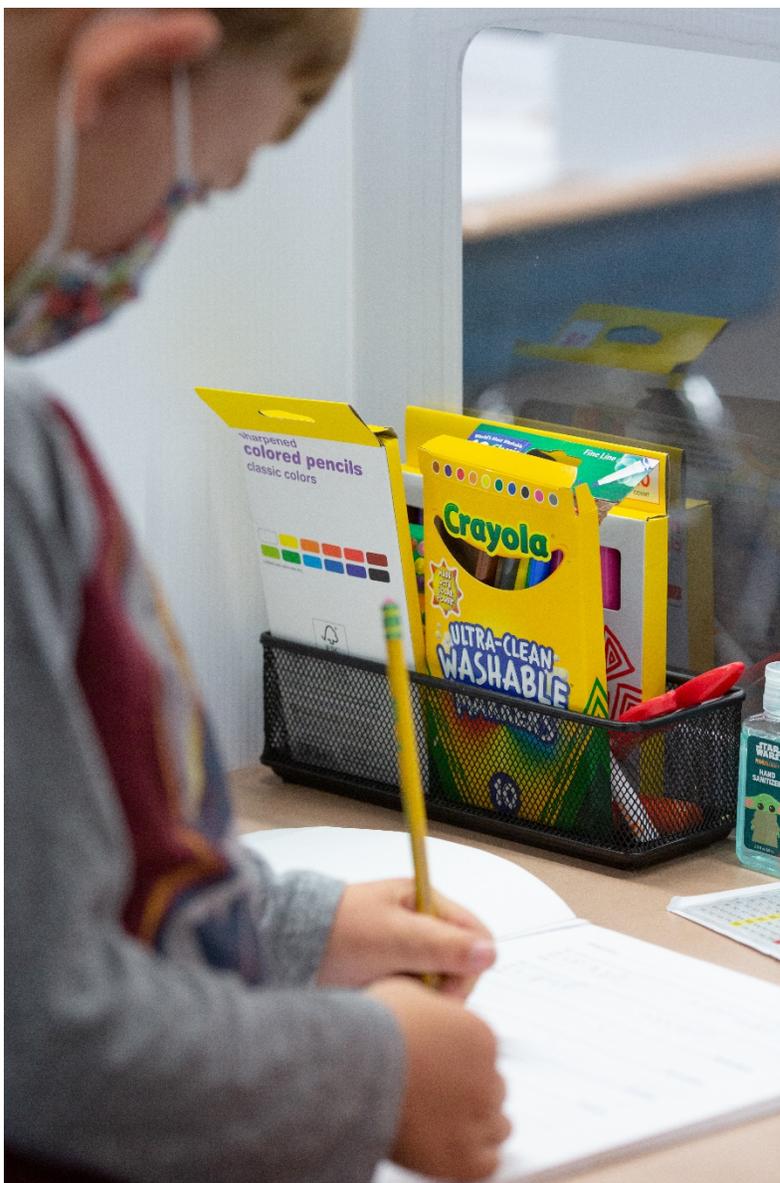


Image Credit: Allison Shelley for EDUimages

Investing with Transparency and Accountability

Transparency in how ARP ESSER funds are used and their impact on the nation's education system is a fundamental responsibility of federal, state, and local government. It is important for an LEA to continuously monitor progress by collecting data and adjusting its strategies, based on impact. The collection of data should be disaggregated by student group, where applicable and to the greatest extent practicable.

Reporting parameters for ARP ESSER will generally reflect reporting requirements for both ESSER I and II. Consistent with statutory requirements, each ESSER fund must be tracked and reported separately. ARP ESSER reports will also include a distinct field for reporting on the LEA's initiatives to address learning loss including for populations most impacted by the pandemic.

PDE's contracted monitors and Division of Federal Program coordinators will be responsible for monitoring ARP ESSER Fund grant implementation. This will take place in a variety of ways including, but not limited to, virtual monitoring and desk audits. PDE's FedMonitor system will be used to document monitoring.

