



NCDPI ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL EMERGENCY RELIEF (ESSER) FUND APPLICATION

Early Learning Opportunities

As federal COVID relief funds find their way to State and Local Education Agencies, there is a continued need to prioritize early childhood education to ensure the youngest learners and their families are supported.

On April 23, the U.S. Department of Education (USED) announced \$13.2 billion for states is being made available under the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Under the CARES Act, these grants are awarded to State educational agencies (SEAs) to provide local educational agencies (LEAs) with emergency relief funds to address the impact of the coronavirus. The Department notes that funding could be used for both continuing to provide educational services, such as remote learning, and developing and implementing plans for the return to normal operations. **North Carolina** received approximately **\$389 million** through the ESSER Fund, of which approximately **\$350 million** will be distributed to LEAs.

Any allowable activities under Title I are allowable uses of ESSER funds. As a reminder, early childhood is an allowable use of Title I dollars, and districts can use the funds for:

- Salaries and benefits for teachers and other staff
- Home visiting programs
- Extended day programs in school sites, Head Start, or community-based child care programs
- Professional development for early childhood professionals who serve Title I eligible children
- Support services, such as nutrition, vision, dental, and counseling services
- Screening and diagnostic assessment
- Summer enrichment programs for young children and their families
- Transition programs

Recommendations for how LEAs might use ESSER funds to support early childhood are outlined in the table below and include strategies for meeting the social-emotional needs of staff, children and families; ensuring equitable access to learning opportunities for all children and families; and supporting staff as they navigate the reopening of schools. Each section below is included in the NCDPI Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund Application.

PART A: Needs Assessment-LEA Data

Provide data the LEA will use to determine its most important educational needs as a result of the disruption in educational services and subsequent shift to remote learning due to COVID-19.

Utilize local school and community data (i.e., [COVID-19 rates](#), engagement and participation in online learning/virtual services by children and families, access to technology and internet, access to meals, employment rates, changes in vaccination rates, etc.) and work with local early learning partners (private child care, Partnerships for Children, Head Start, NC Pre-K, etc.) to gather relevant information on whether and how young children have received services during the COVID-19 crisis and to understand what children and families will need as they move into the new school year:

- Local Partnerships for Children ([Smart Start](#)) are keeping data on issues and needs of early learning partners in the community
- Head Start programs are [documenting](#) needs of children and families and many have surveyed parents and staff
- Head Start programs have completed applications for [CARES Act funding](#) and are determining needs for the use of those funds
- The National Association for the Education of Young Children surveyed child care providers [impact of COVID-19 on child care](#)
- NC Pre-K conducted a survey of all providers developing a [Remote Learning Survey Report](#)

Additional early childhood data sources include:

- [Pathways to Grade Level Reading Data Book 2019](#)
- [NC Child 2020 Data Cards](#)
- [NC Child Care Data](#)
- [Additional Data Sources](#)

PART C: Funded Strategies *(the LEA plans to fund utilizing ESSER funds (PRC 163) as provided by the CARES Act)*

Coordination of coronavirus response efforts between the LEA and other government organizations

Early learning coordination activities could include:

- Summer learning opportunities, including preschool
- Nutrition services and meal access such as ensuring access through [No Kid Hungry NC](#) and [No Kid Hungry Summer](#)
- Parenting and family support strategies (e.g., home visiting, mental health services, etc.)
- Housing
- Mental health
- Transition from early childhood settings to school settings
- Developmental screening
- Home visiting
- Data sharing
- Eligibility determination and enrollment including technology for applications
- Identify resources and supports for continued distance learning or interrupted schedules as the COVID-19 crisis continues and impacts school attendance
- Coordinating before- and after-school services

Providing principals and other school leaders with the resources necessary to address individual school needs

- Provide professional learning related to social and emotional development, trauma-informed practices, and/or Multi-Tiered Systems of Support
- Capacity building and training on remote learning services while emphasizing developmentally appropriate practices in preschool and kindergarten
- Support staff such as social workers and counselors to support family's needs and enhance comprehensive services
- Professional learning opportunities to enhance transition activities and support virtual family engagement
- Support looping when possible to allow children to remain with the same teacher/class they were with in March 2020
- Consider grouping children with familiar peers to support social and emotional development

Activities to address the unique needs of special student populations (e.g., low-income, disabled students, ELLs, minority students, homeless students, foster care students, etc.)

