

SUMMER AND AFTERSCHOOL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Investing American Rescue Plan Funds in Well-Designed and Well-Delivered Summer and Afterschool Learning Opportunities Meets the Intent of the Law, and Addresses Needed Learning Recovery and Acceleration

AFTERSCHOOL IN NEBRASKA

Research shows well-designed and well-delivered summer enrichment, and comprehensive afterschool can address “learning loss” accelerate learning, and expand opportunities for student success. From the new American Rescue Plan, substantial new funding is now available to many local communities extending over at least a 36-month period. These funds are provided through provisions in the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER III) portion of the Act. These funds can be used to expand and improve summer and afterschool programs and partnerships to start new programs that are aligned with the ten principles identified in the Nebraska State Board of Education Quality Framework, approved October 2017.

Local education leaders can address learning loss and acceleration by investing ESSER III and other funds to expand access, as called out in the law, for “summer learning or summer enrichment” and/or “comprehensive afterschool programs,” and to improve existing opportunities in high-need neighborhoods and schools.

The Act states:

USES OF FUNDS. A local educational agency that receives funds under this section - (1) shall reserve not less than 20 percent of such funds to address learning loss through **the implementation of evidence-based interventions, such as summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs**, or extended school year programs, and ensure that such interventions respond to students’ academic, social, and emotional needs and address the disproportionate impact of the coronavirus on the student subgroups...(Highlights added by authors to draw attention to these components of the law.)

See page 2 for specific federal guidance on ESSER III.

School-community collaboration and partnerships are viewed as an excellent vehicle for aligning services leaning-on, and utilizing the expertise, resources, and capacity that exist in multiple sectors. Partnerships require commitment to a shared vision and may include:

Shared professional development to ensure evidence-based practices are implemented across agencies and locations;

Delivery of enrichment opportunities and community engagement, like service learning and entrepreneurship;

Providing wrap-around services and community supports;

Space-sharing to expand opportunities for more varied experiences to engage students and meet needs and interests;

Shared staff to maximize capacity and tap into different expertise; and,

Coordinated services to meet youth and families’ economic, health, food, and other needs.

“The Evidence Base for Summer Enrichment and Comprehensive Afterschool Opportunities,” a very large body of evidence and research that shows that well designed and delivered summer enrichment and comprehensive afterschool programs meet the test of evidence base cited for the use of ESSER III funds. Find the full report here: <https://spark.adobe.com/page/symw23DwBdPms/>

GUIDANCE FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PERTAINING TO ESSER III

THE SPECIFICS

On April 9, 2021, the U.S. Department of Education released the COVID-19 Handbook, Volume 2: Roadmap to Reopening Safely and Meeting All Students’ Needs to provide strategies for safely reopening all of America’s schools and to promote educational equity by addressing opportunity gaps that have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

One section of the Department’s Handbook speaks to educators and summer, afterschool, other out-of-school program leaders by suggesting some overarching implementation considerations.

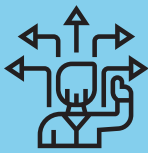


Partner with families

Give family members specific resources and strategies to support their children’s learning, consistent with legal requirements to communicate in a language and format they can understand

Focus on relationships

Sustained and strong adult-student relationships result in higher attendance and better student outcomes;

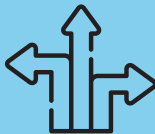


Include enrichment opportunities that support social-emotional and academic development

The activities provided can include tutoring and homework help in addition to enrichment activities such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) activities, career and technical programs, youth development, physical fitness and health education, and arts programs;

Make programs free, inclusive, and supportive of families

Programs can be free of charge for students to participate, may need to provide free transportation and meals, and be available to students with disabilities, English learners, and other underserved students;



Provide flexibility to increase access

For example, summer programs can be provided in full-day or partial day options, with flexible drop-off and pick-up times. If students can only participate in afterschool or summer programs for some of the time, this kind of participation can be allowed for and supported.

Build in frequent program assessment and evaluation

Continuous quality improvement and regular evaluations of the program assist providers in analyzing and making improvements to better provide students with engaging opportunities that improve their lives. Use early warning indicator systems to identify students with the greatest needs.



Scale up existing programs with demonstrated results

Enrichment activities and experiences can be provided with community partners. Consider partners that already have existing programs that have benefited students and work with them to support afterschool, weekend, and summer enrichment opportunities.