

Department of Public Instruction, ESSER III Set-Aside

Summary

The American Rescue Plan provides North Carolina with \$3,599,191,706 through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund. ESSER III funds follow two previous tranches of federal K-12 COVID-19 relief funding (ESSER I and ESSER II) and are available through September 30, 2024. A minimum of 90% of ESSER III funds (\$3.2 billion) must go to public school units (PSUs) to be used for a wide range of purposes. The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) may retain up to 10% of ESSER III funds (\$359.9 million) to address learning loss, support evidence-based summer enrichment and comprehensive afterschool programs, for administration, and for other flexible uses related to the pandemic. Table 1 details the Department’s proposed funding categories for these funds.

Table 1: ESSER III Set-Aside Allocation of Funds by Initiative

Low-Performing District Discretionary Program	\$19,000,000
Extended Learning Recovery After-School Enrichment Support	\$50,000,000
Mastery Based Programs and Assessments	\$19,000,000
Social Emotional Learning Programming and Resources Support	\$10,000,000
ESSER I/II/III & Summer School Lessons Learned Expansion Fund	\$20,000,000
Research Partnerships	\$2,500,000
High-Impact Tutoring Initiative	\$30,000,000
Diagnostic Assessments	\$12,000,000
K-5 Learning	\$22,000,000
CBE, Asset, and Efficiency Management	\$13,750,000
DPI Learning Recovery Initiatives	\$5,250,000
CTE Credentials and Certifications for Students	\$6,500,000
Statewide Student Survey	\$3,000,000
Social and Emotional Learning Pilot	\$250,000
Cybersecurity	\$10,000,000
Support for Drivers Education	\$75,000
Unreserved funds for SBE and NCDPI	\$25,000,000
Grand Total	\$248,325,000

Low-Performing District Discretionary Program

Funds will be used to: (1) offer coaching support and professional development to Districts, Principals and School Improvement Leadership Teams; (2) design and implement a leadership institute for current principals in LPS; and (3) support opportunities for Low Performing Districts in creating creative and flexible improvement plans in conjunction with DPI's District and Regional Transformation Team, which will include teacher recruitment and retention initiatives. Twenty FTEs will support the state’s eight

education regions. \$6.3 million per year will be used to support contract work to expand the work the Department is doing through the utilization of ESSER I for the state's lowest performing schools.

Extended Learning Recovery After-School Enrichment Support

Funds will be held in reserve by the Department, in consultation with the State Board of Education, and allocated to public school units to support COVID-19 related needs, including in-person instruction programs to address learning loss and provide enrichment activities during the traditional academic year afterschool. These funds shall be prioritized to public school units based on need, as demonstrated by the expenditure of existing federal funding received for COVID-19 related impacts

Mastery Based Programs and Assessments

Funds will support: (1) deployment of a Competency-Based Education (CBE) platform; (2) development of Credit by Demonstrated Mastery (CDM) for grades 7-12 for credit recovery or acceleration; (3) development of micro-credentials for teacher competency and professional development; and (4) development of principal professional development. These efforts tie into licensure reform at the department.

Social Emotional Learning Programming and Resources Support

Funds will support development and deployment of an online repository of online programs and resources for PSUs. Toolkits may include Social and Emotional Health and well-being for Teachers, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) for Students, and SEL for Caregivers. Funding will also be used to support professional development for teachers and school leaders.

ESSER I/II/III and Summer School Lessons Learned Expansion Fund

Funding will be used to leverage lessons learned and to scale interventions developed using ESSER I/II/III funding within a PSU or for other PSUs to implement and test the initiative. There will be four FTE's associated with this request which falls under the Office of Learning Recovery.

Research Partnerships

Funding will provide support for external research partners to assess the impact of learning recovery interventions.

High-Impact Tutoring Initiative

Funds will provide support for high-dosage and other evidence-based tutoring initiatives, including the development of online modules for tutor training in curriculum and pedagogy, focusing on literacy, in conjunction with Operation Polaris (Literacy), NC Education Corps, increase capacity of best practices from what districts are already doing, as well as developing a math-centered program.

Diagnostic Assessments

Funding will support development and/or deployment of learning recovery diagnostics and assessments, such as the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) for second and seventh graders state-wide, along with teacher professional development.

K-5 Learning

Funds will provide support for (1) a common Learning Management System (LMS) to be utilized for in-person and remote instruction; (2) Science of Reading implementation and a Kindergarten Readiness

program (based in the science of reading); and (3) teacher and principal professional development for the LMS.

Contracts for CBE, Asset, and Efficiency Management

With the large amount of federal ESSER dollars coming to North Carolina, there is a need to not only track but understand how the funds are being spent. DPI will utilize an education-technology effectiveness system to rapidly analyze digital contracts for subscriptions services and technological assets to determine frequency use by teacher or student users throughout the lifetime of ESSER III to help the department determine if contracts should be extended, expanded, or eliminated to ensure the most effective use of ESSER dollars. Funds will also be used to pilot a tool that identifies and tracks students who have not attended any instructional days during the 2020-21 COVID-19 school year. The department will continue the pilot during the 2021-22 school year to track students who fall under "chronic absenteeism." One new FTE is required to manage these new platforms.

DPI Learning Recovery Initiatives

Funds will support identification of high-impact practices within PSUs throughout North Carolina and the development of a dashboard for use by PSUs and other stakeholders to link recovery and acceleration practices to PSU need. Funds will also support the Director of Academic Recovery and Enhancement, a position within the Office of Learning Recovery, co-reporting to the Executive Director of the Office of Learning Recovery and the Deputy Superintendent of Innovation.

CTE Credentials and Certifications for Students

Funding will expand support for credentials and certifications for Career and Technical Education (CTE) students. The Department estimates \$18 million is needed annually to fully fund the cost of CTE exams leading to credentials or certifications. This investment will allow the Department to conduct a pilot to assess the impact of the state paying for the exams, which may further engage students in non-traditional classroom instruction leading to a credential.

Statewide Student Survey

Funds will be used to support a pilot of the Panorama Student Survey to help North Carolina LEAs measure student perceptions of teaching and learning, culture and climate, and student experience in the classroom and school. Survey data is vital to the State's COVID-19 recovery plan and may provide additional data to help evaluate school performance beyond the existing A-F grade rubric.

Social and Emotional Learning Pilot

Funding will be used to expand implementation of the North Carolina Preschool Pyramid Model (NC PPM) framework. The Pyramid Model is a conceptual framework of evidence-based practices for promoting young children's healthy social and emotional development. Since 2009 the DPI Office of Early Learning has provided training, consultation, and on-going support for LEAs to implement the North Carolina Preschool Pyramid Model. While all children benefit from Pyramid practices, NC PPM is funded solely through the IDEA Section 619 Preschool IDEA grant to help improve child outcomes for Pre-K children with disabilities and to increase opportunities for instruction in the least restrictive environment. This initiative is intended for all collaborative partners who work with special education to implement inclusive preschool programs throughout North Carolina.

Cybersecurity

North Carolina LEAs experienced several security breaches during the COVID-19 school year. These funds will augment funding previously provided through the ESSER II package to address the Department's long-term cybersecurity goals. These funds may not be spent until the Department's ongoing cybersecurity assessment is completed and submitted to the General Assembly.

Support for Drivers Education

Funds will provide the immediate support needed for the Driver's Education program resulting from COVID-19-related impacts during the 2020-21 school year.

Unreserved funds for SBE and NCDPI

Flexible spending account to address the needs of the department, in consultation with the State Board of Education, and PSUs as needs arise that might not fit into buckets. This would also include Charter School and Residential School Title I funding increases.