- Transition to kindergarten activities including virtual tours, online meetings with teachers, and/or socially distanced home visits
- Training and resources (in multiple languages) for families to understand how to use online resources
- Summer learning opportunities, including preschool

	• Five Ways to Protect Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers Experiencing Homelessness During COVID-19 • Resources (in multiple languages) to help families navigate virtual IEP planning and transition for children with special needs
Developing and implementing procedures and systems to improve the preparedness and response efforts of the LEA	• Family engagement supports and strategies on remote learning, developmentally appropriate practices, technology use, social emotional learning and mental health and wellness • Planning with community child care providers, libraries, parks and others for interruptions in school schedules • Provide professional learning opportunities on effective coaching practices to share materials, resources, and best practices for distance learning • Develop substitute pools of staff trained to work with young children
Training or PD for staff on sanitation and minimizing the spread of infectious diseases	• Health and sanitation preparedness and relief efforts to include early learning • Training for families on new health and safety measures through a virtual format or through other outreach methods
Purchasing sanitation supplies	• Thermometers • Additional classroom materials or multiples of the same item to rotate for extra cleaning and sanitizing • Extra cot sheets • Washer/dryer to support extra cleaning • Bleach • Paper towels • Personal protective equipment (PPE) • Scrubs (to either use as a barrier over clothing or to change into while at the site) • Foot coverings • Carts, and other supplies, to transport meals to classrooms
Planning for long term closures:	
• planning for providing meals to eligible students	• Nutrition services and meal access such as ensuring access through No Kid Hungry NC and No Kid Hungry Summer • Coordination with Head Start and CACFP
• planning for online learning	• Professional development on remote learning • Professional development on developmentally appropriate practices for preschool and kindergarten • Training and resources (in multiple languages) for families and caregivers to understand how to use online resources

	• Developmentally appropriate curriculum implementation including at home activities in which technology is not required • Incorporating virtual home visiting and family support into online learning planning and professional development resources
• planning for meeting the requirements of IDEA during distance learning	• Appropriate developmental screening and diagnostic assessment including a plan for timing and use • Technology supported Child Find activities and home visiting services • Assistive technology and adaptive equipment so that students with special needs may continue accessing learning opportunities • Professional development designed to promote individualized lesson planning
• other	• Family engagement strategies ensure engagement in children's learning and supporting family needs
Purchasing educational technology:	• Technology beyond screens (i.e., public access programming, public television, music, etc.) and resources and supports for families unwilling or unable to use technology • Reimagining the Role of Technology in Education 2017 • Future Ready Schools: Building Technology Infrastructure for Learning
• hardware	• Infrastructure to support interactions with families and for staff to work remotely
• software	• Developmental screening programs that can be administered virtually (i.e., ASQ-3 online or PEDS online) for determining preschool eligibility
• connectivity	• Enable Access and Effective Use
• assistive technology	• Assistive technology and adaptive equipment so that students with special needs may continue accessing learning opportunities
Providing mental health services and support	• Additional resources to strengthen connections between children, educators, and families, such as re-structuring schedules to allow for more intentional social-emotional support, additional counselor capacity, etc. • Trauma informed approaches for staff, families, and children such as: • professional development • contract services • instructional supplies • social-emotional curricula • staff wellness activities

Planning and implementing activities related to summer learning and supplemental after-school program	• Summer learning activities, including preschool • Full year, full day services, as appropriate • Coordination with early learning partners for aligned summer learning activities
Other activities not previously listed and that are for any authorized ESEA program, IDEA program, CTE or Adult Education Program, Homeless Youth Education, or that are necessary to maintain the operation of and continuity of services in the LEA and continuing to employ existing staff of the LEA.	• Salary and benefits for teachers and other staff • Staff to reduce classroom ratios and to support additional health checks and cleaning • Substitute staffing for staff on extended leave due to COVID-19 • Home visiting programs • Extended day programs at the school site, Head Start, or community-based child care programs • Professional development for educators and school staff, particularly around trauma-informed and social-emotional practices and family engagement and support • Support services, such as nutrition, vision, dental, and counseling services • Developmental screening for determining preschool eligibility virtually including salaries and benefits for additional time needed
Resources: NC DPI COVID-19 Response NC DPI CARES Act Overview Strong Schools NC Public Health Toolkit Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center COVID-19 The Ounce of Prevention Recommendations to States DHHS Guidance for Schools DHHS Guidance for Child Care DCDEE Interim Guidance for Licensed Child Care June 4, 2020 NC Pre-K FAQ National Governor's Association Governors' Emergency Education Relief Fund	