

Date: May 05, 2022

For ACTION _____

For INFORMATION X

Board Agenda: Yes X

No _____

FROM: Dominic B. Turner, Chief Financial Officer
Robert Easley, Director of Budget and Financial Systems
Kurt Huffman, Executive Director of Community Partnerships and
Engagement

THROUGH: Gregory C. Hutchings Jr., Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

TO: The Honorable Meagan Alderton, Chair, and Members of the Alexandria City
School Board

TOPIC: Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Funds
Update

ACPS 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL: Goal 4: Strategic Resource Allocation

SY 2021-2022 FOCUS AREA:

Focus Area 1: Reopening of School

Focus Area 3: Strategic Plan Implementation

Focus Area 5: Academic Disparities

FY 2022 BUDGET PRIORITY: N/A

BACKGROUND: ACPS has been fortunate to have received several federally funded Programs, through Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Funds, that have been authorized to support public and non-public schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. The overarching purpose of these programs is to address the impact that COVID-19 has had, and continues to have, on elementary and secondary schools within ACPS. The CARES Act (ESSER I), signed into law in March 2020, provided approximately \$3.7 million to ACPS. The Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act (ESSER II), authorized in December 2020, provided approximately \$15.5 million to ACPS. Additionally, the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act (ESSER III) authorized in March 2021, included approximately an additional \$34.8 million in funding to ACPS.

ESSER III requires that, at least, twenty percent (20%) of divisions' formula funds be reserved to address learning loss through the implementation of evidence-based interventions and ensure that those interventions respond to students' social, emotional and academic needs and address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on underrepresented student groups (each major racial and ethnic group, children from low-income families, children with disabilities, English learners, gender, migrant students, students experiencing homelessness, and children and youth in foster care). Another

requirement for utilizing the ARP funding is that each school division must make publicly available updates on its plan.

Our ESSER III funds are and will be used to drive the goals outlined in ACPS 2025: Equity for All. We will ensure that students are engaged in classroom instruction, have access to the educational resources needed to enhance their learning, and participate while in safe, friendly, and welcoming environments. We are committing funds to division-wide priorities and programs that will eliminate opportunity and achievement gaps as well as ensure that all students graduate ready for college, military service, careers and life.

We developed our ESSER III plan to align with the following four Focus Areas: (1) Social, Emotional and Academic Learning, (2) Technology Infrastructure, (3) COVID-19 Prevention and Mitigation Projects, and our (4) Human Capital Needs. These teams organized needs from the community, prioritized requests across departments, and created plans for various initiatives.

Addressing Students' Academic, Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Needs and Unfinished Learning

The ARP Act requires each school division to use, at least, twenty percent of its funds to address the academic impact of lost instructional time (learning loss) through the implementation of evidence-based interventions, such as summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive after school programs, or extended school year programs. ACPS' plan will use approximately \$9,911,217 (~28.5%) of its ESSER III funds to address unfinished learning as described below. In addition to the funds to address unfinished learning and the academic impact of lost instructional time, ACPS will use an additional \$6,733,056 of its ESSER III funds to broadly address Students' Academic, Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs. This totals \$16,644,273 (~48%) for Academic, Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs.

With ESSER III funds, we are focusing our attention, energy, and resources on a limited number of evidence-based interventions that all schools will implement with fidelity. We will spend time identifying what is working in school and program implementations, define their processes, and work to scale and adapt those processes in other settings through protocol development, coaching and networks. Ultimately, we want to ensure that our students are engaged in classroom instruction and have access to the educational resources needed to address lost instructional time while also enhancing their learning experiences.

As part of our commitment to eliminating opportunity and achievement gaps, we have designed our plan to ensure access to and engagement with high-quality instruction and programs that reduce barriers to learning. We also recognize that reopening our schools will involve the need to embrace flexibility while facing unprecedented challenges. Therefore, with previous ESSER II funding and our FY 22 Combined Funds Budget process, we have funded critical instructional programs and student support services programs for students, staff and families.

