

Cumberland County Public Schools

American Rescue Plan (ARP)

ESSER III Uses of Funds Report 2021-2022

Overview

The American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) Fund provides funding to States and school districts to help safely reopen and sustain the safe operation of schools and address the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the nation's students.

Cumberland County Public Schools (CuCPS) will receive \$3,359,563.00 funding over the next three school years. Twenty percent (20%) of this allocation must address learning loss by implementing evidence-based interventions and ensuring these interventions respond to students' social, emotional, and academic needs to address the impact of COVID-19 on all students of Cumberland County Public Schools.

Provisions of the ARP Plan define allowable expenses and specify guidelines for funding. Funds could be used to combat learning loss that resulted from students being out of school, procure personnel and supplies to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, make upgrades to facilities to assist in maintaining a sanitary and safe school environment, promote social and emotional welfare, implement strategies to ensure social distancing, provide digital resources and Internet connectivity to support distance learning, and assist in ensuring adequate nutritious food for students.

Addressing Learning Loss

According to ESSER III guidelines, 20% of the total allocation of funds must be used to address learning loss that resulted from students being out of school. COVID-19 had a major impact on the education of CuCPS students across the board, but especially in math and with students in reporting categories of students with disabilities, African Americans, and students of poverty. Reading has also been identified as an area of concern.

To combat this learning loss, CuCPS allocated funds for the following:

1. Hire three academic acceleration staff members, one for each school. These facilitators will work with students individually and in small groups to design, execute, and evaluate lessons to academically accelerate students.

2. Hire two additional elementary school teachers. Studies have shown the importance of early childhood education and the value of smaller class sizes.
3. Provide after-school learning opportunities. CuCPS currently has a 21st Century grant for the elementary school, which is scheduled to end after the 2022-2023 school year. CuCPS would like to continue the after-school program for the 2023-2024 school year.
4. Provide summer learning opportunities for students as needed. Summer learning provides students with academic, social, and personal enrichment opportunities. Learning can focus on core subject areas, such as mathematics and reading, and can spotlight other areas development, including enrichment activities.
5. Provide professional learning opportunities for staff members. Funds will be used to provide professional learning to faculty on strategies for improving student performance and on academic acceleration, especially in the areas of math and English/Language Arts.
6. Purchase educational materials. Funds have not been available to support the purchase of many books for school libraries and all three schools are in need of additional books. Guidelines by the American Library Association (2021) note that collections need to be maintained based on accuracy, currency, and relevancy. Publication dates of books in the current stacks indicate that some of the books may be outdated. Many books distributed to students during the pandemic were not returned. Paper is also needed to support students who continue to learn remotely. Since broadband access is somewhat limited in the county, teachers have needed to provide paper copies of documents for extended and remote learning

Mitigation of COVID-19

1. Hire a custodial supervisor. To ensure that buildings are clean and sanitized, the division hired a custodial supervisor for one year.
2. Purchase materials and supplies for cleaning and sanitizing. To keep students safe and healthy, CuCPS will continue to enhance cleaning and sanitizing schools, and plans to use funds to purchase custodial supplies for 2 years. The division will repaint wall surfaces since bacteria deposited on painted wall surfaces can be transmitted to others. Fresh paint keeps out moisture, prevents mold or mildew from building up, helps create an aesthetically pleasing atmosphere, and makes it easier for custodians to wipe down and disinfect high traffic areas.
3. Replace carpet in various high-traffic areas with linoleum. Linoleum is easier to clean and disinfect.
4. Repair the roof of the auxiliary gym roof. An inspection of the roof of the middle school revealed that, with the large number of leaks and wet insulation, the air quality inside the gym may be compromised and dangerous if class is happening during an active rain. Students with severe allergies are generally susceptible to mold. According to the Mayo Clinic (2022), symptoms of exposure to mold can include sneezing, runny or stuffy nose, cough, itchy eyes, watery eyes, headache, and shortness of breath. Many of these symptoms mimic those of COVID-19 and, according to the CDC (2022), “COVID-19 likely increases the risk for fungal infections because of its effect on the immune system and because treatments for COVID-19 (like steroids and other drugs) can weaken the body’s defenses against fungi.” For the health and safety of all students, the gym roof needs to be replaced, as well as skylights, gutters, and downspouts as necessary.

