

Frequently Asked Questions
Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund and
Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund

Use of Funds to Prevent, Prepare for, and Respond to the COVID-19 Pandemic

The below frequently asked question (FAQ) is about allowable uses of ESSER and GEER funds by State educational agencies (SEAs) and local educational agencies (LEAs). This FAQ is intended to supplement the questions in the [ESSER and GEER use of funds guidance](#) published in May 2021.

ESSER and GEER funds offer schools and communities an opportunity to respond to the pandemic and ensure that our education system is even stronger than before. The U.S. Department of Education (Department) is committed to continuing to support SEAs and LEAs in deploying these resources to respond with urgency to meet a wide array of needs of the Nation’s students.

Other than statutory and regulatory requirements included in the document, the contents of this guidance do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.

What does it mean for ESSER and GEER funds to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic?

ESSER and GEER funds are part of the Education Stabilization Fund established by Congress. The purpose of the Education Stabilization Fund generally is to “prevent, prepare for, and respond to” COVID-19. As described in greater detail in the ESSER and GEER use of funds guidance, ESSER and GEER funds may be used for a wide range of activities, including:

- Supporting physical health and safety, such as developing strategies and implementing public health protocols including, to the greatest extent practicable, policies in line with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Meeting students’ social, emotional, mental health, academic, and other needs; and
- Operational continuity and other allowed uses.

In response to the pandemic, ESSER and GEER funds offer the opportunity to make educational systems better for students, educators, staff, schools, and their communities post-pandemic. The Department encourages SEAs and LEAs to think holistically about their response to COVID-19 in order to address the impact of lost instructional time from the pandemic on all students and to address pre-existing challenges that, if left unaddressed, will impede recovery from the pandemic.

As stated in the *Overview* of the ESSER and GEER use of funds guidance: “These Federal emergency resources are available for a wide range of activities to address diverse needs arising from or exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, or to emerge stronger post-pandemic, including responding to students’ social, emotional, mental health, and academic needs and continuing to provide educational services as States, LEAs, and schools respond to and recover from the pandemic” [emphasis added].

For example, the Department has advised that allowable approaches to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the pandemic could include, but are not limited to, the following activities:

- Addressing students’ social, emotional, mental health, and academic needs, including addressing inequities that were worsened by the pandemic, through activities such as providing

mental health services and supports to students (including those who experienced trauma before the pandemic), programs to re-engage students (including addressing factors that contributed to student disengagement before the pandemic), continuing to address issues of digital equity and access, and implementing rigorous curricula across P-12 schools.

- Ensuring that students have access to the teachers and other critical staff they need to support their success by hiring additional educators and school staff and improving compensation to recruit and retain educators and school staff.
- Sustaining and expanding existing summer learning and enrichment programming or early childhood education programs.
- Creating or improving existing data systems and collection to identify and respond in a timely manner to student needs in light of the pandemic.
- Supporting the needs of children with disabilities, including infants and toddlers with disabilities and children with disabilities who are English learners, under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, such as by eliminating evaluation backlogs and providing support and direct services for children with disabilities, including technical assistance, personnel preparation, and professional development and training.
- Providing educational and related services to students with disabilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 who are not eligible for services under IDEA but receive services in accordance with a 504 plan. This includes, but is not limited to, providing additional instruction and services to students with disabilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, often referred to as compensatory services, to make up for any skills that might have been lost if it is individually determined that the student was unable to receive a free appropriate education as a result of the closure of school buildings or other disruption in services as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Maintaining healthy facilities, which could include addressing pre-existing or new ventilation, roofing, and plumbing needs, or other needs that may inhibit healthy learning environments during full-time in-person learning. This might include roof repairs or replacement; reducing lead exposure in water; or mold, radon, and asbestos remediation, as well as facility updates (such as upgrading science labs) to address the impact of lost instructional time.

These and additional examples of allowable uses of funds may be found throughout Department resources, including:

- *American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) Guidance Documents and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)*, available at: <https://oese.ed.gov/offices/american-rescue-plan/american-rescue-plan-elementary-and-secondary-school-emergency-relief/resources>.
- *Strategies for Using American Rescue Plan Funding to Address the Impact of Lost Instructional Time*, available at: <https://www2.ed.gov/documents/coronavirus/lost-instructional-time.pdf>.
- *COVID-19 Handbook Vol. 2: Roadmap to Reopening Safely and Meeting All Students' Needs*, available at: <https://www2.ed.gov/documents/coronavirus/reopening-2.pdf>.
- *Frequently Asked Questions: Using American Rescue Plan Funding to Support Full-Service Community Schools & Related Strategies*, available at: [21-0138-ARP-Community-Schools-OMB-and-OS-Approved-071421-1.pdf](https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/11/21-0138-ARP-Community-Schools-OMB-and-OS-Approved-071421-1.pdf) (English) and https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/11/21-0138-ARP-Community-Schools-OMB-and-OS-Approved-071421-1_SPA.508dh.pdf (Spanish).
- *How American Rescue Plan Funds Can Prevent and Respond to Crime and Promote Public Safety*, available at: <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/06/21-0130-ARP-Public-Safety-ED-FAQ-06-16-2021.pdf>.

- *Letter to Chief State School Officers and School Superintendents from Secretary Cardona About the Importance of Using ARP ESSER and Other Federal Resources to Address Educator Shortages*, available at: https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/12/21-0414.DCL_Labor-Shortages.pdf.

ESSER and GEER grantees are welcome to email their State mailbox with specific use of funds questions at [state].oese@ed.gov. LEAs that have questions about uses of funds should first reach out to their SEA for assistance.