

ESSER Funding Guide for Arts Integration & STEAM



Overview of ESSER Funding Resources for Schools

The American Rescue Plan (ARP) provides nearly \$123 billion allocated to the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund for safe school re-openings and recovering learning loss. Local education agencies (LEAs) have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and responsibility to ensure this money makes a difference for all students. This funding offers schools tremendous flexibility in its use and as such, the ability to truly transform education.

If your school or district is interested in using arts integration or STEAM to address learning loss, promote social-emotional learning, or to increase student achievement, you can use these funds now to accomplish your goals.

This resource guide will walk you through the funding available, how to access those funds, and the evidence you need to support your implementation.

What's the Big Deal with ESSER and ARP for K-12 Schools?

ARP funds represent the largest COVID-19 funding relief to schools to date and is **double the amount provided in the CARES Act of 2020 and CRSAA combined**.

Additionally, unlike previous relief funding, the ARP has an incredible amount of flexibility in HOW the funds are spent. And, over 90% of the funding must go directly to LEAs (Local Education Agencies – think county school systems or local school districts) through subgrants issued by the state. So schools are able to quickly and easily access the resources they need to make an immediate impact for their students.

Funding Basics

Funds are provided to each state and are also referred to as ESSER III funds. You can view how much your state received [using this tracker](#). This will show you how much your state received, how much must go to the LEAs in your state, and how the state plans to use it's 10%.



KEY TIP!

Reach out to your district and ask how much ARP subgrant funding for LEAs was received directly for your district. Then, determine how much has been set aside for each school in your district. Many school administrators have control of their individual school budgets. Knowing how much your district received can help you know what is available.

- All funds must be obligated for use by September, 2024.
- While 80% has already been distributed to states, states all have their own timelines on issuing it to LEAs
- ARP also includes maintenance of effort and equity provisions, which prevent states and LEAs from making severe budget cuts, especially to LEAs and schools that serve economically disadvantaged students.
- 5% of the **total ARP ESSER allocation to each state** needs to be used for the implementation of **evidence-based interventions in after-school or enrichment**

aimed specifically at addressing learning loss.

- Of the total amount allocated to an LEA from the State's ARP ESSER award, **the LEA must reserve at least 20 percent of funds to address learning loss through the implementation of evidence-based interventions** and ensure that those interventions respond to students' social, emotional, and academic needs and address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on underrepresented student subgroups.

EXAMPLE OF A BUDGET TRACKER:

How much ARP funding did my State receive?	How much ARP funding did my District receive?	Total required to be used for learning loss	Date and Total Received so far:	What priorities has my district set for the funds?
\$1.8 Billion	\$648,000	Total in column 2 multiplied by .20: \$129,600	\$518,400 as of April 26, 2021	Cleaning supplies, digital texts, Teacher PD
My notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Investigate what kind of teacher PD is being examined• How much would it take for us to get arts integration off the ground?• Can we start with an arts integration summer enrichment program as a pilot?				

BLANK BUDGET TRACKER:

How much ARP funding did my State receive?	How much ARP funding did my District receive?	Total required to be used for learning loss	Date and Total Received so far:	What priorities has my district set for the funds?
		Total in column 2 multiplied by .20:		
My notes:				

Additional uses for the funding include:

- purchasing educational technology (including hardware, **software**, connectivity, assistive technology, and adaptive equipment) for students that aids in regular and substantive educational interaction between students and their classroom instructors, including students from low-income families and children with disabilities.
- Anything addressing learning loss.
- Supporting students in underserved groups to provide equity, including: low-income, racial and ethnic, gender, English Learners.
- Continuity of Service.
- Cleaning, health, and safety resources for safely re-opening school buildings.

View additional guidance for uses of funding through [this summary sheet](#) and the US Department of Education's [FAQ sheet](#).

Leveraging ARP Funds for Arts Integration and STEAM

Arts Integration and STEAM are both research-based approaches to learning which have been shown to close achievement gaps, positively impact social-emotional learning needs, and support all learners in hands-on, inquiry-driven instruction.

[Research](#) has shown that both arts integration and STEAM offer effective tools for increasing student achievement, decreasing behavior issues, and increasing student attendance.

