ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND II

Menu of Options for Early Childhood, K-12, and Higher Education

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AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN (ARP) ACT OF 2021: CHANGES TO THE ESSER FUNDING STREAM

ESSER MENU COMPANION DOCUMENT

This companion document is intended to complement the previously released ESSER II Menu of Options and outlines the implications of the American Rescue Plan Act on ESSER allocation decisions in state and local education agencies. It is not a complete overview of the ARP ESSER III Fund.

Introduction

On March 11, 2021, the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021 was signed into law. This third federal relief package once again included an Elementary and Secondary Emergency Relief (ESSER III) Fund. Unlike the first two ESSER funding streams, the federal government **stipulated a portion of these relief dollars at both the State and local level are to be used to address learning loss.**

State Reserves

- Five percent of the total ARP ESSER allocation for the **implementation of evidence-based interventions aimed specifically at addressing learning loss,** such as summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs, or extended school year programs.
- One percent of the total ARP ESSER allocation for **evidence-based summer enrichment programs.**
- One percent of the total ARP ESSER allocation for **evidence-based comprehensive afterschool programs.**

Local Funds

- Of the total amount allocated to a local education agency (LEA) from the state's ARP ESSER award, the LEA must reserve at **least 20 percent of funds to address learning loss through the implementation of evidence-based interventions and ensure that those interventions** respond to students' social, emotional, and academic needs. Additionally, the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on underrepresented student subgroups (each major racial and ethnic group, children from low-income families, children with disabilities, English learners, gender, migrant students, students experiencing homelessness, and children and youth in foster care) must be addressed.
- The remaining LEA funds can be used for a wide range of activities to address needs arising from the coronavirus pandemic.

ESSER II Menu of Options Implications

As states and LEAs use The Hunt Institute ESSER Fund II Menu of Options, it is important to understand this shift from the federal government to ensure all necessary requirements of this federal stimulus package are met. Many options found on the ESSER Fund II Menu of Options align to learning loss, but it will be important to make sure they meet the **evidence-based requirements** set forth in the Every Student Succeeds Act and as outlined in their state.

The U.S. Department of Education recently published the ED COVID-19 Handbook: Roadmap to Reopening Safely and Meeting All Students' Needs, to help states and LEAs as they work to allocate their remaining ESSER funds and provides samples of evidence-based options. This resource can be used by states and LEAs alongside the ESSER II Menu of Options to make the most appropriate decisions.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On April 23, 2020, the U.S. Department of Education (USED) announced $13.2 billion for states under the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. On December 27, 2020, the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021 (CRRSA), was signed into law, providing an additional $54.3 billion for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER II Fund).

The Department awarded these grants to state educational agencies (SEAs) for the purpose of providing local educational agencies (LEAs), including charter schools that are LEAs, with emergency relief funds to address the impact that COVID-19 has had, and continues to have, on elementary and secondary schools across the nation. The Department notes that funding could be used for both continuing to provide educational services, such as remote learning, and developing and implementing plans for the return to normal operations. ESSER Fund awards to SEAs are in the same proportion as each state received funds under Part A of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA) Act of 1965, as amended, in fiscal year 2019.

The following pages provide a menu of options for states and LEAs to use ESSER set-aside funding to support students and schools. This menu is a sampling of what is happening around the country as states create innovative pathways for supporting their students. The Hunt Institute is happy to provide further research specific context and considerations for your state as requested. The menu is organized by each option for allowable uses of funds provided in guidance from USED. The menu is not an exhaustive list but provides extensive examples of how funds can be used. Visit your state education agency for more guidance on spending ESSER funds. The Hunt Institute is more than happy to provide a customized, state-specific version of this document upon request.

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Option One: Any activity authorized by the ESEA of 1965, including the Native Hawaiian Education Act and the Alaska Native Educational Equity, Support, and Assistance Act (20 u.s.c. 6301 et seq.), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 u.s.c. 1400 et seq.) ("IDEA"), the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (20 u.s.c. 1400 et seq.), the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 u.s.c. 2301 et seq.) ("The Perkins Act"), or subtitle b of title vii of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 u.s.c. 11431 et seq.).

Under this umbrella of various allowable uses, state education leaders could use ESSER funds to invest in a range of programs and services, including early childhood education, Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs that prepare K-12 students for good jobs in high-demand fields, and assistive technologies for students with special needs. States can also build on, expand, and augment their existing programs, using ESSER funds to provide transportation, increase enrollment, or provide other similar services. It's also important to note that the allowable uses are the same as ESEA, but specific program requirements under ESEA don't necessarily apply. In other words, if a state chooses to spend ESSER money on a program they currently run under Title IV, they are not bound to the Title IV allowable expenditures, but can spend on anything allowed under ESEA.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Utilize funds for the following:

🔖 Classroom-based instructional programs.

🔖 Salaries and benefits for teachers and other staff.

🔖 Home visiting programs.

🔖 Extended day programs in school sites, Head Start, or community-based child care programs.

🔖 Professional development for early childhood professionals who serve eligible children, including providers in non-school settings.

🔖 Comprehensive services such as nutrition, vision, dental, and counseling services.

🔖 Screening and diagnostic assessment.

🔖 Summer enrichment programs for young children and their families.

🔖 Transition programs.

Services for children and families experiencing homelessness.

K-12

Identify students who are now eligible for the McKinney-Vento Act due to COVID-19.

Increase communication options for students and families: provide prepaid cell phones for youth and parents for limited contracts to McKinney-Vento high school students; outreach to community through motels, campgrounds, and food banks.

Upgrade online McKinney-Vento enrollment systems to improve access for families experiencing homelessness.

Provide virtual externships and supports to enhance career explorations.

Support families with resources to navigate virtual meetings to develop and individual education program (IEP) and transition for children with special needs.

Invest in assistive technology and adaptive equipment for students with special needs.

Fill funding gaps created by per-student federal education formula by allocating funds to local districts, with greater funds based on percentage of low-income families.

Utilize funds as necessary for school construction. Impact Aid is a part of ESEA (Title VII), and school construction is an allowable use of Impact Aid, therefore presumably an allowable use of ESSER funds. This may be particularly useful for districts and schools with ventilation issues.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Expand apprenticeship training opportunities and promote career readiness for students. Coordination of apprenticeship programs in Kentucky, Maryland, and South Carolina placed Councils in the Workforce Development departments.

Build regional collaborations among educators and businesses/industry partners to facilitate the development of CTE programs. Maryland, Colorado, Iowa, Virginia, Wisconsin, and Michigan, created incentive programs that support apprenticeship training and career readiness.

Expand CTE programs by providing professional development for CTE educators, providing college and career counseling, and acquiring resources for STEM related programs.

- Missouri started an online program for college and career development counseling.
- New Jersey, Virginia, and Indiana introduced high school courses that provide college counseling for CTE careers.
- Develop career exploration workshops for upper elementary and middle school students.
- Oklahoma and Missouri programs introduced real-world relevant projects, resume experience, and knowledge of career paths like business or agriculture.
- Texas and Virginia online programs and workshops introduced basic skills and CTE career path knowledge.

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Option Two: 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.

Local and state education leaders must work across sectors to ensure that dollars coming from the ESSER fund are spent in the most constructive way possible to prevent, prepare for, and respond to, coronavirus.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Coordinate response efforts across early learning programs including Head Start, Public Preschool, Exceptional Children's Preschool, private child care, etc.

Work with Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) to ensure public schools and other community distribution sites provide age-appropriate offerings for infants, toddlers, preschool-age children, and their families.

Collaborate with home visiting providers to increase access to virtual and in-person home visiting, parenting education, and family support strategies.

Partner with housing providers to enhance services for children and families experiencing homelessness.

Work with early learning partners to coordinate transition from early childhood settings to school settings.

Partner with Head Start and other early learning partners to offer developmental screenings to determine eligibility for services and identify developmental concerns.

Partner to develop and implement recruitment and enrollment strategies, including a common application process across early learning programs. North Carolina early learning programs collaborated to develop eligibility and enrollment guidance.

Coordinate with early learning partners for aligned, developmentally appropriate summer learning activities.

Plan with community child care providers, libraries, parks, and others for interruptions in school schedules and settings.

Collaborate with licensed child care or Head Start to offer remote learning support and before- and after-school services. NC Department of Public Instruction offered Innovative Child Care and Remote Extended Support Competitive Grants (ICARES) where some districts partnered with licensed child care and Head Start to provide remote learning support.

Coordinate with local health departments to offer regular onsite COVID-19 testing or vaccine clinics for eligible staff or families.

K-12

Prioritize vaccinations for school personnel and students.

Implement key mitigation strategies: correct use of masks, social distancing, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, cleaning, disinfection, and contact tracing.

