



ESSER / Federal Funding Update

Although District 15 has historically applied for state and federal funds through Title distributions, the last 12 months and certainly the next 12 months will be much different by way of spending through ESSER I, II and III.

Most federal funding awarded to the states is either restricted for specific populations of students, such as Title I, Part A (low-income students) or IDEA (students with disabilities), or for specific uses, such as Title II, Part A (professional development and support of teachers and school leaders).

ESSER funding, however, may be used with all populations of students to address a wide variety of needs arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Essentially, District 15, as all school districts globally, are in our 3rd academic year where COVID-19 has had an impact on students and families. For us locally, we have received over 6.5 million dollars to assist during the pandemic.

The U. S. Secretary of Education has made it clear that the primary goal of providing funding is to transform and restore education in our schools. This is certainly a tall task as we consider where we are at currently. Rising numbers of positive cases; students, and families still navigating quarantine and exclusions; and major shifts in how schools are operating internally. These factors are indeed a challenge but with these challenges come opportunity.

It is the goal of every staff member in District 15 to make learning a positive and central focus right now. We are excited to be back in person to the greatest extent possible and see every day with our students as one that we can interact through teaching and learning.

We have prioritized academics for our students. Already, funds have been utilized for interventions in literacy and math, tutoring, bridge, and enrichment programming. Dedicated teachers from across the district will be coming together in a couple of weeks to refine priority standards in both literacy and math, design content frameworks, and establish pacing guides for all grade levels. This will lead to building common formative

assessments and a collective approach to our Tier I and Tier II instructional practices.

We have made sure that every student will have the technology they need leveraging funding for 1:1 deployment, innovative technology programming, software and internet accessibility to any McHenry family that may need help affording access.

We have invested in PPE, health safety, and air quality for every D15 school to operate safely. Additionally, we have just completed a grant amendment allowing us to purchase and install air filtration systems for each one of our 76 school buses so that these spaces can be considered structured environments without needing the windows down during the freezing months of winter. Already, plans are in place to take care of McHenry Middle School and Duker School HVAC systems and Edgebrook is in the works.

Lastly, I am truly encouraged as we have been strategizing a very comprehensive and aggressive staffing plan that will be collectively discussed with the school board over the next couple of months so we can use funds to give our students what they truly deserve.

We have often heard that education is the great equalizer. Well, now is our opportunity to make a difference in the lives of thousands of children in McHenry. The funding is there, the urgency from the federal and state government is there, and with the strong partnership that we have across the district with teachers, administrators and our board of education, these funds will undoubtedly be used in ways that will make a difference for years to come.

I am truly excited for what is already being accomplished with the provided federal and state funds amidst a global pandemic, but we will only make our school system stronger and will continue to keep the board of education up to date with our planning and purchasing for the future.

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