Helping School District Leaders Use ESSER Funds for Equity-Focused Recovery and Re-design

CLSFF PLC Webinar
April 22, 2021
Welcome!

Please rename yourself to include your organization name in Zoom

Chat question #1:
What is one thing you know for sure about federal stimulus funding for K-12?

Chat question #2
What is one thing you want to know more about?
Defining our shared challenge

• Students, especially students from low-income backgrounds and students of color, have experienced months of disrupted learning.

• With federal stimulus funding (ESSER), school districts have unprecedented power to rapidly respond to meet students’ needs and ensure that we don’t “return to the old normal” when new funding expires.

• Based on spending patterns after the Great Recession, we know it is easy to spend quickly, backfill shortfalls, and reinvest in more of the same strategies that existed before COVID — instead of using funds to spark meaningful long-term change.

How can district leaders use stimulus funds to center equity, accelerate student learning for and create a sustainable foundation for long-term improvement?

How can philanthropy, technical assistance providers and leadership advisors help them accomplish these goals?

Source: ERS
Defining our shared challenge

- Students, especially students from low-income backgrounds and students of color, have experienced months of disrupted learning.
- With federal stimulus funding (ESSER), school districts have unprecedented power to rapidly respond to meet students’ needs and ensure that we don’t “return to the old normal” when new funding expires.
- Based on spending patterns after the Great Recession, we know it is easy to spend quickly, backfill shortfalls, and reinvest in more of the same strategies that existed before COVID — instead of using funds to spark meaningful long-term change.

Source: ERS

How can district leaders use stimulus funds to center equity, accelerate student learning for and create a sustainable foundation for long-term improvement?

How can philanthropy, technical assistance providers and leadership advisors help them accomplish these goals?
Flashback: A year ago, we were deeply concerned about the near- and long-term economic impact of the pandemic.
Flashback: A year ago, we were deeply concerned about the near- and long-term economic impact of the pandemic

Projected impact of a 25% decline in state revenue, *holding all other revenue constant*

- **<10%**
- **10-12%**
- **12-14%**
- **>14%**

U.S. average = 11.7%

**Energy-reliant states:** Severance taxes comprise at least 5% of state revenue

**Tourism-reliant states:** Tourism accounts for at least 5% of state GDP

**States with least diversified economies, regardless of industry:** Hachman Index < 70

* I.e. does not include potential decreases in local tax revenue or additional federal stimulus dollars

Sources: NCES, ERS analysis.
Compared to prior recessions, the economy and labor markets have recovered quickly.

Despite a much larger initial decline, GDP has recovered to pre-recession levels twice as fast as in the Great Recession.

The federal government is providing significantly more K-12 stimulus support than during the Great Recession.

Federal stimulus funding for K-12 education, $B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$B</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Source: ERS; District Administration; National Conference of State Legislatures

New funds, spread evenly: 10-15% of pre-COVID operating budgets each year.

% Annual Operating Expense for a High-Poverty District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School years before deadline to “obligate”</th>
<th>20-21</th>
<th>21-22</th>
<th>22-23</th>
<th>23-24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Operating Expense</td>
<td>20-35</td>
<td>8-15</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
- RTTT = $4.4B
- ESSER I: $2-5
- ESSER II: $8-15
- ESSER III: $20-35

Total for K-12 excludes set-asides for non-public schools and for Governor’s Fund (GEER).
ESSER III funds are allocated to reach students living in low-income communities

ESSER III provides non-recurring revenue to be spent over the next three years

- Most of ESSER III ($110B) allocated directly to districts through Title I formula, with few prescriptions
- State education agencies have several set-asides to distribute funds to districts for summer and after school programs
- Equity: Districts must protect high need schools from reductions in state and local funding

Notes: ARRA = American Recovery and Reinvestment Act; ESSER = Elementary and Secondary School Relief Fund. Total for K-12 excludes set-asides for non-public schools and for Governor’s Fund (GEER)
Source: ERS; District Administration; National Conference of State Legislatures
ESSER I, II and III funds have a widely varying impact on K-12 education spending

ESSER I, II, III funds as % of annual K-12 expenditures (spread over 3 years)

<6% | 6-8% | 8-10% | 10-12% | >12%

U.S. average = 7.7%

* I.e. does not include potential decreases in local tax revenue or additional federal stimulus dollars
Sources: U.S. Department of Education, NCES, ERS analysis.
ESSER allocations are more need-driven than ARRA through link to Title I methodology

Source: U.S. Department of Education, NCES, ERS
As a result, ESSER has a disproportionate funding impact on higher-need districts.

