



May 28, 2021

To: Nebraska Public School Superintendents, ESU Administrators, and Title I Listserv Members

CC: State Board of Education, Commissioner's Cabinet, and NDE Leadership

RE: Commissioner's Message: ESSER III Allocations

As leaders on the front line of this incredibly important work, I want to recognize the extraordinary, ongoing efforts of you and your colleagues in confronting the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. We appreciate the work you have done to continue to ensure that Nebraska students receive the high-quality education they deserve.

On March 11, 2021, President Biden signed the [American Rescue Plan \(ARP\) Act of 2021](#). The ARP Act includes nearly \$122 billion for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER III) Fund that allows state and local education agencies (LEAs) to take additional steps for continued safe in-person instruction and to address unfinished teaching and learning to mitigate the pandemic.

I am pleased to announce that the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) will award \$491,317,757 to Nebraska LEAs in ESSER III funds. These resources will allow school districts to take additional measures to safely sustain their healthy operations, this includes using funds to enact appropriate measures to help schools to invest in mitigation strategies consistent with the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's \(CDC\) Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools](#) to the greatest extent practicable; address the many impacts of COVID-19 on students, including unfinished instruction; implement strategies to meet students' social, emotional, mental health, and academic needs; offer crucial summer, afterschool, and other extended learning and enrichment programs; support early childhood education; invest in staff capacity; and avoid devastating layoffs at this critical moment, ensuring that all students have access to teachers, counselors, and other school personnel to support their needs.

The Department is committed to supporting school districts in implementing these unprecedented resources. The ESSER III funding enables LEAs to promote safe school operations and equity-driven, sustainable, evidence-based programs to serve students – especially those who are the furthest from opportunity – and to continue to strengthen teaching and learning.

In February 2021, the Department released its [Nebraska Framework for School Renewal & Acceleration](#), which serves as a guide to improve outcomes and secure investments for all Nebraska students through key shifts, components, and core actions for 2021 and beyond. Additionally, a call for “renewal” to recommit to serving students who have been historically marginalized, including students of color, students with disabilities, the economically disadvantages, and English learners.

We are taking this opportunity to stress the importance of spending within the [outlined priorities and core actions](#). By doing this, we are leveraging funds on high-impact opportunities and are part of a collective, statewide effort. This will also be helpful as we track spending based on priority and communicate to our public the thoughtfulness of your use of these one-time funds.

The U.S. Department of Education’s (USED) initial grant award notice to the NDE makes immediately available two-thirds of the total federal appropriation to Nebraska under ESSER III, and, as a result, the NDE is providing that same amount to Nebraska school districts. The [LEA ESSER III Allocation](#) document provides specific methodology and allocations by school district.

The remaining one-third of ESSER III funds will be released to schools in the amounts indicated on the above allocation document and will also be supplemental to all other state funds. However, due to federal requirements, these funds have not yet been made available to the state and remain contingent upon the USED approving the State’s plan that outlines the framework in how these resources will be allocated. The state plan will be developed in consultation with educational leaders, educators, and other stakeholders around the state. Additional details on the state plan will be announced in the coming weeks.

In preparation of LEA plans for sustaining safe in-person operations and use of funds, the NDE encourages school districts to engage today in meaningful stakeholder collaboration and seek public comment.

Along with today’s announcement of fund availability, the NDE has published an [ESSER III Funding Overview for LEAs](#). Below is a timeline of important events.

Timeline	Action
June 1-10	Fast Track Application (Part 1) in the GMS
June 2 & 3	ESSER III Launch Zoom Session
July 1-10	Return to In-Person Plan Posted on LEA website
July 15 - September 1	Part 2 of ESSER Application and Use of Funds Plan in the GMS
July 28	NDE Day - Kearney (ESSER III Sessions)

Once the application and allocations become available in the GMS (Grant Management Site) on June 1, the Office of ESEA Programs will host launch Zoom sessions on June 2nd and 3rd, providing pertinent information related to the ESSER III program and Part 1 of the two-step application process. We encourage you to have a staff member from your ESSER III planning team attend.

The Department will continue to provide updates to our school leaders as new information becomes available. Please look for more resources to become available on the [NDE CARES Act](#) and [Launch Nebraska](#) coronavirus resource websites.

Thank you all for your continued leadership.

ESSER III Launch Zoom Sessions:

Wednesday, June 2nd at 2:00 pm Central Time/1:00 pm Mountain Time

Thursday, June 3rd at 10:00 am Central Time/9:00 am Mountain Time

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

[Join Zoom Meeting](#)

<https://zoom.us/j/4024712452>

Meeting ID: 402 471 2452

Or Telephone: US: +1 346 248 7799, Webinar ID: 402 471 2452#