

## ESSER/GEER Extra, Volume 5

Welcome back to [ESSER/GEER Extra](#). This week's volume includes the following: a list of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds available to LEAs; a reminder that school districts and charter schools may access their eGrants applications for the ARP ESSER set-aside funds for learning loss, summer enrichment, and afterschool programs; an announcement of federal waivers; PDE's comments to USDE on ESSER data collection; a preview of the upcoming eGrants dashboard; and reminders to provide as much detail as possible when completing prior approval forms and to submit Health and Safety Plans.

As a reminder, all editions of [ESSER/GEER Extra](#) are archived on [PDE's website](#).

### **What ARP ESSER Funds Are Available to My LEA?**

Pennsylvania's \$5 billion in ARP ESSER funds are broken into several buckets:

1. 90% of state allocation (\$4.5 billion)
2. 10% of state allocation for state set-asides (\$500 million)
  - 5% for Learning Loss
  - 1% for Summer Enrichment
  - 1% for Afterschool Programs
  - 2.5% for other purposes/programs
  - Up to 0.5% for PDE administration of ARP ESSER

**School districts and charter schools** are eligible to receive the following ARP ESSER funds:

1. Share of the 90% (\$4.5 Billion) based on Title I-A funds (**no application deadline**; however, eligible entities are encouraged to apply as soon as possible to maximize the period of fund allowability)
2. Share of the 10% state set-aside (**applications due by 11/29/21**)
  - \$250 Million in Learning Loss set-aside
  - \$50 Million in Summer Enrichment set-aside
  - \$50 Million in Afterschool Program set-aside

**IUs, CTCs, APSs, PRRIs, A-TSI-designated schools, Chartered Schools for the Deaf and Blind, and Educational Programs for Neglected, Delinquent, and At-Risk Youth** are eligible to receive the following ARP ESSER funds:

- Share of part of the 10% state set-aside (\$135 Million) (**no application deadline**)

### **ARP ESSER Set-aside Funds for Learning Loss, Summer Enrichment, and Afterschool Programs Now Available in eGrants**

Act 24 of 2021 (Act 24) appropriated the \$350 million in ARP ESSER set-aside funds for learning loss, summer enrichment, and after school programs to school districts and charter schools based on their share of Title I-A funds. [Access the ARP ESSER set-aside allocations for each school district and charter school](#). The allowable period of use for these ARP ESSER set-aside funds is March 13, 2020, to September 30, 2024. The application for these funds is now available in the [eGrants system](#).

**Learning Loss:** The ARP Act and Act 24 designated \$250 million for implementation of evidence-based interventions to address learning loss and provide summer enrichment and comprehensive after-school

programs in response to the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of students, particularly subgroups of students disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

To reflect the feedback from stakeholders received during the development of [Pennsylvania's ARP ESSER State Plan](#), which encouraged a focus on social emotional learning (SEL) and the prioritization of student mental health, Act 24 requires school districts and charter schools to direct certain percentages of their learning loss allocation to the following specific purposes:

- At least 30% of the allocation must be used for student social, emotional, and mental health supports;
- At least 10% of the allocation must be used for professional development and technical assistance to educators, school support staff, school leaders and school health professionals to address the social, emotional, and mental health needs of students; and
- At least 8% of the allocation must be used for reading support and improvement for students.

In planning for the use of these ARP ESSER funds, it is important for LEAs to adopt a systematic approach to determine both how to improve learning environments through SEL and mental health supports and what reading supports are needed for their students.

To assist LEAs in this process, PDE has developed [ARP ESSER Guidance on SEL](#) and [ARP ESSER Guidance on Reading Improvement for Students](#), both of which connect to the concepts, strategies, and processes in the Accelerated Learning Toolkit and other related resources. These new resources will walk LEAs through a decision-making process to assist in developing teams, assessing needs, and establishing goals in the implementation of SEL, mental health, and reading supports for students.

**Summer Enrichment Programs:** The ARP Act and Act 24 designated \$50 million for implementation of evidence-based summer enrichment programs, and ensuring such programs respond to students' academic, social, and emotional needs and address the disproportionate impact of the coronavirus on the student populations described in Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, students experiencing homelessness, and children and youth in foster care.

**Comprehensive Afterschool Programs:** The ARP Act and Act 24 designated \$50 million for implementation of evidence-based comprehensive afterschool programs, and ensure such programs respond to students' academic, social, and emotional needs and address the disproportionate impact of the coronavirus on the student populations described in Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, students experiencing homelessness, and children and youth in foster care.

To receive your school district's or charter school's allocation of these ARP ESSER set-aside funds for learning loss, summer enrichment, and afterschool programs, you must complete the consolidated application in the [eGrants system](#).

The application requires each LEA to detail its proposed use of the funds and to describe the personnel and operating costs for each program or activity. **Pursuant to Act 24, school districts and charter schools must submit their application to PDE by November 29, 2021.**

### **USDE Approves PA Request for Federal Waiver**

On August 25, the [U.S. Department of Education \(USDE\) approved PDE's waiver request](#) concerning various funding and programmatic flexibilities for LEAs.

