

ARP-ESSR Funding Plan

Byron-Bergen Central School District
June, 2021

Introduction

The 2021-22 enacted state budget includes language requiring local education agencies, such as school districts, that receive funding from the Federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund allocated by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP-ESSER) to post a plan of how funds will be allocated by school year on its website.

New York has been allocated nearly \$9 billion in ARP-ESSER funds, with a minimum of \$8.09 billion (90 percent) going to local education agencies, including public schools. The Byron-Bergen Central School District has been allocated \$2,266,513.

Of this total, \$139,164 is earmarked specifically for supporting summer programming, \$139,164 for after-school programming, and \$695,804 for additional support to address learning loss.

Districts are also required to prioritize spending on ***non-recurring*** expenses in the following areas:

- Safely returning students to in-person instruction;
- Maximizing in-person instruction time;
- Operating schools and meeting the needs of students;
- Purchasing educational technology;
- Addressing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on students, including the impacts of interrupted instruction and learning loss and the impacts on low-income students, children with disabilities, English language learners, and students experiencing homelessness;
- Implementing evidence-based strategies to meet students' social, emotional, mental health, and academic needs;
- Offering evidence-based summer, afterschool, and other extended learning and enrichment programs; and
- Supporting early childhood education.

In addition, districts must identify programs and services that will continue beyond the availability of these federal funds and how local funds will be used moving forward in order to minimize disruption to core academic and other school programs.

Before posting this plan, districts are required to seek public comment from parents, teachers and other stakeholders and take such comments into account in the development of the plan.

Safely returning students to in-person instruction

Plan Summary:

Health and Safety

As a continuation of this past school year, healthy hygiene practices will be taught and re-taught to both students and staff. Instruction will be provided in the following areas:

- Hygiene practices
- Health screenings
- Signs and symptoms of COVID-19
- Face coverings, as determined by the Department of Health and CDC
- Physical distancing, as determined by the Department of Health and CDC
- Proper transitions; i.e., hallway traffic patterns, etc
- Entrance and egress
- Cleaning and disinfection procedures

Cleaning and Disinfecting

The District will:

- Schedule (at least daily) cleaning and disinfecting of touched surfaces during the regular school day. Cleaning and disinfecting will include frequently touched surfaces.
- Ensure safe and correct application of disinfectants ensuring adequate contact times
- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, or other methods
- Take steps to ensure all water systems and features are safe to use
- Clean soft surfaces using soap and water or cleaners appropriate for use on these surfaces
- Follow manufacturer's instructions for cleaning and disinfecting electronics.
- Encourage teachers to support general cleaning within the classrooms and will be provided with appropriate cleaning supplies and training
- Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces including (but not limited to):
 - ❖ Drinking Fountains
 - ❖ Door handles and push plates
 - ❖ Bathroom faucets
 - ❖ Light switches
 - ❖ Handrails
 - ❖ Buttons on vending machines
- Ensure all trash receptacles are emptied and trash removed
- Ensure floors are swept and dust mopped
- Ensure floors are spot mopped or full mopped
- Ensure walls are spot cleaned, when soiled
- Ensure carpets are spot cleaned
- Ensure all unoccupied classrooms are locked

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)/ Face Coverings

Students, staff and approved visitors will utilize face coverings only as determined by the NYS Department of Health.

It is understood that there may be the following *exception*:

- Individuals who have provided the District with medical documentation supporting accommodations. Accommodations will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

The District will allow individuals to wear their own face coverings as long as they cover the individual's mouth and nose. The District will also purchase and provide appropriate PPE for faculty, staff and student use, where applicable. The School Nurses will be provided additional PPE to care for individuals expressing COVID-19 symptoms. Such PPE may include, but is not limited to:

- Respirators (N95) masks that are fitted
- Eye protection
- Face shields
- Gloves
- Disposable gowns

Class Sizes and Cohorting

The addition of teaching staff will allow the district to maintain smaller class sizes to ensure students, faculty and staff have appropriate space in the classroom. In addition, staff will be added to enable cohorting of students as applicable. Cohorting students, if necessary, will allow the district to provide students with the opportunity to have in-person learning five days a week.

Maximizing in-person instruction time

Plan Summary:

Per Commissioner's regulations, all students will receive instruction that is designed to facilitate their attainment of the State learning standards. The District's students will receive high quality rigorous, standards-based instruction that will meet their academic needs and allow them to attain the learning standards in all curricular areas.

Among school-based factors, teaching and school leadership are the two greatest influences on student learning. Adequate staffing is necessary to execute the continuation of in-person learning and maximizing instructional time. Increasing faculty and support personnel allows the district to maintain smaller classes and provide more teacher contact time and intervention opportunities. This supports the district's anticipated Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). This also helps educators to provide academic and behavioral strategies for students with various needs; especially helping to target any students who participated in remote learning for the entire/majority of the school year.

