

# COVID Relief for K-12 and Science/STEM Education

## NSTA Resources to Address Learning Loss

### Background

There have been three rounds of funding under the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER):

The first round (ESSER 1) was about \$13 billion from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, and the second (ESSER 2) was roughly \$54 billion from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act. The \$128 billion from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARP ESSER or ESSER 3) is the third round of ESSER funding,

In all three rounds, 90 percent of the money must go to school districts, which have broad discretion over how to spend the funds. Districts must spend at least 20 percent of ARP ESSER funds to address learning loss through evidence-based interventions.

ESSER 1 is available for obligation until September 30, 2022, ESSER 2 until September 30, 2023, and ARP ESSER until September 30, 2024. ESSER funds must be liquidated within 120 calendar days after the end of each applicable obligation deadline.



### American Rescue Plan

Includes *Interactive ebooks+* and formative assessment probes  
[www.nsta.org/american-rescue-plan](http://www.nsta.org/american-rescue-plan)



### Uncovering Student Ideas In Science Series

[www.nsta.org/book-series/uncovering-student-ideas-science](http://www.nsta.org/book-series/uncovering-student-ideas-science)

## Education Funding under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARP ESSER or ESSER 3)

The bill provides \$125.8 billion in funding for K-12 through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER).

**Similar to other COVID relief bills**, ESSER funding will flow to each State based on its share of Title I funding for FY 2021.

States and districts have the flexibility to utilize recovery funds to address the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the Nation's students. States and district can also use ARP funds or any authorized purpose under current federal law including the Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA; IDEA, Perkins CTE and other major existing education laws.

### State use of funds

State Education Agencies (SEAs) to reserve at least 5 percent of new ESSER III allocations for grants and contracts to carry out activities to promote learning recovery.

SEAs must reserve at least 1% to provide evidence-based summer enrichment programs; and at least 1% to provide evidence-based comprehensive afterschool programs. SEAs are also required to set aside 2.5% for education technology.

### District Use of Funds

87.5% of funding must go to districts. ESSER funds can benefit any or all students (not just Title I or IDEA students), staff, and schools and can support activities including core instruction facilities upgrades, and construction.

Funding can be used for services allowable under federal education laws including ESSA, IDEA, Perkins CTE and other major existing education laws.

Districts must use at least 20% of the grant funds to address learning loss via the implementation of evidence-based interventions that respond to students' academic, social, and emotional needs and address disparate impacts on student

subgroups.

Money can also be used for cleaning, for educational services while schools are closed, to buy education technology and connectivity, and for school repairs and improvements to lower the risk of the virus.

## Using ARP Funds for Science and STEM Education

American Rescue Plan Act Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund— **A Guide for Leaders in Science Education** Council of State Science Supervisors - **American Rescue Plan Resources [cosss.org]**

Read the **NSTA/STEM Education Coalition letter to State Policymakers on Using COVID Relief Funding for Science and STEM**

## ESSER Funds Can Be Used Under Current ESSA Programs to Benefit Science and STEM

In addition to these suggestions the American Rescue Plan provides states and districts with the flexibility to utilize ESSER COVID recovery funds for any authorized purpose under current federal law. Here are some examples of how ESSER funds can be used for current federal title programs under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESSA) that will benefit science and STEM education.

### ESSA Title IVA--Supporting a Well-Rounded STEM Education for All Students

ESSA Title IV, Part A (Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants) provides a pathway for utilizing recovery funds to support a wide range of programs designed to support a well-rounded education for students, create safe and healthy school environments, and improve the use of technology in every school district. To improve instruction and student engagement in STEM, state and district leaders should ensure that relief funding is used to support the wide range of activities that are specifically

allowed in the statute to improve science and STEM teaching and learning, including:

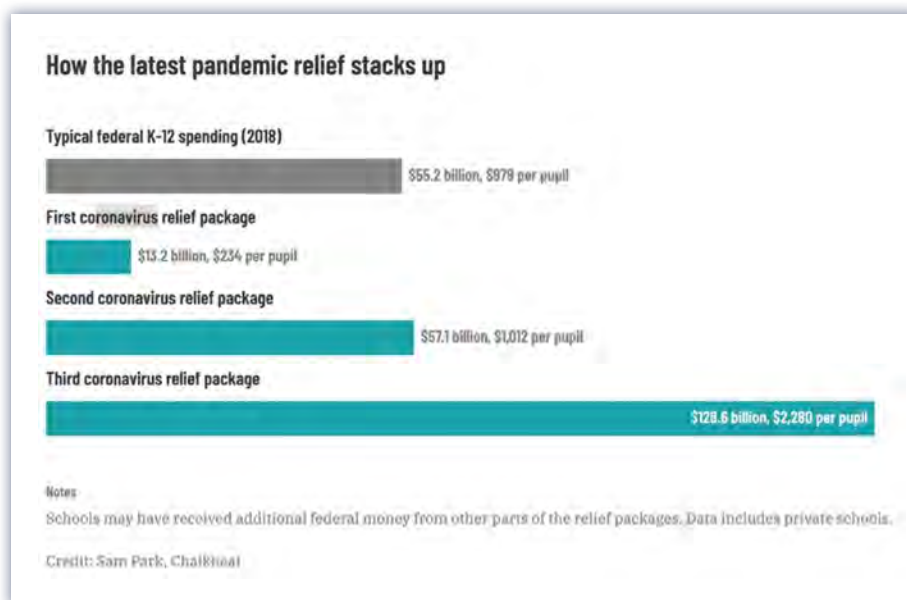
- Expansion of high-quality STEM courses;
- Integration of classroom based, afterschool, and informal STEM instruction including a range of community partners in addition to schools and school districts;
- Increased access to STEM for underserved and at-risk student populations including through community partnerships with youth-serving organizations, science centers and museums, and other informal STEM institutions;
- Support for student participation in STEM nonprofit competitions;
- Providing hands-on learning opportunities in STEM offered by a variety of organizations;
- Integration of other academic subjects, including the arts, into STEM subject programs;
- Creation or enhancement of STEM specialty schools;
- Expansion of environmental education.

### ESSA Title I -- Improve Assessments of STEM Learning

ESSER funds can be used to utilize the flexibility of ESSA Title I to create or improve math and science assessments. ESSA Title I also provides for the use of federal funding for the development of state assessments that would integrate engineering and technology concepts into science assessments.

### ESSA Title II — Provide Professional Development for STEM Educators

Professional learning opportunities are critical to quality teaching. Teachers need on-going training in content and pedagogy that is high quality, meaningful, and sustained. They are making significant shifts in their approach to teaching that includes teaching new science standards; integrating computer science into the curriculum;



integrating other academic subjects into STEM; and incorporating engineering practices and informal learning into the classroom. In addition, the majority of elementary teachers do not have science degrees, and many do not feel comfortable teaching science and STEM content and need support and professional learning. States and districts can use ESSA Title II ((Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High-Quality Teachers, Principals, and Other School Leaders) authority to use ESSER recovery funding to provide professional development to educators on science and STEM content areas and develop STEM leaders and mentors. Title II funds can also be used to establish, expand, or improve alternative certification for STEM teachers and provide for differentiated pay and other incentives to recruit and retain teachers in math and science.

### Helpful Links

- [ESSER Funds District and State Breakdowns](#)
- [How to Decide How to Spend Elementary and Secondary School Relief Funds](#)
- [ESSER Fact Sheet](#)

Education Commission of the [States State Information Request](#) outlines the priorities and trends that state education agencies have identified so far in plans for spending money through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund.