



Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund  
October 5, 2021

Congress passed three separate packages to prepare for, prevent, and respond to the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic – The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act, and the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act. As part of these allocations, Nebraska K-12 public education system will receive an influx of nearly \$854 million.

These three sets of funds provide support through varied means, the largest of which is the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund, with 90 percent of funding going directly to school districts. Each allocation also provides funds for statewide activities administered by the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE). A separate and specific funding stream provides assistance for non-public schools. *The purpose of this document is to outline the use of funds across the three allocations.*

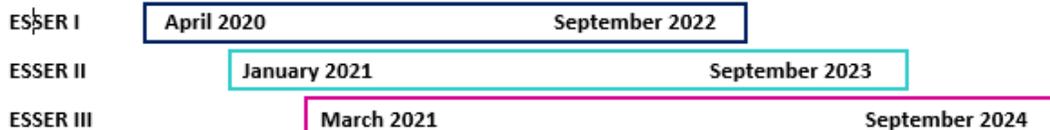
**Overview of Public School ESSER Allocations**

	Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) March 2020	Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA) December 2020	American Rescue Plan March 2021
<b>Total Allocation</b>	\$65 million	\$243 million	\$546 million
<b>Allocation to Districts</b>	\$59 million	\$218 million	\$492 million
<b>NDE Set-Aside</b>	\$6 million	\$24 million	\$54 million

**Grant Timelines**

**ESSER Grant & Performance Period**

It is important to remember that these are one-time funds that must be used to prepare for and respond to impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. LEAs should consider multi-year budgets in alignment with the priorities outlined in [Nebraska’s Framework for School Renewal & Acceleration, 2021-2022 School Year](#), mapping out how they will support their schools in meeting the social, emotional, and academic needs of their students through the fall of 2024.



### Funds for Public School Districts

The ARP Act requires ESSER III funds to be allocated based on their respective share of funds received under Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 in federal fiscal year 2020. The district ESSER III Allocation Table is available [here](#) for review.

To access ESSER III allocations, districts were required to consult with a broad group of stakeholders including parents, educators and their unions, civil rights organizations, tribes, and other community groups. Districts were also asked to consider the evidence-basis for their investments and how these funds and projects would specifically impact those students who were most affected by the pandemic and students who have been historically marginalized, including students of color, students with disabilities, English learners, and the economically disadvantaged.

### Uses of Funds

Approved Uses of Funds for ARP ESSER	
Administration – 10% administrative cap, includes indirect cost rate charged against direct costs.	Planning, coordinating, and implementing activities during long-term closures.
Any activity authorized by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, and Perkins.	Purchasing educational technology (including hardware, software, and connectivity) for students who are served by the district that aids in regular and substantive educational interaction between students and their classroom instructors, including low-income students and children with disabilities, which may include assistive technology or adaptive equipment.
Coordination of preparedness and response efforts.	Providing mental health services and supports.
Providing principals and other school leaders with resources necessary to address the needs of their individual schools.	Planning and implementing activities related to summer learning and supplemental after-school programs.
Activities to address the unique needs of low-income students, children with disabilities, English learners, racial and ethnic minorities.	*Addressing learning loss among students, including low-income students, children with disabilities, English learners, racial and ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness, and children and youth in foster care
Developing and implementing procedures and systems to improve the preparedness and response efforts of districts.	*School facility repairs and improvements to enable operation of schools to reduce the risk of virus transmission and exposure to environmental health hazards, and to support student health needs.
Training and professional development for district staff on sanitation and minimizing the spread of infectious diseases.	*Inspection, testing, maintenance, repair, replacement, and upgrade projects to improve the indoor air quality in school facilities.
Purchasing supplies to sanitize and clean the facilities of a district, including buildings operated by such agencies.	*Development of strategies and implementation of public health protocols that align with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance on

	reopening and operating school facilities to maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other staff.
*Other activities that are necessary to maintain the operation and continuity of services in districts and continuing to employ existing staff of the district. Any entity that receives funds under the Education Stabilization Fund shall, to the greatest extent practicable, continue to pay its employees and contractors during the period of any disruptions or closures related to COVID-19.*	

\*New to ARP

	ESSER I (CARES)	ESSER II (CRRSA)	ESSER III (ARP)
<b>District Distribution</b>	\$58,576,577	\$218,766,177	\$491,317,757
<b>Timeline</b>	Obligated by September 2022	Obligated by September 2023	Obligated by September 2024
<b>Budget Investments</b>	42% Technology 26% Closure/ Employ Staff 19% Response/ Supplies 1.2% Vulnerable Populations 0.4% Professional Development 0.3% Social/ Emotional	<i>ESSER II applications are being analyzed for trends and themes.</i>	<i>ESSER III applications closed September 15, 2021. The NDE continues to review and approve.</i>
<b>Stated Purpose of Funds</b>	Provide direct funding to school districts to support areas impacted by the disruption from COVID-19.	Measure and address learning loss among students disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and school closures, particularly students with high-needs	Reopen schools and sustain safe operation aligned to CDC guidance for in-person learning. Provide evidence-based interventions to meet social, emotional, and academic needs.

### NDE’s Statewide Priorities and Investments

Across 14 roundtable discussions with myriad stakeholders and a survey of [nearly 450 respondents](#), the following themes emerged:

- Provide access to *comprehensive mental health services* for students, staff, and communities
- Reimagine *family and community engagement*
- Develop high-quality *professional learning* opportunities and bolster the *teacher pipeline*
- Ensure all students have equitable access to grade-level instruction to *address unfinished learning and support learning acceleration*
- Comprehensively *modernize information, data, technology, and process systems*

The table below details a few of the highlighted investments across the five priority areas. These investments include both ESSER II and ESSER III statewide set-aside funds. The commitments/contracts are generally spread between two and three years. Priority investments are approved through a joint

decision-making process by the deputies and officers of the NDE, and any initiative over \$50,000 has been or will be approved by the State Board of Education.

When selecting interventions or initiatives, the NDE prioritized districts serving students that were most affected by COVID-19 and initiatives serving historically marginalized student populations.

Priority Area	Highlighted Investment(s)
<b>Comprehensive Mental Health Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mental Health Support Staff, Equipment, Training- \$14 million</li> <li>● Social-Emotional Learning Supports - \$400,000</li> </ul>
<b>Family and Community Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Community Schools Pilot - \$900,000</li> <li>● Transitions Supports for Students - \$460,000</li> <li>● Translation Services - \$226,650</li> <li>● Nebraska Statewide Family Engagement Center - \$500,000</li> <li>● Early Childhood Family Engagement Software - \$2.4 million</li> </ul>
<b>Professional Learning &amp; Teacher Pipeline</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Educator Certification Capacity - \$1.2 million</li> <li>● Pre-K Leadership Academy - \$350,000</li> <li>● Special Education Inclusion Training - \$950,000</li> </ul>
<b>Accelerated Learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Expanded Learning Collaborative - \$11 million</li> <li>● YRTC Academic Investments - \$501,000</li> <li>● Schools Ineligible for ESSER II &amp; III - \$800,000</li> <li>● Learning Acceleration for K-8 Math; Integration of NeMTSS, HQIM, and CIP -\$5.6 million</li> <li>● Statewide Support for Learning Acceleration; Support for CSI Schools - \$2.7 million</li> <li>● Professional Learning to Strengthen School-Tribal Partnerships - \$750,000</li> </ul>
<b>Data, Infrastructure, and Systems</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Support for Redesigning Accountability System - \$193,000</li> <li>● Continued Consultation for COVID-19 Safety Protocols- \$150,000</li> <li>● School Safety and Security Reporting System - \$1.7 million</li> <li>● Staffing Capacity - \$2.5 million</li> <li>● Technology Modernization, Security and Risk Management, and Systems Infrastructure - \$15 million</li> </ul>

**Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (GEER I and II) Fund**

Under CARES and CRRSA, governors were allocated funding specifically dedicated to educational investments. Governor Ricketts worked closely with the NDE and provided the authority for the NDE to administer the funds aligned to the priority of filling technological gaps.

