

Future of Learning – July 2021

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 need