

Your Question:

What trends have you seen in the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Elementary and Secondary Emergency Relief (ESSER) plans submitted by state education agencies (SEAs)? Where is the money going, and what are states and local districts doing to accelerate student learning and meet the needs of different student groups?

Our Response:

The ARP ESSER State Plan Applications were due on June 7, 2021. As of July 27, 41 states and the District of Columbia [have submitted](#) plans to the U.S. Department of Education. Summaries of these plans have been published by [FutureEd](#) and [Edunomics Lab](#) discussing some of the key priorities, trends and strategies for [learning recovery](#) found in the plans. In addition, FutureED created a [spreadsheet](#) with many of the plan details.

ECS has also reviewed the state plans with a focus on three main areas: 1) overall state priorities 2) state reported or planned spending and 3) strategies for accelerating student learning.

Overall State Priorities

Section A2 of State ARP ESSER plans asked states to list their overall top priorities. Common trends in priorities include the following:

Social and Emotional Health, Mental Health - 27 states (AL, AK, AR, CT, DE, HI, IL, IA, KY, ME, MN, MT, NE, NV, NJ, NY, NC, OH, OK, OR, PA, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, WY)

The social and emotional and mental health category refers to states that included student social and emotional health or mental health as a top priority.

Accelerated Learning/Unfinished Learning - 24 states and DC (AL, AK, CT, DE, DC, GA, HI, IA, LA, ME, MA, MI, MO, NV, NH, NJ, NY, NC, OK, OR, SC, TX, WA, WV, WY)

The accelerated learning/unfinished learning category includes states that listed terms such as accelerated learning, learning loss and interrupted learning as one of their top priorities.

Staff and Student Support- 14 states (DE, DC, GA, IL, IN, KY, ME, MN, MT, NV, OH, PA, SD, WA)

The staff and student support category includes priorities related to professional development for staff or student/staff mental health.

Teacher Recruitment and Retention - 9 states (AK, DE, IN, ME, NV, NM, ND, PA, SD)

The teacher recruitment and retention category includes states that listed teacher recruitment, retention and/or staff shortages as a top priority in ARP ESSER Plans.

Digital Divide/Technology Access - 7 states (CT, IL, LA, MO, NM, OH, PA)

The digital divide/technology access category is inclusive of states that listed broadband/internet or device access as a top priority.

Student Engagement - 6 states (ID, LA, MN, RI, UT, WA)

The student engagement category contains states that listed student engagement, reengagement or attendance as top priorities.

State Spending

Section C2 of the state ARP ESSER plan asked states to identify SEA and LEA uses of federal funding. Our review of SEA plans identified the most frequent areas that states have spent or are planning to spend ESSER funds on (ESSER I, ESSER II or ARP ESSER).



States frequently reported using their ESSER funds for technology upgrades, digital learning tools and increasing internet access. Some states used funds to offer internet hotspots, while other states purchased online learning platforms to assist districts. For example:

Connecticut invested \$5 million in ESSER funds matched with GEER funds to purchase hot spots and broadband vouchers for families without internet access. The state also renewed its online learning platforms focused on credit recovery and summer enrichment.

Oklahoma provided 50,000 free wi-fi hot spots to students in low-income households across the state.

Maine used \$2.8 million in ESSER funds to provide anytime, anywhere learning and resources for educators, students and families with the Maine Opportunity for Online Sustained Education (MOOSE) learning library.

New Hampshire is utilizing multiple online platforms for tutoring, learning recovery, supplemental special education services and online college courses.

North Dakota purchased an online learning platform and made it available to all K-12 students to provide reading, writing and math tools.



States also used federal funds to expand existing or create new mental health programs or offer social and emotional learning opportunities. For example:

Arkansas set aside \$11 million to develop a comprehensive program to help support the mental health and behavioral needs of students around the state.

Iowa is planning to use some of its ESSER II funds to provide social and emotional behavioral health services as part of the Future Ready Iowa program.