Work with community-based organizations to identify needs and provide support for students experiencing homelessness during coronavirus including, but not limited to, immunizations, food, medical and dental services (as appropriate), eyeglasses and hearing aids, counseling services to address anxiety, and mental health issues.

Disseminate critical information about coronavirus to students, families, staff, and the community from public health officials that are culturally appropriate and accessible.

Develop a plan for physical distancing recommendations in schools based on case, contact, and outbreak data.

Coordinate testing protocol including specimen collection to confirm outbreaks in schools, encourage testing of individuals with symptoms, and report test results to the health department. North Carolina's Department of Health and Human Services selected both public and charter schools to participate in a pilot program for COVID-19 rapid testing.

Ensure essential needs of students and staff in quarantine or isolation are met and assist in identifying these persons (including coordinating meals and access to items like toiletries), especially in schools with boarding programs.

Develop and receive guidance for plans to prevent and control cases and outbreaks and align these plans with procedures for screening and cleaning.

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Option Three: Providing principals and others school leaders with the resources necessary to address the needs of their individual schools.

School buildings will have varied and individualized needs related to the pandemic, and this option allows funds to go to individual schools for resources necessary to address their needs.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Provide professional learning related to social and emotional development, trauma-informed practices, and/or Multi-Tiered Systems of Support.

Build capacity and offer training on remote learning services while emphasizing developmentally appropriate practices in preschool and kindergarten.

Provide support staff such as social workers and counselors to support family needs and enhance comprehensive services.

Offer professional learning opportunities to enhance transition activities and support virtual family engagement.

Develop resources and supports for continued distance learning or interrupted schedules as the COVID-19 crisis continues and impacts school attendance.

K-12

Invite districts to apply for competitive grants that tie together community partners to, on a long-term basis, support students and adults as they recover from all the societal and health-related impacts of COVID-19. Set clear parameters around exactly what the goal of the competitive grants is. There should be a clear breakdown of intended equity impact the program would have and should be specified by subgroup.

Take measures to support vulnerable employees and students who may be at higher risk for COVID-19 and protect staff, generally.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Encourage districts, when possible, to partner with local postsecondary institutions to engage in research around the impacts of the work and how it could be made scalable over the long term.

- A Chicago institution tracked the warning signs of student drops outs to better support long term retention.
- In Wisconsin, Massachusetts, Texas, and Kansas, formal partnerships researched teacher preparation and supported student attainment goals.

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Option Four: 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.

How can policymakers use ESSER dollars to meet the needs of students from each population? Carefully targeted investments will be required, and policymakers will need to work with district and school leadership, as well as families, to understand how to best make those investments.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Offer kindergarten transition activities including virtual tours, online meetings with teachers, school readiness toolkits, and/or socially distanced home visits. Create a video to share with families if in-person orientation cannot occur. New America published a resource and Vermont created guidance to support transition.

Provide training and resources (in multiple languages) for families to understand how to use online resources.

Offer developmentally appropriate summer learning opportunities.

Offer teachers and support staff a stipend to provide individual support and to do regular check-ins with children and families, including families experiencing homelessness.

Consider providing transportation to in-person learning opportunities to increase access to preschool, Head Start, or other early learning programs, if not currently available.

Provide services to young children and their families experiencing homelessness by increasing McKinney-Vento Liaison capacity for outreach, identification, and services by augmenting their hours or hiring additional staff and providing outreach to children and families experiencing homelessness to monitor their needs and assist them in accessing services.

Deliver family training and resources (in multiple languages) to help families navigate virtual Individualized Education Program (IEP) planning and transition for children with special needs.

K-12

Provide small, socially distanced, academic opportunities in academic buildings to support students with distance learning.

Provide consultation, coaching, and support services to families of students with disabilities, English learners, racial and ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness, and children in foster care.

Provide more food-centered programming for older and disconnected youth. Young individuals who do not attend school or are disengaged from school-based programming are often overlooked, and policymakers should work to get a good idea of the proportion of the state's youth population that falls into this category. Much work has been done around engaging older youth, especially teenagers. When the Urban Institute studied efforts to address food insecurity in Vermont, the organization convened a focus group that included teenagers to discuss food-centered programming. With individuals and communities having a better sense of how to engage one another in a safe manner during the pandemic, policymakers could fund these programs for the purpose of engaging more youth.

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Option Five: Developing and implementing procedures and systems to improve the preparedness and response efforts of local educational agencies.

