ESSER Guidance Released

The USED released the highly anticipated ESSER guidance on Wednesday, May 26, 2021. The guidance is available on the NDDPI COVID-19 Funding website.
Training Purpose

The purpose of today’s training is to provide an overview of the USED ESSER guidance, highlight key topics, and address questions.
Organization of USED Guidance

• The USED guidance is formatted as a Q&A.

• There are five key sections:
  ➢ Overview of funding
  ➢ Reopening schools
  ➢ Advancing equity
  ➢ Supporting school staff
  ➢ Fiscal considerations

• Reference the Table of Contents to find specific topics.
Focus on Inequities

The USED ESSER guidance places a significant focus on addressing underserved students who may have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, including:

- Students of color
- Students with disabilities
- English Learners
- Students from low-income families
- Students experiencing homelessness
- Students in foster care
- Migratory students
The USED ESSER guidance clarifies:

- The guidance applies to ESSER I, II, III funding, as well as GEER funding.
- States and school districts can simultaneously use all funding sources (ESSER I, II, III).
Intent of ESSER Funding

As outlined in the USED ESSER guidance, the intent of the funding is to safely reopen schools, maximize in-person instructional time for all students, and address learning loss due to the pandemic.
Positive Clarifications

**Time and Effort Requirements** – The guidance clarifies that time and effort documentation is only required if an employee splits their time between allowable and unallowable activities, which would be extremely rare given the broad array of activities allowed with ESSER funds.
Expands on Social/Emotional Supports

• Hire nurses, counselors, and social workers
• Expand arts programs
• Expand sports programs
• Support various clubs
Reiterates Two Key LEA Plan Requirements

**Stakeholder Engagement** – Must obtain broad input
  - Sample of a strong narrative on engagement [here](#)

**Addressing Learning Loss** – Districts are encouraged to address learning loss in a broad manner, based on data, and inclusive of underserved populations.
  - Sample of a strong narrative on learning loss [here](#)
Overarching Guidelines

The document reiterates the guidelines for the uses of ESSER funding:

• Activities to prevent, prepare for, or respond to COVID

• Activities that are an allowable use of ESSER funds

• Activities that meet the necessary and reasonable standard set by the Uniform Grants Guidance (UGG)
Highly Anticipated Topics

The USED ESSER guidance addresses three specific topics that ND educators have been highly anticipating:

• Construction & renovation (pages 24-27)
• Learning loss (pages 29-30)
• Providing additional pay (page 47)
Using ESSER Funds for Construction or Renovations

**Topic:** Can ESSER funds be used for construction & renovation?

**Guidance:** The guidance reiterates that construction & renovation are authorized activities for ESSER funding. The USED discourages districts from using ESSER funds for new construction because this use of funds may limit the ability to support other essential needs or initiatives and may not be workable under the ESSER timeline.

**NDDPI Response:** When reviewing Capital Expense requests, the NDDPI will take into consideration the following:

- Can the activity be tied to Covid-19?
- Is it necessary and reasonable?
- Has the district included funding for essential learning needs as identified with their student achievement data?

Districts will be monitored to ensure that all construction-related activities adhere to the requirements outlined on page 25 of the USED guidance.
What Costs Can Be Coded to the Required 20% Learning Loss

**Topic:** What activities can be coded to learning loss?

**Guidance:** The guidance outlines numerous activities that can be coded to the 20% learning loss requirement, most of which are direct student services (summer school, afterschool, extended year). In addition, the guidance indicates that curriculum, professional development, and embedded assessments can be coded to learning loss if they are evidence-based.

**NDDPI Response:** Districts will need to provide documentation to support the practices utilized when desks audits occur.
Regulation on Providing Additional Pay

**Topic:** Can school staff be provided with additional pay due to COVID-19?

**Guidance:** On page 47, the guidance outlines several scenarios where it would be appropriate to provide school personnel with additional pay, including “premium pay” which NDDPI interprets as bonuses.

**NDDPI Response:** Districts need to ensure any extra pay is reasonable and necessary and provided as part of an established plan or written policy.
Costs Prohibited

Throughout the guidance, one topic in particular was highlighted as being unallowable.

On page 51 of the guidance, the USED states that it is unallowable to use ESSER funding to restore a rainy-day fund.
In Summary

The NDDPI will continue to provide updates and clarification through various communication methods to keep school personnel informed as we continue to navigate the ESSER spending guidelines.
Questions

Questions regarding the allowable uses of ESSER funding can be directed to the following staff:

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Sample of Strong Narrative on Engagement

2. **Stakeholder Consultation:** LEAs are required to engage in meaningful consultation with stakeholders, including students; families; school and district administrators and special education administrators; teachers, principals, school leaders, other educators, school staff, and their unions; as well as any tribes or civil or disability rights organizations in the LEA, as well as groups that represent students with disabilities, ELs, children experiencing homelessness, children in foster care, migratory students, and those who are incarcerated. Describe in detail how the LEA consulted with these stakeholder groups regarding how the ESSER II will be utilized.

An explanation of ESSER grants and our ND Smart Restart plan is posted on our schools website. We ask parents and community stakeholders for their comments and feedback. If we are to target student learning loss then the discussion revolves around how to best use these dollars in that regard. The School Board has been informed on what kinds of remediation are necessary and has reacted by approving the needed dollars for those strategies. The teaching staff and administrators analyze the data collected through assessments and create the classroom strategies involved for remediation of students. This includes the teaching staff that work with all the special populations. There has also been discussions with the Student Council on addressing learning loss. The students provided feedback and helped brainstorm a consistent and ongoing remediation plan that included the use of IXL learning and student tutors. Some portions of ESSER II funding will be used for school technology. This needed technology is identified by the teaching staff and technology coordinator. The technology will be used to deliver live video streaming from school to students at home as well as hardware needed by students learning from home as well as to support remediation at school. Other grant dollars will be used for cleaning supplies, extra custodial help for sanitation and school health as well as facility improvements in order for us to better monitor school access and to assist with contact tracing.
Part D: Narratives

1. Addressing Learning Loss: Detail the LEA’s plan to use a portion of ESSER II funding to address learning loss. ESSER II regulations have a focus on learning loss and districts are encouraged to spend a portion of their LEA funds to measure and address learning loss among students. In particular, those disproportionately affected by the coronavirus and school closures. Districts will be required to indicate what percent of their ESSER II funds were used to address learning loss. Districts will need to track the learning loss expenditures separately.

Burke Lakefront School District: TBD. TBD has earmarked ten percent (10%) of ESSER II Funding for Learning Loss. This is a total of $545,611.30. Burke Lakefront used the priority of ESSER II funds for the following:
- Burke Lakefront Elementary School = $121,760.31 (45% of current ADM)
- Burke Lakefront Middle School = $121,760.31 (45% of current ADM)
- Burke Lakefront High School = $121,760.31 (45% of current ADM)

The remaining ten percent will be spent on other initiatives.

MSS (Title I and Title IV funds will be the primary source for support as well.)

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- Florida’s Bridge: BHD 1 purchased Florida’s Bridge, which is a kind of narrative assessment meant for teachers, research based, and designed to build a strong Multi-Tiered System of Support to ensure that (optics) and data are available to provide timely and targeted support to address learning loss. Narrative assessments in the areas of Literacy, Mathematics, and SEL will assist BHD 1 in the creation of Individual Development Plans to address learning loss and/or specific interventions for students identified as at risk, based on MDES.

LITERACY
- The identified professional development provided in literacy will be used to address students on an MDES model to support individual student needs according to universal assessment in the areas of Literacy, Mathematics, and SEL.

NDEK1C Grant allowed BHD 7 to conduct a literacy audit during COVID, resulting in recommended professional development (PD) for Schools County, ultimately funding to support in learning loss, with particular attention to literacy. This PD is occurring during the month of June.
- Implications of educational language, phonological processing, and a structuralhuman approach (K-12)
- Reading Institute – Level 2: Teacher and Language (K-12)
- Language Loss – Tier 2 Reading Interventions (K-12)

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)
- BHD 7 encourages the impact COVID-19 has had on our students. Preparations for support that will be necessary for students includes SEL: Training to our staff. The following PD will occur to have:
- Resilience – Support to staff and students to expand the 4 sources of resilience to empower teachers to reach their students
- Why Try – Program, tools, and training to motivate and engage students

HIGH IMPACT TUTORING
- Currently, Title I/Federally funded (SBE) mandates prevent BHD 7 from providing full-scale instruction. Additionally, SBE determined in June that for SY21-22, beginning September 15, 2020 and ending June 11, 2021. This provided allows us to continue to provide summer services. In the future, BHD 7 will contract outside providers to provide services for at risk students. BHD 7 is also working with NSCC to utilize North Dakota Reading and Math Corps for high impact rate training.

Fortunately, it is very likely that we will begin SY21-22 with all students under. In conjunction for the benefit of all students, BHD 7 will address learning loss through High Impact Tutoring. This will be accomplished in several ways.
- Continue tutoring services provided through GIRISH plan
- Continue partnership with education cohorts at Burke Lakefront Community College for tutoring services from college students planning to enter the teaching field.
- Continue training to every teacher for high leave rates training – research shows that a more comprehensive, differentiated, students with a substantial improvement in educational achievement with significant, intentional, and reduced training opportunities in literacy, mathematics, and social-emotional learning.
- The high impact tutoring will be delivered in three phases, literacy training, literacy training, and additional training.

EVIDENCE-BASED, AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMMING
- Burke Lakefront Advantage (BLA) is currently for Burke Lakefront Advantage-Blended After-school programs under the Every Student Succeeds initiative. Students 4th – 12th grade at Burke Lakefront Elementary, Middle, and High school in the areas of Academic, Career Leadership, Multisport, Physical Activity, Health, STEM, and Sports.