Given the scope and purpose of the ARP funding, arts integration and STEAM are both highly effective options for meeting the requirements of funding use. **Both approaches also offer the evidence-based support that funds must be tied to for interventions and enrichment.**

[The Institute for Arts Integration and STEAM](#) can support your implementation of these approaches and offers the resources you need to leverage this opportunity. Here are the specific ways we can help you address the needs of your students while meeting the requirements for funding use:

FUNDING USE	HOW WE CAN HELP
The LEA must reserve at least 20 percent of funds to address learning loss through the implementation of evidence-based interventions and ensure that those interventions respond to students' social, emotional, and academic needs and address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on underrepresented student subgroups	Arts Integration and STEAM qualify in this area. Specific resources/programs we have that meet this requirement: The Accelerator Platform This all-in-one solution for teachers using arts integration and STEAM provides: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lesson plans• Resources and• Professional Development Many school districts are currently using The Accelerator to address learning loss by using the standards-aligned lessons as interventions both during the school year, and during the summer.
Purchasing educational technology (including hardware, software , connectivity, assistive technology, and adaptive equipment) for students that aids in regular and substantive educational interaction between students and their classroom instructors, including students from low-income families	Our Arts Integration Lesson Packs from the Accelerator also work well here as each lesson also comes with a website for students to use to enhance their learning and ensure learning is accessible for all. Additionally, the Accelerator scope and sequences provide teachers with specific accommodations for students with disabilities and English Language Learners.

and children with disabilities.	
Anything addressing learning loss.	The Accelerator offers curriculum that can be used for interventions, as well as PD for teachers on specific strategies and research-based tools for closing achievement gaps.
Supporting students in underserved groups to provide equity, including: low-income, racial and ethnic, gender, English Learners.	The workshops and courses in the Accelerator provide PD in supporting these learners, and the curriculum provides equitable opportunities for all students in these groups to learn in and through creative means.
Continuity of Service.	Accelerator memberships allow teachers to quickly shift between in-person and online instruction using the curriculum, as well as address their PD requirements regardless of location

Need research-based evidence to support these areas? We've done the heavy lifting for you on that, too! Just head over to our [funding page](#) and you'll find the links to sample evidence you can use.

Essential Strategies for Fund Planning

ARP Funding is both a unique opportunity to transform education and a big responsibility to ensure the funds are not wasted. Planning now for how to use these funds for long-term improvements can make a big difference. Here's a few strategies that may help:

1: Get your most urgent needs met now

Look at part of your funding as an infusion that can be used to get you immediately up and running. What do you need to get students and staff safely back in the building? What resources are imperative to acquire now to provide students equitable access to learning? Fill the gaps (or gaping holes) that occurred during the Pandemic.

2: Look at the big picture

Next, it's time to shift your focus to a 30,000 foot view. Looking at the big picture of needs, wants, and vision for the next 3 years, what bubbles to the surface for your school community? This is where arts integration and STEAM really begin to come into focus. How can approaches like this help you achieve your goals?

3: Think sustainability

Whatever you do, don't purchase one-and-done items if possible. Single-use items are a waste of resources. Instead, consider what you need to fill your gaps and build a flywheel of momentum for long-term growth. What positions do you need and how will they be funded after this subgrant? What resources can you invest in over the next 3 years which will build a culture of sustainability in any effort? If you're looking at purchasing a resource, software, or curriculum, consider if it will be outdated after a year or two. If so, look at a different option.

4: Consider giving autonomy and choice through competitions

One way to build ownership of the efforts with your staff is to provide a tiered-competition for funds. Ask staff what they consider to be the most important needs or changes for the next 3 years. Then, set up a tiered award system for a certain portion of the funds that teams of teachers can apply for as a "mini-grant". This helps to ensure the funding is supporting the needs of students, build collaboration and innovative-thinking, and helps teachers frame their requests in a way that offers sustainability over the long-term.

5. Ensure accountability through data collection

One of the best ways to keep track of the impact of funding is through data collection. This doesn't need to be complicated - a simple spreadsheet will work. The key here is to assign the funds to specific uses and then monitor the impact it has on your goals over time. For example, if you used part of your funds on arts integration lesson plans, you would want to track how many teachers were using the lessons, how often they were being used, and how students performed on the assessments at the end of each lesson. This simple data collection can help you determine if the resources are working and provides simple accountability to all stakeholders should they ever ask.



REMEMBER!

This is a fantastic opportunity to get the funding you need for approaches that make a real impact for students.

We understand this process can be overwhelming and we're here to help! [Reach out to us directly](#) and let us help you leverage ARP today.