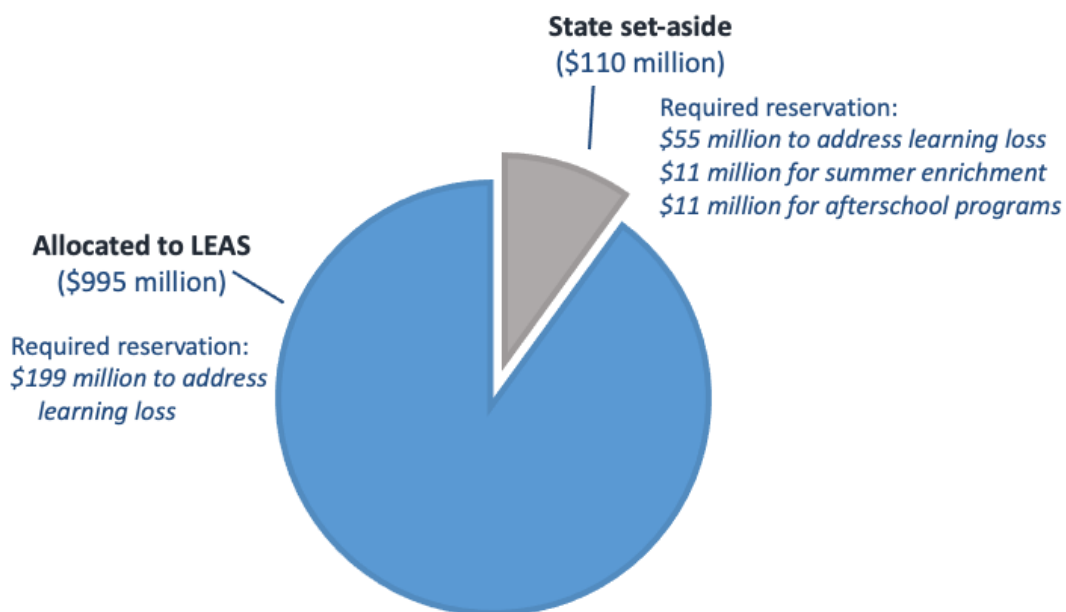




Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)
American Rescue Plan (ARP) Elementary and
Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER)
State Plan Executive Summary

Utilizing the [template provided by the U.S. Department of Education \(USED\)](#), the [CSDE ARP ESSER State Plan](#) provides a comprehensive narrative of how the education community has survived with the help of ESSER I, has thrived with ESSER II and the vision for how the CSDE, alongside local education agencies (LEAs), will use ARP ESSER to ensure that collectively we achieve our goal of *reimagining schools to transform students' lives*. This plan is the result of ongoing collaboration among multiple state agencies, including the Office of the Governor, the Office of Policy and Management, and CSDE, as well as feedback solicited from various educational stakeholders across the state of Connecticut. The CSDE is committed to equity in utilizing these funds by focusing access on our preK-12 populations most disproportionately affected by COVID-19*.



Of the \$1.1 billion ARP ESSER funds given to the state of Connecticut, 90% (\$995 million) is reserved for use at the district level, and 10% is reserved for use at the state level. There are two types of investments that the CSDE aims to make when it comes to **the state set-aside of \$110 million**:

- **One-time investments that are self-sustaining** such as “train the trainer” programs and programs that have high start-up costs but have a lower or sustainable cost for long-term maintenance.
- **Investments that are heavily focused on measurement and impact** so that once the ARP ESSER funding runs out, there is demonstrable proof that the programs merit long-term investment through private philanthropy, and state and local funds.

By focusing on these types of investments, the CSDE will maximize both the short term and the lasting impact of the federal funding by creating a parachute that will help the education community land safely following the COVID-19 pandemic and also collecting the evidence to support continued funding for strategies that work. Through further data analysis, continued stakeholder engagement, and a landscape analysis of promising practices within districts, the CSDE will make further decisions about what initiatives are sustainable and scalable under ARP ESSER.