	GEER I
<b>Program</b>	CARES Act
<b>Nebraska GEER Aid</b>	\$16,358,075 ( <i>Revised June 2021</i> )
<b>Allocation Method</b>	Based on Public, Nonpublic, and Homeschool Needs

<b>Use of Funds</b>	Digital learning infrastructure including devices, software, and hotspots. NDE partnered with the ESUCC to maximize economies of scale, and use their already designed purchasing and distribution.
	<b>GEER II</b>
<b>Program</b>	CRRSA Act
<b>Nebraska GEER Aid</b>	\$7,162,159 ( <i>Revised June 2021</i> )
<b>Allocation Method</b>	Governor Discretion; Awaiting Priorities
<b>Use of Funds</b>	Preventing, Preparing for, and Responding to COVID-19

**Emergency Assistance for Nonpublic Schools (EANS)**

With the CARES Act, States received an allocation based on the State’s relative share of children ages 5-17 who are from families at or below 185 percent of the poverty level and enrolled in non-public schools. Under GEER I/EANS and ARP EANS, nonpublic schools identified with high-poverty and most in need receive an award for services.

The Department provides services or assistance to eligible nonpublic schools serving K-12 students accredited or approved to operate in accordance with Nebraska Administrative Rule 10 or 14, respectively, prior to March 13, 2020. A non-public school is still eligible for EANS if the school was granted a Personal Paycheck Protection (PPP) prior to December 27, 2020 and/or will not apply for and receive a PPP loan on or after December 27, 2020.

**GEER I/EANS Award:**

- Total Award: \$17,272,129
- The Department administers the entire program under expedited timelines
- Contracted with FACTS Education Solutions to provide the services and assistance
- 50% of the total EANS funds are calculated based on Student Enrollment counts and 50% based on reported Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) counts.
- The formula assigns a K-12 per pupil amount for each student enrolled regardless of a student’s socioeconomic status and an additional amount provided for students identified as low-income.
- Each eligible school is provided a minimum of \$5,000 services and assistance. Recipient participation requires application, assurances, budgeting, approved allowable services, award performance assessment, and reporting activities.

**ARP EANS Award:**

- Total Award: \$18,618,767
- The Governor and the Department await Certification and Agreement approval from the U.S. Department of Education on thresholds the State will use to determine if a non-public school enrolls a significant percentage of students from low-income families and is most impacted and data utilized prior to standing up the second relief aid program for nonpublic schools.

**Summary**

This federal infusion of funding to education represents an opportunity of a lifetime--a moment for Nebraska educators to create significant, transformational investments in closing achievement gaps for historically marginalized student groups (i.e. students of color, students with disabilities, English learners, and economically disadvantaged). Schools are using these funds for critical infrastructure upgrades, needed interventions, and supplemental activities to respond to unfinished teaching and learning. As part of the state’s commitment to education, we cannot withdraw from our responsibility for funding,

oversight, and vision. In fact, one requirement of these funds is a “maintenance of equity” which ensures:

- The State does not disproportionately reduce per-pupil State funding to high-need districts.
- The State does not reduce per-pupil State funding to the highest-poverty districts below their FY 2019 level.
- A school district does not disproportionately reduce State and local per-pupil funding in high-poverty schools.
- A school district does not disproportionately reduce the number of full-time-equivalent (FTE) staff per pupil in high-poverty schools.

The NDE is working to ensure transparency on the use of funds at all levels, evaluation of the return on investment, and impact beyond the three year lifespan of the investments.