

MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents, Business Managers
FROM: Daniel M. French, Ed.D., Secretary of Education 
SUBJECT: American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Overview
DATE: March 22, 2021

Purpose

This communication is intended to provide a high-level overview of the [American Rescue Plan Act](#) (ARPA), signed into law on March 11, 2021. The Agency of Education (AOE) is awaiting program-specific guidance, and the field should expect more communications around each of the grant programs within the law as we learn more.

Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) III Fund

Through the Education Stabilization Fund (ESF) provided for in ARPA, the bill includes an additional \$122.775 billion for ESSER funding. \$800 million of this amount is being reserved for the US Department of Education to identify and assist homeless children and youth to attend school and receive wrap-around services. Similar to the CARES and CRRSA Acts, SEAs with approved applications would receive funds based on their share of Title I funding. Ninety percent of funds received by an SEA must be allocated to LEAs based on each LEA's Title I share, leaving 10% for SEA-level activities.

Vermont is expected to receive \$285,164,000 in additional ESSER funds (based on estimates made by the Congressional Research Service):

- Estimate for LEAs- \$256,164,000.
- Estimate for SEA set aside- \$28,516,000 (of which a maximum of \$1,426,000 may be used for administration).

Similar to ESSER II funds:

- There is **no Equitable Services requirement** (there are additional funds being made available for the GEER EANS program which are outlined below).
- The period of performance for ESSER II and ESSER III is from March 13, 2020 through Sept. 30, 2023.

There are several significant and new provisions in the use of ESSER III funds (these will be outlined in detail in a separate, ESSER III-specific guidance document once we have further

Contact Information:

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information from the US Department of Education):

1. LEAs are required to set aside 20% for “activities to address learning loss through evidence-based interventions such as summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive after school programs, or extended school year programs. Interventions are required to respond to students’ academic, social and emotional needs and address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on subgroups of students described in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), students experiencing homelessness, and children and youth in foster care.”
2. LEAs receiving ESSER funds will be required to develop and make publicly available a plan for “safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services.” LEAs must seek public comment on their plan. LEAs may use a previously developed plan if it meets the requirements established by the US Department of Education. AOE will offer additional guidance on how LEAs might leverage their Recovery Plans to meet this requirement.
3. Lastly, with a few exceptions for very small schools, LEAs must not reduce per pupil funding or staff in high poverty schools disproportionately from their reductions in all LEA schools.

Any entity that receives funds under ESSER is required, to the greatest extent practicable, to continue to pay its employees and contractors during the period of any disruptions or closures related to COVID-19.

The SEA set aside is subject to additional restrictions which will be detailed in subsequent guidance documents.

Governors Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Emergency Assistance for Nonpublic Schools (EANS) Fund

ARPA did not add additional funding to the GEER Fund (the programs that are referred to as GEER and GEER II), but it did provide an additional \$2.75 billion for the GEER EANS program. Vermont is expected to receive \$2,628,000 in GEER EANS and is awaiting further programmatic information. One significant change from the first GEER EANS program is that the AOE is not allowed to provide reimbursement for goods and services.

IDEA

The bill provides slightly more than \$3 billion in funding for several programs under IDEA. Specifically, the bill provides \$2.58 billion for the Part B, Grants to States program; \$200 million for the Section preschool program, and \$250 million for the Part C Infants and Toddlers program. At this time, AOE does not know how much of this funding Vermont will receive.

Child Nutrition Programs

The bill includes language extending Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfers (P-EBT) through Summer 2021. However, we are awaiting guidance from USDA as to whether this would be applicable to Vermont students, and if so, how the extension should be conducted.

Other Funding

The AOE will be working with other state agencies to gather programmatic information on the many funding opportunities provided through CRRSA and ARPA. The information below is only intended to provide the highest-level awareness of support for education entities, communities, and families, and is not all inclusive of every ARPA program that could impact schools and families.

Broadband and Remote Education Provisions

LEAs can find a list of resources for schools, communities, and families in the [Continuity of Learning: Broadband Supports and Resources for Families](#) and on the Department of Public Service's webpage [New Connectivity Resources to Support You during the COVID-19 State of Emergency in Vermont](#).

“Emergency Connectivity Fund”

Through the Federal Communications Commission and e-Rate program, \$7.2 billion will go to supporting schools and libraries in providing advanced telecommunications and information services, connected devices, and other eligible equipment to students, teachers and library patrons for internet use at home or at other locations outside of the school or library.

Education and Remote Options in Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund

The bill provides \$10 billion to states, territories and tribal governments for capital projects pertaining to work, education, and health monitoring, including remote options. This may permit this fund to be used for education and remote learning projects, including broadband.

Child Care

1. ARPA provides block grants to provide childcare assistance to health care sector employees, emergency responders, sanitation workers and other essential workers.
2. It also provides \$23.975 billion for childcare stabilization grants to assist providers in defraying the costs of providing childcare during the COVID-19 pandemic and paying full compensation to employees of the provider.

The AOE is awaiting further guidance on the impacts of these programs in Vermont.

Resources and Contacts

As new information becomes available, including any guidance from the US Department of Education, US Department of Agriculture or US Department of Treasury, it will be posted on the AOE's [COVID-19 Federal Emergency Funds webpage](#).

ESSER

Questions regarding ESSER applications should continue to be directed to [Josh Souliere](#) and questions regarding Equitable Services should be directed to [Jesse Roy](#).

GEER

For questions regarding the GEER funds directed to CTE centers, please continue to contact [Ruth Durkee](#).

For questions regarding the GEER non-public schools fund (GEER-EANS), please contact AOE.geereans@vermont.gov.

Child Nutrition (CACFP and School Food Authorities)

Questions concerning Child Nutrition programs should be directed to [Rosie Krueger](#).

e-Rate Program

Questions concerning the e-Rate program should be directed to [Lisa Helme](#).