Other Uses of Funds

The ARP Act permits school divisions to use the ESSER III funding not reserved to address unfinished learning to address the impacts of COVID-19 in a variety of ways. ACPS will use approximately \$5,582,484 (~16%) for initiatives related to Technology Infrastructure and

\$4,530,744 (~13%) for initiatives related to Human Capital, in accordance with the ARP Act as described below.

Technology Infrastructure

We are building a streamlined and sustainable technology infrastructure across our division to ensure a smooth transition to in-person learning, the need for continuous integration of technology into students' daily learning experience, and that software support services are available to all schools. With ESSER III funds, we are able to provide a reliable, scalable and transparent technology infrastructure that facilitates the operation of the school division and supports greater access and equity.

Human Capital Needs

In support of reopening our schools and achieving the goals outlined in our Strategic Plan, we are expanding the ways in which we support our existing staff while building an inclusive work environment for all. Our team has made commitments to improve our strategic and operational planning, create collaborative communications and grow relationships, and expand our benefits so that they are market competitive and pay equitable. Plans are being developed to scale communications support to provide additional / augmented communications support and public relations support as well as studio support for students to access and apprentice and develop internship opportunities. Additionally, efforts to strengthen Grants Management and staffing to oversee our federal relief grants portfolio will ensure timely implementation of grant activities, contracted services to design and implement a new division-wide Grants Management System with centralized knowledge management and reporting capabilities.

Prevention and Mitigation Strategies

ESSER III funds are and will be used to implement prevention and mitigation strategies that are, to the greatest extent practicable, consistent with the most recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance on reopening schools, in order to continuously and safely open and operate schools for in-person learning. ACPS is projecting to use approximately \$8,035,280 (~23%) of its ARP Act ESSER III to continue to fund prevention and mitigation strategies. Spending on initiatives such as Positive Indoor Air Quality and COVID Screening/Testing & Contact Tracing have already been implemented and carried out.

During the month of May, ACPS will publish an updated and amended plan as well as engage the ACPS community to submit their input via the ESSER III Community Feedback form.

To date, due to the multiple rounds of federal funding, ACPS has and is primarily utilizing ESSER I and ESSER II funding. ESSER I funding has been fully committed, while ESSER II funding is currently approximately 40% committed. ESSER III, as highlighted, remains in the early phase of spending commitments.

ARP ESSER III funds are available through September 30, 2024 to be expended and/or encumbered.

SUMMARY: The purpose of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER III) Fund is to help safely reopen and sustain the safe operation of schools and address the impacts of COVID-19 on the nation’s students by addressing students’ academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. ACPS has been awarded \$34.8 million in ESSER III funds. This plan and subsequent amendments and updates describe how the awarded funds will be used.

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The Funding/Spending Summary highlighted below not only reflects the ARP ESSER III Funding to ACPS, but also highlights additional “Supplemental” Funding for specific and targeted programs and/or initiatives. ARP ESSER III funds are available through September 30, 2024 to be expended and/or encumbered.

FUNDING/SPENDING SUMMARY:

ARP ESSER III			
CHARACTER NAME	ORIGINAL PLAN	TOTAL EXP/ENCUM	AVAILABLE
TOTAL	34,792,781	4,509,655	30,283,126
HVAC Supplemental			
TOTAL	3,155,225	-	3,155,225
Unfinished Learning, Before/After School, Summer SPED Supplemental			
TOTAL	933,020	-	933,020
Homeless Supplemental			
TOTAL	111,720	-	111,720
Teacher/Mentor Supplemental			
TOTAL	14,918	-	14,918

RECOMMENDATION: The Superintendent recommends that the School Board review the ESSER Fund(s) Update and elicit public engagement.

CONTACT PERSON: Dominic B. Turner, 703-619-8141

ATTACHMENTS:

1. ESSER School Board Update - FY2023