Estimated Annual Expenditures + ESSER Spending Plans for 2021-22
(1.00 = statewide unweighted $pp before ESSER)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Pre-ESSER</th>
<th>With ESSER</th>
<th>Pre-ESSER</th>
<th>With ESSER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State A</td>
<td>District A</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State B</td>
<td>District B</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State C</td>
<td>District C</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Defining our shared challenge

- Students, especially students from low-income backgrounds and students of color, have experienced months of disrupted learning.
- With federal stimulus funding (ESSER), school districts have unprecedented power to rapidly respond to meet students’ needs and ensure that we don’t “return to the old normal” when new funding expires.
- Based on spending patterns after the Great Recession, we know it is easy to spend quickly, backfill shortfalls, and reinvest in more of the same strategies that existed before COVID — instead of using funds to spark meaningful long-term change.

How can district leaders use stimulus funds to center equity, accelerate student learning for and create a sustainable foundation for long-term improvement?

How can philanthropy, technical assistance providers and leadership advisors help them accomplish these goals?

Source: ERS
We couldn’t have designed for the dramatic changes in mindset that we are seeing now

- Changes in **school designs** to better meet students’ and teachers’ needs are possible.
- **Technology** can be a central part of instruction, collaboration, and teachers’ professional learning.
- **Families** can be and must be deeply involved in supporting students’ learning.
- Teachers’ **roles** can be differentiated to benefit everyone.
- **Community partners and programs** can facilitate learning both inside and outside of typical school hours can help to meet students’ social-emotional needs.
- It is everyone’s job to tackle **racial inequities** by addressing systems, structures, policies, practices, and biases.

Source: ERS
But it is challenging to invest new resources strategically

- **Rapid timeline, limited/taxed capacity**, combined with **pressure to spend** stimulus **quickly**
- **Needed focus on the immediate and urgent**, without time or staff to work on long-term planning
- **Lack of strong processes** to determine how best to invest these funds or track the impact of these investments
- Historic premium on spending new dollars on staff positions in schools
- Systems need to simultaneously **support schools to use these resources well** in new designs

Result to avoid: Using stimulus funds to pad budget shortfalls, reinvest in the status quo, or layering in ‘add on’ approaches that will disappear when the funds run out

Source: Education Resource Strategies
7 Principles for Investing ESSER Funds

Define Vision & Strategy for Recovery & Redesign

1. Understand and quantify student need.
2. Design new scheduling and staffing tools.
3. Take a “do now, build toward” approach.

Plan for Sustainability.
Size the full cost of implementing strategies, integrating all sources of funding, and invest to build bridges to new ways of organizing resources that sustain the work.

Design for Equity.
Act deliberately to disrupt long-standing patterns of inequity by differentiating resources based on need and context, engaging stakeholders along the way.

Create System Conditions.
Scale your strategies by creating district-level enabling conditions and clarifying decision-making roles and central office supports for schools.
Power Strategies are designed to help district leaders focus on impact now and in the future

✓ Grounded in years of research

✓ Address students’ critical academic and social-emotional needs that have emerged or been exacerbated as a result of the pandemic

✓ Tackle underlying cost structures in ways that make them sustainable to implement over time

Source: ERS
# Power Strategies to accelerate equity-focused recovery and redesign

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Empowering, Adaptable Instruction</td>
<td>Ensure teaching teams have high-quality curriculum, time and support to collaboratively assess and accelerate learning and provide just-in-time support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Time and Attention</td>
<td>Expand and target individual attention and learning time inside and outside of traditional school hours, especially for students with the greatest learning needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Teaching Job</td>
<td>Restructure teaching jobs and roles to be more rewarding, collaborative, and sustainable while enabling excellent instruction from a diverse teaching force.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Relationships &amp; Social Emotional Support</td>
<td>Organize to cultivate positive student-adult relationships and ensure support for wellness and social emotional needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Community &amp; Family Partnerships</td>
<td>Engage families, community partners, and other out-of-school resources to increase academic, health, social, and emotional support for students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Education Resource Strategies
Examples: How are districts aligning resources against power strategies?

Percent of $ in current ESSER plans

Common “Other” investments:
- Maintaining staffing through enrollment decline
- Across-the-board bonuses
- Facilities upgrades
- Physical health/nurses

Source: ERS
30-50% of 2021-22 investments in Empowering, Adaptable Instruction are going to curricula

Source: ERS
Power Strategies require changing underlying cost structures, rather than layering on new resources.

Estimated costs to implement Power Strategies:

- More time for shared-content collaboration
- Assess/shore up curricula & assessments
- Reduce class sizes in priority grades and subjects
- Revise schedules/staffing to support stronger relationships
- Reward highly effective teachers for leadership roles
- Increase time through longer school day and/or year
- Offer select courses online
- Create time and roles for frequent observation and feedback
- Contract with third-parties for social-emotional services
- More time for shared-student collaboration
- Assign all staff a family outreach "portfolio"
- Expand "shelter and develop" models for rookie teachers
- Provide intensive tutoring to students who need the most help
- Systematically reach out to families of chronically absent/unenrolled students
- Pro-actively use, capture, and share data on student need, supports provided, and...