5. Purchase additional vehicles to facilitate social distancing. Additional vans and destination buses are needed to transport students. Vans, often used to transport special needs students, would allow more space for social distancing as would the destination bus. Four new buses are also needed to supplement the current fleet. These would be larger to carry more students than older models. A wheelchair-accessible van, which can be driven without a CDL, is needed to transport students with limited mobility.
6. Replace a hot water heater. The division needs to replace an old inefficient water heater with a high quality, energy efficient one that provides sufficient hot water. This will facilitate handwashing.

Addressing Social and Emotional Needs of Students

1. Provide additional support for students to ensure social and emotional welfare. To focus on social-emotional welfare for students, the division would like to secure an extra day for the school psychologist to be on campus for the next two years.
2. Professional learning regarding social and emotional welfare. Opportunities were provided for staff members in the importance of meeting the social and emotional needs of students, which includes the importance of family engagement.
3. Constructing a playground for 5th graders. A playground is needed for 5th grade for outdoor recreation. Due to overcrowding issues, 5th grade students were moved to the middle school some years ago, and do not have access to a real playground. The playground would provide students opportunities to be in the fresh air and promote better health. It would provide opportunities for social interaction as well.

Providing Digital Resources

1. Purchase Chromebooks/computing devices for student use. The division is also in need of additional computing devices, since many devices in use are old and in need of replacement. These are extremely important due to the need to be prepared for virtual learning.
2. Purchase of WiFi Booster. The division also needs WiFi boosters to ensure connectivity in outdoor learning spaces.

Ensuring Adequate and Safe Nutrition for Students

1. Purchase a Tilt Skillet. The elementary cafeteria needs a tilt skillet to assist in preparing nutritious meals for students. This piece of commercial cooking equipment allows the user to prepare a variety of foods in large batches and can be used to fry, simmer, steam, sauté, and grill. It is easy to clean and facilitates cooking with sanitary conditions.

Providing Resources for Return to In-Person Learning

In-person learning allows students to connect with others. A study by J. A. Cohen, et al., suggests that in-person learning provided educational, social, and physical benefits.

1. Purchase fuel for buses. The after-school program and the extended-day learning will require additional fuel for vehicles.
2. Pay for utilities. To support in-person learning, including after-school and summer learning, the division will use funds to assist in payment of utilities, including electricity, water, sewer, and heating/air conditioning. Approximately 15% per year during the three-year grant period of the utilities cost will be covered by ESSER III funds.
3. Provide flexible seating. The division will purchase flexible seating that will facilitate social distancing and promote collaborative learning. In addition, flexible seating allows students to move. Some flexible seating allows students to wobble, rock, bounce, lean, or stand, which increases oxygen flow to the brain. It also has the potential to keep minds more alert and focused.

Opportunity for Public Comment

Cumberland County Public Schools values input from its stakeholders to include students, families, teachers, principals, and community members. All stakeholders are invited to provide input on ARP ESSER III by any of the following means:

- Attend a meeting of the Cumberland County School Board (meets first Monday of the month).
- Phone the School Board Office at 804-492-4212.
- Email comments to ejamerson@cucps.k12.va.us.
- Mail comments to Dr. Elizabeth Jamerson at Cumberland County Public Schools, P. O. Box 170, Cumberland, VA 23040.

Accessibility to the ARP ESSER III Plan

Upon request, a parent who is an individual with a disability as defined by the ADA may be provided with the plan in an alternative format accessible by contacting the Cumberland School Board Office at 804-492-4212.