Documentation of all expenditures, including fiscal management system records, procurement records, staff time and effort documentation, and other records, as appropriate, will be reviewed to ensure a system of internal controls to eliminate fraud, waste, and other abuse of federal grant funds. Single audits will be required by all LEAs that expend \$750,000 or more in federal grant funds in one fiscal year (i.e., the single audit threshold). Single audit reports will be reviewed, and all audit findings investigated, through PDE's subrecipient review process.

Quarterly and final program reporting will take place via eGrants and the Future Ready Comp Plan Portal (FRCP). Additionally, recipients will complete regular quarterly fiscal reporting to continue monthly payments through FAI, and some data may be collected through PIMS.

While reporting requirements are not yet finalized, reporting will likely focus on the following:

- How the LEA is developing strategies and implementing public health protocols including, to the greatest extent practicable, policies and plans in line with the CDC guidance related to mitigating COVID-19 in schools;
- Overall plans and policies related to LEA support for return to in-person instruction and maximizing in-person instruction time, including how funds will support a return to and maximize in-person instruction time, and for advancing equity and inclusivity in participation with in-person instruction;
- Data on each LEA's and school's mode of instruction (fully in-person, hybrid, and fully remote) and conditions moving forward;
- LEA uses of funds to meet students' social, emotional, and academic needs, including through summer enrichment programming and other evidence-based interventions, and how they advance equity for underserved students;

- LEA uses of funds to sustain and support access to LEA-supported early childhood education programs;
- Impacts and outcomes (disaggregated by student subgroup) through use of ARP ESSER funding (e.g., quantitative and qualitative results of ARP ESSER funding, including on personnel, student learning, and budgeting at the school and district level);
- Student data (disaggregated by student subgroup) related to how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected instruction and learning;
- The URL(s) where the public can readily find:
 - Data on school operating status;
 - LEA Health and Safety Plan; and
 - LEA Plan for use of ARP ESSER Funds;
- Appropriate use of the funds;
- Requirements under the Federal Financial Accountability Transparency Act (FFATA); and
- Additional reporting requirements as may be necessary to ensure accountability and transparency of ARP ESSER fund use.



Image Credit: Allison Shelley for EDUimages

Key Terms

ARP ESSER — American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief. Funding may be used for pre-award costs dating back to March 13, 2020, when the national emergency was declared and is available for obligation by SEAs and subrecipients through September 30, 2024 (with the Tydings Amendment).

eGrants — PDE’s [eGrants](#) is a grants management system that offers licensed education agencies and community-based programs a way to access grant applications online.

ESSER I — The Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund was established by Section 18003 of Division B of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Funding may be used for pre-award costs dating back to March 13, 2020, when the national emergency was declared and is available for obligation by state educational agencies (SEAs) and subrecipients through September 30, 2022 (with the Tydings Amendment).

ESSER II — The Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief II Fund was established by Section 313 of the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act. Funding may be used for pre-award costs dating back to March 13, 2020, when the national emergency was declared and is available for obligation by SEAs and subrecipients through September 30, 2023 (with the Tydings Amendment).

Federal Financial Accountability Transparency Act (FFATA) — Signed on September 26, 2006, this legislation requires that information on federal awards—both federal financial assistance and expenditures—is made available to the public on a single, searchable website. The intent of [USA Spending](#) is to allow citizens to hold the government responsible for its spending decisions.

Future Ready Comp Plan Portal (FRCPP) — The [Future Ready Comprehensive Planning Portal](#) was designed to provide a consistent planning framework and collection mechanism for all Pennsylvania LEAs. See [guidance](#) on accessing the FRCPP.

High-Need LEAs — LEAs with the highest percentages of economically disadvantaged students and which collectively serve at least 50 percent of the state’s total student enrollment within LEAs.

High-Poverty Schools — High-poverty schools are the 25 percent of schools serving the highest percent of economically disadvantaged students in the LEA.

Highest Poverty LEAs — LEAs with the highest percentages of economically disadvantaged students and which collectively serve at least 20 percent of the state’s total student enrollment within LEAs.