As states and districts consider scaled transitions to in-person and hybrid learning, LEAs must have the capacity not only to facilitate that transition but be equipped to respond to pressing issues that will continue to emerge in their districts in the immediate- and long-term.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Plan with community child care providers, libraries, parks, and others for interruptions in school schedules.

Offer professional learning opportunities on effective coaching practices to share materials, resources, and best practices for distance learning.

Develop substitute pools of staff trained to work with young children.

Coordinate with local health departments to provide regular onsite testing for staff, children, and families.

K-12

Provide brochures and pamphlets to homes of students explaining personal hygiene and social distancing practices in native languages.

Hire staff to train students on hygiene best practices and maintenance.

Develop tiered interventions and supports for the maintenance of hygiene practices and social distancing.

Train on implementation and monitoring of school improvement systems.

Provide professional development on school reopening.

Ensure that school nurses are connected to the most recent information from public health departments and the CDC, and provide resources to make sure protocols are being followed.

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Option Six: Training and professional development for staff of the local educational agency on sanitation and minimizing the spread of infectious diseases.

As states and districts consider scaled transitions to in-person and hybrid learning, LEAs must have the capacity and resources to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Policymakers seeking to equip LEAs with the tools and capacity to facilitate transitions to in-person and/or hybrid learning can consider the following options.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Train staff in health and sanitation preparedness and relief efforts that include early learning.

Provide training for families on new health and safety measures through a virtual format or through other outreach methods.

K-12

Provide training for the need of healthy activities and social diversions during quarantine (e.g., good nutrition, clean water).

Provide training on how to support students with hygiene best practices.

Train on in-person classroom management and structure (e.g., spacing of students, usage of PPE).

Provide trainings to the custodial staff on appropriate uses of PPE and cleaning supplies.

Create a color-coded cleaning system to organize equipment (designating specific cleaning zones) to minimize cross contamination between work zones.

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Option Seven: Purchasing supplies to sanitize and clean the facilities of a local educational agency, including buildings operated by such agency.

Policymakers using ESSER dollars to purchase sanitation supplies for schools should be sure to invest in the following items and/or services.

EARLY CHILDHOOD & K-12

Thermometers.

Additional classroom materials or multiples of the same item to rotate for extra cleaning and sanitizing.

Extra cot sheets for early childhood classrooms.

Washer/dryer to support extra cleaning.

Bleach.

Paper towels and microfiber towels.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) including disposable gloves, masks, foot coverings, and scrubs (to either use as a barrier over clothing or to change into while at the site). Consider entering contracts for disposable masks in child and adult sizes.

Carts and other supplies to transport meals to classrooms.

Portable sinks for entrances to the site and to classrooms from the outdoor environment.

Sanitation stations with hand soap and hand sanitizer.

Hygiene products for students in need.

Greener cleaning options to reduce reliance on harsher cleaning chemicals.

Commercial cleaning tools for increased speed and ease of use and to support more frequent cleanings. An Albuquerque company, Build with Robots, deployed a cleaning robot for schools.

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Option Eight: 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 IDEA and ensuring other educational services can continue to be provided consistent with all federal, state, and local requirements.

With millions of students still engaged in remote learning, investments in academic and non-academic needs and resources for students will continue to be critical. Some options on how to best target federal relief towards these needs include the following.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Partner with No Kid Hungry and coordinate with Head Start and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) to support meal distribution.

Ensure meals are age-appropriate for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

Leverage educational technologies and teach parents and children how to use and access education platforms for online learning.

Develop guidance and provide resources for remote learning. Boston Public Schools created home learning kits for teachers as well as Remote/Hybrid Teacher Guides. North Carolina Department of Public Instruction created technology-free remote learning activities.

Enhance teacher training and professional development opportunities on developmentally appropriate practices, using educational technology to communicate with young children virtually, and incorporating introductory technology skills necessary for virtual schooling in the ECE curriculum.

Provide training and resources (in multiple languages) for families and caregivers to understand how to access and use online resources.

Incorporate virtual home visiting and family support activities into planning and professional development resources.

Provide appropriate developmental screening and diagnostic assessment including developing a plan for timing and use.

Develop-supported Child Find activities and home visiting services.

Purchase assistive technology and adaptive equipment so students with special needs may continue accessing learning opportunities.

Offer professional development designed to promote individualized lesson planning.