The CSDE has already determined five initiatives to invest a portion of the \$110 million state set-aside under ARP ESSER:

Initiative	Description
Statewide Model Curricula <i>(Addressing Learning Loss)</i>	By providing Statewide Model Curricula, the CSDE is able to ensure that our students most affected by the pandemic, including gifted and talented students, will have multiple and varied opportunities to engage, discover, and connect to challenging content designed by their teachers using highly aligned instructional materials. This allows CSDE to make notable impact in the state’s education system while seeking to minimize the funding gap.
Extension of Contracts to Deliver Statewide Online Curricula and Courses to Districts <i>(Addressing Learning Loss)</i>	On May 10, 2021, the CSDE announced that, after a thorough procurement process, the Department entered into two partnerships with Apex Learning and Defined Learning to support its goal of delivering equitable access to high-quality online curricula and courses at no cost to school districts. ARP ESSER funding allows LEAs to continue to engage learners that may have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years. These platforms provide high-quality supplemental resources to support the LEA implementation of local curricula, to advance equity and access, and to accelerate learning for Connecticut students.
Expansion Grant Program <i>(Summer Enrichment)</i>	After a thorough application review process, Expansion Grants ranging from \$2,500 to \$25,000 were awarded to 210 eligible applicants that will expand existing enrichment opportunities and increase access for children who might otherwise not have access to summer camp or programming by offering additional slots for students and/or subsidizing enrollment fees. A complete list of awardees can be found here , and a searchable database for families can be found here .
Innovation Grant Program <i>(Summer Enrichment)</i>	After a thorough application review process, Innovation Grants ranging from \$50,000 to \$250,000 were awarded to 25 eligible applicants to deliver bold and innovative summer enrichment programming to Connecticut children at scale this summer. A complete list of awardees can be found here , and a searchable database for families can be found here .
Funding for Districts and Endowed Academies not Eligible for Formula ARP ESSER Funding	Five of our public school districts and our three endowed academies are not eligible for formula funding through ARP ESSER. We have reserved a pool of funds to help support them with pandemic-related costs.

In addition to the determined investments above, the CSDE has prioritized the following areas for more funding consideration. Depending on the outcome of the exploration process and potential opportunities to braid other state and federal funding, the CSDE will consider investing in other evidence-based strategies.

Priority	Description
Social, emotional, and mental health supports	<p>The CSDE has set the vision that each school in the state will have the mental health supports necessary to support their students. In collaboration and communication with local providers, these funds will further connect schools to the community and ensure that students and educators have the support they need. Initiatives may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supporting existing local providers; • working with or creating school-based health centers; and • hiring/deploying additional behavioral health staff.
High-dosage tutoring <i>(Addressing Learning Loss)</i>	<p>Rigorous research on high-dosage, small-group tutoring has found there to be large effects on student learning. The CSDE is exploring how it can support the efforts across the state, in alignment with district initiatives, to ensure the students disproportionately impacted by the pandemic have access to tutoring.</p>
Students with disabilities <i>(Addressing Learning Loss)</i>	<p>The CSDE aims to continue providing stipends to support local districts with addressing IEP supports and services that may have been interrupted by the pandemic. The recently released <i>Guidance Regarding Special Education Recovery for Students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) due to the COVID-19 Pandemic</i> will support LEAs in developing a plan.</p>
English learners	<p>Connecticut has a growing student population of English learners, and data has revealed that COVID-19 had a disproportionate impact on English learners' attendance. Initiatives the CSDE may pursue to support these students include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing pathways to bilingual certification for educators; • supporting district programs that work with local organizations to serve multilingual families; • building effective and high-quality dual-language programs; and • utilizing culturally sustaining and relevant pedagogy.
Just-in-time efforts to boost high-school engagement <i>(Addressing Learning Loss)</i>	<p>The CSDE has noticed a greater decline in attendance amongst high school aged students and therefore higher levels of disengagement. Programs to boost engagement will be developed and deployed in partnership with local philanthropy and community organizations.</p>
Utilizing education research to reimagine schools	<p>In partnership with the University of Connecticut, researchers from the state's universities, Regional Educational Service Center (RES-C) representatives, and district and school educators, the Connecticut COVID-19 Education Research Collaborative (CCERC) will conduct studies on how the pandemic has affected all Connecticut students. These types of studies will illuminate successes and help CSDE target resources toward the most meaningful next steps.</p>