Ohio provided \$1.5 million in ESSER funds to the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to expand early childhood mental health supports in each of its existing 16 state support teams.

The District of Columbia expanded its Comprehensive School Based Behavioral Health System to increase access to clinical services in public schools.

Expanded Learning Time **20 states** AL, DE, GA, HI, LA, MI, MN, MT, NJ, NM, NY, NC, ND, NH, OH, OK, RI, SD, UT, WV

Twenty states are using federal funds to expand learning time through summer school and afterschool programs. For example:

Alabama is using ESSER II funds for summer K-3 reading camps.

New Hampshire is awarding \$6.7 million for summer programming, including educational robotics programs and \$3.5 million for before and after school student enrichment programming.

North Carolina is planning to dedicate \$66 million in ESSER II funds for in-person summer instructional programming and \$15 million for extended learning for students negatively affected by COVID-19.

Pass Through Grants to LEAs (Not Competitive) **20 states** AK, AL, CT, DE, ID, IL, IA, MI, MN, MT, NH, NJ, NY, PA, OK, OR, RI, SD, UT, WY

Ninety percent of ESSER funds were dedicated to LEAs and states passed on additional ESSER funds beyond that amount. States distributed these additional resources using a variety of approaches, including directing resources to LEAs with the highest rates of poverty or to LEAs receiving limited or no ESSER funds. For example:

Idaho distributed \$11.85 million in ESSER II funds to LEAs that do not receive a Title I-A allocation or received low levels of ESSER II funds.

Kansas is providing \$11 million in ESSER II funds for discretionary grants to LEAs that would have otherwise received less than \$300 per full-time equivalent to provide a minimum level of aid for relief and recovery.

New York allocated \$395 million in ESSER II funds to provide LEAs of lower wealth with a minimum per pupil allocation.

Pennsylvania combined \$49.8 million in ESSER I funds with \$100 million in federal CARES Act funding to award COVID-19 Disaster Emergency School Health and Safety Grants to school districts, regional education service agencies, career and technical education schools, and charter schools upon application.

Professional Development **17 states** AK, AR, CT, DE, ID, IL, LA, NC, ND, NH, NJ, NM, NV, PA, OH, OR, WY

States used federal funds for professional development to improve remote instruction or learning acceleration. For example:

Alaska developed the Alaska Statewide Virtual Systems to provide districts with educator training and seats for students to participate in a virtual education program.

New Jersey is developing an Acceleration Coach and Educator Support grant program.

Oregon is providing professional learning opportunities for teachers on learning acceleration, culturally affirming and sustaining pedagogy, and technology-enabled instruction and to administrators for innovative staffing models and leadership.

COVID-19 Spread Prevention **16 states** AR, CT, DE, GA, ID, MA, ME, NC, ND, NM, NY, PA, SC, SD, WV, WY

Another area that states have dedicated federal funds to is preventing the spread of COVID-19. This includes funding for additional nurses, contact tracing or personal protective equipment. In addition to state funds dedicated for these purposes, LEAs frequently used the ESSER funds that they received to control COVID-19 spread. For example:

Maine deployed a team of contact tracers including retired nurses at the Maine Department of Education to support schools in contact tracing and monitoring contacts of positive cases.

Additional Instructors and/or Teacher Recruitment Efforts **13 states** AK, DE, GA, HI, IL, IN, LA, MO, NC, ND, NV, OH, UT

States spent federal funds for additional instructors including tutors or for teacher recruitment and retention. For example:

Hawaii dedicated \$129.5 million of ESSER II funds to support teacher recruitment and retention for hard-to-staff areas and specialized needs programs.

Illinois is using \$12 million to implement a High Impact Tutoring program and pay stipends for tutors.

Louisiana plans to spend the state’s ESSER II funds in alignment with the state’s Believe to Achieve Educational Priorities including \$39.4 million for an effective educator workforce. These dollars will support recruitment and retention models, new teacher supports, certifications and a pre-educator pathway.

Missouri dedicated \$8 million to teacher recruitment and retention grants.

Nevada spent \$20.7 million to incentivize pathways to teaching by funding stipends for pre-service teachers completing their student teaching or final semesters in educator preparation programs to assist with on-time completion.



States created competitive grant programs and invited LEAs, and in some states community organizations, to apply. These programs may be available statewide only for LEAs with specific needs or only for specific services to students. For example:

Indiana awarded \$20.5 million in ESSER I funds for a competitive set-aside grant, \$773 thousand for digital learning grants and \$274 thousand for tutoring grants. In addition to awarding federal funds for competitive grants, the state also created the Student Learning Recovery Grant Program with state general funds. The grant is available to community partners and schools to provide focused tutoring, afterschool programming and other enhanced learning opportunities in literacy, math and college and career readiness.

Michigan created an Education Equity Fund, which invites districts with high percentages of economically disadvantaged students, special education students or English learners to apply for competitive funds.



Eight states and the District of Columbia directed state set-aside ESSER funds to services for students with disabilities. For example:

Georgia offered supplemental relief to LEAs to offset the increased costs of special education services due to the impact of COVID-19 and gave LEAs the ability to better serve special education students during the pandemic.

Strategies for Accelerating Student Learning

States were required to set aside 5% of their total ARP allocation to address learning recovery. Section D1 of state ESSER plans asked states to detail how they plan to allocate those funds. The following approaches emerged as common tactics with demonstrated benefits for students that states will implement to facilitate learning recovery efforts.

Community Partnerships

Community Partnerships can help facilitate family engagement by using the skills and connections of various community members and organizations. Community partnerships can help facilitate the expansion of employment opportunities along with wraparound services. Effective community partnerships have also demonstrated success in increasing engagement in school along with academic success for students.

Minnesota will be expanding community schools, developing, and implementing community partnerships and neighborhood programs.

Early Childhood Interventions

There were significant declines in the enrollment rates of children in Pre-K and kindergarten during the COVID-19 pandemic. High-quality preschool programs have demonstrated effectiveness in helping young students be prepared for their first few years of school. Research has also shown the effects of high-quality early childhood programs can persist beyond secondary school and that students living in low-income households especially benefit from access to high-quality early childhood programs.

Massachusetts has developed the Summer Step Up program, which targets early childhood students.

New York will be providing grants for creating and expanding universal Pre-K programs.

Summer Enrichment

The implementation of summer enrichment programs is a strategy to help increase instructional time for students while aiding their re-acclimation to in-person instruction for the 2021-22 school year. High-quality summer enrichment programs that use a blend of academic coursework and recreational activities have demonstrated some success in maintaining students' academic progress during the summer months.

Montana will be implementing a summer enrichment program. Guidance and trainings were provided to facilitate the implementation of the program.

West Virginia will be providing grants for the implementation of summer learning programs for the summers of 2021 and 2022.

Tutoring Programs

Research has shown that high-quality, high-dosage tutoring is one of the most effective academic interventions to help students accelerate their learning. High-quality tutoring programs include one-on-one or small groups settings, use qualified tutors and take place on a consistent basis.

Kentucky will be providing high intensity tutoring for students. Guidance was provided to districts on best practices including individualized or small group settings, the frequency of tutoring along with the duration of tutoring sessions.

South Carolina will be providing high dosage tutoring to students. The department of education intends to partner with LEAs and other organizations to offer tutoring services.

Additional Resources

- Learning Policy Institute: [How States and Districts Can Use Federal Recovery Funds Strategically](#)
- Christensen Institute: [6 Guiding Principles for Spending Federal Recovery Dollars on Systemic Solutions](#)
- Forbes: [Congress Provided Billions To Schools. Will Districts Spend It Creatively?](#)
- The Hunt Institute: [How States are Using Federal Relief Dollars for K-12 Education](#)
- The 74 and FutureEd: [How Are States Spending Their COVID Education Relief Funds?](#)
- U.S. Department of Education: [ESSER resources](#)