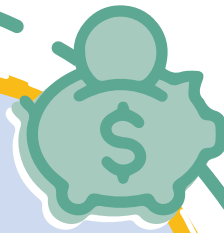


Michigan
Education
Justice
Coalition



RECOMMENDATIONS

ESSER FUND



PROMOTING HEALTHY AND HEALING SCHOOLS
DURING PANDEMIC UNFINISHED LEARNING

JUNE 2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY — — — — —



**THERE IS
\$6 BILLION
IN STIMULUS FUNDS
ALLOCATED TO LOCAL
SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

Under the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER Fund), the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) is providing local educational agencies (LEAs), including charter schools that are LEAs, with emergency relief funds to address the impact that Novel Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) has had, and continues to have, on elementary and secondary schools in Michigan. Michigan is receiving \$3.7 billion total in ARP ESSER funds. LEAs must provide equitable services to students and teachers in non-public schools as required under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act). This page will serve as a resource to all CARES Act grants administered by MDE.

The Michigan Education Justice Coalition (MEJC) has authored a set of key values titled the Healthy and Healing Schools Platform. These values guide the vision MEJC holds for building a system of public schools that provides public access to quality educational options and positive learning environments for ALL children in Michigan. Now is a unique time to leverage ESSER funds to implement systems, structures, and resources to ensure our children get the best education possible. This document serves as a set of recommendations for LEAs to allocate ESSER funds based on the Values defined in the Healthy and Healing Schools Platform.

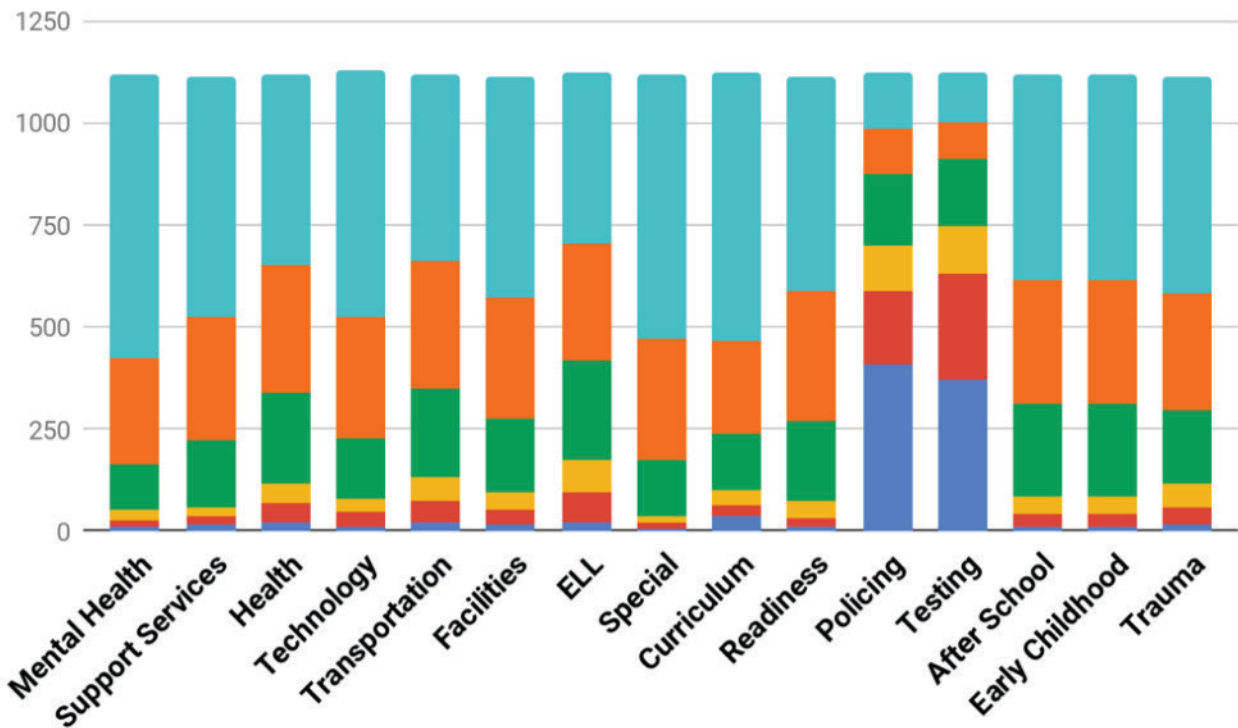
Additionally, ESSER funds offer a pathway for us to ReImagine school budgets. MEJC sees the ESSER funds as a unique opportunity for Michigan to close the \$4 billion gap in school funding each year AND to initiate steps toward a weighted funding formula based on the widely accepted recommendations of the School Finance Research Collaborative. MEJC also held listening sessions, which resulted in key stakeholders prioritizing the allocation of ESSER funds in our schools.

WHAT DO MICHIGAN RESIDENTS WANT TO SEE FUNDED IN SCHOOLS?

Between April 19, 2021, and June 30, 2021, surveyed Michigan residents statewide through an online survey in English, Spanish, and Bangla. Respondents were asked to rank how important funding 15 different program areas was to them on a scale of 0-5 from, “Do Not Fund” to “Very Important.” Those responses were recorded by the school district.



HOW IMPORTANT IS FUNDING THESE AREAS TO YOU?



Rounded to the nearest whole number, all issues were ranked as important aside from policing and testing.

HOW IMPORTANT IS FUNDING...

1. mental health services to you?	4.39
2. special education to you?	4.36
3. early childhood education to you?	4.24
4. family support services to you?	4.23
5. overcoming the technology gap to you?	4.21
6. an inclusive curriculum to you?	4.19
7. career readiness to you?	4.12
8. facilities and infrastructure to you?	4.09
9. after school programs to you?	4.04
10. trauma-responsive schools to you?	4.04
11. school health services to you?	3.93
12. equitable transportation to you?	3.89
13. language resources to you?	3.74
14. more police in schools to you?	1.85
15. more standardized testing to you?	1.74

RECOMMENDATIONS FOCUSED ON ACADEMICS AND A RIGHT TO QUALITY EDUCATION



PUBLIC SCHOOLS, ESPECIALLY THOSE IN LOWER-INCOME AND RURAL AREAS, HAVE BEEN STRUGGLING WITH A LACK OF RESOURCES LONG BEFORE COVID-19

One key purpose of ESSER funds is to remedy unfinished learning among students during a tumultuous school year, especially students who are already at risk of falling behind their peers. The House and Senate FY 2022-2023 ignored the Governor's recommended increase for economically disadvantaged youth by \$222 for at-risk supports, by keeping the current year appropriate, with no increases to students who were disproportionately affected by the pandemic. The Senate maintained the current appropriations for special education funding, even though the data shows students with disabilities were greatly affected by unfinished learning over the last 2 years. The Governor's FY 2022-2023 budget recommended \$150 million to reimburse districts and ISDs for 8% of total approved costs, while the House budget recommended \$210 million to reimburse districts and ISDs for 10% of total approved costs.

Twenty percent of funds received in the third round of ESSER funding (via the American Rescue Plan Act) must go toward activities aimed at combating unfinished learning, such as:

Providing summer, after-school learning and enrichment opportunities

- ▶ Hire a summer and after school learning coordinator
- ▶ Hire and implement an extended school day
 - ▷ Pay for transportation costs, childcare, and meals during the after school and summer learning to combat barriers to participation



**LACK OF
EQUITABLE FUNDING
AND RESOURCES
IS AT THE HEART OF
SO MANY ISSUES IN
MICHIGAN SCHOOLS**

Addressing the needs of low-income students, students with disabilities, English language learners, migrant students, students experiencing homelessness, and youth in foster care

- ▶ Invest time, money, and resources to pay teachers and administrators to develop a standard aligned curriculum and instructional materials for both in person and remote learning (including formative and summative assessments)
- ▶ Create a dedicated library in every school that has culturally relevant books
- ▶ Hire literacy tutors to provide small group instruction to struggling readers
- ▶ Hire tutors to provide 1:1 instruction, 3 times a week for 30-50 hours per semester during the school day to pay attention to those students the farthest behind
- ▶ Provide training for co-teaching throughout the year
- ▶ Develop and implement a program for suspended and expelled students to receive education during times of suspension and expulsion
 - ▷ Hire a teacher and a social worker to implement the program

Improving student attendance and engagement

- ▶ Coordinate with organizations like Community in Schools
- ▶ Purchase of character traits curriculum like True Success or Second Step
- ▶ Explore implementing models such as Check and Connect

RECOMMENDATIONS FOCUSED ON FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Covid created separation and isolation for families, students, and staff. The separation and isolation were experienced differently, both positively and negatively. Schools need to be equipped to meet the needs of all students, families and staff through family and community engagement initiatives. ESSER funds can support family and community engagement by focusing on:

▶ **Connecting with families to inform them of available opportunities**

- ▷ Hire a family engagement coordinator who would determine barriers to attendance and connect families to community resources and agencies
 - ▶ Develop a parent university to empower and educate families on several topics
- ▷ Implement and stock a laundry room and closet for students and families who need the ability to wash clothes or access clothes for their children

▶ **Implementing Restorative Practices**

- ▷ Implement restorative circles in the classroom, training for staff and books purchased for all staff members



HOW MUCH
FEDERAL RELIEF
FUNDING IS YOUR
DISTRICT GETTING?

GO TO
MICHIGANEDJUSTICE.ORG
& CLICK ON "FUNDING"

RECOMMENDATIONS FOCUSED ON WELLNESS PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE TO COVID-19



MICHIGAN HAS A
\$4 BILLION FUNDING
GAP EACH YEAR IN
OUR SCHOOL BUDGET!

During the 2020-21 school year, there was an overwhelming rise of virtual learning: whether in place of classroom learning during quarantine periods and COVID exposure, as part of a hybrid model, or as a parental choice due to fear of COVID. ESSER funds can support the transition to virtual education by:

- ▶ **Acquiring new digital tools to assist in teaching, scheduling, and collaboration, and training staff for implementation**
- ▶ **Improved indoor air quality including, but not limited to:**
 - ▷ Meet basic standards for safety -- at least 4 x per hour air circulation with Merv 13 filtration (at a minimum)
 - ▷ Ongoing random carbon testing in rooms throughout the building
 - ▷ Publicly available data on testing results
- ▶ **Supporting teachers in modifying curricula for virtual learning**
- ▶ **Increasing support staffing (such as librarians and technology help desk personnel)**
- ▶ **Improving and updating technological infrastructure**
- ▶ **Purchasing new educational technology**
- ▶ **Flexible and alternative classrooms**
- ▶ **Outdoor classrooms can be created & deconstructed in moments**

RECOMMENDATIONS FOCUSED ON MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

This year has been extremely difficult for students, staff, and families as they navigate a global pandemic, bouncing between hybrid, virtual and face to face learning, separation and isolation from their peers, and some experiencing grief or economic hardship. Governor Whitmer's FY 2022-2023 budget recommended an overall increase of \$50 million dollars, while the House and Senate FY 2022-2023 budgets maintained current year appropriations. If there has ever been a time that we needed to invest in the mental health of our students it is NOW, so the House and Senate recommended budget is unacceptable.

Schools may use ESSER funds in several ways to support students' mental health:

Implementing evidence-based programs to support social and emotional learning, resilience, and trauma sensitivity

- ▶ Provide mental health services and support, including through the implementation of evidence based full-service community schools and the hiring of counselors
- ▶ Mental Health screeners
- ▶ Dedicated spaces for families to access mental and physical health care centers in the school
- ▶ Hire school nurses for face-to-face health needs and telehealth consultation and coordination of services with community support
- ▶ Hire resiliency coaches to coach staff, train and implement restorative practices to reduce exclusionary practices.

Designing classrooms and other in-school spaces to promote relationship building and mental wellness

- ▶ Create calming corners in every classroom (purchase of fidgets, body mapping activities, timer, visuals)
- ▶ Hire staff to develop and staff a resilience room or student success center in the school with a system for implementation, working with youth to design and outfit space

Offering mental health support for students, families, and staff

- ▶ Provide self-care training for staff
- ▶ Implement spaces and activities for staff to practice self-care
- ▶ Hire counselors (1:250) with a dedicated caseload
- ▶ Hire school social workers (1:250) with a dedicated caseload
- ▶ Hire school psychologists (1:600) with a dedicated caseload

Access to daily physical activities

- ▶ Hire a full-time school or district wellness leader



**THE AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION
RECOMMENDS THAT SCHOOLS MAINTAIN A 1:250
COUNSELOR PER STUDENT RATIO**

**MICHIGAN HAS ONE OF THE WORST RATIOS IN THE
COUNTRY OF 1:671**

RECOMMENDATIONS FOCUSED ON SCHOOL CLIMATE

A positive school experience is paramount for the success of a student's academic and social emotional development. Providing students, staff and families is crucial as they manipulate their way through various learning platforms and return to face-to-face instruction. The House and Senate are intentionally supporting the implementation of risk assessments, a reactive practice to school culture and climate with the House FY 2022-2023 budget recommending \$16 million for \$2,000 per building grants to implement risk assessments and \$50 for school resource officers and the Senate budget \$15 million for \$2,000 per building grants to implement risk assessments. To be proactive in supporting the various experiences of students as they return, school districts may consider the following recommendations in their use of ESSER funds to address a positive school climate:



STATEWIDE,
17.7% OF STUDENTS
ARE BLACK BUT
ONLY 6.6% OF
TEACHERS ARE

Professional development for school staff

- ▶ Dedicated trauma informed training
- ▶ Restorative practice training
- ▶ Early warning system, Educlimber for implementation of evidence based, culturally affirming and social emotional aligned with Casel
- ▶ Dedicated library for staff and parents to access resources on trauma informed best practices
- ▶ Provide professional development on equity and culturally responsive teaching

RECOMMENDATIONS FOCUSED ON CONTINUED STAFF EMPLOYMENT

Increased staffing to meet the needs of a multiple education setting with a varied student body has been an increased need for districts. ESSER funds can support:

Hiring extra substitute teachers to support flexible scheduling

- ▶ Provide stipends or bonuses to dedicated long-term substitutes
- ▶ Provide training to substitute teachers the same as district hired teachers

Offering more generous sick leave to encourage staff to stay home when they do not feel well

Continuing to employ current staff

- ▶ Retention bonuses
- ▶ Sign on bonuses
- ▶ Attendance incentives



AN MEA SURVEY OF EDUCATORS STATEWIDE FOUND THAT 91% SAID THEY WERE EXTREMELY OR VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE EDUCATOR SHORTAGE.

TEACHER RETIREMENTS IN MICHIGAN ARE UP 44% SINCE AUGUST OF 2020

RESOURCES

This document serves as a set of recommendations for LEAs to allocate ESSER funds based on the values defined in the Healthy and Healing Schools Platform. Additionally, ESSER funds offer a pathway for us to ReImagine school budgets. MEJC sees the ESSER funds as a unique opportunity for Michigan to close the inequities that exist in our school that have been exacerbated by the global pandemic.

440 BURROUGHS
DETROIT, MI 48202

(269) 873-1000

INFO@MICHIGANEDJUSTICE.ORG

Michigan
Education
Justice
Coalition



Larson, Kate. (2021, June 15). *Making the most of ESSER funds*. Demco Ideas & Inspiration. <https://ideas.demco.com/blog/making-the-most-of-esser-funds/>

Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. (n.d.). *Frequently asked questions about the elementary and secondary school emergency relief fund (ESSER Fund)*. Retrieved June 3, 2021, from <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2020/05/ESSER-Fund-Frequently-Asked-Questions.pdf>

School Finance Research Collaborative. (n.d.). Retrieved December 1, 2021, from <https://www.fundmischools.org/>

The U.S. Department of Education frequently posts updated information about the ESSER Program on its website – www.ed.gov