Offer remote learning support and before- and after-school services. For example, NC Department of Public Instruction offered Innovative Childcare and Remote Extended Support Competitive Grants (ICARES) where some districts partnered with licensed child care and Head Start to provide remote learning support.

Provide family engagement supports and strategies on remote learning, developmentally appropriate practices, technology use, social-emotional learning, and mental health and wellness.

Facilitate parent-teacher communication using online platforms.

K-12

Provide direct financial support to families to support homeschooling, school choice, and private education costs through scholarships or microgrants.

Reimburse device purchases for students made to continue remote education.

Cover salaries and benefits for bus drivers to deliver meals to specific drop-off locations. Chicago Public Schools distributed grab and go meals and the state board of education served meals through partnerships with their summer meals program.

Offer professional development on remote learning and developmentally appropriate practices, and curriculum implementation with home activities. New Jersey's Department of Education (NJDOE) provided virtual professional learning with topics on asynchronous and synchronous learning.

Create community learning centers to provide academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours. Ohio's 21st Century Community Learning Centers redesigned their experience to restart for the 2020-2021 school year.

Purchase at-home learning kits to align with goals and objectives of LEAs.

Develop digital learning coaching model to target distance and remote learning.

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Option Nine: 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.

The sudden transition to distance learning for millions of students in the spring of 2020 revealed the vast inequities in broadband and technological access, and while many students we able to engage in a seamless transition to remote learning, millions did not have the fiber and technology required to engage in remote learning. Significant improvements have been made in recent months to engage more students in remote learning, yet much work in this space remains to be done. Policymakers using ESSER funds to close the digital divide can consider investing funds in the following areas.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Technology to support remote learning such as computers or tablets.

Technology beyond screens (i.e., public access programming, public television, music, etc.) and resources and supports for families unwilling or unable to use technology.

Infrastructure to support interactions with families and for staff to work remotely.

Developmental screening programs that can be administered virtually (i.e., Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) or Parents' Evaluation of Developmental Status) for determining preschool eligibility or identifying developmental concerns. Brookes Publishing adapted guidance for administering ASQ-3 in virtual environments.

Family engagement supports such as Ready Rosie.

Assistive technology and adaptive equipment so children with special needs may continue accessing learning opportunities.

Additional Resource: Reimagining the Role of Technology in Education 2017.

K-12

Educational online platforms to make instructional activities publicly available.

Access to broadband connectivity and high-speed internet (e.g., provide portable Wi-Fi hotspots). In South Carolina, resources were shared to provide students with free and low-cost internet.

Technology grants to support the purchase of Wi-Fi, laptops, or other technologies.

School busses with Wi-Fi capabilities to increase connectivity.

Digital textbooks and library resources for students to support remote learning.

Software licenses for technology capacity and infrastructure.

Robust cybersecurity infrastructure to prevent steep costs resulting from ransomware attacks. Recent cases of ransom payments include a payment by Sheldon ISD amounting to $207,000. To prevent the costs of these attacks from eating into school budgets, cybersecurity investment will be critical.

Technology support to students and their parents as they transition to online and blended learning. Hawaii's State Department of Education sponsored the 'Ohana Help Desk for students across the state.

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Option Ten: Providing mental health services and supports.

The mental health toll on students resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic has been immense, and as students continue to endure the severe difficulties brought by the pandemic and accommodating crises, policymakers should be sure to target a portion of ESSER dollars to mental health services. Some options on how that can be done include the following.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Additional resources to strengthen connections between children, educators, and families, such as restructuring schedules to allow for more intentional social-emotional support, responsive caregiving, additional counselor capacity, etc.

Trauma informed approaches for staff, families, and children such as:

- Professional development.
- Mental health consultation.
- Contract services.
- Instructional supplies.
- Social-emotional curricula.
- Staff wellness activities.
- Mental health support for staff.
- Parenting education and family supports.

K-12

Increased access to mental health professionals and surveys to assess student health during and immediately after the crisis. Wisconsin focused on building their staff capacity to provide mental health services through various programming.

Programming focused on cyberbullying, responsible social media use, is allowable as mental health support and can help address documented challenges around teenagers, social media, and mental health.

Essential needs (e.g., food, clothing, health care, and other social services) provided to families.

Trauma-informed trainings and practices.

Tiered mental health supports and interventions either through counseling staff or contacted community platforms.

HIPAA/FERPA compliant virtual and remote platforms for the delivery of counseling services.

Professional development for teachers and administrators on behavioral and emotional issues for children in remote learning.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Relationships with organizations that provide advising services in both the K-12 and higher education spaces, such as College Possible and College Advising Corps, thinking about how to scale their services across the state, especially in rural areas. Provide more dedicated funding for school counselors in the K-12 space. Texas and Pennsylvania established a report card system for identifying criteria of partnerships.

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Option Eleven: Planning and implementing activities related to summer learning and supplemental after-school 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.

An important piece in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic will include meeting the needs of all student subpopulations, and especially the most vulnerable subpopulations. Addressing these needs will require the radical restructuring or capacity-building of out-of-school programs, which will not only address the academic needs of the child, but the needs of the whole child.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Offer developmentally appropriate, comprehensive summer programming focused on the whole child (e.g., social-emotional development, family engagement, and health), especially for children who have not been enrolled in a preschool program.

Provide professional development on developmentally appropriate practices and trauma-informed approaches for preschool, kindergarten, and first grade teachers; administrators; and other staff as children transition to school after extended periods at home.

Provide funding for early learning programs to extend the program year through the summer months.

Offer full-year, full-day services.

Coordinate with early learning partners for aligned, developmentally appropriate summer learning activities.

Create or enhance outdoor learning environments. The Early Childhood Center at Sarah Lawrence College in New York completed the fall semester outdoors.

Increase McKinney-Vento Liaison capacity for outreach, identification, and services by augmenting their hours or hiring additional staff.

Partner with Head Start, housing providers, and other early learning partners to actively identify families who are experiencing homelessness but are not yet receiving services. Ensure recruitment strategies, as well as applications, are accessible for families experiencing homelessness.

K-12

Use summer learning and after-school funding to enhance the quality of CTE programming offered in those settings. Possible initiatives include:

- Buy better technology equipment for certain CTE programs, which will help the programs in the short- and long-term.
- Provide professional development for CTE educators to better deliver remote instruction now and into the future.
- Supply related equipment or materials for programs and students that have been hardest hit by the transition to remote instruction and are likely to struggle to complete certifications without those materials.
- Survey CTE programs, students, etc., to better understand where to target the resources.
- Think about tutoring or other ways to extend learning beyond the school day/year to ensure students are prepared for certification, the workforce, or postsecondary opportunities.
- Offer work-based learning partnerships to ensure students get experience even through virtual platforms. In West Virginia, students are able to participate in the Simulated Workplace program.

Invite districts to apply for grants creating pilot programs within their local communities that tie together all community partners to support learning recovery for students through the summer.

Expand the amount of community partners to also include local Boys and Girls clubs, YMCAs, etc.

Provide additional funds for COVID testing and safety measures at these community partner centers so that in-person summer programming may resume.

Increase summer and fall activities for children to combat adverse effects of social isolation by promoting socialization and recreation.

Provide academy recovery camps for elementary students in reading and math through face-to-face summer instruction.

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Option Twelve: 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.

Closing achievement gaps has been a high-priority task in state education systems for years, a gap which has received much attention yet has barely changed, and with the mass disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic enduring for nearly a year, those achievement gaps will widen. To mitigate learning loss incurred during the pandemic and ensure that the country does not lose a generation of students, policymakers must be deliberate in how they use federal relief for efforts to mitigate learning loss and be especially attentive to the needs of students who are suffering disproportionate amounts of learning loss. Some options on how to best approach this issue using ESSER funds including the following.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

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.

- Partner with preschool programs to ensure data sharing for kindergarten transition.
- Provide support for kindergarten teachers in interpreting pre-K assessment data.
- Align assessment between preschool and kindergarten focusing on multiple domains of development.
- Provide professional development for early learning partners and kindergarten teachers on the high-quality formative assessment process as well as transition strategies.
- Provide professional development for kindergarten teachers on state early learning and development standards for preschoolers.

Implementing evidence-based activities to meet the comprehensive needs of students.

- Implement social-emotional curriculum such as Second Step, Pyramid Model, etc.
- Partner with early learning programs, such as Head Start, to provide evidence-based parenting education supports and professional learning sessions to families, such as Parents as Teachers, Circle of Security, Abreindo Puertos, Incredible Years, etc.
- Implement developmentally appropriate curriculum including at home activities in which technology is not required.
- Provide coaches to help promote best practices for working with young children through distance learning, hybrid models, and in person to address the traumas and anxiety of the COVID-19 period.

Providing information and assistance to parents and families on how they can effectively support students, including in a distance learning environment.

- Offer family engagement supports such as Ready Rosie.
- Training and resources (in multiple languages) for families and caregivers to understand how to use online resources.
- Support families in staying up to date on their child's immunizations and well child visits.

Tracking student attendance and improving student engagement in distance education.

- Align attendance policies across early learning programs and provide supports to districts for tracking attendance.

K-12

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.

- In Connecticut, an outline for sensible assessment practices moving forward was released.
- Invest in a learning management system for remote learning and assignments to provide organization and communication. Hawaii's Office of Curriculum and Instructional Design (OCID) provided schools with Blackboard Learn as a learning management system, with additional content for distance/blended learning.

Implementing evidence-based activities to meet the comprehensive needs of students.

- Provide research-based professional development to allow teachers, school counselors, and support staff to shift their lessons to distance learning and ensure high-quality learning.
- Invest in tutoring programs, reduce student-to-teacher ratios for individualized student attention and class sizes, and hire additional support staff to facilitate small group work.
- Extend instructional school year to increase the amount of instructional time students receive.
- Provide information and assistance to parents and families on how they can effectively support students, including in a distance learning environment.
- Focus on using low-cost solutions to prevent achievement gaps from widening, such as working with districts to mail books to students on a bi-weekly basis. These books would have pre- and post-comprehension questions and would be completed and mailed back – research finds that this approach has positive effects on reading comprehension, effects of which are most pronounced in high-poverty districts. This intervention could be coupled with text-messaging reminders to encourage students and families to complete those assignments.

Tracking student attendance and improving student engagement in distance education.

- Allocate funds for high-intensity tutoring programs. These programs would focus on literacy and numeracy skills and could be structured in the following way:
  - ❯ High school students tutor elementary school students as an elective course.
  - ❯ College students tutor middle school students as a federal/state work-study job; and
  - ❯ Recent college graduates tutor high school students as full time tutors.
  - ❯ Paraprofessionals, substitutes, retired teachers, and education students as tutors

States are addressing learning loss through legislation:

- On the legislative front, states are developing bills targeted at mitigating learning loss. In January 2021, Tennessee Governor Bill Lee announced special session legislation specifically targeted at learning loss. Those bills are the following:
  - ❯ SB 7001: Accountability to Inform: Extends hold harmless provisions from the 2019-20 school year to the 2020-21 school year so that students, teachers, schools, and districts do not face any negative consequences associated with student assessments; and provides parents and educators with assessment data including TCAP testing to provide an accurate picture of where Tennessee students are and what supports are needed to offset any learning losses.
  - ❯ SB 7002: Intervening to Stop Learning Loss: Requires interventions for struggling students including after-school learning mini-camps, learning loss bridge camps and summer learning camps, beginning in summer 2021; prioritizes students who score below proficient in both reading (ELA) and math subjects; creates the Tennessee Accelerated Literacy and Learning Corps to provide ongoing tutoring for students throughout the entire school year; and strengthens laws around a third grade reading gate so we no longer advance students who are not prepared.
- In Washington, Senate Bill 5147, which was introduced by Senator Brad Hawkins, is accumulating support from the Washington Education Association and the Washington State Department of Education. The bill calls for the Superintendent of Public Instruction to select a limited number of school districts for a program to implement a year-round school calendar.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Use a portion of the ESSER funding to develop partnerships with IHEs that allow higher education resources to be used for efforts around mitigating learning loss. New York explored expanded learning options like enrichment programs.

Structure the effort in any number of ways - for example, a grant program that provides funding to LEAs and IHEs that submitted descriptions of creative ways of developing a partnership.

🔖 Kentucky used funding for a program to improve student behavior and increase student academic performance.

🔖 New Mexico used funding for a program to build school-community relationships.

🔖 South Dakota used grant funding for partnerships supporting diversity, mental health, college or career guidance, and STEM programs.

Recruit IHEs that have worked to develop relationships with local community providers.

🔖 An Oregon study found reciprocity and communication as partnership keys.

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND II

Menu of Options for Early Childhood, K-12, and Higher Education

Option Thirteen: 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.

Though children and staff had to leave the school building following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the virus itself revealed the significant need for increased investment in capital improvement and maintenance in our nation's school infrastructure. The costs of capital improvement and maintenance are steep, and current federal relief will not cover all those costs, but policymakers nevertheless can use ESSER funds to begin the process of investing in much-needed capital improvement and repair. Some options on how to do that include the following.

