

A TIME TO ACT: A FRAMEWORK TO ACCELERATE LEARNING

EFFECTIVE RESOURCE ALLOCATION FOR EQUITABLE SYSTEMS



In April 2021, JerseyCAN released [A Framework to Accelerate Learning](#) through and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. This document focuses on one element of the Framework – Effective Resource Allocation for Equitable Systems – and highlights New Jersey schools and districts who exemplify promising practices in action.

The Opportunity: COVID Relief Funding for Education in New Jersey

The federal government is providing over **\$4.3 billion** to New Jersey in three rounds of funding through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) initiative. This money flows from the US Department of Education to the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) and then to local education agencies (LEAs). **New Jersey is receiving \$310,371,213 through ESSER I, \$1,230,971,757 through ESSER II and \$2,764,587,703 through ESSER III** (aka ARP ESSER funds). For each round, the bulk of funds will flow to LEAs so local leaders can direct resources toward their greatest needs.

The NJDOE has provided an ESSER [website](#) for LEAs that includes the allocation, spending, reporting and monitoring requirements for all three rounds of funding as well as this [NJ ESSER Funds Summary Table](#). The NJDOE has also offered additional grant opportunities using state set-aside funds, with more expected to follow:

- [Addressing Student Learning Loss](#) (\$2.5 million): Grants to support quality instruction for mitigation of learning loss through ESSER I.
- [Learning Acceleration Grants](#) (\$75 million): Awards of at least \$25,000 per LEA for P-12 acceleration opportunities including summer and school year enrichment activities, one-to-one tutoring and other instructional supports through ESSER II.
- [Mental Health Grants](#) (\$30 million): Awards of at least \$45,000 per LEA to support mental health services in schools, districts and community partnerships through ESSER II.
- ESSER III guidance and applications are still forthcoming; however, the state and LEAs will be [required](#) to engage a diverse set of local stakeholders in developing their plans for safe school reopening as part of this round of funding.

In order for LEAs to access their allocated funds and state grants, an application must be submitted to the NJDOE that includes evidence-based approaches to the allowable activities. **JerseyCAN’s full [Framework to Accelerate Learning](#) outlines a robust research base and includes strategies and examples of these initiatives in practice, as well as New Jersey-specific policy recommendations, which may be useful to LEAs in applying for these funds.**

New Jersey Districts Leading the Way

While the majority of federal relief funding has yet to be distributed to LEAs, several across New Jersey are already demonstrating leadership in strategic alignment of resources to best serve all students. Philanthropic leaders have also provided timely support to jumpstart key initiatives.

A long-term vision for investing in equity: [Logan Township School District](#)

Logan leaders have focused on directing resources to drive equity for many years, pre-dating the pandemic. Logan is one of four districts partnering with Rowan University as part of a [School Climate Transformation Grant](#) initiative that started in Fall 2019. Leaders initially set out to improve equity, inclusion, social emotional learning and student voice across the district and, with the

“ We have prioritized inclusive instruction and intentionally hiring more diverse staff because our students deserve both. We have learned so much from participating in this grant, listening to our staff and working with our fellow districts.”

Patricia Haney
Logan Superintendent

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onset of COVID-19, have only seen an increased need for this work. The district is providing a summer student voice program for 4th-8th-graders to share what they'd like to see change. Leaders point to the increased capacity that the grant and partnership with Rowan have provided, especially during a time of unprecedented need. Logan is working to maximize all available grants, pre-k expansion aid and public funding opportunities and taking proactive steps to mitigate funding challenges they have faced. ★ To learn more, see our briefs on [Student and Family Engagement](#), [Data for Understanding Student Learning](#) and [High Quality, Inclusive Curriculum, Instruction and Training](#), as well as this [video](#). ★

Forward-thinking, data-driven decisions: [Paul Robeson Charter School](#)

Careful planning has allowed the Paul Robeson school community to rise to the challenges brought on by the pandemic. This school is a recipient of one of the ESSER-funded [NJDOE Addressing Learning Loss grants](#) thanks to their focus on using data to inform investments and initiatives. School leaders are using diagnostic assessments and student growth metrics to identify where support is needed and determine which students will benefit most from summer enrichment in 2021 and target research-based interventions and additional extended learning opportunities like tutoring and Saturday School. ★ To learn more, see our brief on [High Quality, Inclusive Curriculum, Instruction and Training](#). ★

“Two years before COVID, we made the decision to go 1:1 with devices and became a Google education campus. That long-range decision meant we did not have to face the digital divide as a key issue out of the gate but could instead move quickly to support students and families. This pandemic has made us truly appreciate the entire ecosystem of services and support we provide to our students, staff and community.”

John Amenda, Executive Director

“We are thinking strategically about federal relief funds and investing these dollars to avoid a fiscal cliff a few years down the line. This includes boosting educators' pay in some instances. They have been committed to coming into our schools for in-person instruction at the height of the pandemic. Though the extra money will never equate to their commitment, it helps show how much we value them.”

Dr. Gemar Mills, Executive Director

Strategic one-time investments: [College Achieve Paterson](#)

Leaders at College Achieve Paterson are leveraging some of the federal relief funds to directly support educators. School leaders are increasing educator pay for summer school and looking into the creation of a new Director of Student and Staff Experiences position to focus on culture. With the help of additional funds, College Achieve is also creating a new program to support high school students getting to and through college; this will be known as the Summer of A Lifetime (SOAL) and will include field trips to colleges and universities. ★ To learn more, see this [video](#) and our briefs on [High Quality, Inclusive Curriculum, Instruction and Training](#) and [Educator Support and Innovative Staffing](#). ★

Timely philanthropic support for critical initiatives: [New Jersey Summer Tutoring Corps Program](#)

The NJ Summer Tutoring Corps is a new philanthropy-supported partnership between the New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund, Overdeck Family Foundation and The College of New Jersey (TCNJ). Tutors will be drawn from teacher preparation programs at New Jersey institutions and small group services will be provided during Summer 2021 at community organizations, including Boys and Girls Clubs of America and the Y Alliance. TCNJ is managing the program and hopes to extend it into the 2021-22 school year, pending the availability of additional funds. This a key example of New Jersey philanthropic leaders surveying national best practices and stepping up to address a time-sensitive need amidst the state's COVID recovery.

JerseyCAN salutes these leaders across the state for showing how this work can, and must, be done. Looking ahead, JerseyCAN will support policy and programmatic solutions that will expand these efforts.