Students already facing limited educational opportunities and disengagement*	<p>In addition to the funding allocated directly to students experiencing homelessness, the CSDE is seeking opportunities to directly serve disengaged and underserved students. Possible initiatives include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing funding for devices and enhanced connectivity for students involved in the justice system; • working with the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Social Services, and state behavioral health care providers to develop a third-party payer system that funds in-school supports for students' mental and behavioral health needs through Medicaid and/or private providers; and • developing and implementing supports and trainings that reduce the use of exclusionary student discipline practices in school districts, especially those with high incidences of such practices.
Innovative and engaging afterschool programming	<p>ARP ESSER requires the State to set aside 10% for evidence-based comprehensive afterschool programming. Though the CSDE has a long history of funding strong programs, it wants to take the unique opportunity presented by ARP ESSER to fund truly innovative, engaging, and enriching afterschool programs. These programs will be developed in conjunction with a special roundtable discussion with stakeholders.</p>
Amplifying family and community partnerships	<p>A strong theme expressed in the stakeholder feedback solicited was the desire for family and community partnerships to be fully realized. Therefore, funding will be used to support the CSDE's and districts' efforts to develop and nurture family and community partnerships.</p>
Grassroots marketing campaign for ARP ESSER	<p>To ensure that every ARP ESSER dollar spent has the greatest impact possible, the CSDE is planning to launch a grassroots marketing campaign. By focusing on the bottom up communication and meeting residents where they are the CSDE hopes to amplify the efficacy of all programs funded by ARP ESSER.</p>
	<p>These efforts will be supported and guided by the Commissioners' Roundtable for Family and Community Engagement in Education and the State Student Advisory Council on Education.</p>
Educator support, recruitment, and retention	<p>In addition to the Department's efforts to diversify Connecticut's educator workforce, the CSDE will provide funding to expand our highly successful educator support, recruitment, and retention programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TeachCT • NextGen Educators • Educators Rising <p>Funds will also be dedicated to professional development opportunities including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assisting educators in utilizing technology in the classroom; • examining cultural sensitivity and racial bias; and • providing emotional and mental health supports to students.

Post-secondary access, adult education, and credit recovery <i>(Addressing Learning Loss)</i>	Acknowledging the long-term implications if needs are not addressed, the CSDE aims to provide targeted resources to increase access to credit recovery, encourage completion of and support for FAFSA, and mitigate barriers to adult education.
Reservation to address unforeseen needs	With ARP ESSER funds being available until September 30, 2024, the CSDE is setting aside a reserve to address unforeseen needs as they might arise in the next three years.

Support LEAs in Planning for and Using ARP ESSER Funding

Recognizing the complexity of making sustainable investments, the CSDE has created a process to provide both support and inspiration to LEAs to aid them in planning for and meeting students' needs using the \$995 million in ARP ESSER funds allocated.

- (1) [CSDE's ARP ESSER Guidance](#): This document provides the priorities that LEAs are required to utilize when planning the use of their ARP ESSER funds. The guide also provides a library of evidence-based initiatives/resources that LEAs can select to build upon.
- (2) [Spark Innovation Webinars](#): Throughout the ARP ESSER application period, the CSDE will develop and deploy webinars that highlight best practices across the state and nation to spark innovation for districts as they determine how to best meet their students' needs.
- (3) [Comprehensive Application](#): The CSDE designed the ARP ESSER application to not only guide, but to keep LEAs accountable in their efforts to expand existing initiatives both in depth and breadth. The application requires LEAs to align their new ARP ESSER strategies to those CSDE-approved ESSER II evidenced-based interventions. The application is due August 16, 2021.
- (4) [ESSER Advisors](#): CSDE has partnered with the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) to provide direct support to districts throughout the application and implementation processes. CAPSS has engaged a group of retired administrators to serve as a technical assistance team (ESSER advisors) and as a mechanism for more easily sharing best practices across districts.
- (5) [Ground-up communication within communities](#): The CSDE is exploring what communication to our communities should look like to ensure that families, students, and community members are aware of what is required of LEAs and consequentially the shared accountability in jointly shaping the required plan. Working alongside the [Commissioners' Roundtable for Family and Community Engagement in Education](#) and the [State Student Advisory Council on Education](#), the CSDE will ensure that the LEAs are provided with supports needed to conduct the required meaningful stakeholder consultation.

Stakeholder Engagement

The CSDE is grateful for the stakeholder engagement received throughout the development of its state plan. The Department continues to be committed to ongoing, two-way dialogue surrounding ARP ESSER and its many other educational initiatives. To submit feedback or questions regarding the state plan, e-mail SDE.ARPESSER@ct.gov. If your concerns are regarding your local districts' plan for usage of the ARP ESSER funds, please contact your district superintendent.

**Including students of color, students with disabilities, English learners, students experiencing homelessness, disengaged youth, youth in foster care, students from low-income families, students involved in the justice system, and/or students who experienced barriers to remote learning or whose progress was disrupted.*