<div style="color:#b3122a; font-weight:bold;">EARLY CHILDHOOD & K-12-12</div>

Install handwashing facilities or purchase/rent portable sinks as well as purchase sanitation stations for each entrance and for outdoor environments.

Install sanitization stations and water bottle filling stations.

Improve general infrastructure problems (e.g., plumbing, roofs).

Redesign and convert spaces for social distancing with furniture changes, signs and posters, and floor distance markers.

Ensure school health offices have the space to ensure that healthy students and ill persons can be separated.

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ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND II

Menu of Options for Early Childhood, K-12, and Higher Education

Option Fourteen: 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.

Though children and staff had to leave the school building following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the virus itself revealed the significant need for increased investment in capital improvement and maintenance in our nation's school infrastructure. The costs of capital improvement and maintenance are steep, and current federal relief will not cover all those costs, but policymakers nevertheless can use ESSER funds to begin the process of investing in much-needed capital improvement and repair. Some options on how to do that include the following.

EARLY CHILDHOOD & K-12

Repair school ventilation systems to improve air quality and reduce spread of COVID-19.

Update or replace heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems.

Invest in portable air purifications systems.

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND II

Menu of Options for Early Childhood, K-12, and Higher Education

Option Fifteen: 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.

Robust investment in staff will be required to prevent workforce attrition and provide LEAs and schools the capacity to meet the needs of both students and staff in a safe and effective manner in the immediate- and long-term. Some options on how policymakers can use ESSER funds to invest in staff and services include the following.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Salary and benefits for teachers and other staff.

Staff to reduce classroom ratios and to support additional health checks and cleaning.

Extended day programs at the school site, Head Start, or community-based child care program.

Substitute staffing for staff on extended leave due to COVID-19.

Professional development for educators and school staff, particularly around trauma-informed and social-emotional practices, and family engagement and support.

Comprehensive services such as nutrition, vision, dental, and counseling services.

K-12

Educational support personnel to develop online learning capabilities necessary to continue educational instruction and address learning loss during the summer.

Paraprofessionals for duties related to COVID-19 (e.g., check-ins with students)

Teacher stipends for summer school.

Child care for teachers/staff/administrators who are unable to access the service due to COVID-19.

Costs of offsetting the need to furlough or reduce salaries of staff due to fiscal year reductions.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Incentives (tuition discounts, grants, testing fee waivers) for paraprofessionals to move into classroom teaching positions. Invest in partnerships that provide low-interest loans and down payment assistance for housing to students who grew up in urban centers and return to teach in their communities.

State leaders should invest in programming like the Influence 100, which supports the development of new superintendents for Massachusetts schools.

Identify opportunities to build a more diverse teacher workforce. In partnership with The Hunt Institute, North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper created the DRIVE Task Force to focus on this challenge.

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND II

Menu of Options for Early Childhood, K-12, and Higher Education

THE **hunt institute**

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

US DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

- Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund
- ESSER Awards
- CRRSA ESSER II Fact Sheet

EARLY CHILDHOOD

- National Head Start Association: Head Start and COVID-19 Relief and COVID-19 Destination Reopening Playbook
- North Carolina Department of Public Instruction: NC Early Learning ESSER Guidance
- School House Connection: Authorized Uses of McKinney-Vento Act Education for Homeless Children and Youth Funding
- NAEYC, Education Counsel, CLASP: How States Can Spend $10 Billion for Child Care Well, Wisely & With Urgency

K-12

- National Education Association: Community Schools | National Education Association
- Thunder Valley CDC: Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation
- New Jersey Department of Education: New Jersey Competitive Grant Program
- National Environmental Education Association: YMCA Keeps Learning Rolling in the Summer
- Aspen Institute: Building Partnerships in Support of Where, When, and How Learning Happens
- Wallace Foundation: Summer Learning Planning Toolkit
- ACTE: High-quality CTE, Planning for a COVID-19 Impacted School Year
- District Administration: How schools can improve CTE during COVID-19
- Ed Tech Magazine: How schools are bringing CTE programs online
- The Hunt Institute: Impact of COVID-19 on CTE Courses
- Advance CTE: Resources for States COVID-19
- American Institutes for Research: Recognizing the Role of Afterschool and Summer Programs and Systems in Reopening and Rebuilding
- McKinsey & Company: COVID-19 and Learning Loss - Disparities Grow and Students Need Help
- National Governors Association: Governors' Emergency Education Relief Fund