Specifically, USDE has waived the carryover limitation in section 1127(b) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) that limits PDE's ability to grant LEAs a waiver of the 15% Title I, Part A carryover limitation in section 1127(a) to once every three years. This will be applied to Federal fiscal year 2020 Title I, Part A funds (the Title I, Part A funds that will become carryover funds on October 1, 2021).

USDE has also extended the period of availability of FY 2019 funds for the following programs until September 30, 2022:

- Title I, Part A of the ESEA (Improving Basic Programs Operated by LEAs), including the portions of the SEA's Title I, Part A award used to carry out section 1003 school improvement, section 1003A direct student services, if applicable, and Title I, Part D, Subpart 2.
- Title I, Part B of the ESEA (State Assessment Formula Grants).
- Title I, Part C of the ESEA (Education of Migratory Children).
- Title I, Part D, Subpart 1 of the ESEA (Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At Risk).
- Title II, Part A of the ESEA (Supporting Effective Instruction).
- Title III, Part A of the ESEA (English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement).
- Title IV, Part A of the ESEA (Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants).
- Title IV, Part B of the ESEA (21st Century Community Learning Centers).
- Title V, Part B, Subpart 2 of the ESEA (Rural and Low-Income School Program).
- McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program.

### **PDE Submits Comments to USDE on Proposed ESSER Data Collection**

On August 30, PDE submitted comments to USDE on the proposed ESSER data collection form. PDE's comments focused on the scope and volume of information requested. [Read PDE's comments to USDE.](#)

USDE received [77 public comments](#), and will review them before posting the final ESSER data collection requirements and forms. We will share the final USDE reporting requirements as soon as they are available.

### **COMING SOON: eGrants Dashboard**

Changes are coming to eGrants! Soon, eGrants users will have access to a dashboard that makes it easy for an applicant to know what funding is available and where applications are in the process. The goal of the dashboard is to make the eGrants process more efficient and user-friendly. [Access a brief video for a preview of the upcoming eGrants dashboard.](#)

### **REMINDER: Explain Your Projects on the Prior Approval Forms—Provide Detail!**

As you complete your ARP ESSER applications, remember to complete the prior approval forms if you are planning to engage in construction, capital expenditures (including equipment with a per-unit cost of \$5,000 or more), or other relevant expenditures. [See 2 CFR § 200.407.](#)

Prior approval forms will be reviewed with your ARP ESSER application. Please be sure that you articulate effectively: 1) the identified allowable use under ARP ESSER; 2) how the expenditure meets the overall purpose of the ESSER funds, which is to prevent, prepare for, or respond to COVID-19; and 3) how the proposed expenditure is “reasonable and necessary” in compliance with the Cost Principles in 2 CFR Part 200, subpart E (2 CFR §§ 200.403-200.404).

An LEA’s explanation of the proposed use is important. For example, an LEA’s request to replace carpets with tile in classrooms would likely not be approved if the carpet removal/tile replacement was scheduled and budgeted prior to the pandemic. Similarly, the project would likely be disapproved if the removal of the carpet stemmed from longstanding health issues, including concerns with mildew, that were identified prior to March 2020. Even where the LEA indicated the allowable use in [section 2001\(e\)\(2\)\(O\)](#) of the ARP Act, the explanation does not include any indication that the project assists the LEA in preventing, preparing for, or responding to COVID-19.

However, an LEA’s request for the same allowable use under [section 2001\(e\)\(2\)\(O\)](#) of the ARP Act would likely be approved if the LEA indicated that the project allowed them to more easily, frequently, and thoroughly clean and sanitize classroom floors to mitigate the spread of viruses, and the expenditure allowed them to maximize efforts to ensure that students remained healthy and able to attend school in-person, minimized the time and effort of school employees needed to spend cleaning each classroom to effectively mitigate the spread of the virus, and allowed for reduced long-term maintenance costs.

***Can I still submit my Health and Safety Plan even if we didn’t have a governing body meeting in August?***

Yes. If the governing board of your IU, CTC, APS, PRRI, Chartered School for the Deaf and Blind or educational program for neglected, delinquent, or at-risk youth did not meet in August, please submit your preliminary, unapproved Health and Safety Plan in eGrants, signifying: 1) when the board meeting for approval will occur and 2) where the approved plan will be posted on the entity’s public website (using a URL). Upon approval by the entity’s governing body, please submit the final approved Health and Safety Plan as soon as possible.

**Share Your Ideas!**

Did your LEA develop an innovative or creative way to tackle social distancing in your schools? If so, we want to hear from you! Share your story with us: [ra-edarpesser@pa.gov](mailto:ra-edarpesser@pa.gov).

**Next Week’s Edition...**

Is *ESSER/GEER Extra* useful and responsive to your needs? Please send feedback, questions, and ideas for future editions to us via email: