



## Tabletop Session Summary

May 27, 2021

### Fiscal Transparency: SEA and LEA Expenditures for Summer Learning and Beyond

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**Presenters:** Marguerite Roza, [National Comprehensive Center](#)

This tabletop discussion emphasized the importance of transparency in planning and using American Rescue Plan funds.

### Session Highlights

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- » State education agencies were obligated to make two-thirds of the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief III (ESSER III) funds available to local districts by May 24, 2021.
- » By June 7, 2021, states are required to submit plans with current educational needs and details on how they will use and support districts in using the funds specifically required for learning recovery, summer enrichment, afterschool, and additional discretionary/administrative purposes. The plans will be published on June 21, 2021 and are required to receive the final third of the ESSER III funds.
- » Districts are also required to submit plans to their states within 90 days of receiving ESSER III funds and must review and update them two times per year.
- » State and district plans are both to be developed in consultation with school administrators, principals, teachers, school staff, employee unions, tribes, civil and disability rights organizations, families, students, and representatives of different student groups.
- » Currently, some states are planning to provide funds to districts and nonprofits to expand summer learning and enrichment programs. In North Carolina, some funding may go directly to families for learning or enrichment. Tennessee's Reading 360 program will focus on boosting students' literacy skills. In Oregon, funds may be directed towards credit recovery programs.
- » Early indications of district spending plans reveal plans for class size reduction by hiring additional teachers; plans to hire counselors, nurses, and specialists; plans for facility projects and technological or curriculum updates; and plans to fill budget gaps or to make thank you payments to staff.
- » Some early district examples include Philadelphia. Philadelphia plans to spend \$325 million on facilities improvements. Detroit Public Schools is offering \$500 and two sick days to teachers and other employees who prove that they've been vaccinated.

As plans continue to take shape, there will be interest in the extent to which states are transparent and ensure broad participation in spending decisions, focus on students and relief, have a multi-year spending plan, make targeted investments to increase learning time for students, and apply funds equitably across schools.



## Shared Resources

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- » [Examples of States Using Recovery Funding](#)
- » [Frequently Asked Questions: Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Programs/Governor's Emergency Education Relief Programs](#)
- » [Mini course: Ed Finance in 2021](#)
- » [Timeline of the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds \(ESSER\)](#)

## Questions and Answers on Fiscal Transparency: SEA and LEA Expenditures for Summer Learning and Beyond

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### **What districts have you tracked so far in terms of their spending plans?**

Information on more than 125 districts has been collected so far. The information is based on budget documents, board meeting minutes, local news stories on plans, etc.

### **To what extent are local education agencies consulting the five spending principles?**

Many districts are just starting to engage with these kinds of principles, as they have a lot to balance right now.

### **Can state education agencies limit what local education agencies can do with the ESSER III funds?**

States must allow districts to spend the funds in all the ways that are allowable.

### **What about states that are recommending saving local funds by using this money and using local funds for the future? Any advice on what to recommend?**

First, ESSER comes with a Maintenance of Equity provision. It is a new provision for districts. If local funds are cut, they cannot be disproportionately cut from high poverty schools. Second, if you get off track with your local levies in many communities, you may have a hard time securing them in the future.

### **Would it be advantageous for school districts to partner with community providers to run summer and afterschool programs? They could provide scholarship funds to make them free rather than to create their own programs.**

Partnerships are encouraged. Organizations that work with various communities that a district is trying to reach may be good partners.

### **Is there a reason for the short window for spending these funds?**

The window is actually longer than people may think. As long as the funds are obligated, services can be provided for many years to come. Some suggest that funds will really last through 2028 or later.

ARP ESSER funds must be obligated by September 30, 2024. This includes the 12-month Tydings Amendment period.

### **What are some easy-lift strategies local education agencies can leverage to avoid one-size-fits all solutions for schools?**

Districts can give money to schools for schools to decide how to apply it. They could give it in weighted increments.