Operating schools and meeting the needs of students

Plan Summary:

Professional Development

The Byron-Bergen District is using grant funding to meet the needs of all students in several ways. Primary among those is additional professional development for all staff members. There were several different adjustments made to instructional practice as a result of the pandemic that we will want to keep and to expand on. The use of technology to support instruction will be incredibly important in the future regardless of whether learning conditions return to pre-pandemic levels. Continuous opportunities for teachers to transition student learning to a personalized approach will assist in helping to provide instruction specific to each individual's needs. The grant will provide learning opportunities for all as well as the ability to have some "research and development" with various techniques and practices shared by the field. Re-establishing the district's rich Instructional Coaching program will also offer embedded professional development for teachers.

Summer Programming

A second means of using the grant funding to better meet the needs of students is through summer programming. Grant funding will assist us in establishing a summer program in conjunction with the Gillam Grant Community Center for students completing Kindergarten through eighth grade that will provide any student with the opportunity for remediation, enrichment, and recreation through a social and emotional learning lens. We have attempted to remove all barriers to participation by including transportation and meals. Any approach to instruction will be personalized so that some students will be recovering from any losses in learning that they might have experienced as a result of the pandemic while others might be advancing their learning to prepare them to excel in the next school year.

Additional Personnel

Another means of meeting the needs of all of our students will be the addition of several staff members for smaller class size, family support, and individualized instruction. Through a review of expected retirements over the term of the grant we were able to offer several positions that can assist with the recovery of learning while being able to be phased out through attrition. Initially, it will be important to maintain a small class size in our Elementary School so that we can support social distancing and keep students coming to school every day. At the point we can return to pre-pandemic class size, we will convert those instructors to instructional support working through the Response to Intervention format. The district is also planning to have two teachers on special assignment with the focus on math/science and ELA/social studies. Their task will be to use student performance data in conjunction with the classroom teacher to provide a prescriptive path to advancing the student's learning. The professionals in those roles

will need to have a keen understanding of each student's learning to assist with setting targets and meeting goals. The district plans to hire a social worker that can focus specifically on those families that have chosen to remain in a remote environment for 2020-21 and may have specific needs as a reason or result. Finally, there is a plan to hire an additional technology teacher to expand the STEAM learning for all of our students. One of the losses in learning was the opportunity to work collaboratively with other students, so using STEAM and the performing arts will allow for growth in the “soft skills” such as communication, collaboration, and creativity.

Extended School Day

The District plans to develop extended day learning opportunities similar to those that have been in place in the past that have shown success. It is important to provide for transportation so that opportunities are open to all students. The district will be seeking out ways to work with community partners such as the Gillam Grant Community Center so that there is a better chance of sustaining the positive developments.

Purchase of educational technology

Plan Summary:

All students in Kindergarten – 12th Grade will continue to have access to District-owned devices in our 1:1 device model. The district has already developed and maintained an obsolescence program for this model. One potential way to use the grant to support technology is with the use of some of the tools that have been “discovered” during the pandemic. Many educators found that overhead cameras had a great impact on their instruction. While some of that was online, the use was also pervasive in our Elementary Grades with a significant amount of demand. Grant funds will allow the district to get tools like this to all teachers that can make instructional use of them and to attach them to the district's obsolescence plan so that there can be support internally once the grant is depleted.

There is also a demand for those instructional applications that were discovered and used during the pandemic. Our instructional and technology personnel have been able to vet and determine efficacy in practice of various instructional tools and are now in a position to make longer term purchases as well as to access the training to make the most effective use of each of those resources.

Finally, we expect to use some of the funding to support pilots of new instructional tools to assess their value in the learning environment.

Addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on all students, including low-income students, students with disabilities, English language learners, and students experiencing homelessness.

Plan Summary:

Since the Elementary level students were able to attend school every day, the focus for addressing the impact of the pandemic has and will continue to be on those students who were fully-remote throughout the school year. In addition, we have a need for extra support to recover from the three months that all of our students missed for in person instruction in the spring of 2020.

The district has decided on a two pronged approach to support students' needs. First, there will be additional teachers assigned so that there can be both smaller class sizes to enable social distancing, if necessary, and to allow more time for teachers with individual students. Second, we will be assigning Teachers on Special Assignment with a focus on individual student data so that there can be some assistance for classroom teachers in determining the approach to take and the actual instruction for each student.

The district has also engaged with consultants to focus on the incorporation of Social and Emotional Learning components within the regular curriculum.

Implementing evidence-based strategies to meet students' social, emotional, mental health and academic needs.

Plan Summary:

An important part of the recovery process from the disruption to regular instruction due to the pandemic will be a focus on students' social, emotional, and mental health needs. The district had established professional development for staff in Social and Emotional Learning strategies prior to the pandemic. Through the research efforts of groups like CASEL there is an awareness of the effectiveness of the inclusion of Self-Management, Self-Awareness, Responsible Decision-Making, Relationship Skills, and Social Awareness, in developing a well-rounded student that is both college and career ready. Schools have been focused on the college readiness piece since their inception but the full career readiness of the student relies on their growth in what is sometimes referred to as the "soft skills". The district will continue to use consultants to support our inclusion of social and emotional learning into the curriculum. Also, Content Leaders and Grade Level Leaders are being re-established in 2021-22 with one of their responsibilities to include curriculum development with a social and emotional component.

The District initiated child abuse training according to Erin's Law in 2020-21. With the assistance of the grant and the successes of the current year, there will be an expansion of the program to ensure that all students have had the opportunity to learn about safety and protection of themselves.

A big part of a student's mental well being can be influenced by their participation in extracurricular activities. We anticipate reactivating all of those activities that were not able to operate this year or were compromised as a result of the pandemic so that students can participate. A special focus for the district will be equity of opportunity so that those new activities as well as those that have been mainstays of the district can be analyzed through the lens of access.

Finally, one of the instructional successes for many through the pandemic with hybrid learning was the ability to teach using a personalized approach to student learning. One of the best ways that we can assist with a student's social, emotional, academic, and mental well-being is with instruction that is based on individual needs. We anticipate that much of our summer and extended learning programming will be developed with this in mind as well as professional development opportunities so that teachers can expand on the pieces that they put in place during the pandemic.

Offering evidence-based summer, afterschool, and other extended learning and enrichment programs.

Plan Summary:

The work that our staff will be doing through summer, after school, and extended day learning will be grounded on several evidence-based resources. The district's literacy program uses the Fountas and Pinnell instructional strategies. As part of the summer programming, teachers will use similar strategies for reading instruction as they have during the school year. With the Response to Intervention model, for many students the focus will be on continuing forward in the learning to make up for any lost time. For other students, teachers will use other strategies, such as Reading Recovery, to remediate and develop literacy skills. The approach will be personalized.

The district has collaborated with the Genesee Valley BOCES for development of instructional skills and will continue to take advantage of this collaboration during the summer and extended day learning. Professional development will be a key component of summer learning so that students can receive instruction geared toward their needs. Teachers on Special Assignment as Instructional Specialists have been established to help our teachers use student data to individualize strategies for students.

Supporting early childhood education.

Plan Summary:

One of the areas of most focus for grant efforts will be with early childhood education. Maintenance and growth of the critical basic skills in literacy and numeracy will be paramount with the access of additional resources. In addition, the district will continue to maintain and grow its focus on Social and Emotional Learning. Since some of our students were not in school during the entire year, there will be the need for additional support in both instructional and non-instructional activities to allow for our youngest students to experience and practice quality social behavior.

To focus on helping students learn to read at these critical ages, the district will return teaching staff to Reading Recovery. This research based program is aimed, through individual and small group instruction, to bring students along in the process at a rate that can help them catch up to their grade level peers. The district has hired additional instructors at the Elementary level with one of those aimed at providing academic intervention support for our early grades.

The grant will also provide additional funding for training for all of our teachers. There is an opportunity for all of our professional staff to develop their instructional skills to match the challenges in student growth that the pandemic has brought. With a broader continuum of skills and abilities anticipated for the next couple of years, it will take more individualization of instruction to meet each student where they are. We expect there to be opportunities both during the school year and in the summer for teachers to grow their ability to access student learning with the district's literacy and math programs.

Finally, the district has had instructional coaches to support teacher development in the past. The grant will help us to reinstate the program for the next school year and beyond. Instructional coaches support our teaching staff as they work to improve.

Other areas of student performance and need.

Plan Summary:

One of the areas that the Byron-Bergen school district would like to use grant funding for is to have a greater focus on career exploration. If possible, we will hire an additional teacher with certification in Career and Technical Education or Technology to provide students with a hands-on means to explore and develop interests in contemporary careers. The district will also explore options using outside resources to expose students to options that they will have after school. Whether in school or part of an after school or summer program, it will be important to get our students involved in shaping their future while still in the PK-12 program.

Another area that has seen a reduction in opportunities due to the pandemic is in the Performing Arts. The district is exploring ways to provide students with these opportunities

during summer or through extended day programming while building back to the same levels of in-school program prior to the pandemic.

An area that the district will also explore is more opportunity for students to learn and participate in coding both in school and outside the school day. The district will use the 2021-22 school year to see how this will best be implemented as well as sustained after Federal funding is depleted.