Implementing Power Strategies requires:
- Overhauling master schedules
- Prioritizing teacher collaboration
- Creating instruction-focused teacher-leadership roles
- Re-designing the high school experience
- Extending learning time through partnerships and strategic scheduling

Source: ERS
Goal: expand and vary time and provide more individualized attention to students, both inside and outside of traditional school hours

Do Now...

- Extend core instructional time in a specific grade or subject
- Assign existing non-teacher staff to small-group instruction at targeted times in the day
- Identify a partner to provide high-dosage tutoring for a subset of high-need students

Build Towards...

- More learning time via extended school days and years, intersessions, intensive “high-dosage” tutoring, and other after-school learning opportunities.
- Smaller class sizes in priority grade levels and subjects, and where student needs are greatest, offset by larger class sizes in other areas
- Integrated learning experiences across live and asynchronous platforms
- Specialized and advanced HS classes offered online to maximize access and free teachers for more individualized instruction

Source: ERS
District leaders can consider investments to accelerate redesign for equity and excellence and lower long-term costs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Investment</th>
<th>Why it could change the game</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Raise spending or staffing weights</strong> for schools with high concentrations of students living in poverty and with higher learning needs</td>
<td>All schools get more resources now, but when recovery funding ends funds are still distributed more equitably if cuts must happen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design and transition costs for <strong>new compensation structures</strong> with defined benefits contribution</td>
<td>Paying great teachers more long-term requires differentiating compensation. A 10% reduction in benefits costs saves ~2% of budget.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Invest in principals</strong> through compensation, professional learning and additional school leadership staff</td>
<td>A little goes a long way: Strong principals raise teaching effectiveness across the board and reduce teacher turnover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redesign and implement <strong>new models for rookie teacher support</strong> coupled with increased investment in recruiting</td>
<td>Expands reach of expert teachers and brings high-potential candidates into classrooms. Places candidates in doable, supported roles while enabling careful selection of new teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Increase teacher compensation linked to expanded work year</strong>-more or longer days</td>
<td>Finding time for teacher collaboration and connection with families and students helps enable new visions for teaching and learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ERS
Changes to state policies and contractual requirements can accelerate redesign for equity and excellence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Roles</th>
<th>Course-taking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Length of school day and/or year</td>
<td>• Teacher-of-record policies</td>
<td>• Limits on partner-offered courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Seat time requirements</td>
<td>• Limits on teacher-leadership roles</td>
<td>• Rigid course-taking requirements for high schoolers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rigid class size and staffing ratios</td>
<td>• Traditional (non-differentiated) compensation structures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rigid, narrow planning time requirements</td>
<td>• Staff dismissal policies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ERS
### Measuring equity of your ESSER plan – “how much”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Investment</th>
<th>Total $M</th>
<th>Need-based $M</th>
<th>Non-need-based $M</th>
<th>Pct Need-based</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health plan + nurses</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School supplement</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer learning</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family outreach</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff bonuses</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add”l need allocation*</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math coaching</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotspots</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutoring</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>131</strong></td>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
<td><strong>95</strong></td>
<td><strong>27%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Implemented through increase in student-based budgeting allocations, non-ESSER funds

Source: In-progress district ESSER plan for 2021-22, ERS analysis

---

Equity metrics should consider both “how much” is need-driven (including what needs are driving allocations) and “how well” investments are expected to re-shape student and teacher experience.
Defining our shared challenge

- Students, especially students from low-income backgrounds and students of color, have experienced months of disrupted learning.
- With federal stimulus funding (ESSER), school districts have unprecedented power to rapidly respond to meet students’ needs and ensure that we don’t “return to the old normal” when new funding expires.
- Based on spending patterns after the Great Recession, we know it is easy to spend quickly, backfill shortfalls, and reinvest in more of the same strategies that existed before COVID — instead of using funds to spark meaningful long-term change.

How can district leaders use stimulus funds to center equity, accelerate student learning for and create a sustainable foundation for long-term improvement?

How can philanthropy, technical assistance providers and leadership advisors help them accomplish these goals?

Source: ERS
How can district partners be a driving force for change in school systems?

- Encourage investment in **categories of design changes** for schools that will **meet students’ academic and social-emotional needs** now and **enable sustainability** in the long-term.

- Provide funding to create **extra capacity in school systems** to focus on **long-term planning and community engagement** in this work **over multiple years**.

- Invest in **support providers** who can **help systems through this work**, including by working closely with cohorts of systems to rapidly learn together.

- Advance the development of **easily accessible and translatable planning and design tools** that districts can use to guide rapid and complex decision-making.

- Support **networks and cohorts** of leaders and systems to work on shared strategies and **translating lessons** for wider use.

- Help districts develop **strong continuous improvement structures** to monitor how these new approaches are working.

Source: ERS