Maintenance of Effort Provision — Under this provision, states must ensure that in fiscal years 2021–2022 and 2022–2023, they will spend the same proportion of their state budgets on K-12 and higher education as they did on average in fiscal years 2016–2017 through 2018–2019.

Maintenance of Equity Provision for highest poverty LEAs — This provision was designed to prevent funding cuts from disproportionately affecting students in poverty. Under this provision, states are

prohibited from cutting per-pupil funding to the *highest poverty LEAs* for fiscal years 2021–2022 and 2022–2023 below FY 2019 levels.

Maintenance of Equity Provision for high-need LEAs — This provision is also aimed at protecting the most economically disadvantaged students from shouldering the burden of funding cuts. Under this provision, the state is prohibited from cutting per-pupil funds to high-need LEAs by an amount that is more than any overall per-pupil funding cut the state enacts for FYs 2021–2022 and 2022–2023.

Maintenance of Equity Provision for high-poverty schools — At the LEA level, the Maintenance of Equity provision requires that per-pupil funding from state and local sources and staffing levels for *high-poverty schools* may not be decreased by an amount that exceeds districtwide reductions in per-pupil funding and staffing levels for *all schools* served by the LEA.

SEA — State education agency.

Tydings Amendment — This amendment allows educational agencies additional time to spend federal monies they receive. The Tydings Amendment was incorporated by Congress into the General Education Provisions Act. Under the amendment, grantees are able to carry-over for one year any funds that were not spent during the grant award period.

Appendix 1: Recommended Resources

Strategic Planning

[Chiefs for Change Workbook for ARP ESSER Planning](#)

Evidence-Based Programs

In addition to [PDE's Evidence Resource Center](#), sources providing information on evidence-based programs include the following:

- [What Works Clearinghouse](#)
- [Evidence for ESSA](#)
- [Social and Emotional Learning Evidence Review](#) (RAND)
- [National Center on Intensive Intervention Academic Intervention Tools Chart](#) (AIR)
- [Common Sense Education EdTech Ratings & Reviews](#)
- [Rivet Education Professional Learning Partner Guide](#)
- [EdReports](#)
- [Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development](#)
- [The Community Guide \(Health-Related Interventions\)](#)
- [National Institute of Justice Crime Solutions](#)
- [Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention](#)
- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#)

WestEd's [Evidence-Based Improvement Guide](#) is also recommended as a useful LEA tool for planning to implement evidence-based improvement strategies. This guide provides a set of tools to help school districts and charter schools facilitate the review and comparison of interventions that target an identified need and align with a given context.

Equity

EdTrust offers [strategies to solve unfinished learning](#) from a center of equity. For helpful information, please see their briefs on:

- [Targeted Intensive Tutoring](#)
- [Expanded Learning Time](#)
- [The Importance of Strong Relationships](#)

Appendix 2: ARP Act Excerpt explaining the Allowable Use of LEA Funds

(e) USES OF FUNDS.—A local educational agency that receives funds under this section— (1) shall reserve not less than 20 percent of such funds to address learning loss through the implementation of evidence-based interventions, such as summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs, or extended school year programs, and ensure that such interventions respond to students’ academic, social, and emotional needs and address the disproportionate impact of the coronavirus on the student subgroups described in section 1111(b)(2)(B)(xi) of the Elementary and Secondary

Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.6311(b)(2)(B)(xi)), students experiencing homelessness, and children and youth in foster care; and (2) shall use the remaining funds for any of the following:

(A) Any activity authorized by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

(B) Any activity authorized by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

(C) Any activity authorized by the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act.

(D) Any activity authorized by the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006.

(E) Coordination of preparedness and response efforts of local educational agencies with State, local, Tribal, and territorial public health departments, and other relevant agencies, to improve coordinated responses among such entities to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus.

(F) Activities to address the unique needs of low-income children or students, children with disabilities, English learners, racial and ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness, and foster care youth, including how outreach and service delivery will meet the needs of each population.

(G) Developing and implementing procedures and systems to improve the preparedness and response efforts of local educational agencies.

(H) Training and professional development for staff of the local educational agency on sanitation and minimizing the spread of infectious diseases.

(I) Purchasing supplies to sanitize and clean the facilities of a local educational agency, including buildings operated by such agency.

(J) Planning for, coordinating, and implementing activities during long-term closures, including providing meals to eligible students, providing technology for online learning to all students, providing guidance for carrying out requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education

Act and ensuring other educational services can continue to be provided consistent with all federal, state, and local requirements.

(K) Purchasing educational technology (including hardware, software, and connectivity) for students who are served by the local educational agency that aids in regular and substantive educational interaction between students and their classroom instructors, including low-income students and children with disabilities, which may include assistive technology or adaptive equipment.

(L) Providing mental health services and supports, including through the implementation of evidence-based full-service community schools.

(M) Planning and implementing activities related to summer learning and supplemental afterschool programs, including providing classroom instruction or online learning during the summer months and addressing the needs of low-income students, children with disabilities, English learners, migrant students, students experiencing homelessness, and children in foster care.

(N) Addressing learning loss among students, including low-income students, children with disabilities, English learners, racial and ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness, and children and youth in foster care, of the local educational agency, including by—

(i) administering and using high-quality assessments that are valid and reliable, to accurately assess students' academic progress and assist educators in meeting students' academic needs, including through differentiating instruction;

(ii) implementing evidence-based activities to meet the comprehensive needs of students;

(iii) providing information and assistance to parents and families on how they can effectively support students, including in a distance learning environment; and

(iv) tracking student attendance and improving student engagement in distance education.

(O) School facility repairs and improvements to enable operation of schools to reduce risk of virus transmission and exposure to environmental health hazards, and to support student health needs.

(P) Inspection, testing, maintenance, repair, replacement, and upgrade projects to improve the indoor air quality in school facilities, including mechanical and non-mechanical heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems, filtering, purification and other air cleaning, fans, control systems, and window and door repair and replacement.

(Q) Developing strategies and implementing public health protocols including, to the greatest extent practicable, policies in line with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for the reopening and operation of school facilities to effectively maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other staff.

(R) Other activities that are necessary to maintain the operation of and continuity of services in local educational agencies and continuing to employ existing staff of the local educational agency.

Appendix 3: Other Federal COVID-19 Relief Funding

IDEA: Other ARP Act funding includes nearly \$105 million for special education in Pennsylvania through IDEA grants for school age students with disabilities, as follows:

- IDEA Part B, 611 - \$90,472,838
- IDEA Part B, 619 - \$7,098,160
- IDEA Part C - \$7,179,588

The IDEA Part B formula grants assist states in providing a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment for children with disabilities ages 3 through 21 (Part B, Sections 611 and 619). The IDEA Part C formula grants assist states in providing early intervention services for infants and toddlers birth through age two and their families.

ARP Homeless Reservation: The U.S. Education Department is [distributing \\$32.7 million](#) to Pennsylvania for educational and wraparound services to students experiencing homelessness. A portion of this funding will supplement homeless assistance grant funds some schools already receive under federal law.

Emergency Connectivity Fund: Under ARP, funding has been allocated to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for an Emergency Connectivity Fund (through the E-Rate program) to enable schools and libraries to purchase Internet access and connected devices (including hotspots, routers, modems and computers) for students, educators, and library patrons who lack home internet access, a connected device, or both. Additional information is available at [E-rate in Pennsylvania](#).

Emergency Broadband Benefit Program: The Emergency Broadband Benefit is an FCC program funded through CRRSAA to help households struggling to pay for internet service during the pandemic. The program began in May 2021. The Emergency Broadband Benefit provides a discount of up to \$50 per month towards broadband service for eligible households. Eligible households can also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from participating providers if they contribute more than \$10 and less than \$50 toward the purchase price. The Emergency Broadband Benefit is limited to one monthly service discount and one device discount per household. See the [FCC Emergency Broadband Benefit website](#) for more information.



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION