An Overview of the USED ESSER Guidance

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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.

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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.

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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

General Information

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).

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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.

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Positive Clarifications

<u>Time and Effort Requirements</u> – 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.

Positive Clarifications-Continued

Expands on Social/Emotional Supports

- Hire nurses, counselors, and social workers
- Expand arts programs
- Expand sports programs
- Support various clubs

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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

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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)

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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)

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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 my 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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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 tht 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.

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Sample of Strong Narrative on Learning Loss

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.

Belcourt School District 7 (BSD 7) has earmarked ten percent (10%) of ESSER II Funding for Learning Loss. This is a total of $954,401.30. Based on the current ADM at each respective school, the approximate breakdown of this 10% is as follows:
- Turtle Mountain Elementary School = $410,392.56 (43% of current ADM)
- Turtle Mountain Middle School = $219,512.30 (23% of current ADM)
- Turtle Mountain High School = $324,496.44 (34% of current ADM)

The services mentioned below will exceed the 10% of ESSER II. However, BSD 7 will use NDSRCL, Title I and Title IV funds to support the services as well.

MTSS (Multi-Tiered Support System)
- **Fastbridge -** BSD 7 purchased Fastbridge, which is a formative assessment system for teachers, research based, and designed to build a strong Multi-Tiered System of Support to ensure the right tools and data are available to provide timely and targeted supports to address learning loss. Formative assessments in the areas of Literacy, Mathematics, and SEL will assist BSD 7 in the creation of Individual Development Plans to address learning loss/specific interventions for students identified as at risk, based on MTSS.

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

NDSRCL Grant allowed BSD 7 to conduct a Literacy Audit during COVID, resulting in recommended professional development (PD) by Schools Cubed, ultimately leading to support in learning loss, with particular attention to literacy. This PD is occurring during the month of June.
- Implications of oral language, phonological processing and a structured literacy approach (K-12)
- Reading Institute - Fundamental knowledge and skills on literacy and impacting literacy in schools (K-12)
- Language Live - Tier 3 Reading Intervention (K-12)

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)
BSD 7 recognizes the impact COVID-19 has had emotionally on our students. Preparation for support that will be necessary for students includes SEL Training to our staff. The following PD will occur in June:
- Resilience - Support to staff and students to expand the 4 sources of resilience to empower teachers to teach their students.
- Why Try - Programs, tools and training to motivate and engage students.

HIGH IMPACT TUTORING
Currently, Tribal and Federal (BIE) Mandates prevent BSD 7 from providing full onsite instruction. Additionally, BIE determined a late start date for SY20-21, beginning September 15, 2020 and ending June 18, 2021. This provides little to no time to provide summer services. In the interim, BSD 7 will contract outside providers to provide services for our at risk students. BSD 7 is also working with NCEC to utilize North Dakota Reading and Math Corps for high impact tutor training.

Fortunately, it is very likely that we will begin SY21-22 with all students onsite. In preparation for the return of all students, BSD 7 will address learning loss through High Impact Tutoring. This will be accomplished in several ways:
- Continue tutoring services provided through GEERS grant.
- Create partnerships with education cohort at Turtle Mountain Community College for tutoring services from college students planning to enter the teaching field.
- Intense training to every tutor for high intense tutoring -- research shows that socioeconomic disadvantaged students could substantially improve educational achievement with significant, intentional and robust tutoring in literacy, mathematics and social emotional learning. The high impact tutoring will occur before/after school, Saturdays and holiday vacations.
  Dietrichson, Jens, et al. "Academic Interventions for Elementary and Middle School Students With Low Socioeconomic Status: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis." Review of Educational Research, vol. 87, no. 2, 2017, pp. 243–282., doi:10.3102/0034654316687036.

EVIDENCE BASED AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMMING
Turtle Mountain Administrators (K-12) are currently reviewing Evidence-Based After-school programs under the Every Student Succeeds Act (Tiers I - III) for Elementary, Middle Grades, Elementary/Middle Grades and High School in the areas of: Academic Career Leadership, Multicomponent, Physical Activity/Health, STEM and Sports.
Neild, R.C., Wilson, S.J. & McClanahan, W. (2019). *Afterschool programs: A review of evidence under the Every Student Succeeds Act.* Philadelphia: Research for Action.

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